

Retreat Resources

Most of us are not millionaires, nor do we have a super abundance of extra cash to go on expensive retreats as regularly as we need. There are ways to find a prayer retreat that is close to home and won't cost you an arm and a leg. Whether you need a get-away for 3 hours, one day, or three days there is probably a reasonably priced (even cheap) location near you.

Monasteries, and Convents - these are Catholic centers that were inspired places of prayer. Most have rooms and facilities that are ideal for private prayer retreats.

Church Camps - denomination camps abound all across America. Certainly somewhere near your home town is a church camp. Often they are happy to offer lodging (sometimes meals and lodging) in the off seasons for private prayer retreats.

Cottages, Cabins, and Condos - not every believer has the luxury or good fortune to have their own mountain cabin or seaside condo, but there are probably some people in your church or your circle of friends who do. Though I am reluctant to ask someone for the use of the private retreat I do often talk to people about the value of my retreats and that I am looking for local places to pray. I find that some people are eager to offer their cottage to you for that use. Be sure to offer to pay for electric, heat, etc.

An RV or Trailer - thousands of Americans have pop-up campers, camping trailers, and RVs they use in the summer months. Often these mobile retreats sit idle during the spring and fall of the year. Perhaps someone in your family or a close friend might be willing to lend you the use of their mobile prayer retreat.

Tent or Cottage - Last year I bought myself a tent and screen gazebo so I could easily take of on the spur of the moment and camp with my Creator. Electric, water and a bathroom is all I need for facilities, so often the isolated wilderness camps are ideal (and cheap) for a one of two day get-away with God. Consider also your local KOA Campground often has small cabins to rent.

Retreat Links

Retreat Finder - www.retreatfinder.com

Retreats Online - www.retreatsonline.com/usa

Want more details about a Prayer Retreat? Check out our web site:

www.PrayerToday.org

Intimacy with God

Retreats and Concerts

Biblical Steps to Intimacy With God

by Richard W. LaFountain

Personal Prayer Retreats

Have you ever had a prayer vacation? That's right, "A Prayer Vacation." It is really a personal prayer retreat. Several years ago I began the discipline of scheduling regular (and irregular) times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

Elijah discovered the value of such extended times with the Lord during his misadventures with Jezebel (I Kings 19). Jesus often went on such retreat into "a mountain apart to pray" and he invited his disciples to "come apart and rest." Paul practices the discipline of prolonged times of prayer as well. In fact every man or woman of God throughout the history of the church has found this to be a secret to spiritual strength and refreshing.

Wesley Duewel, in his wonderful book, Touch the World Through Prayer, testifies of the strength this discipline has brought to his own life and ministry even in times when his schedule seemed too busy for it.

I have been encouraged recently when several friends in ministry, men and women of God, shared with me that they too have begun to set apart periodic times for personal prayer retreats. I would encourage you to do it as well.

Devotional Books for Prayer Retreats

- Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire - Jim Cymbala
- 7 Basic Steps to Successful Fasting & Prayer - Bill Bright
- Touch the World Through Prayer - Wesley Duewel
- Binding and Loosing - Neil Foster
- Authority of the Believer - J.A. MacMillan
- God Chasers - Tommy Tenny

(Often your pastor or church library has these books available to loan. Otherwise get them at a discount from Christian Book Distributors 1-)

Hints

1. Schedule it with God just as you would any other appointment. Write it into the calendar.
2. Find a secluded place where you can be alone with God and your thoughts.
3. Meet God alone. If you have a young family to care for ask a friend or relative to care for them for a day so you can meet with God alone.
4. Make it an overnight experience to give yourself plenty of time. Don't rush it. Make it two nights if you are really hungry for God.

