



Free Listening Hearts Program Materials

**A Primer on Spiritual Discernment: Topic 4**

## Applying the mind

Life in the Spirit involves the whole person. Sound discernment builds upon vigorous mental activity. Assemble the best relevant information possible. Examine it. Discuss it. Evaluate it. Develop options. Consider the pros and cons. Weigh the options. Arrive at a preliminary position on the matter.

Russian Orthodox contemplatives in the latter part of the nineteenth century habitually spoke of letting the mind descend into the heart. This is not saying to dispose of your mind or to ignore it. It implies that you conscientiously apply your mind, then let it descend to the very center of your being where God dwells in stillness, where body, mind, and spirit can become unified. Thus the mind becomes strengthened and fortified as it is integrated with both the body and the spirit.

Thus, in spiritual discernment there is a time to concentrate on using the intellect, a time to fall into centered silence, a time to allow integration, then a time to take action to do the work that will produce fruits.

*Mature spiritual discernment begins with vigorous mental activity.*

– Farnham and Grayson, *Keeping in Tune with God*, p. 25.