

SACRED PACE

STUDY GUIDE

FOUR STEPS TO
HEARING GOD AND ALIGNING
YOURSELF WITH HIS WILL

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Sacred Pace is a four-step process and biblical framework that will help you discern God's direction and leading in the decisions of your life that matter to you most—any decision for which you don't yet have peace about the answer. It's an invitation to slow down and listen for God in a way that you probably never have before.

How do you make decisions in your life? How do you find the assurance that you are aligned with God's will in the decisions you make? Welcome to *Sacred Pace*.

STEP 1

CONSULT YOUR FRIEND JESUS

GETTING STARTED

1. What is your initial response to the first step of the Sacred Pace process, “Consult Your Friend Jesus?” What thoughts, feelings, or questions does this evoke in you?

A VERSE TO CONSIDER

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

JOHN 15:15 (NIV)

1. What is the difference for you between being a servant of Jesus and becoming a friend of Jesus?

2. The Sacred Pace process encourages us to keep consulting Jesus from beginning to end in our decisions. What hinders you from doing this? What could you do differently, in practice or attitude, to maintain and even deepen your connection with Him along the way?

3. Reflect on this quote from John Piper: “There is a direct correlation between not knowing Jesus well and not asking much from Him.” How might this truth be evident in how you relate to Jesus?

GOING DEEPER

1. Perceiving Jesus as your Friend may involve considering *who* Jesus is to you in new ways. What other roles does He play in your life? Start with ones that are named in Scripture (such as Lord, Shepherd, Savior), and then consider other images.

2. How do your images from the question above affect how you relate to Jesus? In what ways do they make it easier or harder to perceive Jesus as your Friend? Give the reasons for your answer.

3. In this first step of the Sacred Pace process, a lot is said about knowing and experiencing Christ's love. What has been your journey and experience of the words "Jesus loves you"? Is this still a concept in your head, or an actual "knowing" in your heart?

- If it's only head knowledge, ask yourself: "What would I count as Jesus' love toward me?" Today, ask Jesus to help you know and feel His love.
- Consider times and ways that He has shown His love, but you didn't call it that. As experiences of joy and gratitude come to mind, enjoy the reliving of those moments.
- If God's love is sealed in your heart, what produced that assurance? Recall when this became a reality, and let Him love you again in this moment.

STEP 2

GATHER THE FACTS

GETTING STARTED

1. Before engaging with Step 2 of the Sacred Pace process, write down at least one decision you are trying to make, and keep referring to it as you dive into this study.

2. At first glance, this idea of gathering facts probably isn't new to you in your decision-making. However, owning our biases within certain facts makes this much more challenging. What immediately comes to mind as you think about what you want in the decision you are trying to make?

A VERSE TO CONSIDER

Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God’s way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17 (MSG)

1. Sacred Pace speaks of the Bible as a primary source in our fact-gathering. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 says there are multiple ways that the Bible influences our lives if we allow it to do its work in us. How have you experienced God’s Word at work in your life?

2. As you think about your current decision, how might God’s Word influence it? How willing are you to let Scripture speak to you?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

1. *Sacred Pace* mentions three sources to help people gather the facts: the Bible, the truth of who we are, and the wise counsel of experts and mature believers. List what measures you have taken to gather facts pertaining to your decision. Are you missing any of the three sources? If so, which one(s)?

2. On the scale below, how willing are you to let the facts speak to you, especially if they challenge your preference?

1

2

3

4

Unwilling

Reluctant

Open and Interested

Very Willing

3. Talk to Jesus as a friend about your level of willingness. What do you want to say to Him?

4. Can you name your bias in this decision? How could you discover any blind spots?

GOING DEEPER

Creating a pro/con list might not be new to you, but Looper suggests some further ways to use this tool. Try them with the decision you're considering.

Once you've made your pro/con list highlighting the spiritual, emotional, relational, and financial pluses and minuses of your decision . . .

- a) Mark out the items that are fear-based or ungodly. This diminishes their power as deciding factors.
- b) Take an extra 3-5 minutes to sit quietly and see if anything else bubbles up in your heart or mind that you need to add to the list, such as something you might be avoiding or were unaware of that God would have you consider. Write down anything that occurs to you from the quiet.
- c) Review each item and own what you are protecting and what you are minimizing or discounting. Talk to God about what is revealed and how to create a "level playing field" with each of those items.
- d) Choose to follow what is revealed in the process, always consulting your Friend Jesus to help you.

