

Contemplation

# Prayer Tool: How to take a One-Day Retreat

## What?

The principle of retreat can bring refreshment to our lives. This prayer tool will unpack some ideas on how to begin to take a retreat.

## Why?

“Oh God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and trust will be our strength; by the power of your Holy Spirit quiet our hearts we pray, that we may be still and know that you are God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Book of Common Prayer

## Bible reference

“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”  
Matthew 11:28

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## A quick introduction to a One-Day Retreat

The reason for contemplation is because our souls are crying out for a deeper encounter with Christ. If we are to become the person Jesus wants us to become, then a life of ongoing communion and contemplation must be our priority.

One practical way to do this is by building the principle of retreat into our lives. Jesus’ words ‘come away and rest for a while’ reveal the Biblical foundation for such a practice. A retreat grants us a generous use of time, a space to rest our bodies, and an opportunity to allow the Good Shepherd to restore our souls.

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## Do it: How to take a One-Day Retreat

How do we actually retreat well? Spending a whole day with the Lord in prayer is a worthwhile and wonderful thing to do, but it can often feel a bit daunting.

Pete Greig does the following:

*“Every six weeks or so, I take our two dogs for a long walk to a particular pub and, as I walk, I talk with the Lord, laying out quite carefully the clutter of things in my mind and working through the concerns on my prayer list.*

*I also let my thoughts wander a bit, breathing slow and deep, enjoying the countryside and allowing the busyness and stress I’m carrying to dissipate. Psychologists would say that I am re-regulating my brainwaves, moving down the frequencies from beta (alert) to alpha (relaxed) to theta (ideating) – entering a more reflective mental state.*

*When I arrive at the pub I eat a leisurely lunch and read a few chapters from a devotional book, recording my reflections in a journal.*

*Eventually, I strike out for home with a belly full of good food and a heart full of good thoughts. This time I often walk in silence, reflecting on the things I’ve been reading and simply enjoying the sense of God’s presence.*

*When I arrive home, several hours after leaving, I am relaxed and recharged with two tired dogs. It’s a lovely way to spend a day.”*

There are plenty of other ways to spend a day in prayer. There’s an example of a man who rides the New York subway to pray for hours on end. Many people retreat from the midst of their busy lives to prayer rooms or other ‘third-spaces’ like ‘Houses of Prayer.’

Heidi Baker, the great missionary to Mozambique, checks into a hotel to spend uninterrupted time with the Lord.

Wherever and however you do it, the important thing is to pace yourself. Slow down quite deliberately. Make space for worship, intercessory prayer, devotional reading, and a more contemplative period of simply enjoying the Father’s presence.

It is also important to retreat with other people too at times. Church weekends and overnights; festivals and special occasions for teams and volunteers. These communal dynamics can be some of the most profound times with God and others. God honours the effort we make to get out of our normal surroundings, set up camp somewhere and spend some money on prioritising Him and one another.

Countless lives have been changed at these types of events, from Bible times (think Passover and Pentecost), to the variety of opportunities we have today, as the Spirit of God descends upon people together in one heart and of one accord.

## **Books on Retreats**

- Wilderness Time: Guide for Spiritual Retreat –Emilie Griffin
- Invitation to Retreat – Ruth Haley Barton
- Invitation to Solitude and Silence – Ruth Haley Barton
- Poustinia: Encountering God in Silence, Solitude and Prayer – Catherine Doherty
- Going on Retreat: A Beginner's Guide to the Christian Retreat Experience – Margaret Silf