What to Do

1. Read the Bible. Perhaps target to read one of the Gospels, the book of Romans, or an Old Testament Book like Genesis or Kings.
2. Discipline yourself in a pattern of prayer. Use the six steps of preparation the pastor taught and then six topics for intercessory prayer. I do 45-50 minutes of prayer on each step throughout the day - 12 hours of prayer - sounds impossible but it works.
3. Fast or at least drink lots of juices. It is not a time for feasting. Take along some crackers or snacks if you are not an experienced faster. But don't let fasting distract you from prayer. It is more important to pray than to fast. There are no "brownie points" for endurance.
4. Go for a walk with God. Enoch did.
5. Sing songs to the Lord. Choruses or hymns from memory or from a songbook. God is listening and enjoying fellowship with you. (Ephesians 5: 19 and Colossians 3:16)
6. Take a nap. Elijah did. It's OK. "He gives his beloved sleep." "Rest in the Lord."
7. Read a good devotional book on prayer or the deeper life. Don't try reading it all at once. Read a chapter each hour or a couple of reading periods during the day.

A Quiet Retreat

Peace and quiet are rare birds recently placed on the endangered species list. The Lord commands us to *“Be still and know that he is God.”* Yet most of us have no clue what this “stillness” is like in our hyperactive culture. God sadly scolds his tired people in Isaiah, *“In quietness and confidence would be your strength... but you would not.”* Jesus invited his weary soldiers to *“come away with me and rest awhile.”*

Be Still?

“Be still” is a command, not a suggestion! Stillness is a virtue seldom sought in our success-driven, hyper-active, church-growth culture of evangelical Christendom. I often feel like I am wearing a red flag in the yearly “running of the bulls” – or is the “running of the fools”? I’m pushed by the stampede of ever-necessary, never-ending, well-meaning church to do’s. In our breathless drive to achieve we seldom see a break in the endless merry-go-round where we can jump off to catch our breath and get a new, calmer perspective on life.

Purposeful Pauses

If you don’t incorporate purposeful pauses in your conversations you are probably wearying your listeners with your endless droning. These is not a panic pause of “Help, I lost my place!”) Purposeful pauses let you take a breath and listen. It is deliberate rest to let God’s Word sink in. It is time to give the Spirit room to speak in silent moments. It is the “pause that refreshes.”

Peaceful Prayer Pauses

I call them my personal prayer retreats. They are one or two night get-aways to be alone with God in silence. It’s “a quiet rest, far from the noise and pace, where God can soothe your troubled heart.” God invites you In fact He is calling you. *“Be still and know that I am God.”*

A Silent Retreat

We want to encourage everyone to go on a personal prayer retreat three times per year. You will find it refreshing. Finding adequate time to get away is always a chore. Give yourself lots of time to pray. Plan your own pace and schedule. Try alternating each hour between prayer and prayerful activities. Make it your goal to enjoy the Lord in all that you do.

A few years ago I began a new discipline of quarterly Personal Prayer Retreats. Through a friend I found a Catholic Retreat Center in Wexford, PA, where for a donation pastors were welcome to enjoy their facilities to spend time in a private prayer retreat. Since donations fit my budget I signed up. The day I arrived they welcomed me warmly, howbeit in whispered voices. The director clarified that I was welcome to stay on one condition; “That you speak to no one but God while here.” She explained that I had arrived in the midst of their annual Retreat of Silence where there were ten other people dedicating the week to prayer alone. So I was introduced to three days of holy silence. Wow! What a wonderful experience! I came away craving for more and was forever addicted to “Jesus Alone” prayer retreats.

For the past nine years I have tried to maintain the discipline of a Personal Prayer Retreat at least three times a year. All too often I fail because I find myself addicted to my ministry instead of to my Savior. Over the past three years I have attended the College of Prayer at Beulah Beach as part of that discipline. But I find it too much talk and teaching for my tastes, so I beg out of many meetings to meet with Jesus alone. They are gracious enough to ignore my absence at all the meetings knowing I have a higher appointment. These times at the Beach have enabled me to meet with brothers and sisters of like mind, to learn their prayer disciplines, and to share our prayer experiences together. It has been a life-changing experience. I am sure it will be for you too.

Schedule to Pray

Most of us find that we need a daily planner and a calendar so we can schedule our lives. Without a schedule we'd never get anything done. So it is with prayer. Without a schedule you probably will not get it done. Put God into your day-timer and on your calendar just as you would any other appointment with important people.

