

PERSONAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT

REFOCUS | REFUGE | REFUEL

This form is to help guide a time of personal retreat with God. Not only do we need to be consistently walking with God in prayer and in His Word on a daily basis, but we also need more extended and focused solitude with God from time to time. During these personal retreats we disconnect from the world and all our distractions and set aside a day or half day just to be with God. This short document is designed for the rhythm of seasons, to set aside a time like this every month and rotate through certain ideas every season of the year. The aim each season is to refocus, refuge, and refuel (adapted from Mike Calhoun's "Thirsty" document on personal spiritual retreats http://mikecalhoun.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Personal-Spiritual-Retreats-White-Paper_18JAN17.pdf). Therefore throughout the year you will go through each of those topics 4 times. It would look something like this: January - refocus, February - refuge, March - refuel, and then rotate through again the same way throughout the year. This practice will help maintain your zeal for the Lord and for the ministry He has given you. Psalm 62 is a great place to start as it depicts this practice of solitude with God so I will leave that here. As you pursue this never forget that Psalm 16:11 will prove true every time, "in your presence is fullness of joy and at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Go enjoy God and "taste and see that He is good!" (Psalm 34:8).

Psalm 62

- 1 *For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.*
- 2 He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.
- 3 How long will all of you attack a man to batter him, like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?
- 4 They only plan to thrust him down from his high position. They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse. *Selah*
- 5 *For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.*
- 6 He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

7 On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

Selah

9 Those of low estate are but a breath; those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath.

10 Put no trust in extortion; set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart on them.

11 Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this, that power belongs to God,

12 and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.

Refocus

For this month and specifically on this day take time to refocus. The goal of this time is to be reminded and excited about the most important things in life. Often in the busyness of life we just go from one thing to the next without any specific focus on where it is all leading. However, God wants us to live life with intention and purpose (Ephesians 5:16). So take today to think through how to live these next few months wisely, intentionally, and with great purpose.

Jesus modeled this for us in Mark 1:35, “and rising very early in the morning while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.” His ministry immediately took off so much so that “the whole city was gathered together at the door” to see Him (1:33). So the next morning He got up early and retreated to the Father to refocus for what was ahead. He came out of that place and said “let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out” (1:38). He was able to say no to something, staying, because he was focused on his purpose to preach in other towns as well. If Jesus retreated to the Father to refocus in the midst of busy ministry, so should we.

Write down everything on your mind that is preventing you from being present now and then put that paper away. Later on you will deal with those things. Also, as you work through the material today make sure to keep it in a notebook or document that is specifically for these retreats so you can look back over time and see what God did.

Pick a Psalm – What do you learn about God? Write down everything you see and try to think with a blank slate as if you never knew anything about God. Then spend some time in praise to God for being the characteristics displayed here.

Pick a Proverb – What do you learn about God? How does He instruct us to walk in wisdom? How can you implement these truths moving forward? Pray God would help you to walk wisely.

Pick a book of the Bible and read through all of it. Answer these 4 questions: 1. What does this text say about God?

a. How does Jesus clarify this picture?

2. What does this text say about how God relates to His people and the world? a. How does Jesus clarify/resolve this?

3. What does this text say about how God relates to me? a. How does Jesus clarify/resolve this?

4. In light of all this, what does this text say I should do?

a. How does Jesus and His gospel propel me to be obedient?

Meditate and pray: What has the Lord taught you through His word? What are some of the main things that stand out? Reflect intently on a few verses or specific big idea found in this book. Pray through these things.

Memorize Scripture: Pick a passage about how intentionally we should live or about what we should be living for. Could be something like Ephesians 5:16 or Philippians 1:27 for example.

Reflect and self-examine:

1. What have I learned about God this past month? What has He been teaching me? How is my spiritual life right now?
2. What are the most important things to God? What is His focus? How did Jesus prioritize these things during His earthly life?
3. What are the most important things in my life right now? List out by priority. Am I giving the appropriate amount of time and energy to them in accordance with their importance? How can I be more diligent in each area? Which area is thriving and which is most in danger?
4. What have been my primary distractions? How can I be more disciplined in how I approach these things? Do some of them need to be cut out all together? How do I spend my free time? Am I fully present at work, with family and friends, and in church life?
5. What do I need to change in my schedule? How can I be more intentional and plan ahead to live out the things the Lord has shown me to prioritize now?
6. What is my Gospel ambition (Romans 15:20)? What is the overarching purpose of my life that will guide the way I live in the next few months?

7. What are the main take aways from this time of reflection? What do I need to commit to do?

Pray: Take the list from the beginning and bring everything to the Lord in prayer. Close your time by thanking God for this day away and asking Him to establish the things He taught you today.

