

# YEAR END RETREAT 2020

(D.I.Y Retreat Guide)



## ***“Come with me... to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31)***

This is God’s invitation for all who hunger for a deeper relationship with him, who are weary from fighting life’s battles or wrestling hard questions. This guide has been prepared for you to experience rest and renewal by reflecting of God’s love, presence and invitations to you in this season of your life. While this guide is designed for an individual to experience and encounter God on retreat, it can also be used in a group setting. To do this, your group members can meet together online after spending time on their own, and share some of the fruits of their reflection. This will provide the social and relational aspects of group retreats. Alternatively, it can also be helpful to speak with a spiritual director to make sense your retreat experience.

### ***Introduction to retreat***

Going on a retreat is about creating the time and space to be with God as a “generous commitment to friendship with God, to form us in Jesus Christ” (Emilie Griffin). While we can practice various spiritual disciplines to help us be open to God, key spiritual practices that are helpful during a retreat include:

#### **1. Solitude (Creating space to be alone with God)**

This is an intentional setting aside time and place to be alone with God. In solitude, we seek a full turning to God who is in us and with us. We focus on him, we turn our minds, hearts towards him.

*My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him (Ps 62:1)*

We unplug or detach ourselves from everything that distracts us from being present with God. This includes our hand-phones, tablets, laptops, social media, and even people, that we have become dependent on and may distract us. Solitude gives us time and space to explore and know ourselves in God’s presence.

#### **2. Silence (Clearing the clutter in our mind for communion with God)**

In the practice of silence, we turn away from careless speech and quieten down our thoughts. This interior stillness enables us to hear God who speaks in silence

*Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him... (Ps 37:7).*

The silence returns us to the core of our being where the Holy Spirit’s presence is and open ourselves unconditionally to receive from God. Rather than an emptying, it is filling of our heart with God’s presence. This involves a gradual moving from outer silence (absence of speech or external noises), to inner silence (absence of discursive thoughts) to heart silence (yielded and surrendered will to God). Whenever distracting thoughts surface (and they will) as you try to become silent, do not resist or fight against those thoughts. Acknowledge them but do not entertain them. Allow let them pass or consign them to be attended to at another time after the retreat.

#### **3. Scripture Meditation (Listening to God’s Words in the heart for transformation)**

This practice involves reading a portion of scripture and reflecting on it deeply in order to focus on the mind and heart of God for our heart transformation – our mind, attitude and will.

## ***Preparing for Your Retreat***

Begin by setting aside time for your retreat in your calendar – anywhere from half a day to a full day or a weekend. Stop what you are doing. Take a break from the routine. This may require some advance planning and preparation. While this guide is designed for a day retreat (about 8 hours), you may wish to adapt it accordingly depending on your retreat duration.

Go somewhere pleasant and quiet if you can. Preferably, a place away from home, routines or distractions. It could be in a park, on a beach or a quiet corner in a cafe. If you're not able to leave your home, find a quiet spot where you will be least interrupted or distracted. This can be in your room, a corner of your living room, balcony, garden etc. What makes a space sacred is the intention and desire of the person entering it – to retreat from normal life to be with God and God alone. Put your phone on silent mode if you're not able to turn it off. Resist the temptation to check your email, social media and phone. Let your family members know you're on retreat so that they won't disturb you.

Bring along with this guide your Bible, journal and writing & drawing materials. If you're going outdoors remember to pack your sunscreen, sunglasses, mask and hand sanitizer. Please refrain from bringing laptop, hand-phone, tablet, mp3 players, recreational reading, anything that will distract you.



## ***Schedule for a 1- day Retreat***

### **9.00 - 9.30 am          Opening Session**

If you plan to go outdoors, schedule to arrive at your retreat location at least 30 minutes to get settled and feel comfortable in your surroundings. Once you've settled in, read through the "Introduction" that will explain the theme and focus of this retreat. Then move on to the "Prayer Exercise: Arrival." This session is designed to help you to 'arrive' and enter into your retreat experience prayerfully and contemplatively.

