



Abide in me,
and I in you

John 15:4a



SPIRITUAL RETREAT GUIDE

A tool for your time away with God

SPIRITUAL RETREAT GUIDE

Edition 1.1

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Dear Friend,

We want to affirm your decision to go on a personal spiritual retreat. Our prayer is that you will be open to whatever God has planned for you during your time away with him. Whether you have been on retreat previously or this is your first time it can be helpful to have some guidance as you plan your time with God. Our hope is that this “Spiritual Retreat Guide” will be precisely the tool you need to discern God’s plan for your retreat and to orient your heart to what he is doing while you are alone with him.

This retreat guide is divided into three basic sections. The first section is intended to help you discern God’s plan for your retreat. It includes prayerful steps to help you discern God’s unique purpose for your retreat. We would encourage you to set aside an hour to walk through the first section and prayerfully plan out your upcoming retreat. The second section offers you practical suggestions and guidance while you are on retreat. In this section you will find prayer exercises to help you start and end your retreat, as well as suggestions on how to spend your time. The final section offers you specific resources that will be useful during your time away. In it you will discover a list of “Suggested Retreat Exercises” and “Psalms for Prayer” which are designed to help you focus on your unique purpose for getting alone with God. The “Retreat Exercises” are specifically designed to match one of the five potential purposes for your personal retreat mentioned in the first section. The list of Psalms are included to frame your time in prayer on retreat. Perhaps you will discover one retreat exercise or a Psalm that will help shape your retreat.

Please see this retreat guide as your personal resource. As you walk through the guide write down your reflections and underline key insights. You will notice at the back of the retreat guide we have included several blank pages for you to journal.

God’s grace and peace be with you,

The Spiritual Maturity Team, Saddleback Church
www.saddleback.com/retreats



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Preparing for Retreat



*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.*



WHY SHOULD I GO ON RETREAT?

Universal Purpose

At Saddleback Church, we believe going on retreat is a valuable and important part of the Christian life. We define retreat as ***an intentional act of setting aside time and space to be with God***. Different from our daily quiet time, the practice of retreat is an act of making ourselves available to God with a *focus* and *intensity* that daily life often does not permit.



Matthew 11:28–30 (NIV)

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.



Unique Purpose

A desire to go on retreat is usually birthed from an awareness of something God is doing in your life. It is important to choose one thing to focus on while on retreat. Take time to prayerfully consider the area God wants you to focus on. The questions below can help get you started in discerning God's unique purpose for your retreat.

- Is there a particular area of sin God wants you to focus on?

- Are there life challenges or hurts that you need to share with God?



- Is there an area of confusion or frustration in your relationship with God that you need to honestly share with him?

- Are you in need of God's guidance as you make a life decision?

- Is God calling you to simply rest in him because your life is busy and hectic?

Reflect on your list above, examine what you've written, and prayerfully discern which one item should be focused on at this moment in your life. If you're like most people, you may have a hard time isolating which one is the right one. This is why you will want to pause, in prayer, and ask God which "one" to choose. Ask "God, what are you calling me to focus on during my retreat?" Now pause for 10 minutes and listen to God in regards to your Unique Purpose.



My Unique Purpose for retreat is _____

My
Unique
Purpose



Once you have decided what the unique purpose of your retreat will be, take some time to prayerfully explore this with God. The questions below will help you talk with God about the area you will be focusing on during your retreat.

- Is this an area of my life that God has been calling me to focus on already or is it something new?

- How am I responding to God's calling in this area? Do I feel resistant or open? Do I feel anxious, excited, etc.?

- Is there anything I can do prior to my retreat in order to begin opening my heart to the area God is calling me to focus on? For example, do I need to focus on this topic in my quiet time or talk to my small group about it?

HOW DO I SPEND MY TIME

The purpose of your retreat should shape your activities. Why you are going should define what you do while on retreat.

Without purpose driving what we do, it is easy to lose focus or try to do too much.

Look back at your unique purpose for going on retreat. Take a few minutes and prayerfully ask God to lead you as you explore this area of your life with him.

Whether you are on retreat for two hours or twenty hours it is important to have a plan for how you will spend your time.

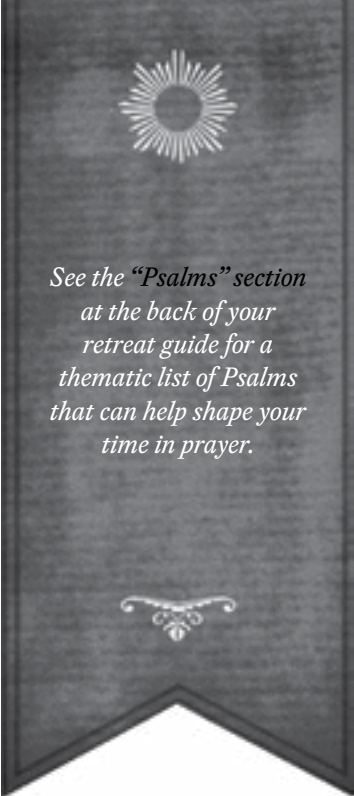
There are a wide variety of spiritual disciplines you can engage in while on retreat, and below you will see a short list of suggestions to get you started. Take the time to prayerfully consider a few spiritual disciplines God is calling you to engage in while on retreat.



For another resource in planning your retreat see the “Suggested Retreat Exercises” section on page 24 of your “Spiritual Retreat Guide.” These suggested exercises are based on the five potential unique purposes suggested earlier, and can serve as helpful tools in opening your heart to God.



READ YOUR BIBLE . . . Find Bible passages that speak to the area of your focus. To get started we suggest you look through a Bible concordance (often at the back of your Bible) in order to find passages on the topic you are focusing on. Reading Psalms on your retreat can also help shape your time in prayer. The variety of Psalms (lament, praise, thanksgiving, etc.) serves as a great resource in articulating your heart to God. It can also be helpful to find a story or parable in the Gospels that speaks to the purpose of your retreat. Whatever Scripture passage you choose can be used for prayerful consideration of what God might want to teach you.



*See the “Psalms” section
at the back of your
retreat guide for a
thematic list of Psalms
that can help shape your
time in prayer.*

READ A DEVOTIONAL . . . Bring along a helpful devotional that can serve to focus your prayer time. Often we are not sure where to begin in prayer and a devotional can be a helpful tool to give us words to get started. If you are bringing one of your devotionals on retreat, take the time to find an excerpt that speaks to the area you are focusing on.

WRITE IN A JOURNAL . . . Bring along a journal or use the space provided at the back of your Spiritual Retreat Guide to write down reflections. When we are seeking to discern God’s will in a particular area or share our heart with him, it can often be helpful to do so by writing in a journal. Journaling helps outlet thoughts and feelings that otherwise are difficult to express, and it provides a space to concretely explore what God is bringing up during prayer.



HOW DO I PLAN MY RETREAT?

Schedule a Time

Scheduling your retreat is very important. When we intentionally schedule something we are more likely to do it. Without intentional planning, your desire to go can be swallowed up by the demands of everyday life. Look ahead in your calendar and mark the date.

