



RETREAT OF SILENCE GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

"But Jesus would withdraw to deserted places for prayer." - Luke 5:16, CEB

It is NOT our job to create an exciting, insightful, religious experience. Our job is to show up, be as attentive as we can, and receive with open hands whatever comes our way. The goal is to be with the Lord and He with us. Resist efforts to critique the time. Trust the Lord and His ways of working. He knows what he is doing.

~ Steven Stuckey

Feel free to adapt guide to fit the time you have scheduled for your retreat.

Suggested Schedule for a 3 Hour Retreat:

15 Min Settling In

30 Min Listening and Responding to Your Body

1 Hour Examen

30 min Looking Back, 30 min Zooming In with Naming the Grace Examen

30 min in Scripture (Isaiah 40:26-31)

15 min Intercession

30 min Looking Ahead and Benediction

Suggested Schedule for a Day Retreat:

30 Min Settling In

30 Min Listening and Responding to Your Body

1 Hour NSO Examen

30 min Looking Back, 30 min Zooming In with Naming the Grace Examen

45 Min. Contemplative Walk - seek beauty!

1 hour lunch - eat slowly!

30 min in Scripture (Isaiah 40:26-31)

30 min Intercession

30 min Looking Ahead and Benediction

Getting Ready:

- *Minimize distractions as much as possible.*
- *Consider putting your phone in airplane mode.*
- *Make sure you have some paper, a pen, and your Bible.*

Settling In

Once you arrive at your retreat location, it can be helpful to take some time to settle in and quiet your body and spirit. We have often come to our retreat from a busy schedule of ministry and daily life, or a hectic morning. Take some time to calm yourself and settle in - perhaps 15-30 minutes.

Relax

Breathe slowly: Settle in and relax. Take slow, deep breaths and allow yourself to relax.

Pray

Use one or more of the prayers below, and/or your own prayer for the start of this retreat.

Here I am again, my Lord, responding to your invitation to come away with you to this lonely place to rest awhile. Amen.

- A Guide to Prayer for All God's People (Upper Room Books)

I am here again, my Lord, drawn by faith that nothing shall ever separate me from your love and care. Love me, my God, care for me in this place, and equip me for the duties which await my return. Amen.

- A Guide to Prayer

My God, in the quietness of the desert you spoke to Moses, and in the quiet cave Elijah heard your voice. Even so, speak to me in the quietness of this place, that I, too, may know the direction of your will in all the great and small decisions of my life. Amen.

- A Guide to Prayer

Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess you have given me: I surrender it all to you to be disposed according to your will. Give me only your love and your grace; with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing more. Amen.

- Ignatius of Loyola



Take some time to receive God's invitation of loving communion through this song by Common Hymnal, [Come to the Table](#)

Listen & Respond to Your Body

Take a few deep breaths as you listen:

The Welcoming Prayer



1 min

Click [here](#) for the Audio Guide

"Start listening to your body and allow your body to lead you toward healing. Let your brain chill and let your body speak to you. What is your body saying? Allow your body to lead you towards Jesus. Listen to your body. If you need to dance it out, dance it out. If you need to eat - eat! Let this translate into the ways you engage your spiritual practices with God."

- Jazzy Johnson

Pause for a moment and listen to your body.

Are you feeling tense? Is your heart rate increased?

Are you excited? Tired? Frustrated?

Hopeful? Hopeless?

Where do you feel these feelings in your body?

Pause, take a few deep breaths and ask God:

Lord, what does my body need right now?

How can I honor you with the body you have given me in this moment?

Invite Jesus to help you identify what next step you need to care for your body and take a next step towards healing. Consider trying this:



Pray the Lord's Prayer with Your Body
[CLICK LINK](#)

Examen

LOOKING BACK ON THE MONTH

A monthly retreat day includes a regular, ongoing opportunity to look back over the past month and reflect on our life, ministry, and our walk with Jesus. Far too many of us, including those of us in “ministry,” do not take time to reflect and ponder in such a way.

Through the practice of Examen, we deepen intimacy by paying attention and inviting Jesus into the parts of our life that feel beautiful -and the parts that feel ugly- and allowing his gracious gaze and love to transform us.

Take some time for unhurried reflection of the past month with questions such as these which follow and respond to them in your journal.

- For what moments am I most grateful? For what moments am I least grateful?
- What experiences felt most life-giving to me? What experiences drained life from me?
- When did I sense God’s presence most fully? When did God seem absent in my life?
- When was did I cooperate with the Holy Spirit? When was I resistant to the Holy Spirit?

