



PERSONAL SPIRITUAL RETREATS

Refreshing Your Soul Intentionally

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THIRSTY?

The Basics of Refreshing Your Soul Intentionally

- A Personal Word
- Best Times – When to Have Personal Spiritual Retreats
- Best Places – Where to Have Personal Spiritual Retreats
- Best Tools – What to Bring to Personal Spiritual Retreats
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A PERSONAL WORD

Honestly, you would never think it required enough energy to make a difference. Yet, leaving on such a small overnight light in my car affected my life and the lives of several others. The battery was just weak enough for the “small” light to drain it completely. The result was an eerie clicking sound when I attempted to start my car the next morning.

Many of you can relate; perhaps you have experienced the same problem. Maybe you did not leave the interior light on, but your battery died, and your car was lifeless. Making the connection to your spiritual life is easy to pick up on here. You feel as if your spiritual battery is weak from the constant drain, and just one more little thing might be that “small” light that sucks the last little bit of life out of you.

Is there a secret to keeping our souls full? Seriously, how do we keep ourselves energized in a world that is constantly draining our spiritual batteries?

Philippians 3:10 – **“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”**

Daily time with God in His Word is imperative, but we need *more*. By more, I am suggesting blocks of time designed to recharge our spiritual batteries. What we need is to plan special “oases times” for our souls: I call these **Personal Spiritual Retreats**.

If you are like me, you may protest about not having enough time. The truth is, we always have time—or make time—for what we think is important. Actually we need to plan these retreats when we face the greatest demands in our lives. Sounds impossible, but spiritually it makes sense. It is at these



times we need a Personal Spiritual Retreat the most, but we consider it the least.

On my spiritual journey, I had to decide if the deeper relationship I desired with Jesus was strong enough to influence my spending extended times with Him. That gave birth to this document or at least the initial version of it. Over the last forty years, I have tweaked and adjusted the content as I have retreated with Him. This is not mysterious or something reserved for a select few. It is for every believer. It is for you.

There are more practical tools and suggestions included in this document than you will want to use each time you retreat. Be selective when planning your Personal Spiritual Retreat. Choose what works for you, or include your own personal tools, when you worship. The idea is to personalize your time with God.

One of the books that has impacted my life greatly is *The Life & Diary of David Brainerd*, edited by Johnathan Edwards. Brainerd died as a young missionary, but during his brief life, he had an amazing relationship with the Savior. He spent much time with God alone in prayer and reading the Word. You can hear his heart through this brief quote from his journal:

“But of late, God has been pleased to keep my soul hungry, almost continually; so that I have been filled with a kind of pleasing pain. When I really enjoy God, **I feel my desires of him the more insatiable, and my thirsting after holiness the more unquenchable**; and the Lord will not allow me to feel as though I were fully supplied and satisfied, but keeps me still reaching forward.”



THIRSTY?

Brainerd realized the necessity for Personal Spiritual Retreats. I am sure his life as a missionary was demanding, but he knew his time with God was important. Note he says he has a ***thirst*** for holiness (or for God).

I submit this concept to you and pray that you will embrace it. I ask that you simply begin by scheduling one Personal Spiritual Retreat and see how things go. You do not have to plan a long retreat. Start with thirty minutes to an hour—but try it. Try a longer retreat the next time, but begin somewhere—just go for it!



BEST TIMES . . .

When to Have Personal Spiritual Retreats

PERIODICALLY

In conjunction with your schedule, I suggest you plan retreats for the fortification of your life and soul. Someone has wisely said, “A crisis does not make a man; it *reveals* him.” Just as soldiers prepare for the battle, we must spiritually fortify our souls for spiritual warfare.

Studying the Scriptures, you will discover a pattern in the life of our Lord. Even in His busiest, most demanding times, Christ separated Himself from the crowds to pray. When He was facing major decisions or events, He took time for personal retreats. Jesus set a great example for us to follow in this area.

In Scripture, I see three ways our Savior used times of retreat strategically in His life. Over the years, I have come to appreciate this pattern and have found the concepts extremely beneficial in my own personal practice.

Take time to examine each of these three concepts. Identify specific times in your life when one of them would have been or would be refreshing to you.

He used it for a time of:

REFUGE

Allow yourself to identify with a sorrowing Savior. Jesus is dealing with the raw emotions of the recent beheading of His friend and relative, John the Baptist. His followers are visibly shaken and looking to Him for stability. Added to this, He knows something no one else knows: He is about to feed five thousand hungry people. This is a time to regroup, to take Refuge in the Father.