Another important factor to consider is the length of time you spend on retreat. Retreats can be anywhere from 3 hours to an entire week. Your prior experience plays a huge part in determining the amount of time you should spend. Much like physical exercise, we want to incrementally build our spiritual muscles for retreat. If you have never been on a retreat before it is wise to begin with a time frame that is manageable. For example, you may take a 3-hour retreat on a Saturday morning. If you have been on retreat previously, then you are prepared for a longer experience.

Find a Place

We encourage you to choose a location that is comfortable and quiet. You don't want the location of your retreat to be a distraction or hindrance. Physical discomfort makes rest and focus challenging. Noise makes it difficult to focus our heart on the Lord. The location you choose should be a place of relative silence and solitude.



HOW DO I GET THE MOST OUT OF MY RETREAT?

A Few Retreat Principles

As you prayerfully consider what spiritual disciplines God wants you to engage in while on retreat, there are five key principles to keep in mind. These principles are good habits to maintain while you are on retreat.

LEAVE SPACE . . . It can be easy to over plan a retreat. There are two key spiritual disciplines that you need to maintain so that you continue to allow space for God to speak. First, you want to maintain the discipline of silence. It is important that you leave space to simply listen to God. Second, you want to embrace the discipline of stillness. It is important to be still before the Lord. These two disciplines go hand in hand and will help in maintaining a receptive posture towards God.



Psalm 46:10a (NIV)

Be still, and know that I am God.

BE FLEXIBLE . . . Your plan should not ultimately dictate your time. God should dictate your time. Hold your plan loosely, and be open to whatever God wants to do. If you establish sharp expectations for your retreat based on your plan, you might be disappointed. The only expectation to hold firmly is that God will be with you!



Matthew 28:20b (NIV)

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”



OFFER EVERYTHING . . . There will be times on retreat when you will lose focus. You may catch yourself daydreaming or worrying about something in the middle of reading your Bible or praying. Typically we define these moments as “distractions.” Indeed, sometimes these are moments of distraction and we need to refocus our heart on God. However, sometimes these moments are invitations. Yes, we have lost focus, but what we are daydreaming about or feeling worried about are things that are truly on our heart. God may actually be inviting us to talk to him about these areas of concern and anxiety. Discerning God’s call in these moments will require prayerful attentiveness. As a general rule you want to remain focused on your unique purpose for going on retreat. However, instead of immediately pushing distractions aside take the time to offer them to God and ask him if he is inviting you to talk to him about whatever thoughts or worries are coming up.



Psalms 139:23 (NIV)

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

BE HONEST . . . We can’t experience love if we are not known, and we can’t be known if we are not honest. If you want to be receptive to God’s love on retreat, you need to be honest. Honesty can be scary because it means exposing areas of our heart to the Lord that we have tried to hide. We worry that if we are truly known in these places, we won’t be loved. The truth is, God already knows everything about you and will never reject you or leave you. It is safe to be honest with God. As believers in Christ nothing can separate us from God’s love.



Romans 8:1 (NIV)

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.



LISTEN . . . If we are honest with ourselves, we will acknowledge that we spend a lot more time talking in prayer than listening. Sitting in silence to listen to God can be incredibly challenging for us due to the action and noise we've become accustomed to. Pause for a moment. Notice how much is spinning around inside of you—a flurry of thoughts and feelings. Silence tends to bring up things we have been trying to avoid. Retreat provides a unique space to listen to God about what is really going on in your heart. Retreat also provides the unhurried space and time to hear from God regarding his will for your life.



Psalm 85:8 (NIV)

I will listen to what God the LORD says;

A Few Retreat Cautions

This might sound odd, but there are actually several common misconceptions about being on retreat. It is important to be aware of a few of these in advance so you can discern the movements of God and be receptive to his work.

RETREATS ARE NOT A PLACE TO FIX OURSELVES . . . There are no shortcuts regarding your spiritual growth. Many of us believe that if we just go on retreat, our spiritual struggles will all be fixed. Instead, we want to posture ourselves in dependence upon God and be willing to enter into the long journey of growth he has for us. As you enter into your time on retreat you may discover areas of sin or brokenness. It can be very tempting to turn your retreat into a project to fix yourself or figure things out. Trying to generate our own transformation is a move away from relationship, but opening yourself to God's transforming work is a move into relationship. On retreat you want to move into relationship!



RETREATS ARE NOT A MEANS OF ESCAPE . . . As we have discussed, escape and rest are two different things. Retreats are not a venue for escape to avoid responsibility or disregard areas of life that God actually wants you to focus on in the real world. Your retreat is not a time to detach from real life, but to attach to God in light of real life.

DO NOT BASE THE DEPTH OF YOUR RETREAT ON A CERTAIN KIND OF EXPERIENCE . . . Do not think that every spiritual experience equals a “mountaintop” experience. This kind of thinking can cause you to gloss over what God is doing because you are only looking for the grandiose. We all have self-definitions of what makes something meaningful and if our retreat does not meet this litmus test we can feel let down. This can lead us to grade our experience in comparison to others, or even to try to generate an experience on our own. Instead, be open to whatever God gives you and realize it will often be unexpected. We don’t want an experience on retreat, we want God on retreat!



Being on Retreat



*Try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there
is any hurtful way in me.*



HOW DO I BEGIN MY RETREAT?

Even with a plan in place it can often be difficult to know how we should begin. Sometimes we arrive on retreat in a posture of rest, but sometimes we arrive in a posture of anxiety. You will arrive on retreat after spending time with your family, engaging in a work meeting, etc. It is important to begin your time by centering your heart on God and offering yourself to him. Below is a suggested prayer exercise that will help you to open your heart to the Lord as you begin.

Find a quiet place to sit. Open your Bible to Psalm 139:23–24. Read the passage through one time, slowly. You will use this passage to frame your opening prayer. Now, use the steps below to guide you through your prayer. You may use the space provided to write your reflections.

STEP ONE . . . Read



Psalm 139:23a

Search me, O God, and know my heart.

After reading the passage slowly a couple of times, use the words to form your prayer. Ask God to search you and know your heart. You are simply opening your heart to him. Sit in silence for a few minutes.

**STEP TWO . . . Read****Psalm 139:23b–24a**

Try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there is any hurtful way in me.

After reading the passage slowly a couple of times ask God to show you the truth of your heart. Use the words from the Psalm to be your prayer. Ask God to show you what you are worried about or consumed by. Perhaps there is something going on at home or at work, or perhaps you are worried about your time on retreat. Be honest with him about the things that are in your heart. Finish by spending a few minutes confessing areas of sin that come up during this time.

STEP THREE . . . Read**Psalm 139:24b**

And lead me in the everlasting way.

After reading this passage slowly a couple of times ask God to lead you down his path on this retreat. Use the words of the Psalm as your prayer. Ask God to be your guide. Finish by simply listening to him and allowing him to share his will for your time.

