

The Passing of Time

This retreat is a favorite of mine. I think it is a great way to end a chapter and prepare the way for the next. I often return to this retreat at the end of the year as a time of reflection on the year and a time to settle with my God and listen for my marching orders for the year ahead. Each year, my experience is different. Some years, I return from retreat with simply a feeling of peace and connection with God. Other years I return with clarity of purpose for the upcoming year. Come expectant but not assuming.

As you arrive at retreat, consider what you need at this point of time. Perhaps you come exhausted and need a nap. Perhaps you come with pent up energy and you need a hike. Perhaps you feel lost in the land of autonomy and you long to reconnect to God. Perhaps sitting in the psalms, listening to or singing worship music, or taking a trek through the land that He has created will reconnect you. I think heeding those needs is a wise beginning.

I like the prayer of recollection as a vehicle to “rouse your soul and prepare you to meet with God in truth.” It is included at the end of this retreat. You may find you need to return to this prayer at different times during this retreat.

Spending time in your journal

Throughout the year you have written in your journal. It is a record of your thoughts, experiences and perhaps even epiphanies. You have processed through emotions, relational issues and experiences with God. It is great to go back through this journal, lingering over the entries. It is a way to see how you passed time. As you go back through it, you may have a theme of what you are looking for. You may go back through it several times looking for different things and journaling those things. Here are some themes to consider:

- ❖ What am I grateful for?
- ❖ Where did I see God's hand on my everyday life?
- ❖ How did I experience God's personal love for me?
- ❖ Where did I see His love in me reflected in my love for others?

- ❖ What were the themes of this year (or smaller segment of time)?
- ❖ What were the obstacles I experienced to a life surrendered to God?
- ❖ What routines or disciplines did I employ that led me towards God?

I would expect that this journaling activity would take place in several blocks of time. Be mindful of your heart as you go through your journal. Are there times when you are uncomfortable? Sit there and ask God to show you why. Are there parts where you want to linger? Then sit with your God and listen closely and expectantly for His voice and what He may have to show you. As you go through this, you may want to journal the experience “real time” or you may want to journal at the end of the experience.

Looking ahead

This part is a bit more fluid I think. Sometimes I find God does have specific marching orders for me and other times I understand that He is leading me step by step without letting me in on the big picture of the year or the next chapter. So don't lose heart if God doesn't have specifics for you during this section. I think the important thing is that you are making time and asking Him. That shows your heart's desire is to live your life as He desires. Even as clumsily as we can sometimes be day to day, I know He honors that desire. Here are some questions to sit with Him and ask. As before, quiet yourself, get connected through worship, scripture, walking and perhaps going back to the prayer of recollection. Then consider these questions or certainly some of your own.

- ❖ What do I need to do to prepare myself for the next year ahead Lord?
- ❖ Do you have a guiding scripture for me?
- ❖ Are there spiritual disciplines or routines that I should engage in?
- ❖ How am I to use my spiritual gifts in this next season?
- ❖ Is there a community that I need to be a part of that I am not presently engaged in?
- ❖ Do I need to step back in my community in order to make time for what lies ahead?
- ❖ Do I need more support from my community and if so what?

Be aware of your heart as you go through this section. Are you excited? Disappointed? Afraid? Sit quietly with God and let Him hold your heart and speak to you.

Traveling Companions

Again, start this section by connecting with God through worship, scripture, prayer or His creation. The prayer of recollection affirming the truth that you are not God. You cannot meet all the needs around you. Only God can. Then prayerfully consider who God has as your traveling companions during this next season of life. You may find it helpful to use the diagram at the end of this retreat for specific questions to pray through. The diagram gives you a visual reminder of the level of involvement God has for you in those individual relationships.

Preparing to Leave

Take the time to again connect with your heart. What are your emotions as you prepare to leave? Gratitude? Excitement? Relief? Discouragement? Anger? Sit with God and talk to Him about it. Is there anything else He has for you to do while you are here? Perhaps another journal entry to remember this experience by. Perhaps an artistic expression using things from the experiential worship room. Or ??????