

In This Dark Age, Christians Must Exercise This Spiritual Gift Daily

Tim Ferrara takes the gift of discernment seriously, so much so that he staked his professional career, his life and his family on this precious kingdom blessing.

After nearly a quarter of a century in retail with the same company, Ferrara used the discernment God gave him to not only begin a new vocation as a pastor but also to initiate a ministry he knew would affect thousands of lives.

In the summer of 2020, after nearly 2½ decades in the same job, Ferrara knew he had to make some major life changes to see his dreams to impact the kingdom come true. While making a solid living in retail, he sensed God's call into full-time ministry two years before. But he faced some huge hurdles—the biggest being the reality of how he could support his family.

When offered the position as executive pastor at LifePoint Church in the Phoenix, Arizona, area, Ferrara knew God was putting his gift of discernment to a radical test.

"I honestly didn't know if I could make the money we would need," says Ferrara, the host of Everyday Discernment podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network. "God obviously had different plans. That really started this long process of discerning God's voice and hearing from Him. Online, I was preaching this message about how to discern His voice, but now I had to live it out in one of the biggest decisions I could ever make, this tremendous career choice.

"I worked in retail for 24 years at the same company, managing a store, and I was just getting burned out. I knew that I couldn't do it for another 10 years—physically, mentally and

spiritually. It was just too much for me. If I were still in my 20s, I could have done that easily. So I had to go before God in prayer and ask Him, 'Is this really your will for me? Is this just something that is a good opportunity but not necessarily a God opportunity?'"

Hearing From God

"That led to a month of praying without an immediate answer," Ferrara says. "I'm not really a big risk taker. That's why I was at the same job for 24 years. That's where my financial security was. That's where my nest egg was—if you will—my 401(k). It made sense to stay there. But we know how God works. It's not always doing what the world thinks is the best option. So, yes, it was scary. Honestly, even though I knew God was behind it, it still took a measure of risk and faith to know that God was going to be there after I opened that door.

"My wife knew right away that it was from God, and she felt God would bless me either way no matter what decision I made," he adds. "But she told me if I went with the pastor role, I would understand God in a deeper relationship. Obviously, I wanted that, but I really needed to hear from God. Basically, this was going to be a 50%-plus pay cut. It was going to be a big struggle as far as changing our lives and our budget around.

"I really wanted to make sure 100% of this decision," Ferrara says. "So I went before God, and I said, 'I want to know if this is from You.' I put a few fleeces in front of Him. God doesn't always answer by fleeces, but He can choose to if he wants. And so that was kind of my thinking: Hey, God, if You want to let me know through these fleeces before You, then that would make it so much easier."

God responded quickly to two of those fleeces, Ferrara says. That gave him a good indication of God's will for him and what

he needed to do. The very next day, God responded to the third fleece by bringing him a check in the exact amount needed for a brand-new laptop. Ferrara had received his confirmation.

“I felt peace about it, and my wife felt peace about it,” Ferrara says. “It was amazing, and I felt like I was on the right path. Since then, God has just been so faithful. The money that I thought would be a struggle has not even been an issue based on different things that have happened. There’s just been an immense blessing with being able to do this ministry, helping people and just doing what I love. What is really cool is I have been able to take the knowledge that I had in the business world and apply it to being a pastor.”

Even as a pastor’s son, Ferrara says he only toyed briefly during college with the idea of becoming a pastor himself. For five years, he served on the elder board at LifePoint Church, but Ferrara says he never thought he possessed the personality to preach.

His journey to the pastorate came through small steps of what he calls an “open door analogy.” One of those small steps was to begin to write—yet another aspect of his ministry he never thought he would undertake.

“If you walk through the open doors, there will be a blessing on the other side,” Ferrara says. “Even though I didn’t really want to or wasn’t even thinking to do it, God opened the door for me to write. And that’s an amazing story in itself considering the ridiculous stuff I was seeing on social media and the internet.”

Moving Into Writing

In 2018, Ferrara says he became disillusioned with what so many people—even Christians—spewed forth on various social media channels. As an elder in his church, the hate speech and vitriol he saw caused him to consider discontinuing his participation in social media all together.

But God had other plans for Ferrara.

“Yes, He certainly did,” Ferrara says. “I was ready to quit, just kind of sick of what I was seeing out there on the internet. I was serving my church, but I wasn’t really putting anything out there that would have any kind of effect on the kingdom. But then God started to give me a vision for some things I believe he wanted me to write—ideas for possible blogs.

