

Preparing for Your Prayer Retreat

"Being a disciple of Jesus Christ affirms the unity of the present-day Christian with those who walked beside Jesus during His incarnation. To be His disciple then was to be with Him, to learn to be like Him. It was to be His student or apprentice in kingdom living. His disciples heard what He said and observed what He did. Then, under His direction, they simply began to say and to do the same things. They did so *imperfectly but progressively*. As He taught, "Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40).

Dallas Willard

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One of the goals of this retreat is not simply to hear and glean more information **about** God, but to grow **in** the life-changing grace of God, i.e., intentional spiritual formation. As you take time to behold the Lord, the Holy Spirit will mold and increase in you the character of Christ (2 Cor. 3: 17, 18). Following are some recommendations that may help intentionalize and maximize your time at this retreat.

(1) Select & Practice a Spiritual Discipline

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| * meditating on Scripture | *listening to God's voice |
| * centering prayer | *solitude and silence |
| * prayer of relinquishment | *fasting and asking |

(2) Identify

>> a repetitive, besetting sin you want to "put off" and bring to the cross (He. 12: 1-3; Ro. 6:11-14; Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:5-10)

» a deficiency or flaw in your character you want to see changed, e.g., impatience, harshness, worry, a critical spirit. Memorize Scriptures that highlight the fruit of the Spirit, for example, "gentleness:" Phil. 4:5; 1 Cor. 4:21; Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:24,25.

(3) Identify

A distortion in your spiritual life you want to overcome (an incorrect, unhealthy understanding & practice of the Christian life). Typically, these distortions trace to family of origin issues, emotional abuse, or unhealthy modeling.

» inability to believe and receive unconditional forgiveness

>> perception of God as an angry, harsh judge

>> obsessively justifying/proving myself through performance

>> neurotic perfectionism

>> disappointment or anger towards the Lord

>> chronic doubt

(4) Identify & Write Out a Question or Decision for which you Seek an Answer

- » vocational change, pioneering a new ministry, healing for a troubled marriage
- » stand on Scriptural promises for guidance: Ps. 32:8; Prov. 3:5, 6; Is. 30: 19-21
- » fast a meal, meditate on Ps. 5: 1-3, and bring your request before the Lord

(5) Do Some Serious "Excavation" of Stones Hindering Your Spiritual Path. What do you regularly "bump up against" or trip over as you walk as a disciple of Jesus? What obstacles to growth might you need to deal with?

- my own obsessive, type-A, project-driven personality
- spending more time serving than seeking God
- unresolved resentment or bitterness in a relationship
- fear: inability to trust in and submit to God's will
- ambition: too much ego
- distractions in the culture (e.g., T.V., internet, media, malls, money)
- _____?

(6) Take time to "stand in the gap" (intercede) for something specific the Lord puts on your heart, e.g., a friend or acquaintance in trouble, a church/ministry in crisis, an unreached people group, the persecuted church, the unsaved (Luke 18:1-8; Romans 8:26, 27).

"We should never forget that intensive training away from 'ordinary life' is exactly what Jesus did in the spiritual formation of the selected few who were to be his shock troops, his 'green berets' in world revolution. He gave them almost three years of special training away from their ordinary life.

We must flatly say that one of the greatest contemporary barriers to meaningful spiritual formation in Christlikeness is overconfidence in the spiritual efficacy of 'regular church services, of whatever kind they may be. Though they are vital, they are not enough.

Individuals and local congregations of disciples must discover and effectively implement whatever is required to bring about the inner transformation of those who have really become apprentices of Jesus and who really do gather in immersion in the Trinitarian presence. Jesus did not give us a plan for spiritual formation that will fail, and He has the resources to see to it that it does not."

Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, pp. 249-250