

September 2003 Rendezvous with God

“Come unto Me”

Note: use this guide where it is helpful, and adapt it to your own style and situation. Don't let it bog you down, if God is leading you elsewhere. The goal is to hear and respond to God!

Welcome and Settling In -- about 15-30 minutes

Take time, upon arrival to prepare the space, locate bathrooms, coffee and other essentials; welcome your retreat partner and catch up on the news; set up emergency contact instructions and any other business. (You may want to post a “Silent retreat in progress; please do not disturb” sign). You and your partner can pray for each other, together, before you enter into silence. Keep your conversation brief!

Come into the Lord's Presence – 10 minutes

“The Lord is in His Holy Temple; Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

Take 5-10 minutes in silence, eyes closed, to consciously settle yourself.

1. Leave behind the burdens, issues and distractions you brought with you. Picture yourself laying them at Jesus' feet, or giving them to Him to carry (I Peter 5:7). Resolve that when other distractions arise through the day, you will turn those over to Jesus as well.

(Note: if, during the day, you remember something you need to do later, write it down and put it aside, so you won't be distracted by trying to remember it.)

2. Notice what is happening in your body: are you sleepy, tense, fidgety, sick? Offer your body to the Lord at this time as well.

3. What hopes or fears are you feeling as you anticipate the silence in God's presence? Bring those to the Lord as well, remembering that He loves and welcomes you as you are.

Greet the Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with this prayer, or your own:

“Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.” (Book of Common Prayer, p.355)

Come into the Courts of the Lord with Praise – 20 - 30 minutes

Read Psalm 103 (or another psalm of praise) slowly, to yourself – (or aloud, if you won't bother anyone!) Personalize each phrase as you are able, and give God thanks and praise in personal ways. Take time to praise God in ways that are familiar – and then try one or two ways that are not so familiar or comfortable. Here are some ideas:

List everything you can think of that you appreciate about God

Study an object from Creation, and marvel at God's handiwork

Sing a hymn

Go on a God Hunt (walk around and praise God for what you see)

Dance
Draw a picture

Write a poem or a psalm
Write a letter to God, or a letter of recommendation about God

Meditate on God's Word – 30 minutes or more

Using Lectio Divina (divine reading, outlined below), spend some time with Matthew 11: 25-30, and especially vv. 28-30. Follow these steps:

Read (lectio) the passage slowly, listening for God's voice to you in the text. Read again, and try to identify one word or phrase that stood out to you, that caught your attention.

Meditate (meditatio) or "chew on" the passage, looking at it from different angles, and using your mind, imagination, feelings, memories. As Mary did with the Angel's greeting, "ponder these things in your heart". You may write in your journal, (or draw).

Pray (oratio) in response to the text. Talk back to God about what He has said to you. You may express thanks, or wonder, or doubt and questioning, or conviction or confession – whatever is on your heart to say to God.

Contemplate (contemplatio) or simply rest in God's presence, soaking in what you have heard and seen and felt. Don't try to do anything, but just savor the encounter with God and with the truth of His word. Quietly, when you are ready, ask God to show you how to live out what you have received.

Respond to God's Word – 15 - 30 minutes

Write an invitation from Jesus to yourself, to come and spend this day with Him. Reflect on his heart's desire to welcome you and carry your heavy load. Then, write an RSVP to Jesus. Journal about your insights and feelings.

Now, respond to the invitation. In whatever way seems natural to you, come to Jesus, take up his yoke and learn from Him. You may want to take a walk with Jesus and talk to him. Or have a dialog as you journal – ask the Lord questions, and listen for his responses, then write down what you hear.

Some questions might be:

What is making me weary and heavy-laden?

What does "rest" look like in my life?

What do I want to learn from You, Jesus? What do You want to teach me?

Am I living and believing this promise?

Recreate and Rest -- with remaining time, except for 30 minutes

Enjoy time with Jesus, who no longer calls you “servant” but “friend.” Ask Him how to spend the rest of your time. You may want to take a nap, or go exploring, or do any of the activities that have been mentioned earlier. You may also want to take time to pray and intercede for loved ones, friends, and others on your heart. Try to maintain a conscious awareness of Christ’s presence with you, whatever you do.

Closing – the last 30 minutes

1. Review the time you have spent with Jesus, and give thanks for what God has done and said to you today.
2. What will you take home with you? Is there a clear next step that God has put on your heart? Write it down in your journal.
3. When will you plan another Rendezvous with God? What worked well, and what would you do differently?

In the last ten minutes, meet with your fellow retreatant(s) and share only what you choose to share of your experience. Take care to honor each other’s quiet state and the privacy and intimacy of the day. (For example, ask, “is there anything from today you want to share?” rather than, “What did God say to you?”) Together, briefly give thanks to God and pray for protection as you go back to the “real world”. You can pray the Lord’s Prayer together to close.

“Our Father who art in Heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done
On earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power and the Glory,
For ever and ever, Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!