STEP 3

WATCH FOR CIRCUMSTANCES

GETTING STARTED

1. What is your initial impression when you hear that God is and wants to be involved in your decisions?

2. Can you think of a time when you were aware that God was speaking to you or leading you through the circumstances of a situation? Was that realization only in hindsight?

- 3. How would you feel about having God be more present in your unfolding story as you watch for circumstances?

A VERSE TO CONSIDER

We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps.

PROVERBS 16:9 (NLT)

- 1. What is the difference between you making plans and the Lord determining your steps?

- 2. What kind of circumstances has God used to guide your steps?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

1. List some occasions when waiting for circumstances to unfold gave you further insight.

2. What are the challenges for you in watching for circumstances?

3. Why do you think that discovering God's will usually requires waiting?

4. Looper says, “Facts are more finite and objective; circumstances require that we pay attention to the unfolding story.” What circumstances are happening around you that are inviting you to pay attention? What might they be revealing to you?

5. Another way to “watch for circumstances” is to listen well. How well do you listen, whether to others, to God, or to your inner self? What could you do to improve your capacity to listen?

GOING DEEPER

1. How does it feel to you to actually be seen by God to a degree that invites, and even expects, Him to be so involved with your life and decisions? Which thoughts and feelings are stirred when you consider this?

2. Recall a time when you were initially disappointed or hurt at the way something turned out, but eventually were relieved when you saw it was for the best.

- a) How was God actually at work in your life of faith as He determined your steps?

b) In what ways have you allowed that experience to deepen your relationship with Him?

c) What faith-strengthening opportunity, if any, have you possibly overlooked in that experience? Take some time now to be present with God and thank Him for His protection or His grace in that situation.

STEP 4

GET NEUTRAL

GETTING STARTED

1. What initial impression do you have toward these two words, “Get Neutral,” in your thoughts, feelings and gut? (Pay attention to what you become aware of in saying this phrase out loud.)

2. In what ways could this last step in the Sacred Pace journey be an invitation, and in what ways do you resist it? Give the reasons behind your answers.

A VERSE TO CONSIDER

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

PROVERBS 3:5-6 (NLT)

The Sacred Pace process, in many ways, is contained in this verse. Consider **EACH** phrase:

1. What does **TRUST IN THE LORD** mean to you? What is the Lord asking you to entrust to Him today?

2. **WITH ALL YOUR HEART** seems like a tall order. What does it look like to give God *all* your heart? How would that feel for you?

3. DO NOT DEPEND ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING. When are you tempted to rely on your own understanding?

4. SEEK HIS WILL IN ALL YOU DO. How much do you actually desire to know and do God's will? What do you see as the cost of seeking God's will? What are the benefits?

Now, imagine what could happen in your life if you chose to seek His will in **ALL** you do, and write out those possibilities.

5. **HE WILL SHOW YOU WHICH PATH TO TAKE.** Does this feel possible to you? Why or why not? What might be hindering you from living out this verse?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

1. Make some observations about what you learned by exploring Proverbs 3:5–6.

2. Looper describes “Getting Neutral” as the challenge of dying to self and wanting God’s desires over your own. Be honest with God and yourself about how much you actually want His preference in your decision-making. Include the reasons for your answer.

3. *Sacred Pace* teaches that peace is a by-product of aligning your will with God's in your life and work decisions. What has been your experience of knowing God's peace?

4. Being willing to say no when you're lacking peace can also lead to aligning with God. When, if ever, have you had this experience? How did that feel to you? Was it easier than you expected, or harder?

GOING DEEPER

1. Where in your life are you seeking God's will? Take the time to own your preference and see what you need to address in order to get neutral. In what ways does this demand courage?

2. Name and relive a time when you knew you were following God's will. What happened inside yourself and in your world (your external circumstances, etc.) that confirmed that you were aligned with the Lord?

These steps build upon one another and continually work together in the trust of this truth:

- God sees the future, and I don't.
- God knows best, and I just think I do.
- God loves me and the people in my life more than I ever can.

As you continue to actively Pray, Gather, Watch and Get Neutral, may you know and feel God's peace in the deepest part of you.