### **9.45 - 10.45 am          Prayer Period #1: Scripture Meditation**

Time to meditate scriptures using the "Lectio Divina" method. Invite God to speak to you through the prayerful receiving of his word. Don't rush through this. Make this a spacious encounter with God and journal your reflections on how you sense the Lord inviting you into a deep rest and renewal.

### **11.45 - 1.00 pm          Prayer Period #2: Reflection**

Spend time praying through the guided reflection and journal your thoughts. Take your time, you may wish to continue this reflection after lunch as the silence and solitude helps you gain insight.

### **1.00 pm                  Lunch, Rest**

Take a walk, or a nap, or find a creative outlet to add balance and joy to your retreat. You may choose to continue with Prayer Period #2.

### **3.00 – 4.00 pm          Prayer Period #3: Scripture Meditation**

### **4.30 pm                  Review of Retreat**

This final part helps you to review your retreat experience based on the insights you discovered and the refreshment you received earlier. End your retreat with a spirit of thankfulness and praise to God. Ask God for his blessings as you move back into your daily tasks.

### **5.00 pm                  End of Retreat**





## ***Introduction to Retreat***

*"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards."*

*Soren Kierkegaard*

Welcome to this 1-day retreat! We hope that this space will enable you to make sense of your experiences this unusual year. For some of us, we may have felt like being on the 'battle ground' or "war zone" for a season. We may have initially been hyper-vigilant as we sought to fight an invisible enemy – with lock downs, MCOs, donning our face masks, packing hand sanitizers, regularly washing our hands, etc. Some may have adjusted well to having the children home and enjoying their company. Some may feel weary from the ongoing cautiousness or tired from always being plugged in and available as work and ministry moved into an online space.

In our life journey, we need to pause occasionally in order to rest in God's grace and to ponder about life. Without pause and reflection, our journey may become tiring and even boring.

Reflecting on our lives as we live them allows us to ask: "What does it mean? What is God trying to tell us? How are we called to live in the midst of all this?" Without such question our lives become numb and flat.

This is a good time to take a pause, retreat and rest. We all need to take a break, rest, allow God to tend our wounds, to gain perspective, and to review the year, inviting God to give us wisdom we need.

As you begin this retreat, we invite you to come as you are and to be open to God's movement and presence in your life as he reveals to you what he is doing in your life. He is already here waiting to meet with you...



## ***Prayer Exercise: Arrival***

Sit in a comfortable position, close your eyes and take a few slow deep breaths... Take some time to become aware of your breath. Breathe deeply and allow yourself to relax, unwind, slow down.

After a while, when you are ready, consider the following questions:

- What am I thinking about?
- What emotions am I feeling? (Stressful, worried, anxious, fearful, excited, peaceful etc)
- How does my body feel? What do you notice? (tiredness, stiffness, pain etc)
- Lord, how are you with me now?

As you breathe, let the rhythm of your breath become a prayer.

Breathe in, "Prince of Peace," Breathe out, "I rest in you."

Prayer:

*Father, I trust you today to hold the people I love, to attend to the things I have left undone, and to meet me in my place of worry, doubt or fear. I turn my eyes and ears toward you and I look for how you want to love me today. Amen.*



If you feel tired physically, you may want to take a rest or nap now, and allow your body to recover in order to be refreshed to pray.

## ***Prayer Period #1: Scripture Meditation***

### **Silence**

Begin with quiet preparation of the heart. Come into God's presence, slow down, relax and intentionally release the chaos and noise in your mind to him.

### **Reading**

Read the scripture passage slowly and out loud a few times, lingering over the words so that they resonate in your heart. When a word or phrase catches your attention, stop and attend to what the Spirit is drawing your attention to. Be open to the word. Don't analyse or judge it. Listen and wait.

### **Meditation**

Think about the word or phrase that stands out for you? Why do you think that is?

How does this passage connect with your life?

Is there some idea, feeling or intention you need to embrace from it? if so, what?