“And then all of a sudden, one Sunday in particular, I just clearly heard from God,” he says. “We were talking about spiritual gifts in our message, and previously I had taken a test that showed discernment to clearly be one of mine. I received a call from God during that service to start a ministry called Discerning Dad and to begin to blog. I went home and wrote down in a journal some short-term and some long-term goals, like writing a book and doing a podcast.

“At this point, I hadn’t written anything since I had graduated from college,” Ferrara says. “Honestly, I really didn’t even like to write. So I had to go on this journey: How do I do this? How do I blog? How do I do Instagram? How do I do all these social media sites I was trying to get away from?

Ferrara says his Discerning Dad ministry “started small,” and few people were interested in reading it. He didn’t even attach his name to the blog until his mother urged him to do so.

Soon after, God prompted Ferrara to write his first book, *Everyday Discernment: The Importance of Spirit-Led Decision Making*. He formed a partnership with an independent firm called Kingdom Winds to publish the book. Since God had blessed him with the gift of discernment to make godly decisions for his own life, he knew he needed to share this gift with other believers.

“This was a book to honor God, and it was designed to help

people make better decisions in all areas of their lives,” Ferrara says. “After we make the main decision of following Christ—which is obviously the most important decision we can ever make—we are left with tons of decisions every single day. It’s been said that we, as individuals, can make up to 30,000 decisions or more daily.

“How do you put God first in all of your decisions, both the big ones and the small ones, ones that won’t lead you down a path that leads to sin and struggles but actually lead to blessing?” Ferrara asks. “That was a book I knew God wanted me to share. And then in the summer of 2020, I began a podcast by the same name called Everyday Discernment. So that’s really been my journey of growing this online presence and being faithful to help others grow in discernment, which is really the main focus of my ministry.”

Ferrara will release a second book, a 90-day devotional titled *Eyes on Jesus*, this fall. Teaching others how to keep focused on Jesus every day has served as the main topic of season two of his *Everyday Discernment* podcast even as he continues his emphasis on discernment.

Pursuing the Gift

In a world of confusion, lies and deceit, where sin is sugar-coated and compromise is popular, discerning what you should do every day can be a major challenge. Yet life demands that we make critical choices.

Experience has taught Ferrara just how difficult those choices can be, and from that experience, God gave him a heart to teach others where to find the discernment they need to make the right ones. In both his book and his podcasts, believers can discover how to measure teaching against God’s Word, how to develop a life-giving connection with God and the path to find clear direction from the Holy Spirit. They can also learn how to discern God’s will for their finances, their

relationships, their careers as well as how to distinguish truth from lies and right from wrong. They will learn how to overcome the assault of a biblical mindset, which leads to compromise.

Ferrara says believers must learn to lean on Scriptures such as James 1:5 (ESV): "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."

"There are three sources of discernment, with the Bible being the main one because it's our source of truth," Ferrara says. "God's Word is infallible; it's never changing. And then the Holy Spirit will quicken things to us in a moment where we can make a decision on the fly when we need to. We can say a quick prayer, like, 'Holy Spirit, where are You guiding me? How are You leading me?' That's called discernment—Spirit-infused decision making, where the Holy Spirit's involved, helping us when we need it.

"I kind of think about it like in the movie *The Matrix*, where the bullets are coming at you and you go in slow motion to dodge them.," Ferrara adds. "When decisions come, we have to kind of slow it down and ask God for advice instead of just trying to do it through our own effort.

"Then the third source of discernment is the godly relationships that the Lord has put in our lives; whether it's a pastor, a teacher or a friend," he says. "It is not just any relationship, because there are some relationships that don't speak life into us. We want to be filled up with relationships with people who themselves are hearing from God and who can confirm things through prophecy or words of knowledge, or just through wisdom. Maybe they are people who are older than we are who have gone ahead of us down the journey that can speak wisdom to us and to areas of our life that we're walking down. It's really important that people use all three of those sources."

Ferrara believes if he had failed to use all three of those sources of discernment, he might still be stuck in a job he hated, without the ministry God had planned for him. In fact, he says his gift of discernment saved him from a life of misery.

“Being able to discern what God had in mind for me instead of what I might have had in mind for me continues to be a tremendous blessing in my life,” he says. “That’s why I encourage people to pursue this gift so that they can discover God’s will for their lives instead of doing what they think is best for them. People need this heavenly gift, and God will reward them for their obedience when they receive it.”

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