STEP FOUR . . . Close your time in prayer by again reading



Psalm 139:23a-24b

*Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my
anxious thoughts; and see if there is any hurtful way in me. . . .*

^{24b}And lead me in the everlasting way.

Offer yourself to God and ask him to do his will. Close your time in prayer by thanking him for this graced space to be with him.

[illegible]

THE CORE OF MY RETREAT

Having opened your heart to God in this initial prayer exercise it is now time to settle into your retreat. You have crafted a plan prior to coming that is based on Your Unique Purpose for retreat. Perhaps you are going to walk through one of the Suggested Prayer Exercises or pray through the Psalms. Perhaps you will spend some time reading your Bible or writing in your journal. It's time to dive in. Remember, the goal is not to get things done, so as you enter into your time with the Lord be open to his leading. Enjoy the gift of time alone with God. As you close your time, you will notice a final prayer exercise below that will help you end your retreat well.

HOW DO I END MY RETREAT?

As your time comes to a close, it is important to be intentional about how you transition back into your everyday life. There is incredible value in taking the time to prayerfully capture what happened on your retreat. The below prayer exercise is intended to help you close your time well. We encourage you to keep your notes from this prayer exercise, so that you can return to it in the weeks and months following.

Find a quiet place to sit. Grab a journal or piece of paper to write your reflections. Spend a few minutes prayerfully examining your retreat. Use the steps below to guide you through your prayer. Feel free to write your reflections in the space provided.



STEP ONE . . . Start by reconsidering the unique purpose you came on retreat with. Was that the focus God had for you or did he take you a different direction?

STEP TWO . . . Consider what God was doing on retreat. God may have felt close. You may have felt like he spoke to you. God may have felt distant. You may feel like he was rather silent. The goal isn't to create an experience, but simply to be open to what God actually did and how you experienced him. Close by listening to him. Perhaps in this moment you will realize a way in which God was moving that you were not aware of at the time.



STEP THREE . . . In light of what God was doing, how did you respond? Honestly consider how you responded to God's promptings during your retreat. Were you open or were you resistant?

STEP FOUR . . . In closing, ask God to show you how he wants to continue to move in your life. Is there something that came up that he wants you to continue to lean into when you return home? In light of your retreat, is there something new or different that God is calling you to do? Spend several minutes listening to him. Close this time by thanking him for being with you on your retreat.



After the Retreat



*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters,
in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and pleasing to God—this is your
true and proper worship.*



WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTER MY RETREAT?

God wants to do a powerful work of transformation in your life. Our prayer is that the retreat opportunities we provide for you here at Saddleback will be used by God in this process of spiritual transformation. It is an incredible privilege and honor to be a part of God's work in the lives of his children.

Join us on a guided retreat sometime soon. You can check out all of our retreat opportunities at **www.saddleback.com/retreats**. We also encourage you to do three things when you return from your retreat:

1. Share your retreat experience with your small group, spouse, or friend.
2. Connect with someone on the Spiritual Maturity Team and share your experience. Email us at **maturity@saddleback.com** and share your story.
3. Two weeks after your retreat, take 30 minutes to read back through your "How Do I End My Retreat?" prayer exercise on page 17.





Suggested Retreat Exercises



*For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great
is his love for those who fear him*



INTRODUCTION TO RETREAT EXERCISES

These retreat exercises are designed to be guides for your time on retreat. They have been crafted to explore the five key questions mentioned in the “Unique Purpose” section previously. In light of the particular area you believe God is calling you to focus on, pick one specific exercise to utilize on your retreat. Each person will have a different experience as they walk through the retreat exercises, because God has a unique journey of transformation for all of us. The exercises will provide prompts and questions that will direct your time in prayer. Space is provided throughout the retreat exercises for you to journal your reflections. Below are a few tips to help you utilize these exercises effectively.

Don't Rush

Each person will go through the retreat exercise at a different pace. God may want you to spend more time on one particular area than another. Don't rush through the exercise. Take your time. The goal is not to get it done, but to open your heart to the work of the Holy Spirit. These exercises are not a test, but are an invitation to conversation.

Follow the Steps

There is a brief introduction at the beginning of each prayer exercise intended to establish its focus. The prayer exercises have been created with intentional steps. It may not feel like every step connects with you, but follow the process. It is fine to focus more in one area than another, but don't avoid certain steps. The prayer exercises are intended to be developmental and cohesive.



Be Honest

Each retreat exercise will involve Scripture reading. You will take time to prayerfully reflect on God's character. You will take time to share your heart with God. As we hear the truth of Scripture our heart can respond in a variety of ways. Sometimes we feel connected with the truth and sometimes we feel disconnected. Regardless of the response of our heart the goal is to enter into honest and genuine conversation with God. For example, you may read a passage of Scripture that says God is loving and you may feel thankful for this truth and encouraged by his love. In that case, the call of God is to celebrate God's love and rest in his care. However, you may hear about God's love and doubt the truth of his care or feel disconnected from his love. Perhaps you doubt his love because amidst the hardships and difficulties of life it feels like God has been distant. In that case, the call of God is to honestly share your doubt and hurt with him. The goal is not to pretend like you believe he is loving, but to share your heart with him and ask him to reveal the truth of his character to you. God doesn't want us to fake it. Prayer is not a time for illusion, but a time for reality. The retreat exercises are intended to facilitate authentic conversation with God.



RETREAT EXERCISES

Retreat Exercise 1

Is there a particular area of sin God wants you to focus on?

You have come on retreat because you believe God is calling you to repentance and transformation in a particular area of your life. Perhaps you are struggling with gossip, lust, or pride. It is imperative that you invite God into these places of sin and allow him to identify what is going on in your heart. Remember, be honest. God can handle the truth. In fact, God already knows the truth, and he is inviting you to explore it with him. Don't beat yourself up or try to fix yourself, instead, lean into God for redemption and healing. Remember, he is with you and he loves you. Use the exercise below as a guide to explore your sin with God.

STEP ONE . . . Begin your time by resting in the truth of who God is. Read the passage below, Psalm 103:1-14 (NIV). Underline words that reflect God's character. Specifically, focus on how he relates to you in your sin.



Psalm 103:1-14 (NIV)

Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so



STEP THREE . . . Read the passage below:



Mark 15:22–32 (NIV)

They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!” In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

Imagine that you are standing before Jesus as he is hanging on the cross. Imagine the pain Jesus is experiencing. Picture the crown of thorns upon his head. Picture the wounds on his body. Remember the truth that he knew no sin, and yet willingly went to the cross to take the sin of the world upon himself (2 Corinthians 5:21). As you imagine the scene, physically kneel before the cross. As you are on your knees confess the one area of sin that has brought you on retreat.



STEP FOUR . . . Continue to kneel before the cross. Imagine Jesus is no longer there. He has died. He has been resurrected. Pause and read the Bible passages below.



Romans 3:23–24 (NIV)

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.



Ephesians, 1:7–8a (NASB)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which he lavished on us.



