



Planning a Simple Personal Retreat

By Mary Younger

I live an active life: wife, mother, grandmother, homemaker, community activities, involvement in ministry, and caretaker. I garden, sew, read, and study the Bible in my spare time. Just writing this makes me pant and wonder how I keep it all together.

Your life is just as busy, plus you're probably working a full-time or part-time job. On any given Friday night, we collapse on the couch and yearn for some time alone to clear the rubble out of our heads and gain some peace. When life overwhelms, it is time to "come apart before you come apart," some wise person said.

A simple personal retreat can restore our sanity, spiritual life, and peace of mind. The ideas below can help organize a day with the Lord.

Preparing for Your Day Away

Set a date to take a personal (mental health) day, even though the minutia of life demands otherwise.

Find a SAFE place preferably away from your home: beach, mountains, a friend's guest house, or a quiet room at church. One day I took my car and parked on a Central California canal bank. (That only worked until I needed a bathroom.)

Unplug from the world as much as possible. There is only one person you're going to talk with this day, God, and he doesn't have a cell phone, tablet, or computer. Be old school for a day.

Take items that enrich you: a flower, music, paper or a journal, your favorite Bible, and a book of devotions. Keep the day simple: a sack lunch to share with Jesus, a comfortable chair, and appropriate clothing. My sweatshirt roasted me when it was 87 degrees in the mountains one fall day.

A Simple Plan For Your Personal Retreat

- Unload your mind. Using only one sentence per entry, list all the problems, sorrows, or emotions you are experiencing on paper. Then, fold the paper and set it aside.
- Sit back and be quiet for 20 minutes: Listen to the quiet, the birds, or distant noises. Be aware of your surroundings and breathe deeply as you relax and settle into the stillness.
- Begin to concentrate on and praise God's character qualities. Express gratitude for Christ's sacrifice and the Father's mercy toward you. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your mind and heart, and open your ears to his voice. Psalm 103
- Spend time in confession. Allow the Holy Spirit to bring your sins of omission and commission to the surface. Lay them at the foot of the Cross and receive forgiveness and peace from the Lord. I John 1:9

- Open God's word and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your reading. The Psalms are a great place to start: Psalm 37; Psalm 46:1-2; Psalm 62; Psalm 139; Psalm 143:7-12.
- Have lunch with Jesus, not with other people. Talk out loud to him and enjoy his company. Listen for his answers and input. I know it sounds weird, but it works. He is an excellent companion and will stimulate your thinking.
- After lunch, rest. Take a nap, go on a walk, sit and do nothing. Let your soul unwind and rest in his presence.
- In the afternoon, retrieve your "problem list" and record any insights, scriptural encouragement, commands, or direction the Lord has revealed throughout the day. Pray over each item, praising him for his intervention and resolution in the future. Leave the outcome with the Lover of your soul and receive the deep-felt peace of relinquishment.
- End the day with rejoicing. Sit again in quietness, meditating on the graciousness God has shown you. Psalm 138.

My prayer for you: Dearest Lord, give the reader a day alone with you. Open her heart to your tender care and fill her mind with yourself. Draw her close to your heart, wrap your arms around her wounded emotions and pour out your love. Deepen her faith as she watches you work in the lives of those she loves. Thank you for desiring to meet us when we turn to you. Amen.

Mary Younger

Mary has spent 40 plus years in Women's Ministry, first as an attendee learning about God and the Bible, then serving coffee and setting up chairs. As she grew spiritually, the Lord called her into leadership. Mary served 18 years as a volunteer before joining the staff of RiverLakes Community Church in Bakersfield, CA. She served for 18 years as Director of Women's Ministries and Service Ministries.

Mary loves to help women turn biblical knowledge into practical application for their everyday life. She has a heart for leaders and loves to mentor them. Mary is married to Doug. In retirement, they enjoy traveling across the United States and Canada. They have three children, nine grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. She loves to read, sew and teach. You may contact Mary at myounger.1050@yahoo.com

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