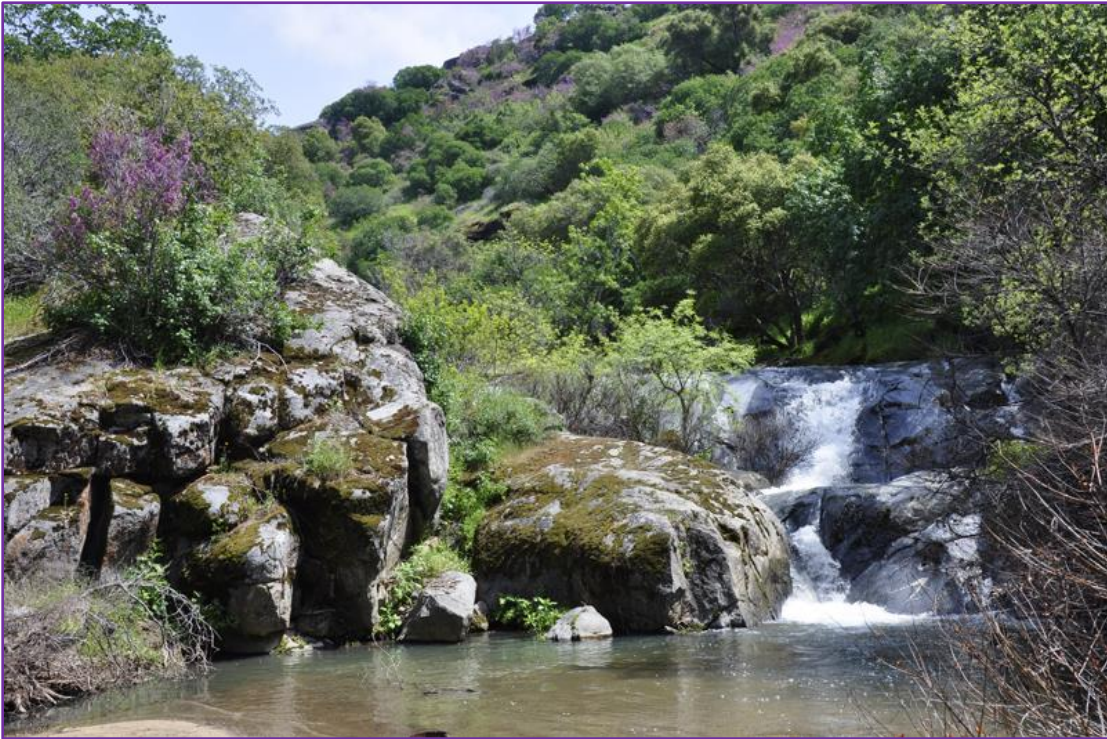


Abiding in Rest



A Guided Silent Retreat

adapted from
The Abundant Life Ranch
Betsy Cockrell



“Welcome, my beloved one.” ... This is how our faithful Father greets us. We simply come before him and are welcomed. By setting this time aside to draw away with the Lord, we open ourselves to his embrace and deeper communion with him.

The spiritual practice of withdrawing for a time of concentrated companionship with God has been modeled to us throughout the Bible. As we surrender ourselves and become fully present to God, he receives us completely.

Why the practice of silence? Psalm 46:10 answers, *Be still and know that I am God.* Silence fosters stillness, and in stillness, you create the space to be present to God, to know him more fully, and be awakened to his call. In his book, “The Spirit of Disciplines,” Dallas Willard says, “A proper abstinence [from speaking] actually breaks the hold of improper engagements so that the soul can be properly engaged in and by God.”

There is no right or wrong way to “do” a silent retreat. This is your time with the Lord, as directed by the Lord. These thoughts and prompts are simply an offering to help you draw away from the daily distractions of life and be present with Jesus. The Holy Spirit is your guide and Jesus is the focal point for the practice.