1 Peter 2:24 (NIV)

He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Thank Jesus for his sacrifice upon the cross. Thank God for the new life you have in Jesus Christ. Thank him for his forgiveness and redemption. Spend a few minutes opening your heart to the incredible grace of God. Receive his forgiveness in this area of sin which you have confessed. If you find it hard to receive his forgiveness, because you feel guilty, honestly share that with God. Sit in silence allowing him to speak the truth of his grace and mercy into your heart.



STEP FIVE . . . Ask God to help you identify the truth of your sin. It is important to explore the dynamics of your sin with God if you hope to experience true transformation in this area of your life. Use the questions below to guide your prayerful reflection with God. Take your time and allow God to be your guide.

- God, what beliefs and desires of my heart are driving this area of sin?

- God, how has this area of sin developed during the course of my life?

- God, how has my sin impacted my life, my relationships, etc.?

- God, how have I avoided or attempted to hide this area of sin?



STEP SIX . . . Having prayerfully considered the depths of your sin, spend some time imagining life without this sin. It is important for you to get a vision for the life God has for you. He desires complete transformation and healing in this area of your life. Use the questions below to guide your reflection.

- God, what beliefs and desires would mark my heart if this area of sin was gone?

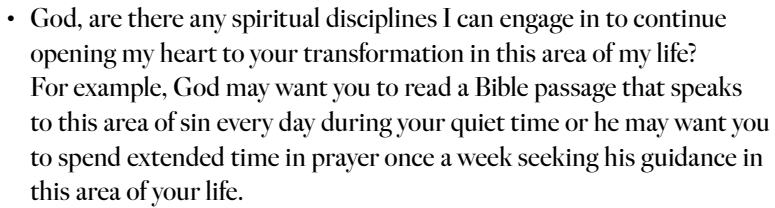
- God, what would my life look like without this sin?



STEP SEVEN . . . As you close your time it is important to consider how you can participate in God's work of transformation in this area of your life. God will be the one to bring transformation, but we do have a part to play. This is not a time to create your plan, but to ask God for his plan. Ask God to give you guidance about your role in pursuing righteousness and healing in this area of your life. Use the questions below to develop a plan of participation.

- God, are there things I need to stop doing in order to guard against temptations in this area of my life? For example, you may need to stop certain daily habits or avoid certain places.

- God, is there someone who can hold me accountable as I pursue transformation in this area of my life? For example, you may have a small group member, a friend or a spouse whom you can share this area of sin with so that they can support you.





Retreat Exercise 2

Are there life challenges or hurts that you need to share with God?

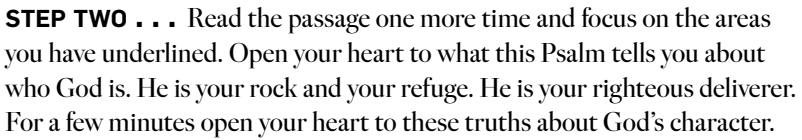
Perhaps this season of life has been overwhelming or painful. You might feel beat up, worn out or frustrated. You may even feel like God is distant during this time. Maybe it feels like you have to manage things on your own. It is in this place and for this reason that you have come on retreat. This retreat will allow you time and space to meet God amidst this difficult season of life. Don't hold back. Be honest. Remember, you can share your true feelings with God. He already knows your heart completely and loves you completely. Use the exercise below as a guide for your time in prayer.

STEP ONE . . . Begin your time by resting in the truth of who God is. Read the passage below, Psalm 31:1–5 (NIV). Underline words that reflect God's character. Specifically, focus on his care and provision.



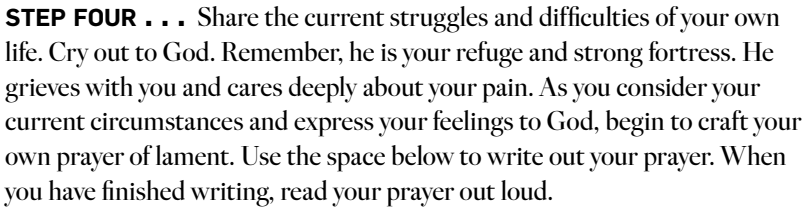
Psalm 31:1–5 (NIV)

In you, LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me. Keep me free from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, LORD, my faithful God.





Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak. Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors and an object of dread to my closest friends—those who see me on the street flee from me. I am forgotten as though I were dead; I have become like broken pottery. For I hear many whispering, “Terror on every side!” They conspire against me and plot to take my life.





STEP FIVE . . . Pause and listen to God. You have prayerfully considered His character and have voiced your hurt and frustration. It is time to listen to him. Use the questions below to guide your time of listening.

- God, how do you feel about the hurt and frustration I feel during this season of life?

- God, have I missed any ways you have been moving or speaking to me during this season?

- God, are you wanting me to learn something through this difficult season?

- God, how do you want me to respond to this season of life?

STEP SIX . . . Close your time by reading Psalm 31:19-22 (NIV) a couple of times out loud. Make the words of the Psalm your prayer. Thank God for his love and care. Thank him for his presence in your life.





Retreat Exercise 3

Is there an area of confusion or frustration in your relationship with God that you need to honestly share with him?

We all experience seasons in our spiritual life in which God feels distant. Perhaps when you pray it feels like God is a million miles away. Perhaps you have asked for something in prayer and God has not answered the way you hoped. During this retreat you will have an opportunity to honestly explore the dynamics of your relationship with God. Remember, be honest. God can handle your disappointment, frustration and doubt. The truth is that he already knows your heart fully and loves you completely (Luke 16:15, Romans 8:1-2, Romans 8:38-39). However distant he might feel he is profoundly present to you (Romans 8:26-27). Use the exercise below to guide your time with God.

STEP ONE . . . Begin your time by reading Romans 8:38-39 (NIV). Read the passage two or three times. Simply open your heart to the amazing truth that nothing can separate you from God's love. Spend a few minutes silently resting in the truth of God's love for you.



Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.



STEP TWO . . . There are seasons in our life when we don't feel like God loves us. There are times when we feel like he is distant or removed from our life. There are times when we feel hurt or wounded by him. You may be feeling disconnected or hurt by God right now. It is important for you to offer the truth of your heart to God in prayer. Spend a couple of minutes reading the two passages from the Psalm below (Psalm 13:1-2, Psalm 22:1-2 NIV). As you read you will discover you are not alone. The Psalmist experienced feelings of disconnection and angst in his relationship with God. As you read these two Psalms of lament underline the phrases or words that seem to reflect your emotions.



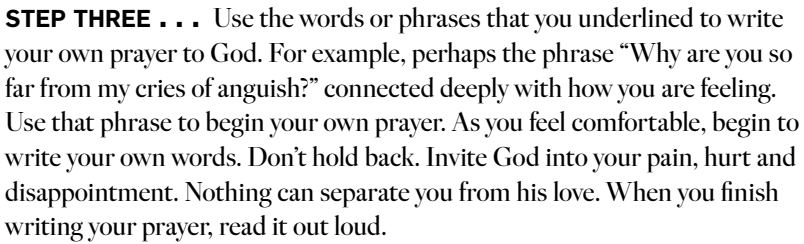
Psalm 13:1-2 (NIV)

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?



