

The Discerning Life

ENDORSEMENTS



Richard J. Foster, author of several books, including *Celebration of Discipline and Sanctuary of the Soul*

In *The Discerning Life* Steve Macchia has placed spiritual discernment smack in the middle of everyday life . . . exactly where it belongs! Discernment must never be sequestered into issues of decision making alone. No, it is discovered in a joy-filled, hair-raising, bewildering awareness of the living presence of God in the push and pull of daily life. I thank God for *The Discerning Life*.



Gary Thomas, author of *Sacred Pathways*

You're holding in your hands a new spiritual classic. Both brilliant and beautiful, *The Discerning Life* may well be the book Steve Macchia was born to write. Every chapter unlocks new insights and treasures of devotion for any believer who aspires to live a life dedicated to "practicing a preference for God."



Eric E. Peterson, pastor of Colbert Presbyterian Church, Colbert, WA

For a world we know to be infused with the divine presence, it's disturbingly easy to miss. Steve Macchia, through his long, steady life of discipleship, has learned how to notice what many of us are overlooking, and in this book he shows us how we also can discern the Presence, thereby enjoying intimacy with the Triune God who is eager to fill us with abundant life.



Ken Shigematsu, pastor and author of *God in My Everything*

Wise, winsome, and worship-evoking, *The Discerning Life* will awaken you to the wonder of God's presence not only in your times of prayer but in your everyday work, your family and friendships, and your rest and play. This beautiful book will help you see God in your everything.



Gary W. Moon, PhD, author and founding executive director of the Martin Institute and Dallas Willard Center, Westmont College

The approach Steve Macchia takes in *The Discerning Life* reminds me of Dallas Willard's primary focus in *Hearing God*. Both offer the wonderful reminder that listening for the voice of God does not begin with a "how-to" manual but with developing the habit of continuously seeking awareness of his presence that leads to the intimacy of divine friendship.



Mark Buchanan, author of *God Walk*

Practicing a preference for God. That is the piquant phrase Steve Macchia uses to describe the life of discernment. But his book itself is that—a radiant testament to a preference for God. And the man himself is that—a living embodiment of a preference for God. I am truly and deeply grateful to Steve that he, yet again, has made his wisdom available to me and to you, so that we, too, can practice a preference for God.



Rev. Dr. Barbara L. Peacock, author of *SoulCare in African American Practice*

The Discerning Life is clearly a masterpiece of God's divine impartation to Steve Macchia. This kairos word is an inclusive invitation for followers of Christ to continually abide in his presence. Consequently, they will embrace the totality of the discipline of discernment. God's gift of discernment is not for the elect few but is for all disciples. Living a life of discernment cannot be boxed in traditionalism and elitism but is for kingdom-minded citizens who desire to know God more personally and intimately. Encountering his presence is not an overnight wonder but is imparted to those who are attentive to pursuing the abundant life while traveling on their discerning spiritual journey.



Leighton Ford, author and founding president, Leighton Ford Ministries

Out of his many years of experience and learning—both as disciple and guide—Steve Macchia has given us a fresh take on spiritual discernment. He pictures discernment not as a tool or technique but as a lifestyle of topics, such as the importance of hospitality and empathy and self-awareness, as we open our lives to the gaze and guidance of God. Both those seeking help and those pointing others along the way will find his thoughts helpful and hopeful. sensing and being obedient to God. Discernment as he describes it is a way of life, not just a help in making decisions. He includes some unexpected topics, such as the importance of hospitality and empathy and self-awareness, as we open our lives to the gaze and guidance of God. Both those seeking help and those pointing others along the way will find his thoughts helpful and hopeful.



Timothy C. Tennent, PhD, president, professor of world Christianity, Asbury Theological Seminary

Steve Macchia in *The Discerning Life* calls us to nothing less than a spiritual awakening at the deepest level. This book charts a path to greater attentiveness and daily awe of God's presence and work even in the quotidian tasks of life. Like a master Sherpa, Macchia leads us to discover new heights of wonderment and Presence amid a broken world.