Matthew 14:13 – **“When Jesus heard it, he departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities.”**

So, *what does He do?* Does He move from one ministry engagement to another? No. He goes into a desert place to be alone, to retreat, to be with His Father. The multitudes were still there; as a matter of fact, they followed Him. For a period of time however, He had *Refuge*.

Life Lesson: During those times when the pressures are mounting and the crowds are pressing, we need to get alone with the Father for Refuge.

He used it for a time to:

REFUEL

The news has blanketed the countryside – the news of the spectacular miracle Jesus performed when He fed five thousand hungry people! His popularity is increasing, and He is about to amaze His disciples by walking on water. He will then culminate all this by demonstrating His mastery of the universal elements as he calms the wind and sea.

Matthew 14:23 – **“And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.”**

So *what does Jesus do?* He is on a roll; even nature obeys Him. Does He have another meeting or perform another miracle? No! He sends the multitudes away, goes alone to the mountain, and prays. He uses this time to *Refuel*, to personally retreat with His Father.



Life Lesson: We need to live and minister from the overflow of our lives, which requires extended time with the Father. We can only give if we are also Refueling.

He used it for a time to:

REFOCUS

The pressures on the life of the Lord never let up. We see Him facing multiple demands. He handpicks His disciples while beginning to demonstrate His power over Satan and the forces of darkness by casting out demons. He also prepares to launch the first of His preaching tours, sharing His counter-cultural, life-changing message while healing and defending His message.

Mark 1:35 – **“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.”**

So, what does Jesus do? Early in the morning, He departs into a solitary place to pray. Once again, He validates the value of personal retreat time with God in the midst of a demanding schedule. This was a time to *Refocus* before moving forward.

Life Lesson: Since the demands and decisions of life never stop, we must intentionally spend time with the Father to Refocus.

The Scriptures are filled with opposites: “*the way up is down,*” “*the servant is greater than his lord,*” “*to live one must die.*” The Lord’s life consistently demonstrates another seeming contradiction. Although His life was full and complicated, He still took the time to be with the Father.



“Pressures, crises, and schedule demands should not be viewed as excuses *from* but invitations to spend time with God.”

–Mike Calhoun

CONSISTENTLY

In my resource, [“Getting from Desire to Discipline.”](#) I said, “You and I will either live by design or default.”

Living life intentionally requires planning. I encourage you to plan your own Personal Spiritual Retreats. These do not have to be full days or occur every month. Try one hour or half a day, once a quarter or once every six months. The idea is to begin incorporating them into your life.

Here is one approach for you to consider. Look over your schedule and identify two of your greatest times of demand or stress points. Now back up two to four weeks, locate a time on your calendar, and plan a Personal Spiritual Retreat to help fortify your life in preparation for these stress points. Remember, this is a time for you take *Refuge*, to *Refuel*, or simply *Refocus*.

As you think about planning, here are a few practical suggestions to assist you:

- Plan for an hour, evening, half-day, or full day, depending on your comfort level and schedule, but do it.
- Put it on your calendar; don't assume it will just happen.
- Make it a priority for your personal spiritual growth.
- Plan one at least twice a year, regardless of the length of time.
- Be sensitive to your need of taking unscheduled retreats when your demands make this necessary.



THIRSTY?

You may need to help make this a reality for your spouse. Your spouse needs to get away; out of the house. Remember, it would be hard for you to have a retreat at your workplace.



BEST PLACES . . .

Where to Have Personal Spiritual Retreats

PLACE OF SOLITUDE

I recommend a quiet place of seclusion where you are not interrupted. A place of solitude is where you can pray, read, laugh, talk, walk, sing, cry—anything you feel you need to do to connect with God.

Psalm 46:10 – “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”

Locate a place with no distractions from those things that normally get your attention, such as a tech device, book, job, project, person, or favorite food. Whatever it is for *you*, remove it or remove yourself from it. Put yourself in a distraction-free zone away from texts, emails, social media, and phone calls.

For some of you, I know that locating such a place may be a monumental task. I encourage you to make an effort, as it will pay huge dividends for the spiritual health of your life and soul.

Suggested places to consider for solitude:

- Take a walk in the woods or a park.
- Get up earlier or stay up later than everyone else in your home/dorm.
- Ask a friend if they have a place you can use.
- Use a classroom at your church.
- Have a time of retreat in your car.
- Check your local libraries; some have study rooms.
- Sit in a coffee shop, facing a wall, with your headphones on.
(Some of you can make this work.)