What's On Your Agenda?

An important item on all of our agendas is prayer – or so we say. Yet how many of us really schedule God appointments with the care and precision of a meeting with a new boss? God laments the forgetfulness of his own people in Jeremiah 2:32. *“Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.”* Unfortunately, it is not the occasional one-time appointment that we miss, but too often it is “days without number.” We prioritize our jobs, our careers, our families, our friends, and even our churches, but when do we prioritize our appointments with God? Do we even have marked appointments with God? It is very embarrassing to forget an important one-time meeting with your boss, but to frequently miss your appointment with the King of Kings says something about our priorities and first-love.

Pray-Timer

God must have first place, not in words or rhetoric but in reality. Appointments with him are really more important than any other meetings on our bulging Day-Timers, and over-filled calendars. Over the years I have learned (and continue to learn) that I must schedule in my appointments with God just like any other appointment. God is not to be the God of my leftovers. He is Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. Let him be that in reality in my day-timer. Here are some of my yet imperfect calendared events with the Savior.

A Prayer Schedule

An Hour a Day

Jesus question to his weary disciples was, *“Could you not watch one hour?”* It echoes in my ears. I am sure the Lord does not have a chronometer running while we pray to see if we can pray for sixty minutes. But at the very best one hour each day ought to be annexed from all other activity to give our attention and focus to the Lord. This may included my Bible reading, singing, journaling, and on-you-knees prayer time. The point is to spend unhurried time with God alone. Prayer is listening to God, and talking to God.

Half-Day Each Week

For me Thursday works best. Often it is a half-day (or four hours) of fasting and prayer in which my morning until noon is spent in prayer time alone with God. Now obviously this is a pastoral discipline and cannot be practiced by the average working person. But it can be done by pastors, retired people, and people with flexible schedules. It could also be done as a four-hour period by anyone if you choose to use a Saturday or Sunday, or a week night of prayer. Again, I often use my Prayer Plan to guide me and keep me focused during this time.

A Day Each Month

I look forward to a day each month as a prayer day. The entire day is dedicated to being alone with God in a place apart from my normal routine. It must be away from phones, books, and the clamor of routine duties. For me it has worked best at the end of each month usually a Monday or Tuesday. I do not mind taking my day off to do this pleasurable task. A friend of mine goes to a university library and finds a quiet corner in which to read, pray, journal, and uses the campus to walk and worship. He also uses the day to evaluate his life and ministry according to a set pattern.

Three Days Each Quarter

I begin the year by marking these days on my calendar before anything else can crowd them out. These are days spent at a retreat center, camp, or other lonely place away from the daily clamor of activities. It is a time of great refreshing from the Lord. I spend huge amounts of time slowing down and being still before the Lord. Sometimes I spend the days with a group of people such as the College of Prayer or a Prayer Summit but much time is designated as time alone with God. I take along my prayer journal, my Prayer Plan, worship tapes and CDs, walking shoes, devotional readings on prayer, my Bible and verses to memorize. These days are the most precious day of my life.

A One-Day Retreat Schedule

Prayerful Activities

Think & Plan

Dream God's Visions
Plan Goals
Plan Yearly Calendar
Write Sermon/Lessons
Write Thoughts/Ideas
Journal to God
Evaluate Your Life
Evaluate Your Ministry
Make Family Plans
Do a Word Study

Rest

Take a Holy Nap
Go for a Walk
Sing to the Lord
Worship with Tapes
Converse With a Friend
Play an Instrument

Read and Study

Read Scriptures
Read on Leadership
Read on Prayer
Read Bible
Listen to Scripture
Listen to a Sermon
Study the Promises
Memorize Promises
Meditate on the Cross
Meditate on Creation
Meditate on Promises

8:30 am – **Talk:** Stillness: Alone With God

9:00 am – Be Still (1)

9:30 am – *Journal to God about this day*

10:00 am – Be Worshipful (2)