Zooming In

NAMING THE GRACE

This particular examen is helpful to narrow in on one memory from the last month as we seek to grow like Jesus in character. It invites us to ask Jesus what we need from him to respond to a particular challenge in a way that is more aligned with the Spirit's work in our life. As we learn to do this, we can prayerfully imagine a way of mission that is dependent on the grace of Jesus and the empowered by the Spirit with us

The following is Adapted from Reimagining the Examen by Mark E. Thibodeaux, SJ

In this exercise, the word grace is used to mean a specific "spiritual gift" or "virtue" or "fruit of the Spirit." You will be invited to ask yourself the question "In this particular moment and situation, if I could ask God for one spiritual gift (e.g. courage, peace, clarity, patience, strength, hope, etc.), what would it be?"

For example, if you were hurt by something a loved one said to you this morning, you might pray for grace of patience or peace --whatever virtue you need to keep from allowing the hurt feelings to lead you to think or act inappropriately. If you were tempted toward some particular sin this morning, you might pray for the grace of self-control or of faithfulness.

- Ask God to show you the greatest challenge you faced in the last month. How did you meet that challenge? Did you respond in spiritual freedom or bondage?
- What were the consequences of your thoughts, feelings, words, and actions? If you feel moved to do so, give thanks, ask forgiveness, ask for healing.

- Ask the Lord to show you what grace or virtue or spiritual fruit you may need to meet this challenge in the future (for example: patience, courage, generosity, peace). Looking at the past few days, ask the Lord to show you what ways you are not being open to this grace. Ask the Lord for strength to be open to this grace from this moment forward.
- Allow yourself to daydream about being “filled up” with this grace. What might tomorrow be like if you have this grace with you at all times? Praydream -that is, prayerfully daydream- about the joyful moment when you meet this challenge in a grace-filled way.
- Ask God to give you the grace you need to be the person he is calling you to be. Repeat the name of this grace over and over again before God. Try to sense God quietly filling you with this grace. Praise God for the graces he bestows on you.

Scripture

When we spend time in scripture on retreat, the goal is not to do rigorous biblical exegesis, inductive study, or gain more biblical knowledge -all things that are good and important. However, on retreat, as we make space for unhurried reflection on our life and our walk with the Lord, a contemplative method of engaging scripture is more in tune with our purposes.

Eugene Peterson describes this way of reading scripture as 'spiritual reading': "reading that enters our souls as food enters our stomachs, spreads through our blood, and becomes holiness and love and wisdom" (p. 4, Eat This Book). In other words, think about this reading as primarily formational rather than informational.

Isaiah 40:26-31

"26 Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. 27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"? 28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and His understanding no one can fathom. 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint"

Lift up your eyes and take some time to observe God's creation around you. What do you notice? Take some time to praise God for His magnificent creation.

Fill in your name in vs 27 where it says "O Jacob and O Israel"? Does that sound like you sometimes? What role has God had in your life in the last few weeks? Do you feel like God is too great to care about you?

Respond

"Hope in the Lord" (some translations: wait). The Hebrew word for hope (KJV, "wait upon") is qawah which means "to bind together (by twisting)...to be gathered together, to be joined; to expect...to be confident, to trust, to be enduring."

- *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*

Hoping (qawah) in the Lord suggests a picture of being joined by twisting and binding ourselves to the Lord. Imagine that for a minute. What feelings or thoughts does that evoke in you?

Read the passage one more time. Sit with the passage. What does hoping in the Lord look like for you where you are in your current circumstances? Where do you need strength?

Are you struggling with hoping in the Lord? What are some obstacles you are facing? (lack of intimacy with God, fear of being out of control, fear that God doesn't have your best in mind, being too busy, a weary heart?)

What has the passage brought up for you? Be honest with yourself and with God. Allow God to speak to you from His word. Respond to Him in prayer.

Intercession

Take some time to pray in the form of intercession to Creator God, remembering his mighty power and unrelenting care for his creation. Let your prayers be shaped by hope in the Lord who gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

How is God inviting you today to intercede on behalf of your family, significant friendships and relationships, church community, students/campus/staff, needs in our nation and world, the poor, disenfranchised, and vulnerable that are on your heart, etc.?

Looking Ahead

Another part of retreat is looking ahead to the month in front of you. As you take some time to be still, listen, and seek God's guidance and will, are there specific commitments you want to make in the following areas:

Spiritual:

- (In Christ) While all of life is spiritual, what spiritual discipline(s) you want to commit to, or re-commit to, this coming month? What will it look like specifically for you?

Physical:

- Are there any habit(s) related to exercise and eating you are called to?
- How are you finding rest and sleep these days?

Relational:

- How are the primary relationships in your life? Is there anything you desire to commit to in the month ahead?
- (Like Christ): How do you want to grow in Christ-like character in the next month? Ask Him to help you.
- (With Christ): How do you desire God to demonstrate his presence with you in your relationships? Is there a request you want to ask of him?

Mental:

- Is there anything you long to commit to for the sharpening of and development of your mind in your walk with Christ?

Benediction

May you hope in the Lord.

May you return with renewed strength.

May you know that the Everlasting God goes with you! - AMEN