- Go to a hotel for an overnight retreat. (Yes, I know this costs \$\$\$.)
- Use whatever works with your geographical location, such as the beach, mountains, etc.

Psalm 62: 1, 2 – **“Truly my soul silently waits for God; From Him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.”**

Susanna Wesley gave birth to 19 children, including the famous Methodist preachers, John and Charles. The story is told that, with such a large family, physical isolation seemed impossible. It is a well-known fact, however, that when she needed silence and solitude (such as it was), she would pull her apron up over her head and read her Bible and pray underneath it. Obviously, this did not block out all the distractions around her, but she did what she could, because she realized the value of this time.

Solitude is a choice.

The concept of solitude is difficult in our society, so we must make a choice. On a consistent basis, we must choose to unplug from the noise and intentionally position ourselves where we can “silently wait for God.”

“We live in a noisy, busy world. Silence and solitude are not twentieth-century words. They fit the era of Victorian lace, high-button shoes, and kerosene lamps better than our age of television, video arcades, and joggers wired with earphones. We have become a people with an aversion to quiet and an uneasiness with being alone.”

—Jean Fleming, *Living the Christ-centered Life Between Walden and the Whirlwind*



Psalm 62: 5, 6 – **“My soul, wait silently for God alone, For my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved.”**

Solitude is refreshing.

“We can only survive solitude if we cling to Christ there. And yet what we find of him in that solitude enables us to return to society as free persons.”

–Dallas Willard, quoting Louis Bouyer, *Daily Riches: Solitude and Superficiality*

One of the blessings of solitude I have discovered is I return refreshed even if my time is brief. There is something rejuvenating about solitude with the Savior that cannot be gained elsewhere.

Solitude is foundational.

I love the way Donald Whitney talks about solitude being foundational as a principle to personal spiritual growth. He reminds us that any worthy cause requires an investment of time.

“It has been said that no great work in literature or in science was ever wrought by a man who did not love solitude. We may lay it down as an elemental principle of religion, that no large growth in holiness was ever gained by one who did not take time to be often long alone with God.”

–Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*.

PLACE OF WORSHIP

Remember, this is a divine appointment; a time set aside to deepen your relationship with your Savior. Like any relationship you desire to strengthen,



your relationship with Jesus requires an investment of time. This does not just occur; it only happens on purpose.

We live in a fast-paced, internet world where we have come to expect everything to transpire in a *zeptosecond* (the actual smallest time interval) or quicker! I think this has also had an effect on our worship as believers.

One of the issues we face in today's culture is we equate worship with an event. Worship is not an event: it is an act of the will—of the heart. It does not necessarily take place because we have a church service with music, prayer, and preaching. Worship is not necessarily about raising our hands, singing our songs, or anything else we do; it is about God.

Worship is God-centered.

“Worship often includes words and actions, but it goes beyond them to the focus of the mind and heart. Worship is the God-centered focus and response of the inner man; it is being preoccupied with God.”

—Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*

There may be times you begin your worship with prayer and end with silence. One of the great pieces of advice I was once given concerning worship was to picture myself before the throne of God. This has often helped me focus and be God-centered.

Worship is about a relationship.

Warren Wiersbe clarifies the relational aspect of worship between God and man. He reminds us that it is a beautiful relationship to be desired and cultivated.



“Worship is the believer’s response of all that they are—mind, emotions, will, body—to what God is and says and does.” Worship is a beautiful relationship between you and God.

–Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship*

Worship requires active engagement.

“Worship of the living and true God is essentially an engagement with Him on the terms that He proposes and in the way that He alone makes possible.”

–David Peterson, *Engaging with God*

Worship is active, not passive. To worship does not necessarily mean to sit still and be quiet, although it might. Worship should be a time of active engagement between you and God. That may mean praying out loud, praying silently, reading the Bible, or whatever you determine helps you connect with God.

Worship means full surrender.

As time progresses and we learn more about the art of worship, I believe we will come to understand the meaning of full surrender in worship. William Temple addresses the ideas of surrender and submission in relationship to worship. It takes time to come to the point where we can focus on God rather than ourselves or primarily our own prayer requests.

“For worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose—and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the



chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin.”

–William Temple

Habakkuk 2:20 – **“But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”**

Worship is elusive.