This retreat presents the theme, “Abiding in Rest,” and includes three guided meditations. These meditations include Bible verses, short devotional thoughts, and questions to consider. These are NOT assignments that need to be completed or followed in order. Let the Lord direct your time. If you don’t follow any of the meditations or end up spending time in just one verse of the suggested passage (or a different passage than is prompted), that is okay.

PRAYER

Thank you, Father, for inviting me to come away on retreat, a time to rest from a busy life of deadlines and significant needs to be met. What a wonderful gift this retreat is: time to read and pray, time to reflect and worship, time to gather myself from the various places I’ve been and refocus my attention on you. I realize that I’m weary and concerned about many things. What a gift that you’ve invited me to come away and have offered to give me rest. I need rest. Dear Lord Jesus, I open my heart to you. Every aspect of my life is open to you. During this retreat, may I know your presence with me. May I draw near, sit close, and rest my weary body and mind. And may I learn to take these truths into my everyday life and circumstances.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen

Preparing Your Heart

As you physically step away from the distractions of your everyday life, you may find it challenging to let go and be with the Lord. Your mind, body, and spirit may feel restless and preoccupied. If so, here are a few suggestions to help redirect your attention to a posture of openness to receive what the Lord has for you.

- ❖ “Fast” from using your cell phone. Our cell phones connect us to the world and may distract us from connecting with the Lord. Go old school and use a watch, printed Bible, pen, and journal. You will be amazed at how turning off your phone quiets your mind.
- ❖ If any concerns, fears, or to-do’s come to mind, write them down on a piece of paper and place them in an envelope. Close the envelope as a recognition that the Lord is Lord of all and fully capable of holding and handling all the challenges and concerns of your day and life. If any distractions continue during your retreat, you may add them to your envelope. The Lord will hold them for you.
- ❖ If you feel led, take a walk. Often, moving your body quiets your mind.
- ❖ There may be external noises during the retreat. Instead of trying to force quiet, simply accept where you are. God may be using this as a teachable moment. Consider your response to the annoyance and what he is trying to teach you in this distraction.
- ❖ Part of the discipline of silence is to process emotions and thoughts with God versus talking to someone else about them. This can be a challenge for some of us who are verbal processors and may require a little extra patience. Allow the Holy Spirit to be your guide and God’s living Word your focus.
- ❖ We offer scriptures throughout the day for you to consider. You may enjoy those scriptures, or the Lord may take you to another passage. The day is yours. Spend it however you wish, with the Lord.
- ❖ It is good to rest and even nap. Physical restoration is part of the gift God has for you. Just be mindful that sleep can become an escape.
- ❖ Open your time in prayer. Take a deep breath ... or two or three, and exhale slowly after each breath. Quiet your soul. When you feel you are ready, enjoy your time with the Lord.
- ❖ This retreat guide is simply a suggested guide, not something to spend your whole time doing. Maybe you will go for a walk (but not for exercise), close your eyes and rest for a short time, pray in a way that feels comfortable to you. The point of spending a few hours in silence and solitude is to engage with God. You want to spend time with him.

As you begin this time with the Lord, it can be helpful to have a time of reflection and remember God's abundant provision for your soul when you're at the end of your rope or hope. As you read 2 Kings 4:1-7, notice what stands out to you, and consider the questions below.

The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves."

Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?"

"Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a small jar of olive oil."

Elisha said, "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side."

She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one."

But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing.

She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left."

How are you feeling hopeless or in need? What are you asking God for that seems out of your reach, or impossible?

What are you running out of?

What is the "one thing" giving you possible hope? Are you willing to let go?

Who do you feel is depending on you that you feel unable to help or make life better for?

What or who is God asking you to surrender?

Meditation 1

God's Priority of Rest

As you settle into a time of silence, alone with the Lord, seeking to know the promises and instructions he gives for rest, take a few moments to quiet your heart and mind, and reflect on these questions. You may want to write in a journal or voice them as a prayer.