What might God be inviting you to be, know, understand, feel or do?

### **Response**

Take these thoughts and offer them back to God in prayer, giving thanks, asking for guidance, expressing your questions, asking for forgiveness, and resting in God's love. What is God leading you to pray? You may wish to write your prayer down. Sometimes that helps our minds from wandering.

### **Contemplation**

Move from prayer to the stillness of contemplation. Simply rest in God's presence and be open to God. Be still and rest in and with him in silence.

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### **Scripture Passage: Romans 8:38-39 (NLT)**

*And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

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What is your reaction to the passage and the words describing God's love?

Can you embrace these realities? If yes, how does this make you feel? If no, why is this difficult for you? Allow this to lead you into a time of prayer.

Spend time pondering the fact that you are one loved by God. What does this stir in you?

*"Divine love is absolutely unconditional, unlimited and unimaginably extravagant."*  
~ David Benner

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### ***Love, Anger, Frustration and Sadness***

*"Some who read these passages do not feel God's love but instead feel emotions such as anger, frustration and sadness. Do not try to force yourself to feel a certain way; instead allow yourself to feel what you are feeling and bring those feelings, as well as the issues that may birth these emotions, to God, because God will meet you in that place. God is not afraid of your questions or emotions. God desires honesty, so be honest and be real with God"*

~ L Warner

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## ***Prayer Period #2: Reflection on the last 10-12 months***

**Tips:** take time to be quiet before the Lord, invite Him to help you to be open to Him and to 'see' – His presence with you, His work in you (transformation) and His work through you. Go slowly.



1. What are the highlights (life-giving moments) of the year? List the things that brought you life and the times you were able to truly give and receive love. Take time to give thanks.
2. What have been some challenges/trials this year? List the significant ones.

Choose one or two and explore what they are really about.

What do you think is the core cause/issue with the experience? How have you been responding and reacting to them?

3. What are some lesson(s) you are learning – through reading, studies, life, reflection?

4. What are some practices that nurture your life with God?

Have a conversation with Him about what arose from your reflection.

As you look back at this year, give a Title to your year:

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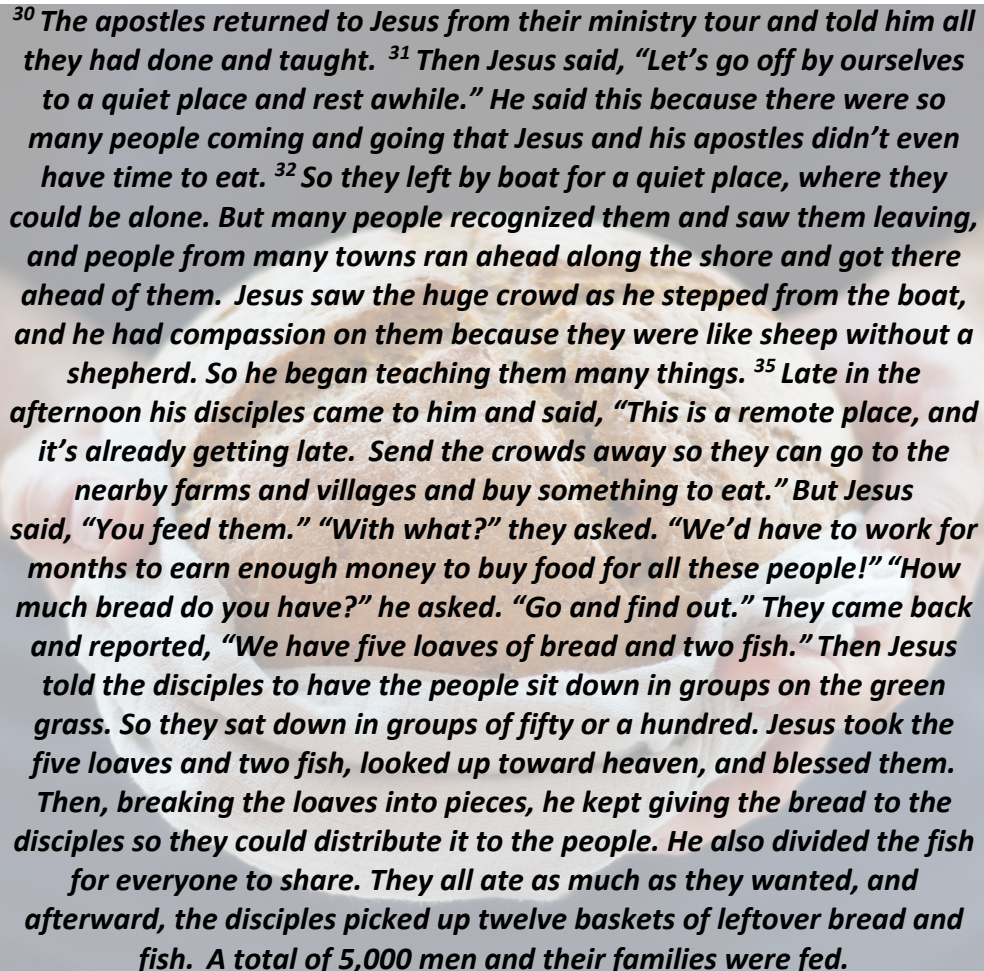
### **Prayer Period #3 Scripture Meditation**