Dr. Alison Cook, counselor and author

In *The Discerning Life*, Steve Macchia leads us into a powerful practice of discerning God in every aspect of our lives. With the wisdom and nuance of someone who practices deeply what he teaches, Macchia provides much-needed guidance for anyone seeking to increase their attentiveness to the movement of God's Spirit in their day-to-day lives. This is a book for every Christ-follower.



Rev. Dr. Glenn Packiam, pastor and author

To follow Jesus is to become fully alive to God every day. That means that a core part of our formation is learning how to recognize God's presence—his gifts, his confirmations and corrections, his invitations and more—in our daily lives. Steve Macchia has spent decades teaching people to do just that. In this book, he imparts his considerable wisdom to us, serving as a sage for our journey, teaching us how to notice not just the world but God at work in His world. We learn in these pages that discernment is about much more than decision-making; it's about the joyful discovery of grace and glory in ordinary life.



Michael Martin, author, and president and CEO of ECFA

How would you cultivate a discerning life? Frankly, most of us don't have the best eyes that see how God is working, ears to hear his voice, or a heart that longs for his presence. If you'd like to grow more in a lifestyle that continuously seeks God's presence, power, peace, and purposes, this engaging book is for you.



John Pearson, author and management consultant

Here's an idea—go deep on this book with colleagues and friends. The stories are page-turners (think *This Old House*—the perfect discernment metaphor). The "Practicing a Preference for God" summaries are so helpful. And the lists, oh my, the lists! Steve Macchia resists formulaic, pious claptrap and instead delivers deep and soul-challenging content: discernment definitions and postures, soul-neglect causes, stumbling blocks to listening, poignant discernment questions, Jesus' favorite topics—you'll love the lists! And this honest warning: "All of this will take a lifetime to rehearse." OK, no pressure—just jump in. I love this book.



Nathan Foster, author, and director of community life at Renovaré

I love it when I come across a book so rich with grounded and thoughtful insights that it could only come from a lifetime of lived experience—this is such a book.



Alan Fadling, author

Discernment is key to living well in God's presence, but we often settle for just figuring out what to do next. Discernment is more communion-cultivating than mere decision-making, more a way of life than a technology for navigating a few crisis moments in our lives. Steve Macchia has written a wise book rooted in deep experience in discerning God's presence in his own life and work.



Kenneth and Jolene Hodder, commissioners and national leaders of the Salvation Army

We have read many spiritual-formation books in our thirty years in ministry. We have never read one as unique, inspiring, and yet practical as *The Discerning Life*. If this book doesn't inspire you to strive for spiritual discernment, we don't know what will. We feel privileged to know Stephen and have been blessed to watch him live out the principles described in this book in his own life.



Fred Smith, founder of The Gathering

So much of our lives are spent attempting to discern the will of God for one wrong reason or another. We don't want to make a mistake or wander from the razor-width path of perfection or displease the unpleasable tyrant. Not so for Steve Macchia and this fresh approach on discernment. It is not a puzzle to be solved or the successful completion of a multiple-choice test but a lifelong process of listening, paying attention, and practicing a daily preference for God—not just in the times of big decisions. Written from deep experience and his own life of practice, this book is full of wisdom, insight, and, yes, discernment.



Jeff Crosby, editor and compiler of *Days of Grace through the Year*

Steve Macchia has a profound biblical understanding of the full nature and vital importance of spiritual discernment. His ability to artfully convey that understanding and winsomely help his readers clear pathways for making spiritual discernment a way of life is a gift to us all. *The Discerning Life* is a book packed full of equal parts wisdom, joy, and practical insight. Highly recommended.



Lt. Colonel Tim Foley, DMin, author and divisional leader, northwest division, of The Salvation Army

Steve Machia once again has shared his keen insight and wisdom in his latest book, *The Discerning Life*. Filled with rich and warm personal stories, the reader will relish the rich biblical instruction that fills this book. If ever there was a day when a follower of Jesus needs discernment and clarity of soul, now is the time. This book will help the reader in their spiritual journey to go deeper, grow closer to God, and walk with greater integrity in the world. A must read.



