



God, Is That You

OR AM I CRAZY?

Finding God in Consolation
and Desolation, Part 2

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The
**Discernment
of Spirits**



An Ignatian Guide for
Everyday Living

*"Timothy Gallagher leads the pressing work of discerning, assessing, and
of spiritual therapy, and offers wisdom to discerning their spiritual lives."*

— HARVEY D. FAAR





“Rules”

- The word *rules* used loosely
- Some recommend behaviors
- Others describe reality



Introduction

These are “rules” to help us discern when God is communicating with us versus when Satan is so we can respond appropriately.



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 1: Persons moving away from God to serious sin

The enemy facilitates this movement through temptation to sensual pleasures. The Holy Spirit stings the conscience to help us turn back to God.

Rule 2: Persons going away from sin toward God

When we're moving toward God, the enemy bites, stings, saddens, places obstacles, and stresses us out with lies. The Holy Spirit encourages, strengthens, consoles with tears, inspires, eases, and takes away all obstacles.



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

The rest of the rules assume that we are *Persons going away from sin toward God*—Rule 2.



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 3: *How to recognize spiritual consolation*

Signs that I am in spiritual consolation include:

- I have faith, hope, and love
- God seems close
- I experience peace, tranquility, transparency, and holy desires

Rule 4: *How to recognize spiritual desolation*

Signs that I am in spiritual desolation include:

- I don't have faith, hope, or love
- God seems distant or even absent
- I experience distress, agitation, secrecy, worldly desires



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 5: In times of desolation, stand fast

NEVER make a change in your spiritual plans when you're in desolation. Be firm and constant in plans made previously when you were in consolation. You can't make good decisions with the enemy as your counselor.



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 6: *Resist desolation*

Resist desolation by changing yourself through increased:

- 1. Prayer**
- 2. Meditation**
- 3. Much examination**
- 4. Taking one small step toward God and precisely against the temptation**



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 7: Resisting desolation builds spiritual muscles

In times of desolation, think about how the Lord has allowed the trial so that you can resist it. You may feel like you're on your own, but God is always with you to help you.

"So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you." (Deuteronomy 31:6 NLT)



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 7: Resisting desolation builds spiritual muscles

In times of desolation, think about how the Lord has allowed the trial so that you can resist it. You may feel like you're on your own, but God is always with you to help you.

- **Teach us to fight and win against desolation**
- **Teach us to trust God as we fight**
- **Find greater freedom from desolation**



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 8: Consolation and desolation are cyclical

In times of desolation, be patient and remember that consolation will soon return. Let that realization give you the courage to diligently resist.



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 9: *Three reasons why God allows desolation → and the fruit that grows when we resist it*

- 1. My neglect → Repentance and conversion**
- 2. A trial → Learning and wisdom**
- 3. Warped desires → Freedom from idolatry**



1. My Neglect → Repentance and Conversion

- I've stopped seeking God, gotten spiritually lazy, or gotten distracted and forgotten God
- God created us for relationship and grieves when we neglect it
- God allows desolation to get our attention so we repent and resume relationship
- This comes from God's love for us



2. A Trial → Learning and Wisdom

- **“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance.
⁴ And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.
⁵ And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.”
(Romans 5:3-5 NLT)**
- **God allows trials not to punish us but so “we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13 NLT)**
- **These trials strengthen us for increasing freedom from sin and freedom for deeper relationship**



3. Warped Desires → Freedom from Idolatry

- Warped desires—for example needing more recognition, greed, selfish ambition, or some deliberate sin—come between us and God
- Idolatry=looking to something that isn't God to give us what only God can provide
- Recognizing and resisting warped desires turns us back to God where we receive freedom from idolatry



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 10: *In consolation prepare for desolation*

In times of consolation, think how you will conduct yourself in desolation, which will come after, storing up strength for that time.

- **Store up memories of consolation**
- **Remember God's love for you**
- **Assess your spiritual activities**



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 11: *Humility in consolation and desolation*

In times of consolation, receive it with humility, remembering how little you are able to do in times of desolation. In times of desolation, think how much you can do to resist enemies with God's grace.

- **Humility=an *accurate* self-assessment**
- **During consolation, humility keeps us from claiming credit**
- **During desolation, humility keeps us from giving up**



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rules 12-14

Three parables about spiritual warfare



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 12: *Stand firm in the beginning*

The enemy is a bully; he weakens and flees when we resist him promptly by doing the opposite of the temptation. But if we lose heart in the face of temptation, the enemy gains strength and grows fierce.

- **Resist by doing the opposite**
- **If we don't resist, the enemy will sense weakness and attack more fiercely**
- **"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
(James 4:7 NLT)**



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 13: *Break the spiritual silence*

The enemy is like a false lover who wants temptations kept secret, knowing he cannot succeed if they are brought to light with the appropriate spiritual person.

- Satan is like a sexual predator; he can't succeed without secrecy
- If we hide temptations, we make it easier for Satan to deceive and destroy us
- Why don't we bring temptation into the light right away?
- When we bring temptation or sin into the light, Satan loses power over us
- Pastoral people in our church



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

Rule 14: *Strengthen the weak points*

The enemy is like an outlaw; he “cases the joint” and then attacks at our weakest point. Take stock of your strengths and weaknesses to know where the battle will be fought. Then build up your defenses so you will be more ready for the inevitable attack.

- **Loyola: The leader of an army of brigands**
- **During consolation, assess your weak points and strengthen them**
- **Self-awareness and humility lead to freedom**



Discerning Means Doing Three Things

1. First, we **notice** and become aware of God's or Satan's communication.
2. Second, we **understand** not only who is communicating but what they are saying and why.
3. Third, we **take action** to receive what's from God and reject what's from Satan.



First, we notice...

- **Consolation and desolation**
- **How God fills our world**
- **God wants us to live where he lives**
- **Like stepping into a different world**



Second, we understand...

- **Understand the truth**
- **Understand that Satan is the father of lies**
- **These rules pierce darkness and dispel confusion**



Third, we act...

- **Act wisely: “...so that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes.” (2 Corinthians 2:11 NLT)**
- **Receive/reject**



Loyola's Fourteen Rules

The discernment of spirits becomes a way of life and a path to freedom.



Challenge

- 1. Read the “Fourteen Rules for the Discernment of Spirits” every day for a week and put them into practice.**
- 2. Practice daily Examen to become more aware of your times of consolation and desolation.**
- 3. Recognize desolation and use the fourteen rules to resist Satan’s attacks.**
- 4. Recognize consolation and use the fourteen rules to gratefully receive God’s good gifts.**





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