**Read** the Scripture Passage through slowly: once aloud to yourself, wait for thirty seconds, then read the passage again. You may have to read the passage several times until your mind is saturated with the passage.

Place yourself in the passage – enter the Bible scene. (like you were making the movie scene). While in the Bible story **see** what is happening; see what the people in the scene are doing; **hear** what they are saying; **feel** the movement as they move around; and where possible, **taste** and **smell** what is around you; **touch** the people in your imagination.

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#### **Scripture Passage: Mark 6: 30-44 (NLT)**



*<sup>30</sup> The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup> Then Jesus said, "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile." He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat. <sup>32</sup> So they left by boat for a quiet place, where they could be alone. But many people recognized them and saw them leaving, and people from many towns ran ahead along the shore and got there ahead of them. Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. <sup>35</sup> Late in the afternoon his disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the nearby farms and villages and buy something to eat." But Jesus said, "You feed them." "With what?" they asked. "We'd have to work for months to earn enough money to buy food for all these people!" "How much bread do you have?" he asked. "Go and find out." They came back and reported, "We have five loaves of bread and two fish." Then Jesus told the disciples to have the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of fifty or a hundred. Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread to the disciples so they could distribute it to the people. He also divided the fish for everyone to share. They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftover bread and fish. A total of 5,000 men and their families were fed.*

Imagine you are following Jesus.

... What are you feeling as Jesus invites you to come “to a quiet place and get some rest”?

... What are your expectations?

... When Jesus challenges you to feed the crowd, what goes through your mind?

... When you begin to feed the crowd and come back again and again to pick up more food, what is going on within you?

Close with a conversation with the Lord about what came up for you in the prayer.



## ***Ending your Retreat: Review of the Day***

1. What did I appreciate or enjoy from this retreat? What was difficult for me?

2. What were some significant discoveries, insights or awareness?

3. A name I will give to my retreat is \_\_\_\_\_

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### ***Closing prayer***

*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.*

*~ Thomas Merton*

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#### Resources:

From Isolation to Invitation Retreat Guide, <https://www.sentwell.org/isolation-to-invitation>

Jan Johnson, *Meeting God in Scriptures: A Hands-On Guide to Lectio Divina*, (IVP Books: 2016)

Ruth Haley Barton, *Invitation to Retreat: The Gift and Necessity of Time Away with God*, (IVP Books: 2018)

Emilie Griffin, *Wilderness Time: A Guide for Spiritual Retreat*, (Harper Collins: 1997)

Rev Dr Chew Tow Yow , Introduction to Retreat Notes.

Larry Warner, *Journey with Jesus*. (IVP Books:2010)

Otawa, Koichi, *Reflecting on your Journey*.