

## *A note and some tips from me to you about planning your personal Spiritual Retreat.*

*I think the place I first really found my voice was at a half day silent Spiritual Retreat. Ironic right? Finding my voice in silence? But it was a turning point for me in how I related to God, others and myself. I've held the practice close to my heart ever since. So what is a Spiritual Retreat? Well to retreat is to withdraw or go backward especially from something dangerous. A Spiritual Retreat is withdrawing away from the dangers of distractions and into the presence of God. How God meets us in these moments doesn't always look the same and in that lies the adventure! How will He meet you? Well, before you dig in to plan your personal Spiritual Retreat here are a few tips I believe could be helpful.*

*I guard against over structuring my Spiritual Retreat times. I may have a plan but I want to flow with the Lord's heart for this time. I'll prepare a basic idea of what our time may look like and bring some resources with me but I keep all of it with open hands.*

*If it's your first time doing this, having some sort of structure may be helpful. I usually start with some light movements of my body and go into a prayer of invitation. This may take just a few minutes or it may take 30 minutes! Once I'm in it, I may sense I'm supposed to stay in that moment. Stay in the moment you are until you feel the release to flow to the next. Remember this isn't about performance or accomplishment. This is about relationship.*

*When it comes to extended reflection, I may break it up. After about an hour of silent reflection, I may go for a stroll or do some light stretches or I may eat a snack. If I feel my mind wandering I may bring it back to the moment by praying a Breath Prayer or taking a deep calm cleansing breath.*

*When distractions come, and they will, I don't ignore them. Instead, I acknowledge them and at times welcome them. If it's a plane flying loudly overhead, I acknowledge the sound of jet engines, welcome them and then allow them to be in their place while I return to my place. If I suddenly remember something on my to-do list I do the same practice.*

*I've given you some practices below that you can use along with a basic planning grid. Be careful in overplanning. Remember that if you don't get through all that you planned, it's okay! You gave yourself permission to be present in each moment with Christ for as long as He was inviting you to that particular moment.*

*I would encourage you to start small and build. If a half day seems overwhelming then try a couple of hours of retreat. Celebrate that! This is your time with our Heavenly Father. Relish it!*

*Brenda Renderos*

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## *How to Use these Resources*

**The Heart:** What makes a Spiritual Retreat successful? Getting through your list of practices? No. Hearing a Word from God? No. The heart with which you approach your Spiritual Retreat is what matters. When you can embrace the unknown and unplanned you're more likely to release and/or receive what you need during your time of withdrawing into His presence.

**The Practices:** Listed are a few practices you can incorporate into your Spiritual Retreat. You can use all of them or just a few. You can do them for short amounts of time or extended time. Flow from moment to moment, practice to practice when you feel God guide you into what's next. Lay expectations aside. Approach these practices as loving gestures between you and God and trust that He will guide you through them.

**The Grid:** You DO NOT need to fill the grid. The grid is just a tool to help you create a basic plan for your time. The point is not to fill the grid or to get through it like a to-do list. It's a general idea of what your journey will look like but with the mindset that if the Lord wants to turn down a different road...you'll follow Him.

## *Practices*

### *Body*

Light easy stretches that open the lungs and activate your mind. An easy but intentional walk works as well.

### *Prayer of Invitation*

Invite God into this time and space. Ask Him what His heart is for this time. Here's a sample prayer:

"I thank you Lord for this space and time that is set apart for You. I invite You Holy Spirit, my guide and comforter, into this place. I invite You Jesus, my Lord and Savior into this time. I invite You Father God, my creator, into this space. I lay my heart before you and with that, all of my desires, victories and sins. I completely and wholly open myself to You. I come as I am and lay all expectations aside. You take me to the places You want me to go. Reveal what needs to be revealed. I give you full access to all the rooms of my heart and mind. Come, Father, come. Come, Jesus, come. Come, Holy Spirit, come.

### *Worship*

Come prepared with songs you'd like for this time on your playlist. You may also consider singing yourself or playing an instrument during this time.

## *Meditative Reading*

Lectio Divina means Divine Reading. It's a process of reading a passage in a meditative way. This is not a study. I have a Study Bible and a Bible that has minimal study resources. It's more of a reflective translation as well. On my Spiritual Retreats I leave my Study Bible at home. It helps me to not get swept up in study during this time of reflection.