Psalm 22:1-2 (NIV)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



STEP FOUR . . . Offer space for God to respond. Remember, the Bible tells us that God hears our cries (Psalm 34:17-18). Ask God to speak his truth into these areas of hurt and discouragement. Ask God to move in compassion and grace. Spend a few minutes sitting in silence simply listening to God's response.

STEP FIVE . . . Spend some time reflecting on God's faithfulness in the past. He may still feel distant and silent right now, but it is important to pause and remember times when you were aware of his comfort and presence. Throughout Scripture God's people were called to remember God's faithfulness during times of doubt or difficulty. Use the questions below to guide your time of prayerful remembrance.

- God, when have I felt comforted or cared for by you?

- God, when have you moved in a mighty way in my life?

- God, when have you clearly answered a prayer?

STEP SIX . . . Finish this prayer exercise by reading the words of Psalm 13:5–6 (NIV). The Psalmist finished his lament with these words of praise for God’s goodness and love. You may still feel like God is distant, but offer your heart to God. Acknowledge the truth that he is a God of love, grace and mercy.



Psalm 13:5-6 (NIV)

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD's praise, for he has been good to me.

[illegible]



Retreat Exercise 4

Are you in need of God's guidance as you make a life decision?

Life is filled with opportunities and decisions. At different seasons of life we are faced with different questions. What job should I take? Who should I marry? How many kids should I have? Should I move? The list could go on. You have come on this retreat because you are currently facing a life decision of some kind. Whether it is vocational, relational, etc., you are confronted with the need to make a decision. However, you don't merely want it to be your decision, but rather you want it to be God's calling. Our life decisions should be in response to God's will not our will. Thus, it is important to spend time intentionally seeking God's will and guidance in regard to our life decisions. This retreat will provide you the opportunity to open your heart to God's calling in your life. The goal of your time today is not to find an answer, but to be receptive to God's voice. Use the exercise below to guide your time with God.

STEP ONE . . . Begin your time by reading Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) a couple of times. Open your heart to the truth that the sovereign Creator of the universe knows what he is doing in your life. He has wonderful plans for you and desires ultimate good for your life.



Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

*For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD,
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you
hope and a future."*

STEP TWO . . . You will spend time on this retreat discerning God's calling in a particular area of your life. However, before you focus on the unique life decision in front of you it is important to remember the primary calling of your life. You are called to abide in God. You are called to remain in loving dependent relationship with him. Read John 15:4–5 (ESV) a couple of times. Open your heart to the call of God to abide in him.



John 15:4-5 (ESV)

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

STEP THREE . . . Before you spend time discerning your specific life decision it is also important to remember where your identity is found. It can be tempting to find our identity in what we do, and more specifically to find our identity in the life decisions we make. However, you are not defined by what you do, but rather you are defined by what Jesus did upon the cross. Read the passage below from Galatians 4:6–7 (NIV) a couple of times. Prayerfully reflect on the truth that in Christ Jesus you have been adopted as a child of God by the Holy Spirit. Open your heart to the profound reality that you are a son or daughter of the Creator of the universe.



Galatians 4:6-7 (NIV)

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.



STEP FOUR . . . It is now time to bring your particular life decision before God. Take time to share your heart with him, but be sure to listen. Use the questions below to guide your time.

- God, what is the life decision I am faced with currently?

- God, how much time do I have remaining to make this decision?
For example, you may have an opportunity to move in with a new roommate, but they have asked that you give them an answer in the next two weeks.



- God, is there anything that obviously contradicts your will for my life as it relates to the decision or opportunity in front of me? For example, you may have the opportunity to get a job promotion, but in order to do so you would have to make unethical decisions that your boss is pressuring you to make.

- God, are there other clear callings in my life (family, work, etc.) that a particular decision would hinder or impact negatively? For example, by making a certain decision will you be forced to sacrifice needed time with your family?

- God, in what ways, if any, have you already been communicating your will in regard to this life decision? For example, you may be trying to decide whether to marry your longtime girlfriend and you have been encouraged by several mentors and close Christian friends to move forward in getting engaged.

STEP FIVE . . . Every life decision has multiple consequences depending on the choice we make. Take the time to weigh the positive and negative consequences related to the competing choices you can make. Write down a list of positives and negatives in columns in the space below. For example, you may be faced with taking a new job opportunity or staying in your current job. In this case, you would make one column for your current job and one for the new job opportunity with a list of positives and negatives under each one. When you are finished share your list with God. Allow him time and space to offer his feedback.

[illegible]



STEP SIX . . . Pause and re-center your heart in God. We want the choices we make in life to be birthed from an abiding relationship with the Father and to be grounded in our identity as children of God. Take a few minutes to allow God to search the beliefs and desires of your heart as it relates to the opportunity in front of you. Use the questions below to guide your time of discernment.

- God, am I tempted to try and find ultimate happiness and satisfaction in a particular role, opportunity, etc., involved in this life decision?

- God, am I tempted to find my identity in a particular role, opportunity, etc., related to this life decision?



STEP SEVEN . . . Take a few minutes to ask God what your process of discernment has revealed thus far. It is important to pause and listen to him. Use the questions below to guide your prayerful reflection.

- God, does a particular option that I am faced with clearly go against your will?

- God, do the positives or negatives clearly reveal a wise decision?

- God, am I clearly tempted to make a particular decision for unhealthy reasons and not for your glory?

STEP EIGHT . . . Take a few minutes to prayerfully offer the outcome of your decision to God. Spend several minutes sitting in silence listening to God. Use the words of 1 Samuel 3:10b (NIV), “**Speak, for your servant is listening,**” to be your prayer. Ask God to give you guidance and direction. If you notice you are getting distracted, simply repeat the words of 1 Samuel 3:10b in order to refocus on God. If you discern God speaking and providing clarity on your decision write down what he says. If you feel God is still silent don’t come to a conclusion on your own or try and force it, but rather allow him to respond how he will.

[illegible]

STEP NINE . . . Close your time by rereading the passage below from Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) a couple of times. Remember, God has a plan for your life. He knows what he is doing. He loves you and cares for you.



Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD,
“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you
hope and a future.”*

If you finished this retreat with an answer regarding your life decision, praise God. Thank him for clarity and confirmation. Commit your decision to him and ask that your decision would glorify his name. If you finished this retreat and still feel like you are lacking clarity and that God remained silent, do not despair. Rather, create a plan to continue prayerfully listening for God's answer for the duration of the time you have remaining to make your decision. Thank God for his presence with you today and ask that he would provide wisdom and guidance as you walk forward in discerning his will for this particular area of your life.



Retreat Exercise 5

Is God calling you to simply rest in him because your life is busy and hectic?