Bishop Steven A Breedlove, diocese of Christ our Hope, Anglican Church in North America

From weary Moses at the end of his life to the fresh, hopeful prayers of people I sacramentally confirm, to my own recurrent longings, the heart-cry of God's people remains essentially unchanged: "Satisfy us with your love, let us see your work in our world, let your favor rest on us" (cf. Ps 90:12–17). We can endure most anything if we know God is with us. Steve Macchia invites us into a rich conversation about a life of spiritual discernment, a life centered in the active everyday awareness of God's presence, power, and peace. *The Discerning Life* is the fruit of Steve's own lifelong pursuit of God and his prayerful ministry to countless others. Full of transformational wisdom about a "with-God life," this book is worth savoring and embracing like you would a lifelong friend's most loving, heartfelt counsel.



David A. Currie, professor of pastoral theology, dean of the doctor of ministry program, and vice-president of cohort-based education at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

As followers of Jesus, we are all "under construction," undergoing heart renovations. *The Discerning Life* provides a skilled carpenter's perspective on how to perceive and enter into the deeper work the Lord is carrying out in this lifelong process.



Stephen W. Smith, author and president of Potter's Inn

The world seems lost these days. So many voices calling out to us: "Come this way!" "Come that way!" How can we ever find our way? *The Discerning Life* is more than a road map to help us find our way. It is a gentle and graceful sieve—removing what is unnecessary and unhelpful in making good and healthy decisions and seeking guidance. This book provides a process of making solid decisions. What is most important for you to know is that the author, Steve Macchia, has followed his own advice and counsel he's given us here. I've witnessed him discern a major opportunity offered him and decided it was not right for him. A leader who can say no is a trusted leader in a world when so many say yes just to please or not ruffle our spiritual feathers. These words, in this beautiful book, can be trusted, and this is a faithful guide to help us all find a path that is a good one, a trusted one, and in the end, a right one. It will be a keepsake that you will return to for many decisions facing you in these confusing times in which we are living.



Paul N. Anderson, professor of biblical and Quaker Studies, George Fox University

In this wonderful book on the discerning life, Steve Machia unpacks the biblical and spiritual features of discernment in ways that individuals and groups can make use of to great benefit. Filled with practical wisdom, this book will enable the believer to discern and embrace what God wants in their lives and in the world—individually and corporately. This book is a must-read for all Christian leaders, and for any others who feel called to attend, discern, and mind the present leadings of the resurrected Lord.



Barry H. Corey, author and president of Biola University in Southern California

Steve Macchia writes what he lives and lives what he writes. I've witnessed his life of discernment for nearly three decades. Leaders today need help in their deeper life, and Steve brings it. Books are aplenty on the techniques of leadership, but they are exceedingly rare on the soul of a leader. For those of us who desire a life of God-in-everything meaning that transcends the many burdens we bear, Steve has something to say.



Bishop Claude R. Alexander, senior pastor of The Park Church

The walk of the believer, as intended by God, is one that is neither aimless, confused, directionless, meaningless, or unclear. Rather it is intended to be one of direction, clarity, focus, meaning, and purpose. The pursuit of God's intention is not accidental or happenstance. It is intentional. Such an intentional pursuit is called spiritual discernment. In his book, *The Discerning Life*, Dr. Macchia provides a blueprint for the intentional pursuit of God and the meaning, direction, point, and purpose that is found in him. Anchored in Scripture and informed by his life as a scholar and fellow navigator, Stephen alerts us to vital characteristics such as attentiveness, listening, presence, hospitality, empathy, and focus. Throughout the book, I found myself challenged by the constant call to "practice a preference for God." In an age where we are so easily distracted by the noisy and the needless, *The Discerning Life* invites us to find the one thing that is necessary that will not be taken away.