10:30 am – *Walk and enjoy God's beauty*

11:00 am – Be Thankful (3)

11:30 am – *Smile, count blessings,
study nature*

12:00 pm – Light Lunch as needed

12:30 pm **Talk:** Self Examination Preparation

1:00 pm – Confession (4)

1:30 pm – *Walk & listen to sermon tape/music*

2:00 pm – Cover Yourself in Armor (5)

2:30 pm – *Read, meditate, memorize*

3:00 pm – Cast all Cares on Him (6)

3:30 pm – Nap time / read / sleep / listen

4:00 pm – **Talk:** Planing Your Prayer Retreats

4:30 pm – Adjournalment

Remember prayer is fellowship with God, not just bending God's ear with a list of requests. It is those who "know their God" that shall be strong and do exploits. Get to know God in prayerful listening, whispering, singing, worshiping, reading, meditating, memorizing his word, etc.

3-Day Retreat Schedule

Day 1 – Friday or Sunday Evening

5 pm – Early Bird Time (arrival and unwind)

6 pm – Supper and Orientation -
"A Strategy Alone With God"

7 pm – Quiet time to "be still," walk and pray

8 pm – Worship Together - no preaching

9 pm – Journaling -
"Tell God why you came."

10 pm – Free Time - Fellowship

Sleep 11:00 pm – 7:00 am

Day 2 – Saturday or Monday

7 am – Rise and Shine

8 am – Breakfast - Group: Morning Worship

9 am – *God time!*

10 am – *God time!*

11 am – *God time!*

12 am – Light Lunch (share experiences)

1 pm – Nap time

2 pm – *God time!*

3 pm – *God time!*

4 pm – *God time!*

5 pm – Supper - (share experiences)

6 pm – *God time!*

7 pm – *God time!*

8 pm – Worship: Sharing Insights on Prayer

9 pm – *Fellowship Time*

10 pm – *Whatever!*

Sleep 11:00 pm – 7:30 am

Day 3 – Sunday or Tuesday (half-day)

6 am - Rise and Shine

7 am – Breakfast

8 am – *Group Worship*

9 am – Communion & Anointing

10 am – Leave for Home

11 am – *Prayer or Study Time!*

12 am – *Prayer or Study Time!*

Prayerful Activities

Think & Plan

Plan & Dream God's Visions
Plan Goals
Plan Yearly Calendar
Plan Sermon Calendar
Write Sermon/Lessons
Write Your Thoughts/Ideas
Write or Journal to God
Evaluate Your Personal Life
Evaluate Your Ministry
Make Personal/Family Plans
Do a New Testament Word Study

Rest

Take a Holy Nap
Go for a Walk with God
Sing to the Lord
Worship with Tapes/CDs
Talk About Prayer, Ministry
Converse With a Friend
Play an Instrument to the Lord

Read and Study

Read Scriptures
Read a Book on Leadership
Read a Book on Prayer
Read the Prayers of the Bible
Listen to Scripture Tapes
Listen to a Sermon
Study the Promises of God
Memorize some Promises
Meditate on the Cross
Meditate on God's Creation
Meditate on God's Promises

Study and Preparations

Spend Time Reading on Vision
Plan your Yearly Preaching
Schedule
Envision What God Longs to Do
Read a Book for Sermon Prep

This is my personal style for an ordered and disciplined time of extended prayer. There will be some who find it difficult or unrewarding to be so disciplined. In that case you need to develop your own style. Just be sure that it keeps you praying.

Pastor's Prayer Retreat

We encourage serious pastors and ministry staff to go on retreat three times per year. You will find it refreshing. Finding adequate time to get away is always a chore. Give yourself lots of time to pray. Plan your own pace and schedule. Try alternating each hour between prayer and prayerful activities. Make it your goal to enjoy the Lord in all that you do.

