

A Suggested Format for a Day of Prayer/Spiritual Retreat

(an adaption of Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*)
from *Essential Spirituality* by Gordon T. Smith

In some respects, a retreat is an extension and expansion of our daily prayers. But, with more time, we can respond more deliberately to the presence of God and his Word. It is helpful to approach a day of prayer or a spiritual retreat well prepared. Have a plan. It is also good to set a purpose from the beginning. Will your retreat be an extended prayer time with God? Or, are you seeking a word of direction or guidance from the Lord?

Bring the following resources for the retreat:

- A Bible
- An unused notebook to serve as a journal
- Worship music
- On longer retreats, a devotional classic (see below for suggestions)

Think in terms of prayer periods of 45-60 minutes. For each period, follow this basic format:

Sing a worship song or read a psalm, focus on God, reflect on Scripture for the theme of the day or phase of the retreat.
Conclude each prayer period with a few comments in your journal, describing your impressions, addressing God and telling him what is happening in prayer and what you hear him saying.

For a one to two-day retreat, divide the time into four equal time periods or phases.

Suggested Devotional Classics for Spiritual Reading

St. Augustine *Confessions*.

St. Thomas à Kempis *The Imitation of Christ*.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer *Life Together*, and *The Cost of Discipleship*.

Thomas Merton *New Seeds of Contemplation*.

A.W. Tozer *Knowledge of the Holy*, *The Divine Conquest*, and *The Pursuit of God*

PHASE ONE: THANKSGIVING AND REMEMBRANCE

After reading appropriate Scripture, reflect on it and list the evidences of God's goodness. Recall the circumstances of your conversion and your call to ministry or to the vocation through which you serve God. Enumerate God's blessings to you.

Suggested Scripture: Psalms 28, 63, 84; Romans 8:28-39

PHASE TWO: KNOWING OURSELVES

Acknowledge who you are before God. Be honest and open. Clear a path between yourself and God so that he can show you matters concerning yourself that He wants you to see.

Reflect on the joys and sorrows of recent days and weeks; seek evidence of the Spirit's work in your life and his call to growth and maturity. Meditate on these experiences of God at work in your life, confessing sin and shortcomings, and acknowledging God's grace wherever he gave strength, perseverance and joy.

Suggested Scripture: Matthew 5-7; Ephesians 4:17-5:21; Colossians 3

PHASE THREE: KNOWING CHRIST

Seek to know Christ more fully, so that you might love him more deeply and serve him more eagerly and effectively. Be drawn to Christ as he is revealed through Scripture. If there is a word of guidance or direction to be received, it will likely come during this phase of our prayers.

Suggested Scripture: John 6:1-14, 6:16-24, 11:17-44; Philippians 2:1-11; Hebrews 4:14-16.

PHASE FOUR: KNOWING CHRIST

Hear again the Word of Christ to be his disciple and servant; reflect on the unique circumstances of that call in response to the retreat; make a fresh commitment to be faithful to that call and to your identity in Christ.

Suggested Scripture: John 13:1-17, 15:7-17; 2 Corinthians 5:16-6:2; Philippians 3:7-4:1