

# *A Place by His Design*

## **Spiritual Retreat Plan**

(sample ideas)

### **Getting Ready for a Retreat**

**Decide:** A retreat starts with a decision. Your decision to answer the call to spend time with God.

**Choices:** Your choices will impact preparations for the retreat. Planning is important so that it is relaxed and focused.

Are you coming alone or with a couple of friends or spouse?

Do you want to observe Communion?

Will your retreat include a fast?

**Commit:** Call and arrange for your stay—a few hours, a day or a week or longer.

**Bring:** Your own Bible (or use one of ours) plus a notebook or journal.

Optionally: A song book or devotional that you like (or use one from our library if you are staying for more than a day.)

**Meals:** Simplicity is important. Make a plan, include a fast if you desire, for your retreat time. Will you bring food? Do you want to eat with the host? Or will you go out to eat when you wish?

### **Retreat Activities**

Since this spiritual exercise is not regularly practiced with so many activities already eating up our time, we offer these suggestions for you to consider including in your time apart. There is no particular order in these suggestions.

There are additional exercises, or disciplines, that can be incorporated into a longer retreat as well. But regardless of the planning, God is in charge. We are not. He has wondrous things awaiting those who come aside to a quiet place to just be with Him. Alone and unhurried.

We also have accompanying Bible verses and passages for the following activities available if you do not feel comfortable left on your own.

**Fast** – Skip one meal, but still drinking liquids. In fasting, we 1) learn to feast on God, 2) work on our spiritual life, 3) experience a heightened awareness of what is occurring and 4) free our time for focus on what is important in “denying ourselves and taking up our cross” for Christ.

**Journaling** – Writing in your notebook. Bringing to mind encounters with the living God. When did your journey start? People who were significant along your journey. Comment on your emotions then and now about the events that God has brought about in your life. God has been working, and writing brings it all into sharp focus. Maybe at the time you did not see God, but you do now—write it down.

**Confession** – Talk with God about failures that haunt you, people who have offended you or whom you have offended, sins of omission and commission that come to mind. Tell Him of your grief over your sin. Thank God for his favor toward you and forgiveness of you. Pray Scriptures back to God, making the words your own.

**Praise** – Alone or in a small group, sing out loud. Use your own songbook (or refer to words of songs we provide). Telling Jesus Christ why you are thankful. It should be a celebration of who He is. Read aloud some of the Psalms of praise. Create your own form of chant. Change words that will cause you to speak directly to God in your adoration of Him. Worship Him.

**Scripture** – Plan on reading through an entire book(s) in one to three sittings during your retreat. Make one of the gospels your choice of one book. To do so will give you a sharper image of the person of Jesus Christ, His ministry, or you will gain some new insight. As the Scripture brings light on your own life, make notes in your journal of things to pray about for yourself, insights that you get or things you want to be praying for others. Also, struggles, how God loves you and cares for you or acts of compassion you need to consider. Read slowly and read aloud.

**Prayer Time** – Write out your prayers in your journal. Read Scripture, changing any words to pray directly to God rather than about Him.

Pray for your own congregation and its leaders. Pray for each leader and staff member by name and their individual needs. This is an opportunity to help those who handle responsibilities for leading.

Pray for friends and relations, missionaries you know personally around the world. Pray for the people whom they are trying to reach. If you do not know enough about mission works, pray for other churches in your area and their outreach to the community.

Pray for your community and government, schools, police and firemen. Pray for peace in the land.

**Silence and Solitude** – Spend some time in silence. You may wish to take a prayer walk on the Labyrinth or through the grounds or stop at the falls. Ponder your own personal ministry.

Record in your journal your reflections on where you think you are now, think of specific areas that need your attention in the next 6 months to a year. Let the Spirit of God speak to you as you relax and just breathe. Pausing to consider what comes to your mind. Is it a confirmation of God's love? It is something you read that you need to remember? Is it something you have been in denial about that God has brought to light? Is He asking you to do something?

**Meditation** – As there is more free time during a retreat, this is where we permit God's grace to invade and deeply influence us. Using our godly imagination in such a way that our faith becomes more alive. Choose a simple story of Jesus and someone else in the gospels, as an example. As you read the Scriptures, put yourself in the place of one of the characters or bystanders (and maybe all of them before you stop).

What emotions might be evident by the words spoken. Who all are present? As you read whom do you identify with? What is Jesus doing? Whatever character you are imagining for yourself, what is the penetrating question? What kind of God is he? Do you see God's goodness expressed?

Now this is where meditation comes in, no matter which character or bystander you chose, the benefit and blessing are yours. Scripture comes alive and leads you deeper in your walk with God. It involves watching and listening. Listen to the conversation. What does Jesus say and do? Notice the reaction of people. What is your reaction? You have been present. Are you glad? How are you affected by what Jesus does and who He is?

Examine your heart. Do you believe that Jesus has authority in your life? Finish with a prayerful exchange with Jesus. Address him as he was addressed in the passage or as his disciples did in other Scriptures. Let Him heal and make you whole.

**Communion** – Use different elements in remembering the death of Christ. Ex: vegetable juice and a bagel. Make silence a part of the remembrance. Read through a passage that covers the events as well as the commands. Slowly read aloud, pause, join hands and pray or kneel and pray, then partake together or alone. Sing a hymn. Making no effort to skip through this time.

**Intercession** – Early in your retreat, record in your journal specific things you want to pray about during your retreat prayer times. Make a list of names and special requests. Then refer and add to as you take time for prayer during your retreat.

**Closing Reflections** – Before leaving, plan on a reflection of your retreat. Reflect on the hours away. Think deeply and write in your journal to focus your thoughts as well as express your feelings. Think through your retreat and write highlights down, decision(s) made and such things as:

Am I really growing as a Christian?

Where do I see specific development in my spirituality?

What impact have I had on others: at work, at home and in the church?

Where do I battle with sin?

What did I discover I am in denial about before God?

How do I want to plan to keep growing in Christ?

How did my time of solitude and silence impact me?

If I fasted, how did that impact my prayer and reflection?

Would I do this again?

What planning now is necessary for my future well being?

With whom can I share my experience?

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him.