

Spend a Day with Jesus

Wouldn't it be great if we knew where Jesus lived, so we could go and spend a day with him? He'd welcome us warmly. This is what happened to two early followers of Jesus.

Here's the way it went:



John 1:35-39

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means, Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day.



John 15:5

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

In John's Gospel we learn that Jesus chose to "live among us," and he delighted to spend time with people, loving them, listening to them with their needs and questions, and talking with them from his own life of "living with" his Father. Jesus today has no local "home address" among us, yet still we can spend a day with him, talking with him, listening to him and receiving anew his love. In fact, Jesus insists that we cultivate "living with him" day in and day out, "7/24/365."



John 14:23

Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

He's always "at home," and will welcome us. We know his address! His resurrection, ascension and gift of his Spirit make him always available to us, wherever we are. His home among us now is as close and accessible as is our own heart! His "home address" now is in the Father's house, and wonderfully, they also make their home with us! (John 14:23). We can "spend a day with Jesus," much like those two disciples did long ago.



What is a retreat all about?

It is about spending a day with Jesus.

It is about bringing our needs and questions to him, along with our love and gratitude. We allow him to love us through serving us, listening to our questions and fears, spoken and unspoken, and speaking from his heart to ours.

A good example of this is the time Jesus spent with his chosen Twelve just before his death, around a table. (See John 13-17). It is about letting him do for us what he died and rose again to do: **to show us his love, wash our feet, address our fears**, reminding us of who he is and what he has for us to do and what he wants us to know, and letting him pray for us. **We need his words, his presence and his Spirit's power.** We need to be led anew into the heart of the Father and learn more of his love.



John 1:18

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

John 17:26

"I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

He loves us and wants to give us his peace and his joy; **he wants to be with us.** He calls us "**friends**" and invites us to become his friends. (John 15:14-15)



John 15:14-15

You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

Why do we do it this way?

The reason to set aside a day to come apart is to **disconnect and distance ourselves** from everything that would distract our attention from **our loving Teacher and Lord.**



- We **seek solitude** so that we can be more attentive to him.
- We **keep silence** so that we can listen better to him.
- We **leave behind** our place of work and daily life so that we can be with him only.

In our "bodily" existence, we are very much dominated by where we are, what we are hearing, and whom we are with. **To go apart for a day is to follow Jesus' own example of going off alone.** He disconnected from the influence of other stimuli, to be alone with his Father.

In reality, we do the same thing for any person we really value and want to connect with. It is **a great act of love**, to give ourselves **undistractedly** to another.

What do we look for?

Since the one we seek is Jesus himself, who is present with us by his Spirit, in the final analysis, **it is he who is "in charge"** of the day.

We bring our needs and our agenda, but what matters most is his agenda, his initiative. The most important part for us, then, **is to be open and listen to him.**

Our basic posture is that of **"waiting on the Lord,"** like Samuel who said, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Perhaps the most vivid description of what we want to have happen in us is expressed in Psalm 131:2.



Psalm 131:2

*But I have stilled and quieted my soul,
like a little child in its mother's arms,
like a little child is my soul within me.*

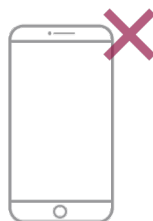
Well, how do I go about it?

In practice, however, most of us are not naturally inwardly and outwardly "stilled and quieted in our souls"! We're pretty wound up and distracted with our **own thoughts, injuries, anxieties, plans, tasks, fears and hopes.**

We also are very connected to the needs and wants of others, through physical presence, papers on our desk, email, **smartphones, tablets, texts, social media,** and perhaps more!

We need to take deliberate steps with the intention of **becoming stilled and quieted without and within.** We set aside time, and then go apart, as first steps towards becoming more attentive to Jesus.

We don't take with us that which would distract our attention from our Lord (work, electronic gear, etc.). It is most helpful to go to a place that helps us disconnect and **draws us towards God.** Often a church or retreat center is a quiet place. It is also helpful to have some structure or focus to guide us during the day.

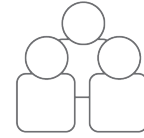




What will we do?
How will we spend the time?



Retreat On Your Own



Retreat With Others

Description

- You take the initiative to set the day, **choose the place** and make decisions about what will be done during the time.
- Usually you do this alone, although a modified form is to go with another and each do the retreat "on their own," perhaps meeting at the end to share and pray together.
- One is essentially alone with him or herself and God, with **the freedom to be led and to respond** without consideration of others or of a program structure.