Day 1 – Sunday Evening

5 pm – Arrival and Supper
6 pm – Prayer stroll - quiet your heart
7 pm – Journaling – Tell God why you are here
8 pm – Joint Meeting – Share Your Retreat Plan
9 pm – Read Scripture / Book on Prayer
10 pm – BREAK: (whatever you like)
Sleep 11:00 pm – 7:30 am

Day 2 – Monday

7:30 am – Rise and Shine
8 am – Breakfast
9 am – God Focus – *Be Still, Worshipful, Thankful*
10 am – You Focus – *Confession, Clothe, Cast Care*
11 am – People Focus – *for burdens & ministry*
12 am – Light Lunch
1 pm – Nap time
2 pm – *Prayer and Planning - reading on Prayer*
3 pm – *Prayer and Planning - dream and journal*
4 pm – *Prayer and Planning - plan making / calendar*
5 pm – Supper - (use the time for sharing ideas)
6 pm – *Walk and Pray*
7 pm – *Worship Time - CDs or Tape*
8 pm – *Read on Leadership / Vision*
9 pm – BREAK: Free Time
Sleep 11:00 pm – 7:30 am

Day 3 – Tuesday

7 am – Rise and Shine
8 am – Breakfast
9 am – *Private Worship*
10 am – *Prayer for Church People*
11 am – *Prayer for Goals & Plans*
12 am – Lunch and Leave

Some pastors may find it convenient and helpful to stay the afternoon to continue their study and prayer.

Prayerful Activities

Think & Plan

Plan & Dream God's Visions
Plan Goals
Plan Yearly Calendar
Plan Sermon Calendar
Write Sermon/Lessons
Write Your Thoughts/Ideas
Write or Journal to God
Evaluate Your Personal Life
Evaluate Your Ministry
Make Personal/Family Plans
Do a New Testament Word Study

Rest

Take a Holy Nap
Go for a Walk with God
Sing to the Lord
Worship with Tapes/CDs
Talk About Prayer, Ministry
Converse With a Friend
Play an Instrument to the Lord

Read and Study

Read Scriptures
Read a Book on Leadership
Read a Book on Prayer
Read the Prayers of the Bible
Listen to Scripture Tapes
Listen to a Sermon
Study the Promises of God
Memorize some Promises
Meditate on the Cross
Meditate on God's Creation
Meditate on God's Promises

Study and Preparations

Spend Time Reading on Vision
Plan your Yearly Preaching Schedule
Envision What God Longs to Do
Read a Book for Sermon Prep

Prayer Summit Retreat

The Prayer Summit is a Thursday evening, all day Friday and part of Saturday. It is dedicated to private prayer and geared to allow the participants to experience large and spacious times alone with God. We call it a God-soaking. It begins on a Thursday evening with a general orientation as to how to conduct your retreat schedule. Friday is dedicated entirely to prayer. Lectures on prayer begin on Friday evening and all day on Saturday.

Day 1 – Thursday Evening - “Slowing Down”

6 pm – Arrival and supper together
7 pm – Worship Together
8 pm – How to Hold a Personal Prayer Retreat
9 pm – Tell God why you are here. - journaling
10 pm – Personal Reading & Bedtime
Sleep 10:30 pm – 6:30 am

Day 2 – Friday - “Yearning for Him”

7 am – Simple Breakfast
8 am – *Be still, get a quiet heart (1)*
9 am – *Be Worshipful (2)*
10 am – *Confession and introspection (4)*
11 am – *Be Thankful (3)*
12 am – Lunch - soup and sandwich
1 pm – walk & listen to sermon tape/music, etc
2 pm – *Clothe yourself (5)*
3 pm – Nap time / read / sleep / listen
4 pm – *Cast Your Care on Him (6)*
5 pm – Supper
6:30 pm – Joint worship time
7:00 pm – Lecture 1
8:00 pm – Coffee Break
8:30 pm – Lecture 2
9:30 pm – Dismissed to travel home
10 pm – Fellowship Time
Sleep 10:30 pm – 6:30 am

Day 3 – Saturday - “Learning of Him”

7 am – Breakfast - and sharing
8 am – Lecture 3
9 am – Lecture 4
10:00 – *God Time!*
11 am – *God Time!*
12 am Lunch & Close

This is an extended time for seeking God and learning to pray.