Lectio Divina Steps:

1. Read the passage. Listen with your heart to what phrase, sentence or word stands out to you. What touches you? What thought or reflection comes to mind. Allow a minute or two of silence in this.
2. Read the passage again and reflect on His Word. What thought or reflection comes to mind? Allow a minute or two of silence in this.
3. Read the passage again and respond to His Word. What prayer is in your heart in response to this? Allow a minute or two of silence in this.
4. Read the passage a final time and rest in His Word. Allow God to embrace you in this silence. Allow a three or four minutes of silence.
5. Take the phrase, sentence or word that stood out to you during this time into the rest of your day.

## *Reflect*

How you reflect is unique to you but here are some ideas to get you started.

- Journal
- Sketch
- Paint
- Doodle
- Feel the weather on your skin
- Use imagery (a photo, artwork)
- Coloring Page
- Silence
- Look at the clouds
- Take in the sounds and/or images of nature around you

## *Breath Prayer*

A Breath Prayer is praying a scripture or Biblical truth to the rhythm of your breathing. Psalm 23:1 could be prayed this way:

As you breathe in you pray “The Lord is my shepherd”

As you breathe out you pray “I have all I need”

You can find more examples of Breath Prayers on my website at

<https://www.brendarenderos.org/breath-prayers>

## *Response*

Your time is coming to a close. How do you want to respond to it? How do you want to respond to God? How do you want to respond to yourself? This could be a prayer of gratitude, confession or declaration. This is also where you could receive the graces God has for you. There may be some goals or next steps that come to mind but remember that this time is an act of relationship with you and your Heavenly Father. It's not about tasks, assignments or performance. This is your heart and His heart coming closer together.

Prayer of Gratitude: As you opened this time inviting God into it now seal it up with Him as well. Thank Him for the way He met you today. All that you laid at the foot of the cross, stays there. All that you received from the victory over the grave, is yours.



### *Example: 45 Minute Retreat*

Practice	Time Length	Resources Needed
Body - Light Stretches		Comfortable Clothes
Prayer of Invitation		
Breath Prayer - Psalm 23:1		
Lectio Divina - Psalm 23		Bible (preferably not a Study Bible)
Reflect - Doodle (Ask God what is His will for this moment)		Sketch book or paper, pens
Response - How will I respond to what I've heard, seen or felt?		Journal, pen
Prayer of Gratitude		
Body - Light Stretches		
Total	45 mins	

I can develop a personalized Spiritual Retreat for you or your team/group or lead one for your team/group.

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*Example: Half Day Retreat (8am - Noon)*

Practice	Time Length	Resources Needed
Body - Nature Walk or Easy Run		Comfortable clothes and sneakers
Prayer of Invitation		
Worship - Acoustic Playlist		Earbuds, phone for music
Breath Prayer - Psalm 23:2		
Lectio Divina - Psalm 23		Bible (preferably not a study Bible)
Reflect - Imagery		Photos or artwork of landscapes
Breath Prayer - Psalm 23:2		
Response - What is God's will for this moment?		Journal, pen
Snack + Body -Light Stretches		Fruit, Bite Size Veggies, Hummus, Water
Worship - Worship Playlist		
Lectio Divina - Psalm 23		
Reflect - Coloring Page, Feel the weather on my skin		Coloring Page options, colored pencils
Breath Prayer - Psalm 23:2		
Response - What is my response to this time with God		Journal, Pen
Worship - Gospel Music Playlist		
Total Time:	4 hours	

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*Example: Full Day Retreat (9am - 5pm)*

Practice	Time Length	Resources Needed
Body - Nature Walk, Easy Run or Hike		Comfortable clothes and sneakers
Prayer of Invitation		
Worship - Playlist		Earbuds, phone for music
Breath Prayer - Psalm 23:3		
Lectio Divina - Psalm 23		Bible (preferably not a study Bible)
Reflect - Feel the weather on my skin, take in the sounds + images around me, silence		
Breath Prayer - Psalm 23:2		
Response - Is there anything to confess? Forgive?		Journal, pen
Lunch + Body -Light Stretches or easy stroll		Sandwich, fruit, veggies, water
Body - Easy Stroll		
Lectio Divina - Psalm 23		
Reflect - Silence, Paint or Sketch		Canvas, paints, brushes, sketchbook, pencils
Breath Prayer - Psalm 23:3		
Response - What is God's will for this moment?		Journal, Pen
Worship -		
Total Time:	8 hours	

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