Amidst busy and hectic lives, it can be easy to lose our focus on God. God calls us to constantly rest in him. However, we can easily forgo our posture of resting in God as we go about daily tasks and responsibilities. At times we may pause and notice that our world has been so dominated by the demands of our life that we have not been attentive to God's work and presence in our life. Perhaps you are coming on this retreat in such a place. You are tired and worn out by the burdens of daily life. You have been consumed by doing. This retreat will provide an opportunity for you to hand your burdens over to God and rest in him. This will be a time for you to stop focusing on all that you are doing and to focus on what God is doing. Use the exercise below to guide your time with the Lord.

STEP ONE . . . Begin your time by hearing Jesus' invitation to rest in him. Read the passage below from Matthew 11:28–29 (NIV) a couple of times slowly. Jesus invites us to rest in him. Our relationship with him is not based on effort or striving, but on his loving reception of us. Open your heart to the warm and comforting invitation of Jesus.



Matthew 11:28–29 (NIV)

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”



STEP FOUR . . . Spend a few minutes opening your heart to God's work in your life. Often when we are living a fast-paced lifestyle we are not attentive to what God is doing. You may not think God has been speaking or moving in your life, but he has. Use the questions below to explore how God has been moving in your life recently. This should be a time of attentive listening. If you find yourself distracted during this time read Matthew 11:28-29 to refocus your heart on God.

- God, are there ways you have been moving in my life that I have been aware of?

- God, are there ways you have been moving in my life that I have not been aware of?



- God, in what way has my rhythm of life hindered my attentiveness to what you are doing?

- God, how can I be more receptive to your work in my life?

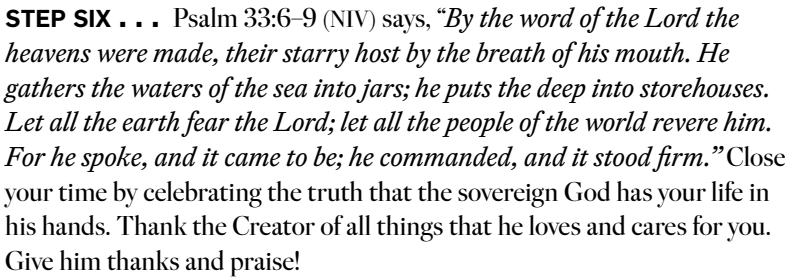


STEP FIVE . . . The goal is to become the kind of person who rests in God throughout all the demands and responsibilities of your life. Prayerfully consider what it would look like to embrace a posture of rest in your daily life. Use the questions below to guide your process of discernment.

- God, what does my daily schedule look like right now?

God, are there areas of my daily life that need to be changed or stopped in order to slow down and rest in you?

- God, are there certain spiritual disciplines I can do on a daily basis to intentionally rest in you? (For example, you may spend a few minutes each morning reading Matthew 11:28–29 or you may take a half hour during your lunch break every week to go on a walk with God and share your burdens with him.)





Psalm's for Prayers



*Turn your ear to me; when I call,
answer me quickly.*



INTRODUCTION TO PSALMS FOR PRAYER

On retreat it can be hard to get started in prayer. Often we have a difficult time putting words to our emotions. At times we feel hesitant to honestly articulate our feelings because we don't think they are appropriate for prayer. The good news is that God has given us the book of Psalms as a guide. The prayers found in the Psalms are marked by authentic human emotion and profound theological reflection on God's character. The Psalms give us freedom to truly be genuine in prayer, and encounter the Triune God. In the Psalms we discover different themes. On the following pages you will find a list of Psalms under four major themes—lament, praise, thanksgiving and confession. This is not an exhaustive list, but is intended to help you get started. Before you go on retreat take some time to find a Psalm that can serve as a guide for prayer. If you are not sure what these themes refer to we have briefly defined them for you below.

- ***Psalms of Lament*** — Prayers of mourning and complaint
- ***Psalms of Praise*** — Prayers of praise and worship
- ***Psalms of Thanksgiving*** — Prayers of thanksgiving and gratitude
- ***Psalms of Confession*** — Prayers of confessing sin



PSALMS OF LAMENT

PSALM 13 (NIV)

- ¹ *How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?*
- ² *How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?*
- ³ *Look on me and answer, LORD my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;
and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.*
- ⁵ *But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.*
- ⁶ *I will sing the LORD's praise,
for he has been good to me.*

PSALM 22 (NIV)

- ¹ *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?*
- ² *My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.*
- ³ *Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.*
- ⁴ *In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.*
- ⁵ *To you they cried out and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.*

Psalm of Lament



- ⁶ *But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.*
- ⁷ *All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.*
- ⁸ *“He trusts in the LORD,” they say,
“let the LORD rescue him.
Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him.”*
- ⁹ *Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you, even at my mother’s breast.*
- ¹⁰ *From birth I was cast on you;
from my mother’s womb you have been my God.*
- ¹¹ *Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.*
- ¹² *Many bulls surround me;
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.*
- ¹³ *Roaring lions that tear their prey
open their mouths wide against me.*
- ¹⁴ *I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.*
- ¹⁵ *My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.*
- ¹⁶ *Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.*
- ¹⁷ *All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.*
- ¹⁸ *They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.*



- ¹⁹ *But you, LORD, do not be far from me.
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.*
- ²⁰ *Deliver me from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dogs.*
- ²¹ *Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.*
- ²² *I will declare your name to my people;
in the assembly I will praise you.*
- ²³ *You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!*
- ²⁴ *For he has not despised or scorned
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.*
- ²⁵ *From you comes the theme of my praise in the
great assembly;
before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows.*
- ²⁶ *The poor will eat and be satisfied;
those who seek the LORD will praise him—
may your hearts live forever!*
- ²⁷ *All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,*
- ²⁸ *for dominion belongs to the LORD
and he rules over the nations.*



- ²⁹ *All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—
those who cannot keep themselves alive.*
- ³⁰ *Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the LORD.*
- ³¹ *They will proclaim his righteousness,
declaring to a people yet unborn:
He has done it!*

PSALM 42 (NIV)

- ¹ *As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.*
- ² *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?*
- ³ *My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”*
- ⁴ *These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.*
- ⁵ *Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.*

Psalm of Lament



⁶ *My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
from the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.*

⁷ *Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;
all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.*

⁸ *By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.*

⁹ *I say to God my Rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?”*

¹⁰ *My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”*

¹¹ *Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.*

PSALM 102 (NIV)

¹ *Hear my prayer, LORD;
let my cry for help come to you.*

² *Do not hide your face from me
when I am in distress.
Turn your ear to me;
when I call, answer me quickly.*

Psalm of Lament





- ³ *For my days vanish like smoke;
my bones burn like glowing embers.*
- ⁴ *My heart is blighted and withered like grass;
I forget to eat my food.*
- ⁵ *In my distress I groan aloud
and am reduced to skin and bones.*
- ⁶ *I am like a desert owl,
like an owl among the ruins.*
- ⁷ *I lie awake; I have become
like a bird alone on a roof.*
- ⁸ *All day long my enemies taunt me;
those who rail against me use my name as a curse.*
- ⁹ *For I eat ashes as my food
and mingle my drink with tears*
- ¹⁰ *because of your great wrath,
for you have taken me up and thrown me aside.*
- ¹¹ *My days are like the evening shadow;
I wither away like grass.*
- ¹² *But you, LORD, sit enthroned forever;
your renown endures through all generations.*
- ¹³ *You will arise and have compassion on Zion,
for it is time to show favor to her;
the appointed time has come.*
- ¹⁴ *For her stones are dear to your servants;
her very dust moves them to pity.*
- ¹⁵ *The nations will fear the name of the LORD,
all the kings of the earth will revere your glory.*
- ¹⁶ *For the LORD will rebuild Zion
and appear in his glory.*
- ¹⁷ *He will respond to the prayer of the destitute;
he will not despise their plea.*