- Do the retreat together with others in community (not just together physically in the same place), **under the leadership of "retreat leaders,"** who will structure the time and content to a greater degree, planning for some time together as a group, with some input and orientation.
- Most of the time will be given to allowing for silence and solitude for each participant.
- A group **committed to the same goals and being together in silence** fills and "sanctifies" the space.

Planning

- This model allows for a **greater degree of silence and solitude**, since there is no one else to interact with.
- It is **more flexible**, since place, time, and "agenda" depend on you and what will work for you.

- For many it is easier to have others plan and lead the retreat, which allows for **greater intentionality and accountability**.
- Retreating in community helps to **"carry" each person forward** as part of a group, rather than leaving all on the shoulders of the individual.

Distractions

- There is not the distraction that the **presence of others can cause**, nor the constraints of following a given structure.
- Solitude allows for issues to surface that we can ignore or avoid when always in the presence of others or **distracted by entertainment or work**.

- Silence in community can **feel "safer"** and keep you from temptations that "pure" solitude might expose you to.
- There is a greater **"intensity" of the Holy Spirit** because of others bringing their own intentionality, focus and prayers into the place.
- The prayers of others for the event and during the time are aiding you in **drawing near to God**, as yours will aid them.

Benefits

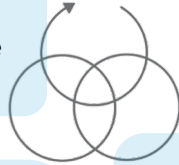
- A retreat "on your own" with the Lord allows for the time and agenda to be **"customized"** for you and what you need at that time.
- There are many Biblical examples of this kind of retreat, of whom the foremost **would be Jesus himself**.

- Another benefit is the **gifted leadership and availability of the retreat leaders**, who are open to give personal input as requested.
- The shared experience of silence in community and of meeting God "in solitude" together can greatly **enrich and strengthen the bonds of community**.



What will we do?
How will we spend the time?

It is important to be aware of certain "dynamics" that accompany us as we go on a retreat.

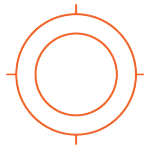


Part of **respecting our weary bodies** is to follow a rhythm that allows for engagement of mind and heart, and disengagement for change of pace, "incubation" and rest.



We need to get in touch with what's going on in us, **how we feel and what "shape" we're in**. Usually we bring a lot of weariness with us, and need to take it into account.

We need to **rest and allow our bodies to be restored** so that we can be more attentive to the Lord.



Spend a day with Jesus, **focusing on him as our Savior, Teacher, Lord, Brother and Friend**. We are taking a "day" from 9:00am to 4:30pm. An essential aspect to this discipline is to be in solitude (not in active contact with others, although others might be physically present with us) and to be in silence (refrain from speaking and get away from speaking and noise.)



Docility to the leadership of Jesus by his Spirit is more important than simply following a prescribed plan or going through all the material.
If he takes over, follow him!

Don't

- ✗ bring a "full" agenda to the retreat
- ✗ try to "do" too much
- ✗ ignore our bodies' needs
- ✗ believe that everything depends on our initiative and activity if we're to "get" good results from the time.

Do

- ✓ reduce our expectations and program
- ✓ slow down and wait on the Lord
- ✓ gently engage in disciplines that help us "draw near" to the Lord
- ✓ relax and allow the Lord to give rich insights and ignite joy in our hearts.



What can we expect to happen?

God will be present to us and work in us, but how we will be affected or perceive his work can vary greatly. We do know that he loves to come to us in our reflections and meditations, in Scripture, in music, in our prayers, spoken and unspoken, in his creation and in symbols.



God speaks

Sometimes he initiates unexpectedly, as with the two walking to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35);
Sometimes we initiate and he responds.

Sometimes he comes and speaks powerfully and energetically, as at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-31);
Sometimes quietly, peacefully, inwardly, as with Elijah on Mount Sinai (1 Kings 19).

Sometimes the day will be quiet and restful, without profound insights or experiences;
Other times it can be significant, full of insights and energy.



Sometimes there is struggle and sighing, as depths are opened up and hard issues confront us. He knows our needs, and he knows what we can receive. He loves us and knows us by name. We are in his hands (John 1:16-18).

He awaits us with his grace.



John 1:16-18

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.