1. What is your deepest need right now?
2. Is it hard for you to rest or be quiet? Why do you think that is?

There are different applications of the word rest. A dictionary definition of rest is: "to cease work or movement in order to relax, refresh oneself, or recover strength; freedom from activity or labor; a state of motionlessness or inactivity."

We need physical rest, as well as rest in the form of a break from responsibilities. Those are important things to consider and pay attention to. Physical rest is crucial in our lives, a need that can often be neglected in our busy and demanding schedules. But when we look at some principles in God's Word, we see the priority it plays.

Going back to creation in Genesis, we see the example of Genesis 2:2-3,

*By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing;
so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.
Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy
because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.*

Of course, God didn't need to rest! But he was setting a pattern for us, instituting a rhythm for our lives, a rhythm of Sabbath rest, setting aside regular times for renewal.

In music, the notes guiding the playing or singing of a piece also include "rests," moments when nothing is being played. "Rests" in music aren't useless but are a vital part of the piece. If they were removed, the music would not be what it was intended to be. This is true in our own lives. The Lord knows our need for rest, times when there is silence and a break from "doing."

For reflection:

As you consider the verses in Genesis, is there something you sense the Lord is speaking to your heart? You might want to look back over your past days and weeks

and do a little inventory, considering your schedule, activities, commitments, etc. Are you in need of adding some “rests” in the music of your life?

1. How do you spend time resting? What adjustments can you make to create more restful rest for your body, mind, and spirit?

2. How do you honor the Lord when you rest?

Meditation 2
God's Promise of Rest

There is an even deeper “rest” that God promises, beyond our physical need. Another definition paints a vivid picture of resting in the Lord:

“To rest means to relax into something and let it support you.”

Jesus gives a beautiful invitation to the weary soul, a promise to the burdened heart. As you slowly read through the following verses, hear them as the Lord's words to YOU. He knows where you are right now; he sees all that has been happening in your life circumstances; he understands every burden you carry, and he knows the weariness you might feel.

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.
Matthew 11:28-30*

For reflection:

As you slowly read again the verses above, is there a word or phrase that stands out to you that you might want to write out and reflect on?

Reading the verses once again, what is God saying to you in this passage?

Slowly reading through the verses one more time, how can you respond to the Lord?

Sometimes it is helpful to use a creative outlet to express our thoughts and feelings. Perhaps you would like to use colored pencils or markers to draw a picture and reflect: What comes to mind when you think of rest for your soul? You can use the following page as your “canvas.”

Meditation 3
God's Provision of Rest

*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.*

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:29-30

Jesus gives us not only the promise of rest for our souls, but also the provision, the way to live it out. He tells us to take *his* yoke and to learn from him. For *his* yoke is easy, and *his* burden is light.

Andrew Murray, in his classic devotional, "Abiding in Christ," gave a beautiful explanation of what this looks like in the life of a believer. As you read these words, take note of what stands out to you, what the Lord might be speaking to your heart.

Weary soul, come and learn this day the lesson that there is a spot where safety and victory, peace and rest, are always open to you. The soul has only to yield itself to Him, to be still, and to rest in the confidence that His love has undertaken, and that His faithfulness will keep it safe. It is because the blessing is so great that our frail hearts cannot rise to grasp it; it is as if we cannot believe that Christ, the Almighty one, will actually teach and keep us all day. And yet this is just what He has promised, for without this He cannot really give us rest. It is His own work to keep us abiding when we yield ourselves to Him. We must risk casting ourselves into the arms of His love, and so abandon ourselves to His blessed keeping. It is not the yoke, but resistance to the yoke, that makes the difficulty; wholehearted surrender to Jesus, our Master and our Keeper, is what finds and secures our rest.