Without a doubt, Dr. Tony Evans speaks for many of us, articulating well the elusiveness of worship. We all want to worship but struggle to know if we actually are hitting the target of worship.

“Worship is one of those activities every sincere Christian knows he ought to be doing, and even wants to do. But we’re not always sure how to go about it. Like the puzzled party-goers who ask, ‘Are we having fun yet?’ Christians sometimes try hard to worship, but feel like asking, ‘Are we worshipping yet?’”

–Dr. Tony Evans

As you begin your Personal Spiritual Retreat, I suggest you take some time for worship. Meditating on the greatness of God, Who He is and His character qualities, helps put me in the mindset for worship. I like to take a few minutes to focus my thoughts on God before I begin to pray or read my Bible. If I begin my time thinking about Him, then He continues as my primary focus.

Note: I will address this concept in more detail in the **“How”** section.

If worship is still a bit new to you, I would like to recommend some books on the topic (complete information is listed in the Bibliography):

- *Real Worship*, Warren Wiersbe
- *The God You Can Know*, Dan DeHaan



THIRSTY?

Worship is personal.

Our relationship with God cannot be dictated or defined by anyone else; it will flow out of our heart's desire to spend time with our Heavenly Father. Learning to be personal in your worship is critical and will help with your corporate worship.

“In the end, worship can never be performance, something you're pretending or putting on. It's got to be an overflow of your heart . . . Worship is about getting personal with God, drawing close to God.”

—Matt Redman

I encourage you to discover what getting personal with God looks like for you. As you fully surrender to Him and become actively engaged, you will overcome the elusiveness of worship.



BEST TOOLS . . .

What to Bring to Personal Spiritual Retreats

This section is extremely practical. I have tried to list as many items and concepts as possible to consider for your Personal Spiritual Retreat. **Do not try to incorporate every item on this “What to Bring” list.**

Choose the particular items or concepts that assists **you** in creating the best possible Personal Spiritual Retreat time. If you do not see an item or concept on the list that helps you worship, add it to the list.

Concerning the list below, I extend a word of warning concerning the use of electronic tools. I use electronic devices on my retreats; however, I limit connectivity to block distractions. I choose not to be distracted by emails or social media during my time with God.

- Approach the retreat with an **open heart**. I confess there were times I went on a retreat when I did not want to go. I felt I was too busy, or I had other excuses, but I went anyway. I have learned that in any area of discipline, if I cancel once, it is difficult to get back on track, so I do my best to follow through with the commitment.
- Take time to think through why you are doing this. What is your **real purpose?** As you do, allow the Spirit of God to create a desire within to be alone with Him.
- Bring the **Bible** translation you feel most comfortable using for reading and study.
- Carry your favorite **pen, pencil, or stylus** for recording your thoughts and the feelings of your heart.



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- You will need a **notebook**, or some other tool or app, that allows you to journal your thoughts.
- A **hymn book** can be a great tool for preparing your heart during the retreat. Reading through some of the old hymns can be such a blessing to your time of worship. You can download a hymnbook to your electronic device if you do not have access to a hard copy.
- I use **music** in all of my retreats, as it is a great aid in my worship. If music helps you, then organize a playlist before the retreat.
- Take a **book** you feel will contribute to your time of worship. I have taken books with me on the topics of worship, holiness, surrender, and prayer, because I felt these would enhance the experience.
- **The bottom line is to remember to personalize.** This is your time with God, so use the things that help you to focus on God.



BEST PRACTICES . . .

How to Have Personal Spiritual Retreats

CLEARING THE CLUTTER

Begin by clearing the clutter from your mind. One way I suggest you do this is through prayer. I have used two different approaches that you might consider. I sometimes verbalize my thoughts, fears, pressures, and failures in a prayer to God. At other times I will actually write a letter to God, expressing these same thoughts and concerns.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 – **“PRAY without ceasing.”**

If you use this approach, you will find it can become a tool for helping you get started with your retreat. Once you have expressed your heart to God, and given your burdens to Him, then rest in Him. Part of the purpose of the Personal Spiritual Retreat is so you can experience forgiveness, correction, comfort, healing, or direction. Each time you may need something different, which makes these retreats even more vital.

TIP: In the notebook or tool you are using, designate a **“to-do list”** page, where you can off-load things that keep coming to mind about your schedule, people to call, etc. Write them on this page and then get back to your worship. Use this page instead of your calendar, planner, or management system, so you do not get distracted.

