

## STEP BY STEP TOGETHER: DISCERN DECISIONS

### CONNECT

#### PREAMBLE:

- Are you in a crisis? Do not do this exercise. Get help first.
- You can use this exercise to think about a major decision you are making.
- You can use this exercise to make decisions about the people/places you prioritised (in chapter 6).

#### PRINCIPLE 1: CHOOSE THE PRIMARY QUESTION FOR DECISION-MAKING

1. What is your situation? Is it a challenge or opportunity?
2. What questions arise as you consider your situation?
3. Craft a binary question. Then fix a time period for decision-making.

#### YOUR NOTES:

#### ALVIN'S NOTES: BASED ON A 2017 REAL LIFE EXAMPLE

1. My situation: I was offered a job as a professor at a top university in Canada. It's a fantastic opportunity.
2. Questions that arise as I think about my situation: Do I move to Canada or remain in Malaysia? Should I become a professor or continue as a consultant? Do I serve faculty/students or leaders/managers?
3. Binary question: Do I move to Canada or remain in Malaysia? Decision period: 3 months

## PRINCIPLE 2: DESIGN A PROCESS OF DISCERNMENT

1. **Head:** Gather facts on your situation (e.g. statistics, research, qualitative data) that could impact what you do
2. **Heart:** Seek input from family, trusted friends, co-workers, mentors and critics. Based on what you've heard, what are you most/least grateful for?
3. **Guts:** How do you feel about the situation?
4. **Review** everything you've written for head, heart and guts. What are the pros and cons for both options?

### ALVIN'S NOTES: BASED ON A 2017 REAL LIFE EXAMPLE

1. *Head:* I learned all I could about higher education trends/economic outlook in Canada and Malaysia
2. *Heart:* After talking to my wife, past/present faculty, friends, consultants and mentors, I realise that I am most grateful that I have gained professional recognition both in Canada and Malaysia; I am least grateful for the vastly different challenges in both cities.
3. *Guts:* I'm excited and thankful for both options. It can't go wrong either way, but that makes the decision even more confusing.
4. *Canada's pros:* Amazing faculty, golden opportunity for family, interesting career switch, lovely city; *Canada's cons:* have to terminate client work and book project; what work will my wife do in Canada?  
*Malaysia's pros:* Amazing clients, unique work and family life, work that is aligned with calling; *Malaysia's cons:* challenging political/economic climate; poorer schooling options for kids compared to Canada.

### PRINCIPLE 3: MAKE THE DECISION – IN A TIME OF PEACE

1. Go for a retreat. Decide on the location and duration.
2. Consider the pros and cons of your choice (based on Principle 2)
  - Which option are you more drawn to? Why? Notice which option gives you greater feelings of love, joy or peace vs. fear, anxiety or agitation.
  - How could you put others first in either option? (e.g. poor, needy)
3. Make the decision
  - Write down the decision
  - Plan the next steps after the retreat

Write your decision  
← and next steps here

#### ALVIN'S NOTES: BASED ON A 2017 REAL LIFE EXAMPLE

1. Booked a 3D/2N stay at a hilltop bungalow, together with my wife.
2. At the retreat, my head told me that Canada is the logical choice but my heart was drawn to Malaysia. That's when I realised the more important binary question to ask is: "Do I feel called to serve faculty/students (in Canada) or serve leaders/managers (in Malaysia)?" Suddenly things became clear. I didn't feel at peace to move to Canada because my current work is unfinished. I felt a strong sense of calling to serve these leaders/managers; through them, I could play a significant role in serving the poor through the policies/programmes delivered by my clients. Finally, I realised that I value my family to be actively involved in my work – and I could do this better in Malaysia than in Canada.
3. Decision: I will say "No" to the job offer in Canada and "Yes" to my current work. After the retreat, I will: inform university president (within the week); renew client contract (within 3 months); finish writing book (within 6 months).



You can use this process to help your family, team, company and/or community to collectively discern a major decision.