- ¹⁸ *Let this be written for a future generation,
that a people not yet created may praise the LORD:*
- ¹⁹ *“The LORD looked down from his sanctuary on high,
from heaven he viewed the earth,
²⁰ to hear the groans of the prisoners
and release those condemned to death.”*
- ²¹ *So the name of the LORD will be declared in Zion
and his praise in Jerusalem*
- ²² *when the peoples and the kingdoms
assemble to worship the LORD.*
- ²³ *In the course of my life he broke my strength;
he cut short my days.*
- ²⁴ *So I said:*
*“Do not take me away, my God, in the midst of my days;
your years go on through all generations.*
- ²⁵ *In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.*
- ²⁶ *They will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.
Like clothing you will change them
and they will be discarded.*
- ²⁷ *But you remain the same,
and your years will never end.*
- ²⁸ *The children of your servants will live in your presence;
their descendants will be established before you.”*



PSALMS OF PRAISE

PSALM 8 (NIV)

- ¹ *LORD, our LORD,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!*
- You have set your glory
in the heavens.*
- ² *Through the praise of children and infants
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.*
- ³ *When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,*
- ⁴ *what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?*
- ⁵ *You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honor.*
- ⁶ *You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet:*
- ⁷ *all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,*
- ⁸ *the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.*
- ⁹ *LORD, our LORD,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

Psalm of Praise

**PSALM 29 (NIV)**

- ¹ *Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.*
- ² *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.*
- ³ *The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD thunders over the mighty waters.*
- ⁴ *The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is majestic.*
- ⁵ *The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.*
- ⁶ *He makes Lebanon leap like a calf,
Sirion like a young wild ox.*
- ⁷ *The voice of the LORD strikes
with flashes of lightning.*
- ⁸ *The voice of the LORD shakes the desert;
the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh.*
- ⁹ *The voice of the LORD twists the oaks
and strips the forests bare.
And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"*
- ¹⁰ *The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD is enthroned as King forever.*
- ¹¹ *The LORD gives strength to his people;
the LORD blesses his people with peace.*

Psalm of Praise



PSALM 33 (NIV)

- ¹ *Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous;
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.*
- ² *Praise the LORD with the harp;
make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.*
- ³ *Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully, and shout for joy.*
- ⁴ *For the word of the LORD is right and true;
he is faithful in all he does.*
- ⁵ *The LORD loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.*
- ⁶ *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.*
- ⁷ *He gathers the waters of the sea into jars;
he puts the deep into storehouses.*
- ⁸ *Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the people of the world revere him.*
- ⁹ *For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.*
- ¹⁰ *The LORD foils the plans of the nations;
he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.*
- ¹¹ *But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever,
the purposes of his heart through all generations.*
- ¹² *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people he chose for his inheritance.*
- ¹³ *From heaven the LORD looks down
and sees all mankind;*
- ¹⁴ *from his dwelling place he watches
all who live on earth—*
- ¹⁵ *he who forms the hearts of all,
who considers everything they do.*

Psalm of Praise



- ¹⁶ *No king is saved by the size of his army;
no warrior escapes by his great strength.*
- ¹⁷ *A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;
despite all its great strength it cannot save.*
- ¹⁸ *But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,*
- ¹⁹ *to deliver them from death
and keep them alive in famine.*
- ²⁰ *We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.*
- ²¹ *In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.*
- ²² *May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,
even as we put our hope in you.*

Psalm 47 (NIV)

- ¹ *Clap your hands, all you nations;
shout to God with cries of joy.*
- ² *For the LORD Most High is awesome,
the great King over all the earth.*
- ³ *He subdued nations under us,
peoples under our feet.*
- ⁴ *He chose our inheritance for us,
the pride of Jacob, whom he loved.*
- ⁵ *God has ascended amid shouts of joy,
the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets.*
- ⁶ *Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing praises.*
- ⁷ *For God is the King of all the earth;
sing to him a psalm of praise.*

Psalm of Praise



- ⁸ *God reigns over the nations;
God is seated on his holy throne.*
- ⁹ *The nobles of the nations assemble
as the people of the God of Abraham,
for the kings of the earth belong to God;
he is greatly exalted.*

Psalm 100 (NIV)

- ¹ *Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.*
- ² *Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.*
- ³ *Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*
- ⁴ *Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.*
- ⁵ *For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

PSALM 117 (NIV)

- ¹ *Praise the LORD, all you nations;
extol him, all you peoples.*
- ² *For great is his love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.*

Praise the LORD.

Psalm of Praise





PSALMS OF THANKSGIVING

PSALM 30 (NIV)

- ¹ *I will exalt you, LORD,
for you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.*
- ² *LORD my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.*
- ³ *You, LORD, brought me up from the realm of the dead;
you spared me from going down to the pit.*
- ⁴ *Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people;
praise his holy name.*
- ⁵ *For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.*
- ⁶ *When I felt secure, I said,
“I will never be shaken.”*
- ⁷ *LORD, when you favored me,
you made my royal mountain stand firm;
but when you hid your face,
I was dismayed.*
- ⁸ *To you, LORD, I called;
to the LORD I cried for mercy:*
- ⁹ *“What is gained if I am silenced,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it proclaim your faithfulness?*
- ¹⁰ *Hear, LORD, and be merciful to me;
LORD, be my help. ”*
- ¹¹ *You turned my wailing into dancing;
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,*

Psalms of Thanksgiving





¹² *that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.
LORD my God, I will praise you forever.*

PSALM 92 (NIV)

¹ *It is good to praise the LORD
and make music to your name, O Most High,*
² *proclaiming your love in the morning
and your faithfulness at night,*
³ *to the music of the ten-stringed lyre
and the melody of the harp.*
⁴ *For you make me glad by your deeds, LORD;
I sing for joy at what your hands have done.*
⁵ *How great are your works, LORD,
how profound your thoughts!*
⁶ *Senseless people do not know,
fools do not understand,*
⁷ *that though the wicked spring up like grass
and all evildoers flourish,
they will be destroyed forever.*
⁸ *But you, LORD, are forever exalted.*
⁹ *For surely your enemies, LORD,
surely your enemies will perish;
all evildoers will be scattered.*
¹⁰ *You have exalted my horn like that of a wild ox;
fine oils have been poured on me.*
¹¹ *My eyes have seen the defeat of my adversaries;
my ears have heard the rout of my wicked foes.*
¹² *The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;*
¹³ *planted in the house of the LORD,
they will flourish in the courts of our God.*