“Tell God all that is in your heart, as one unloads one’s heart, its pleasures and its pains, to a dear friend. Tell Him your troubles, that He may comfort you; tell Him your joys, that He may sober you; tell Him your longings, that He may purify them; tell Him your dislikes that He may help you to conquer them; talk to Him of your temptations, that He may shield you from them; show Him the



wounds of your heart, that He may heal them . . .”

–Francois Fenelon

MEDITATING ON GOD

I have already mentioned how I begin my retreats and my daily devotions—by meditating on God. It is important for us to remember that our time of worship is not about us. I begin my time focusing on God. I like to picture myself before the throne of God, worshiping with the saints and angels.

Worship is big; we serve a Big God. Don’t be afraid and don’t be embarrassed. We are talking about cultivating a love relationship with Jesus, so don’t worry about what anybody else thinks!

“Stay in the secret place till the surrounding noises begin to fade out of your heart and a sense of God’s presence envelopes you . . . Listen for the inward Voice till you learn to recognize it.”

–A. W. Tozer

FOCUSING ON HIS ATTRIBUTES

One of the best ways I have discovered to meditate on God is through focusing on His attributes (characteristics). This means allowing ourselves to be overcome by Who God is, not by what He does (which is often the case). You can study His attributes in books like *The God You Can Know*, Dan DeHaan, *The Attributes of God*, A.W. Tozer, and *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A.W. Tozer.

Let me illustrate what I mean by listing five of the attributes (characteristics) of God. You can begin meditating on these while you study Scripture and research other attributes. I suggest you write them in your journal (paper or electronic), so you can easily review them each day.



Attributes (Characteristics) of God:

- **Omnipresence** (Psalm 139; Proverbs 5:21)
God is everywhere—here, close to everything, next to everyone.
- **Holiness** (Habakkuk 1:13; 1 Peter 1:16; Ephesians 4:24)
God's holiness is infinitely apart, unique, incomprehensible and unattainable.
- **Love** (Romans 5:5; 1 John 4:8, 16)
God's love has no beginning, conditions, end, or limit.
- **Omnipotence** (Jeremiah 32:17; John 1:3; Luke 1:37)
God has all power, and it is limitless.
- **Mercy** (Ephesians 2:4-5; Hebrews 4:16)
God repays evil with good.

As you meditate on one of these attributes (characteristics) of God, ask yourself some practical questions:

- What does this characteristic teach me about God?
- How would I explain this characteristic in my own words?
- How does it help me worship God?
- Does it comfort me?
- Does it require a change in me?
- How should I respond to this characteristic in my life?

"The reason we come away so cold from reading the Word is because we do not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation."

—Thomas Watson

"The amount of time we spend with Jesus—meditating on His Word and His majesty, seeking His face—establishes our fruitfulness in the kingdom."

—Charles Stanley



Notice all this comes before you even begin reading the Word. You are preparing your heart!

Isaiah 30:21 – **“Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it, whether you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.’”**

READING THE WORD OF GOD

Take your time as you read the Word of God. Read slowly, waiting on God and allowing Him to speak through His Word. Too often we approach our time in the Word when we feel rushed. Remember, you are on retreat with God; there is no rush. Read the Scriptures with an open heart, searching them for new insights.

“When you hear the still, small voice within, it is time to be silent. This voice is not a stranger to your spirit. It is God’s voice within your spirit. This is not something mystical but something practical. Deep within you will learn to yield to God and to trust your Lord.”
–Francois Fenelon

A good place to begin reading is in the **Psalms**. Because they express the heart and soul of the psalmists, you will discover portions of Scripture that are easy to personalize.

“Remember . . . reading the Scripture is a way into prayer. Remember, too, that what you read may become prayer.”
–Guyon

Jeremiah 15:16 – **“Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.”**



On my Personal Retreats, I often use my Scripture reading in the Psalms as a way to begin my time of prayer. As I read a Psalm, I also pray it back to the Lord. Very simply, I read a line from the Psalm and then make application of that sentence to my personal life.

For example, if I were praying through Psalm 18:1-2, it might look something like this:

“I will love You, O Lord, my strength.”

(Lord, I really do love you, even though I don't always act like it. Thank you for being my strength.)

“The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;”

(Thank you also for being the unmovable rock under my feet when everything in my life seems to be so moveable.)

“My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;”

(God, You really are my strength, because I feel so weak on my own—so I trust You.)

“My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”

(Father, thank You for Your protection in my life and for my salvation.)