We have suggested that it be 3-times a year to coincide with long weekends when many might have Friday off. It could also be done on weekends when many have Monday off.

You may find it helpful to begin on Friday evening through Sunday noon, or even Monday noon, giving a maximum time for prayer and teaching.

Teaching done in the evenings and Saturday morning affords opportunity for people to drive in for the day.

The first orientation should be mandatory for everyone attending.

Saturday afternoon and evening and into Sunday are options for those who can stay for more lectures on prayer. We schedule the closing for Sunday a.m. early so that many may leave in time to participate in their local church services.

Concert of Prayer

Focus on God

Focus on God	BE STILL
	10 minutes on each (Solo Time)
	<p>Songs: Sweet Hour of Prayer Scripture: [Psalm 46:10, Psalms 27:13-14, Is 30:13-21, Is 40:28-31] In holy awe get alone with God for quieting your heart. Kneel before him, lay prostrate. Be still, keep silence, slow down and put away your list of to-dos. Sweep the cobwebs of your mind so you can focus only on the Lord. Wait on the Lord, and again I say, WAIT on the Lord. Listen for his still small whisper - "Peace be still." Songs: Open My Eyes Lord</p>

Focus on God	BE WORSHIPFUL
	10 minutes on each (Corporate Celebration)
	<p>Songs - <i>Bless the Lord, I Love You Lord, Crown Him With Many Crowns</i> Scripture: [Ps 100, Rev. 1:12-17, 5:8-14] Adoration together lifting our eyes toward the Lord - "I saw the Lord high and lifted up." Praise his name together, tell of his excellent greatness, and sing to the Lord, and worship at his footstool. Make it a time of ministering to the Lord. Magnify him! Songs - <i>As the Deer, I Exalt Thee</i></p>

Focus on God	BE THANKFUL
	10 minutes on each (Group Time)
	<p>Songs: Great Is Thy Faithfulness Scripture: [Neh 12:27, 31, 40, 43 Ps 103,] Give thanks to God for everything! Literally exhaust all the possibilities of things to be thankful for. Tell the Lord. Thank Him! For Creation, for your body, life, health, for friends, for provisions, answers to prayer, your church, your ministry, your family. Then give thanks for the hard things - the trials, the sicknesses, the failures, the good, the bad, and the ugly. Songs: Give Thanks</p>

Concert of Prayer

Focus on Self

Focus on You	CONFESS SIN
	10 minutes on each (Solo & Group Time)
	<p>Songs: <i>Change My Heart O God</i> Scripture: [Daniel 9:4-19, Is 6:1-8] Use half the time for personal introspection and confession of sin, self examination and surrender to God. The other half to share with each other. "Confess your faults (failures & frustrations) one to another and pray one for another." My Sin - My Church's Sin - My Nation's Sin Songs: <i>It Is Well (My sin O the bliss!)</i></p>

Focus on You	CLOTHE YOURSELF
	10 minutes on each (Group & Corporate Time)
	<p>Songs: <i>Spirit of the Living God Fall Fresh On Me</i> Scripture: [Eph 6:10-20, Matt 18:18] Spend half the time in groups identifying strongholds, areas of attack in your church. Then stand together in a large circle and apply the promises and principles of authority of the believer. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven." "Stand in the gap...make up a hedge." <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reckon Your Sin Covered • Reckon Your Position in Christ • Resist the Devil Song: <i>A Mighty Fortress</i></p>

Focus on You	CAST YOUR CARE
	10 minutes on each (Small Groups)
	<p>Songs: <i>I Cast All My Care</i> Scripture: [1 Peter 5:7, Heb 4:16] Share personal burdens and heartaches to be laid down before the cross. Then either assemble (in sanctuary or in small groups) for a time of anointing, laying on of hands and prayer one for another for personal struggles, and physical needs. (Can be altogether or in groups of 3-4) Songs: <i>Burdens Are Lifted At Calvary</i></p>