Come, my fellow believers, and let us this very day begin to accept the word of Jesus in all its simplicity. It is a distinct command to "Take My yoke...and learn from Me"; "Abide in Me." The obedient scholar asks no questions about possibilities or results; he accepts every order in the confidence that his teacher has provided for all that is needed. The power and the perseverance to abide in His rest, and the blessing in abiding, belongs to the Savior: 'tis mine to obey, 'tis His to provide. Let us this day in immediate obedience, accept the command, and answer boldly, "Savior, I abide in you. At your bidding, I take your yoke upon me; I undertake the duty without delay; I abide in you." May each time we fail only give new urgency to the command and teach us to listen more earnestly than ever until the Spirit gives us the voice of Jesus saying with love and authority the words that inspire both hope and obedience: "Child, abide in Me." That word heard as coming from Jesus

Himself will be an end to all doubting, a divine promise of what will surely be granted. Abiding in Jesus is nothing but the giving up of oneself to be ruled, taught, and led, enabling the disciple to rest in the arms of everlasting love.

What is your response to this invitation from the Lord to take his yoke upon you, to learn of him, and to find rest for your soul? You might want to write out a prayer expressing your heart's response to what he has been speaking to you.

Concluding thoughts:

Ending this time of reflection and silence and solitude, is there a way that would be helpful to remind you of this time and the things the Lord has spoken to you? Often in the Bible, the Lord directed the people to build an altar of remembrance, a tangible way to help them remember what he had done and what they experienced. Is there something special that you could use as a symbol or a reminder?

Quote by Andrew Murray taken from "Abiding in Christ" pages 22-23. Used with permission from Baker Books.

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About NEWIM

The Network of Evangelical Women in Ministry is a non-profit, non-denominational organization that strengthens Christian women who minister to others through networking, equipping, and encouraging them in their walk with God.

Foundational Verse

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding, and we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.” Colossians 1:9-12 (NIV)

Upcoming Retreats

All of NEWIM’s contemplative retreats are for the explicit purpose of giving women time to be **with the Lord and deepening their love for him**. There are hours dedicated to silence and solitude so that we can contemplate the goodness of his character, ponder the mysteries of his love, and pursue those spiritual activities that draw us closer to him.

The Springs Retreat

When we spend time with the Lord, we come to know his love more deeply and find out that his love is all we really need. The Springs Retreat provides the opportunity for extended times of solitude and silence, with brief times of devotional thoughts and worship, giving gentle guidance. Meals are with a small group, allowing for connection and prayer. The retreat is two nights, and the cost includes a private room and private bath, and meals. Specific information is available on our website: <http://www.newim.org>

Central California St. Anthony’s Retreat Center in Three Rivers, California

Northern California At a retreat center on the beach in Santa Cruz, California

Savannah, Georgia Our newest location! New Ebenezer Retreat Center in Rincon

Pastors’ Wives Retreats

The Pastors’ Wives two-night retreat is designed to give a small group of pastors’ wives from all over the country the opportunity to come away for a weekend of rest, fellowship, renewal, worship, encouragement, beauty, wonder, and the lavish love of Jesus. The weekend is hosted by NEWIM—**there is no cost to the women who come**. The retreat takes place at various beautiful locations in California.

For Information: <http://www.newim.org> - 408-218-8225 - Email: info@newim.org



An idea if you are leading a group through this Guided Silent Retreat:

Provide a clear jar or vase for each participant (Dollar Tree is a good resource!)

When the women arrive, have them pick a jar.

Read the 2 Kings 4 passage (Page 3) together.

The jar is representative of our emptiness from serving, or whatever we feel is lacking or maybe there's not enough of.

After the first break, give them chocolate hugs to fill their jar 1/3 full. Their time away with God was a "hug" from him.

After lunch, give them chocolate kisses to fill another 1/3 of their jar. Their time away with God was a "kiss" from him.

At the end of the day, fill the last 1/3 with breath mint lifesavers because this time away has refreshed them. When God refreshes us, we can also refresh others.