This is a practice that works for me. You may want to use it or modify it for yourself, so it works for you. The idea is to begin your time with God by getting into His Word and letting the Word get into you. ***Praying through the Psalms*** has been a great tool for my retreats.

John 15:7 says – **“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”**



“The only way to understand the Scriptures is not to accept them blindly, but to read them in the light of a personal relationship to Jesus Christ.”

–Oswald Chambers, *Baffled to Fight Better*

Another place to begin reading the Word is in an area you are **currently reading or studying**. If you choose this method, I caution you not to turn your Personal Spiritual Retreat into a Bible study preparation time. This should be a special time of building your relationship with Jesus. Plan your Bible study preparation for another time.

“What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you.”

–Gipsy Smith

PRAYING

One of the things I have discovered while meditating on God is how apparent my sin becomes. Focusing on His holiness has a way of crystallizing the way I see things and clarifying those areas that need attention. For the simplicity of this document, I am dividing the prayer time into two components: **confession** and **obedience**.

A good friend gave me some great advice for approaching the Scriptures in prayer. He encouraged me to pray this prayer before reading my Bible: “If there is a new commandment to follow, I promise to obey it even before I read it. If I am convicted of a new sin, I promise to confess it and deal with it, even before I read.”



This is a radical way to approach the Scriptures. Try praying this before you read your Bible and see what happens. We always win as we move toward God through confession and obedience, it is a win-win.

It is important for us to spend a period of time confessing our sins, allowing the Spirit of God to purify our hearts.

Psalm 66:18 – **“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”**

1 John 3:22 – **“And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”**

Once you have dealt with any areas of sin, then it is a matter of making commitments toward obedience. The Word of God should have an effect on us, influencing the way we live.

Psalm 119:30 – **“I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.”**

Psalm 119:59 – **“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.”**

Psalm 119:133 – **“Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”**

Confession and obedience are just two components I try to cover in my devotions or retreat. One of my favorite preachers of the past (McCheyne) suggests another approach to consider by giving five components to consider when praying:

- Confession – admission
- Adoration – praise



- Thanksgiving – gratitude
- Petition – request
- Intercession – intercede

“I ought not to omit any of the parts of prayer—confession, adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and intercession. Perhaps every prayer need not have all these; but surely a day should not pass without some space being devoted to each.”

—Andrew Alexander Bonar, *Robert Murray McCheyne, A Biography*

TIME OF EVALUATING

The Personal Spiritual Retreat also provides you with a time of evaluation for your priorities and value system. This is a great time to ask yourself some penetrating questions, such as:

- “Am I doing what really counts?”
- “Did I do anything this week that really mattered?”
- “Has my quiet time become stale?”

You may also want to use some of this time to set new and fresh goals:

- Personal spiritual goals
- Family spiritual goals
- Friendship spiritual goals
- Personal ministry goals



BEST PRINCIPLES . . .

Why Have Personal Spiritual Retreats

“What we *do* on some great occasion will probably depend on what we already are; and what we *are* will be the result of previous years of self-discipline.”

—John Maxwell

As I address the WHY of Personal Spiritual Retreats, let me introduce you to two of my favorite passages of Scripture. In Colossians 1:9-11, Paul challenges us with five tenants of a genuine personal walk with Christ. The Apostle Peter further validates this truth as he passionately writes about his own continuous personal growth in 2 Peter 1:5-9.

Colossians 1:9-11 – **“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy.”**

Paul shares these concepts with an expectation that they should be a part of every believer’s life. All of them must be cultivated; they do not happen by accident. Taking time for personal daily devotions and scheduling Personal Spiritual Retreats can be tools for developing them in your life.

1. **“Filled with the knowledge of His will”** (v. 9) – This requires spending time in the Word.



“I must take care above all that I cultivate communion with Christ, for though that can never be the basis of my peace—mark that—yet it will be the channel of it.”

– Donald Whitney

2. **“Walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him”** (v.10) – We must spend time with people and truly get to know them if we want to please them. The same holds true with our Lord.
3. **“Fruitful in every good work”** (v.10) – Living out the Word of God in every area of our lives will reflect changed lives, influencing others.
4. **“Increasing in the knowledge of God”** (v.10) – This should be viewed as a life-long journey not a one-time destination!
5. **“Strengthened with all might”** (v.11) – The more time we spend with the Lord in His Word, the more we realize our dependency upon Him and His Power.