Psalms of Thanksgiving





- ¹⁴ *They will still bear fruit in old age,
they will stay fresh and green,*
¹⁵ *proclaiming, “The LORD is upright;
he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.”*

Psalm 116 (NIV)

- ¹ *I love the LORD, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.*
² *Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.*
³ *The cords of death entangled me,
the anguish of the grave came over me;
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.*
⁴ *Then I called on the name of the LORD:
“LORD, save me!”*
⁵ *The LORD is gracious and righteous;
our God is full of compassion.*
⁶ *The LORD protects the unwary;
when I was brought low, he saved me.*
⁷ *Return to your rest, my soul,
for the LORD has been good to you.*
⁸ *For you, LORD, have delivered me from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling,*
⁹ *that I may walk before the LORD
in the land of the living.*
¹⁰ *I trusted in the LORD when I said,
“I am greatly afflicted”;*
¹¹ *in my alarm I said,
“Everyone is a liar.”*
¹² *What shall I return to the LORD
for all his goodness to me?*

Psalms of Thanksgiving



- ¹³ *I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD.*
- ¹⁴ *I will fulfill my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people.*
- ¹⁵ *Precious in the sight of the LORD
is the death of his faithful servants.*
- ¹⁶ *Truly I am your servant, LORD;
I serve you just as my mother did;
you have freed me from my chains.*
- ¹⁷ *I will sacrifice a thank offering to you
and call on the name of the LORD.*
- ¹⁸ *I will fulfill my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people,*
- ¹⁹ *in the courts of the house of the LORD—
in your midst, Jerusalem.*
- Praise the LORD.*

Psalm 118 (NIV)

- ¹ *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.*
- ² *Let Israel say:
“His love endures forever.”*
- ³ *Let the house of Aaron say:
“His love endures forever.”*
- ⁴ *Let those who fear the LORD say:
“His love endures forever.”*
- ⁵ *When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD;
he brought me into a spacious place.*
- ⁶ *The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?*
- ⁷ *The LORD is with me; he is my helper.
I look in triumph on my enemies.*

Psalms of Thanksgiving





- ⁸ *It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in humans.*
- ⁹ *It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in princes.*
- ¹⁰ *All the nations surrounded me,
but in the name of the LORD I cut them down.*
- ¹¹ *They surrounded me on every side,
but in the name of the LORD I cut them down.*
- ¹² *They swarmed around me like bees,
but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns;
in the name of the LORD I cut them down.*
- ¹³ *I was pushed back and about to fall,
but the LORD helped me.*
- ¹⁴ *The LORD is my strength and my defense;
he has become my salvation.*
- ¹⁵ *Shouts of joy and victory
resound in the tents of the righteous:
“The LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!”*
- ¹⁶ *The LORD’s right hand is lifted high;
the LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!”*
- ¹⁷ *I will not die but live,
and will proclaim what the LORD has done.*
- ¹⁸ *The LORD has chastened me severely,
but he has not given me over to death.*
- ¹⁹ *Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.*
- ²⁰ *This is the gate of the LORD
through which the righteous may enter.*
- ²¹ *I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.*
- ²² *The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;*
- ²³ *the LORD has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.*

Psalms of Thanksgiving



- ²⁴ *The LORD has done it this very day;
let us rejoice today and be glad.*
- ²⁵ *LORD, save us!
LORD, grant us success!*
- ²⁶ *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.
From the house of the LORD we bless you.*
- ²⁷ *The LORD is God,
and he has made his light shine on us.
With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession
up to the horns of the altar.*
- ²⁸ *You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.*
- ²⁹ *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.*

Psalms of Thanksgiving



PSALMS OF CONFESSION

PSALM 32 (NIV)

- ¹ *Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.*
- ² *Blessed is the one
whose sin the LORD does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.*
- ³ *When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.*
- ⁴ *For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.*
- ⁵ *Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD."
And you forgave
the guilt of my sin.*
- ⁶ *Therefore let all the faithful pray to you
while you may be found;
surely the rising of the mighty waters
will not reach them.*
- ⁷ *You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.*

Psalms of Confession



- ⁸ *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.*
- ⁹ *Do not be like the horse or the mule,
which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit and bridle
or they will not come to you.*
- ¹⁰ *Many are the woes of the wicked,
but the LORD's unfailing love
surrounds the one who trusts in him.*
- ¹¹ *Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart!*

Psalm 38 (NIV)

- ¹ *LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your wrath.*
- ² *Your arrows have pierced me,
and your hand has come down on me.*
- ³ *Because of your wrath there is no health in my body;
there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin.*
- ⁴ *My guilt has overwhelmed me
like a burden too heavy to bear.*
- ⁵ *My wounds fester and are loathsome
because of my sinful folly.*
- ⁶ *I am bowed down and brought very low;
all day long I go about mourning.*
- ⁷ *My back is filled with searing pain;
there is no health in my body.*
- ⁸ *I am feeble and utterly crushed;
I groan in anguish of heart.*

Psalms of Confession



- ⁹ *All my longings lie open before you, LORD;
my sighing is not hidden from you.*
- ¹⁰ *My heart pounds, my strength fails me;
even the light has gone from my eyes.*
- ¹¹ *My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds;
my neighbors stay far away.*
- ¹² *Those who want to kill me set their traps,
those who would harm me talk of my ruin;
all day long they scheme and lie.*
- ¹³ *I am like the deaf, who cannot hear,
like the mute, who cannot speak;*
- ¹⁴ *I have become like one who does not hear,
whose mouth can offer no reply.*
- ¹⁵ *LORD, I wait for you;
you will answer, LORD my God.*
- ¹⁶ *For I said, "Do not let them gloat
or exalt themselves over me when my feet slip."*
- ¹⁷ *For I am about to fall,
and my pain is ever with me.*
- ¹⁸ *I confess my iniquity;
I am troubled by my sin.*
- ¹⁹ *Many have become my enemies without cause;
those who hate me without reason are numerous.*
- ²⁰ *Those who repay my good with evil
lodge accusations against me,
though I seek only to do what is good.*
- ²¹ *LORD, do not forsake me;
do not be far from me, my God.*
- ²² *Come quickly to help me,
my LORD and my Savior.*

**Psalm 51 (NIV)**

- ¹ *Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.*
- ² *Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.*
- ³ *For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.*
- ⁴ *Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.*
- ⁵ *Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*
- ⁶ *Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.*
- ⁷ *Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*
- ⁸ *Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.*
- ⁹ *Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.*
- ¹⁰ *Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*
- ¹¹ *Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*
- ¹² *Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

Psalms of Confession



- ¹³ *Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.*
- ¹⁴ *Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.*
- ¹⁵ *Open my lips, LORD,
and my mouth will declare your praise.*
- ¹⁶ *You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.*
- ¹⁷ *My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.*
- ¹⁸ *May it please you to prosper Zion,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.*
- ¹⁹ *Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,
in burnt offerings offered whole;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.*

Psalms of Confession



Journal



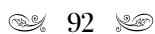
*Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path.*











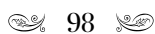










































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