

# Twelve Steps to an Effective Personal Prayer Retreat

*Right now: Pray.*

## What to Do on A Personal Prayer Retreat

### What Is A Personal Prayer Retreat?

A personal prayer retreat is a time you set aside to go away to be alone with God. It is usually recommended spending three days and two nights away from everyday life, the stresses of society, the distraction of technology, and the pace of life. Prayer retreats are your chance to ask the Lord questions, seek His will for your life's work, soak up God's Word, and enjoy the beautiful intimacy of spending time with your Heavenly Father.

### Where to Take a Prayer Retreat

You can take a prayer retreat in the wilderness, in a rented room, at a retreat center, or anywhere that you can escape distraction and reserve time for you to be alone with God. Once you've chosen where you will stay and reserved your dates, you can begin asking the Lord to prepare your heart and for His Spirit to speak to you and to refresh you during your retreat.

### What to Bring on Your Prayer Retreat

Before your retreat, gather your Bible, a journal, and anything you will need to help you focus on God, His presence, and resting in Him.

### Step 1: Go to your retreat site and rest.

That was the counsel of Jesus to the apostles:

*“The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even*

*have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place" (Mark 6:30-32).*

Life has a way of depleting you if you do not take time to rest. One of the most powerful outcomes of prayer retreats is how God uses them to sustain weary, thirsty men and women and reinvigorate them for the life road ahead.

## **Step 2: Pray for your retreat.**

This is one of our most precious Bible promises. *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."* (James 1:5)

Start your retreat by giving the time to the Lord and asking Him to direct you, speak to you, and give you wisdom.

## **Step 3: Plan your retreat.**

Because this time is precious, you will want to be intentional about how you spend it during your retreat.

Proverbs 14:22 promises that *"those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness."*

## **Step 4: Repent of your sins.**

Sin will obstruct your receiving God's guidance or enjoying His fellowship. So, first, repent and receive His cleansing.

Jesus said, *"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me"* (Rev. 3:19, 20).

Verse 20 is often used as a salvation verse, but it speaks more directly to Christ's desire for fellowship with the believer. He is knocking on the door of your heart. Repenting of your sins assures He will enter the door of intimate fellowship with you, ready to communicate and guide.

## **Step 5. Thankfully review how God has been working.**

You may want to list the many ways God has blessed you. Then, as you recognize God's work in your life and provision in your ministry, spend time thanking Him.

Psalm 145:1-7

## **Step 6: Submit to God's plans for you.**

The title of this step is massively obvious. To many times we make our plans and take them to God expecting Him to change His plans and adopt ours...as if we can do better than Him. This is pride at its finest. Submit yourself to the Lord...let Him direct you.

*"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD'S purpose that prevails."  
(Proverbs 19:21)*

## **Step 7: Devour the Word of God and take notes.**

Often God guides us directly from His word. *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).*

Specific books of the Bible may meet specific needs as you practice the discipline of prayer retreats.

## **Step 8: Write down your specific issues and questions.**

What are the specific issues and questions about which you really need to hear from God? It may be helpful to consider three categories of issues and questions: *personal, family, and life (maybe even ministry)*. The most important question for you to consider is: What is God's vision for you, or what is God's vision for your work, or what is God's vision for your life calling (ministry)?

*"1Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:1-2*

## **Step 9: Meet with God in a quiet place. Listen and take notes.**

Consider Elijah, who was discouraged, and needed guidance from God. He found his quiet place in a cave (1 Kings 19:9-13). He discovered the Lord spoke, not in a great wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a gentle whisper.

Where do you best hear God's gentle whisper? Is it on a mountain top, on a beachfront, or in a desert place, by a lake, at a retreat center, in your "prayer closet," during worship in a crowded auditorium, in a garden area, in a library, etc.?

*"But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father secretly. Then your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you." (Matthew 6:6 NLT)*

Personally, I find that I can best hear God's voice as I find my place by myself in the mountains. My mind and spirit connect with the Lord as I go up into the mountain. I always take along a small notebook or 3X5 cards to take notes as He speaks and gives me insights.

## **Step 10: Prayerfully respond in writing to your questions and issues.**

When I return to my office, I transfer my notes to my laptop. Then, I try to match my thoughts with the issues and questions I journaled earlier. Often, I discover questions for which I haven't yet received specific guidance. So I continue to think and then journal these thoughts, too. Because God has prepared me, I am able to do my clearest planning during this time.

2 Timothy 2:15

## **Step 11: Receive counsel from wise, godly people.**

Trying to listen to God has its difficulties. Truth be told, you could be wrong. Even after repentance and submission, your motives could be impure. You could be hearing what you want to hear. Counsel from wise godly people is a solution to this pitfall.

*"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22).*

Run your guidance from God through the grid of wisdom from godly leaders. The counsel you receive might be through mentoring, conferences like this retreat here, books, and even internet research.

## **Step 12: Plan to communicate your thoughts.**

As you consider your thoughts and decisions, ask yourself, "Who needs to know?" If God has given you a vision for your *personal, family, and life (maybe even ministry)*, who among your trusted mentors, counselors and friends should you share with first? How will you communicate this to them?

*15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that [a]give thanks to His name. 16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:15-16*

## **How to Ask God to Direct You in Life**

**During your prayer retreat, answer these questions as the Lord leads you:**

1. What is the Holy Spirit communicating to you about His plan for your life?
2. What kind of leaders do you need as mentors who can disciple you?
3. Do they have a God's kingdom perspective?

4. How will you find these leaders?
5. Who do you love and trust?
6. Are the certain boundaries in God's plan for you?
7. What is the bold faith step you need to take?

Through prayer retreats, many people like you have been able to hear clearly from God about what He wants them to do in their personal and family life.

Here is a simple truth about prayer retreats: It is all about God delivering to you His perfect plan for your life. No matter what pre-conceived thoughts and/or ideas you may have, if God is not in it, if the Holy Spirit is not working, you will miss the greatest life work you could have. The way to assure God's guidance, presence, and empowerment is through prayer. This may seem to be understood, but we need to emphasize it lest we neglect the most important thing. Everything you do in life, every day, starts with you submitting your life, will, everything to God, and praying for the Holy Spirits' leading in your life. As I mentioned earlier, it is a good practice to find that accountability person who will be committed to praying alongside you.

So, as you continue on this retreat called Power Surge, I want to ask you to not just read the motto for this weekend, but actually live it. "Seek the Secret Place and Close the Door!" King David wrote in Psalms 27:4-6; *"One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord And to meditate in His temple. 5For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock. 6And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord."*

## **Summary: Your Prayer Retreat Challenge**

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray, *"Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."* As a Christian, how can you best use the gifts, experience, and passion He has given you to advance His kingdom?

**Our challenge to you is to schedule and write into your calendar and take at least two personal prayer retreats every year.** Make time to get away and get with God. Take time to listen, plan, and obey. If you do, the Lord will give you the guidance and vision you seek. As He gives you direction, you will have more internal conviction about implementing His vision. You will have more confidence that you are doing the right thing. You will have a greater potential to succeed in your personal, family and ministry life. You will see your vision come true!