“. . . the purpose of prayer is to reveal the Presence of God, equally present at all times and in every condition.”

–Oswald Chambers

2 Peter 1:5-9 – **“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”**

2 Peter 1:5-9 demonstrates how to continue the growth process. By the way, Peter was in his eighties when he wrote this passage, and he was still



concerned about adding to his faith and growing. He says that if you are growing spiritually, “You will never be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of God.”

In the last part of this passage, Peter clearly warns us as believers about the dangers of coasting in our faith. He encourages us to continue growing, because the results of not growing are serious. He says if you lack “*these things*,” then you will become:

- Nearsighted – comfortable in your faith.
- Visionless – calloused to the lost.
- Ungrateful – conceited about the gift of God.

“Don’t live on the porch and think you are in the house!”
– Francois Fenelon

Sometimes, as Fenelon says, we become satisfied standing on the front porch, looking in the windows. God wants you to come into the house and explore—spend time with Him in every room! Learn to be at “home” with God in sweet fellowship.

We cannot allow ourselves to be satisfied with reliving our “rookie year,” spiritually speaking, over and over. We must make a decision to move forward in our maturity. Personal Spiritual Retreats can be a great tool to aid in that process.

“O, my friends, we are leaky vessels, and have to be kept right under the fountain all the time in order to keep full.”
– Dwight Lyman Moody

Read this verse and take in its truth. We must keep our souls full and refreshed intentionally.



THIRSTY?

Proverbs 27:7 – **“A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb, but to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.”**

Proverbs 27:7 has always intrigued me, and I am ending this document with that verse, because I think it is powerful. The bottom-line message validates the genuine need we all have as believers to spend time every day with our Father. Carving out time for Personal Spiritual Retreats is adding romance (I mean that in a reverential sense) to our relationship with Christ.

We have to feed ourselves spiritually. No one else can do it for us. I am praying that you will use this tool to enhance your relationship with the Father.

On the following pages, there are three (3) **My Personal Spiritual Retreat** examples and one (1) blank template. These are designed to help you plan your own retreat. The first three are either completed or partially completed, and the fourth is an “open format” template. You may choose to print the examples/template or use them electronically.



THIRSTY?

MY PERSONAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT (Ex. #1)

TIME:

April 20, 2017

Date Scheduled

7:00 p.m.--9:00 p.m.

Time Allotted

PLACE:

Church Classroom

TOOLS:

Bible

Notebook

Pen, Pencil, or Stylus

Music

Personal Spiritual Retreats as a Practice: Insights to Guide

- Worship Through Meditation
 - Attribute/Characteristic of God: Omnipresence
 - God is everywhere.
 - God is always near.
 - All of my actions are in His presence.
 - Verse/passage: Psalm 139:7
- Worship Through Reading His Word
 - Psalm to pray through: Psalm 139:1-7
 - O Lord, You have searched me and known me. (*Lord, you know me better than anybody else.*)
 - You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. (*Lord, you know when I get up and you know what I am thinking, so help me to think correctly.*)
 - You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. (*Father, the thought of you knowing all of my actions is both comforting and terrifying.*)
 - Etc.
 - Passage to read or review on retreat: Jeremiah 23:23-24



MY PERSONAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT (Ex. #1—cont'd.)

- Worship Through Prayer
 - Confession: Lord, forgive me for the times I am not careful with the words I speak.
 - Commitment (Obedience): I plan to place guards on my mind and my mouth. Lord, please help me follow through on this commitment.
- Worship Through Personal Evaluation
 - Review value: My focus was on “Am I doing what really counts?”
 - Review goal: My focus was on personal spiritual goals.

Personal Spiritual Retreats as a Lifestyle: Next Steps

- Realizing God is ever present, I will change my behavior by:
 - Being more selective in the media I consume.
 - Thinking before I speak.
- Realizing God is ever present, I will take comfort by:
 - Reminding myself of His presence when I am fearful.
 - Talking to Him when I feel like I have no one to talk to.



MY PERSONAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT (Ex. #2)

TIME:

June 13, 2017

Date Scheduled

7:00 a.m.—8:00 a.m.