Refuge

For this month and specifically on this day take refuge in God so that you can prayerfully start doing so more consistently throughout life. Although we believe God to be our great refuge, we practically don't live this out sometimes and then we find ourselves tired, afraid, or beat down. Life and ministry are too difficult and we desperately need to take refuge in God. Run to God as your refuge today, don't worry about other things you have to do, and be renewed in His presence.

Jesus modeled this for us in Matthew 14:13, "Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself." John the Baptist was recently beheaded by Herod and the disciples of Jesus just told Him about it. John the Baptist was a beloved friend. Upon receiving this news, Jesus left to be alone with the Father. He took refuge in the Father, and so should we. In the midst of the trials and difficulties of life and ministry, we need to take refuge in God.

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Pick a Proverb – What do you learn about God? How does He instruct us to walk in wisdom? How can you implement these truths moving forward? Pray God would help you walk wisely.

Pick a book of the Bible and read through all of it. Answer these 4 questions: 1. What does this text teach me about God?

a. How does Jesus clarify this picture?

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4. In light of all this, what does this text say I should do?

a. How does Jesus and His gospel propel me to be obedient?

Meditate and pray: What has the Lord taught you through His word? What are some of the main things that stand out? Reflect intently on a few verses or specific big idea found in this book. Pray through these things.

Memorize Scripture: Find a passage about taking refuge in God, something like Psalm 46, and put it deep in your heart through memorization.

Reflect and self-examine:

1. What have I learned about God the last month? What has He been teaching me? How is my spiritual life right now?
2. Why is God such a great refuge? What does the Bible say about this? How did Jesus model taking refuge in the Father? What did Jesus say about being our refuge?
3. What are some of the other places I have been taking refuge in? Why do I tend to take refuge in them before God or instead of God altogether? How can I be more disciplined/careful in how I approach these places? Do some of them need to be off limits altogether?
4. What has been my chosen form of rest over the past few months? Do I spend more time in this place than with God? Why is that? How can I change the way I rest over the next few months?
5. Am I aware of God's presence throughout daily activities or do I generally depend on myself? How can I be more intentional to take refuge in God throughout my day instead of just in blocks of time?
6. Do I have any healthy hobbies that help me enjoy God in daily life? Do I experience refuge in Him through nature/sports/activities?
7. What are the main takeaways from this time of reflection? What do I need to commit to do?

Pray: Take the list from the beginning and bring everything to the Lord in prayer. Close your time by thanking God for this day away and asking Him to establish the things He taught you today.

Refuel

For this month and specifically on this day take time to refuel. We often run ragged because we are going, doing, accomplishing, but leaving little, if any, room for God. If He is the source of energy for all we are called to as Christians, then to not rely on Him is to lead to burnout,

frustration, and ineffectiveness. As you prepare for the things that are coming up soon, take time today to refuel in God's presence.

Jesus modeled this for us in Matthew 14:23, "And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone." Jesus had just fed the five thousand and immediately after he sent the disciples and the crowds away and went to be with the Father alone. He took time to refuel in the presence of the Father and then left and continued his fast paced ministry. We also need to take time to refuel in the presence of God after seasons of ministry to prepare for the next season of ministry.

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4. In light of all this, what does this text say I should do?

a. How does Jesus and His gospel propel me to be obedient?

Meditate and pray: What has the Lord taught you through His word? What are some of the main things that stand out? Reflect intently on a few verses or specific big idea found in this book. Pray through these things.

Memorize Scripture: Find a passage that gives you renewed excitement about God and renewed energy for the mission of God, could be something like Psalm 63:4 or Colossians 1:28-29 for example. Put it deep in your heart by memorization.

Reflect and self-examine:

1. What have I learned about God the last month? What has He been teaching me? How is my spiritual life right now?
2. What about God refuels me? What do I love about Him? Why is Jesus worth it all?
3. What am I thankful for? How has God's grace been evident in my life lately?
4. Am I close to burnout? Am I consistently stressed/frustrated/anxious? What about my lifestyle is not healthy right now? Why am I so rushed? What kind of rhythms need to be in place on regular basis so I can thrive?
5. What am I most excited about coming up? What am I most anxious about coming up? Bring these things before God.
6. What does God want to refuel me for? What are the great things I want to do for God? How can I take steps towards accomplishing them? Where is He clearly active now and how can I prioritize my time there?
7. What are the main take aways from this time of reflection? What do I need to commit to do?

Pray: Take the list from the beginning and bring everything to the Lord in prayer. Close your time by thanking God for this day away and asking Him to establish the things He taught you today.