



Prayer Respite

Let yourself be calmed by the rest you have needed for so long.

A retreat is not work. It is a sacred space for rest and reflection. Your goal is not to cover Bible passages. Instead, by entering deeply into just a few of them, you'll interact with God about how they speak into your life. Your goal is not to come home and feel that you have achieved anything. This retreat is not about what you can do. It's about interacting with God gently and knowing more about God's true self. Do you believe that God loves you just for your own self, or do you have to be doing something to be loved?

The point of this retreat is to help you build a relationship with God. A relationship involves regular personal interaction, ongoing connection, and shared life experiences. You will experience more deeply (yet also gently) what it means to have a life "in God" or "in Christ," as Paul liked to put it.

A retreat is a nonstop Bible study. Scripture is used as a vital point of contact with God in order to have real conversations with God. This process is based on what is called *lectio divina*, a way people have prayerfully read the Bible for centuries. Today people often use self directed effort to apply the Bible to themselves through their own strength. In this retreat, come to the Word to be "taught by the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:13), which may or may not be correction but just something we need to know. This sort of dialogue is essential to life in Christ. In these conversations, the Holy Spirit will mentor you by "ask[ing] you questions you hadn't thought of, challenging you to think in new ways, dropping a few gems to capture your imagination, and allowing you to try on a few ideas before guiding you to the true issue at hand." Expect to be drawn in by the Holy Spirit so that you may not at times be able to "tell where God's words leave off and your intuitive thoughts begin. Now and then, you'll be tempted to launch off onto a tangent, which is sometimes a good idea but other times a distraction from your conversation with God. If you're the





kind of person who usually goes off on tangents, resist for a moment and continue focusing on what's in front of you. See what happens. If you usually don't go off on tangents but you get the urge to now, go with it.

Bring a journal of some kind —spiral notebook or any booklet will do—on your retreat in case you need to write beyond the space provided. Writing in your journal isn't something you do to complete; it's a way for you to dialogue with God in a concrete way. Don't try to journal; just write what goes through your mind.

Don't expect to come home a different person. You probably will be, but not in the ways you notice at first. In fact, you may notice a shift within yourself only after you've been home a few days. But don't look for it. Let God show you what you need to know.

Don't take a retreat because it sounds like a trendy spiritual thing to do. Do it only because you are drawn to do so. Pay attention to the inner nudge. You may be drawn by weariness. You may be drawn by a longing to be with God. You may be drawn for reasons you don't completely understand.

A so-called successful retreat occurs when we keep our expectations low and our activities quite simple. When we expect our [retreat] to be highly 'spiritual,' it becomes one more thing to do, continuing the addiction to productivity.

Read your passages slowly. Let the words settle within you. Read the passage aloud. Let the words fall on your ears so that you are hearing them as if for the first time. These are the words of your Beloved to you. Cherish each word. Taste and see that God is good. You will think more clearly if you write things down and you can revisit them when you get home. Begin your day slowly and move slowly all day. Enjoy a lot of silence.





Psalm 23

A psalm of David.

1 The Lord is my shepherd;

I have all that I need.

2 He lets me rest in green meadows;

he leads me beside peaceful streams.

3 He renews my strength.

He guides me along right paths,

bringing honor to his name.

4 Even when I walk

through the darkest valley,

I will not be afraid,

for you are close beside me.

Your rod and your staff

protect and comfort me.

5 You prepare a feast for me

in the presence of my enemies.

You honor me by anointing my head with oil.

My cup overflows with blessings.

6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me

all the days of my life,

and I will live in the house of the Lord

forever.

Repeat each line to yourself over and over. Write it out. Focus on meditating on certain ideas about God.

“I am my Beloved’s and His desire is for me.” -Song of Solomon 7:10

“I belong to you, Abba.” Romans 8:38-39

“Jesus Christ prays for me.” -Romans 8:34