Time Allotted

PLACE:

Coffee Shop

TOOLS:

Bible

Notebook

Pen, Pencil, or Stylus

Music Device with Headset

Personal Spiritual Retreats as a Practice: Insights to Guide

- Worship Through Meditation
 - Attribute/Characteristic of God: **Mercy**
 - God repays evil with good.
 - God is infinitely compassionate.
 - God confronts our guilt.
 - Verse/passage: Psalm 103:11-18
- Worship Through Reading His Word
 - Psalm to pray through: Psalm 103:11-18 (Use if time allows.)
 - Passage to read or review on retreat: Lamentations 3:22-24
- Worship Through Prayer
 - Confession: (Use if time allows.)
 - Commitment (Obedience): (Use if time allows.)

Personal Spiritual Retreats as a Lifestyle: Next Steps

- Today I will show mercy to [Name].
- I will tell [Name] about God's mercy in my life.



THIRSTY?

MY PERSONAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT (Ex. #3)

TIME:

September 9, 2017

Date Scheduled

½ Day

Time Allotted

PLACE:

Local Park

TOOLS:

Bible

Notebook

Pen, Pencil, or Stylus

Book

Personal Spiritual Retreats as a Practice: Insights to Guide

- Worship Through Meditation
 - Attribute/Characteristic of God: Holiness
 - God's holiness is incomprehensible.
 - God does not conform to a standard; He is the standard.
 - God is infinitely perfect.
 - Verse/passage: 1 Peter 1:16
- Worship Through Reading His Word
 - Psalm to pray through: Psalm 99
 - The Lord reigns; let the people's tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; Let the earth be moved! (*Lord, the whole earth trembles because you are such a great God.*)
 - The Lord is great in Zion, and He is high above all the peoples. (*Lord, not only are you great in Zion, you are great in all the earth.*)
 - Let them praise Your great and awesome name—He is holy. (*I agree, Father, that you are awesome and holy.*)
 - Etc.
 - Passage to read or review on retreat: 1 Peter 1:13-16



MY PERSONAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT (Ex. #3—cont'd.)

- Worship Through Prayer
 - Confession: I am not committed to holiness as I should be.
 - Commitment (Obedience): I am making a new commitment to be holy as God is holy.
- Worship Through Personal Evaluation
 - Review value: My focus was on “Did I do anything this week that really mattered in light of eternity?”
 - Review goal: My focus was on personal ministry goals.

Personal Spiritual Retreats as a Lifestyle: Next Steps

- In light of God’s holiness, I will adjust my life by . . .
- In light of God’s holiness, I will adjust my prayer life by . . .



THIRSTY?

MY PERSONAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT

TIME:

Date Scheduled

Time Allotted

PLACE:

TOOLS:

Personal Spiritual Retreats as a Practice: Insights to Guide

- Worship Through Meditation
 - Attribute/Characteristic of God:

 - Verse/passage:

- Worship Through Reading His Word
 - Psalm to pray through:

 - Passage to read or review on retreat:



THIRSTY?

MY PERSONAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT (continued)

- **Worship Through Prayer**
 - Confession:

 - Commitment (Obedience):

- **Worship Through Personal Evaluation**
 - Review value:

 - Review goal:

Personal Spiritual Retreats as a Lifestyle: Next Steps

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RECOMMENDED BOOKS

The Life and Diary of David Brainerd – August 1, 1989

by David Brainerd and Jonathan Edwards <http://amzn.to/2j8MXyh>

Real Worship: Playground, Battleground, or Holy Ground? – February 1, 2000

by Warren W. Wiersbe <http://amzn.to/2iHPm2w>

The God You Can Know – January 1, 2001

by Dan DeHaan <http://amzn.to/2j4I7yW>

Desiring God, Revised Edition: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist – January 18, 2011

by John Piper <http://amzn.to/2iI0vjx>

Joy of Fearing God, The – August 17, 2004

by Jerry Bridges <http://amzn.to/2j4hJUU>

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life – July 1, 2014

by Donald S. Whitney <http://amzn.to/2j447ca>

The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God: Their Meaning in the Christian Life – October 6, 2009

by A. W. Tozer <http://amzn.to/2iHROzy>

The Attributes of God, Volume 1, with Study Guide: A Journey into the Father's Heart – February 14, 2007

by A. W. Tozer <http://amzn.to/2j49w30>

Robert Murray McCheyne: A Burning Light (History Maker) –

October 12, 2001 by Alexander Smellie <http://amzn.to/2izWCgq>

The Green Letters: Principles of Spiritual Growth – June 27, 1981

by Miles J. Stanford <http://amzn.to/2izQ29m>

My Utmost for His Highest: Quality Paperback Edition – August 1, 2012

by Oswald Chambers <http://amzn.to/2izOPz3>

