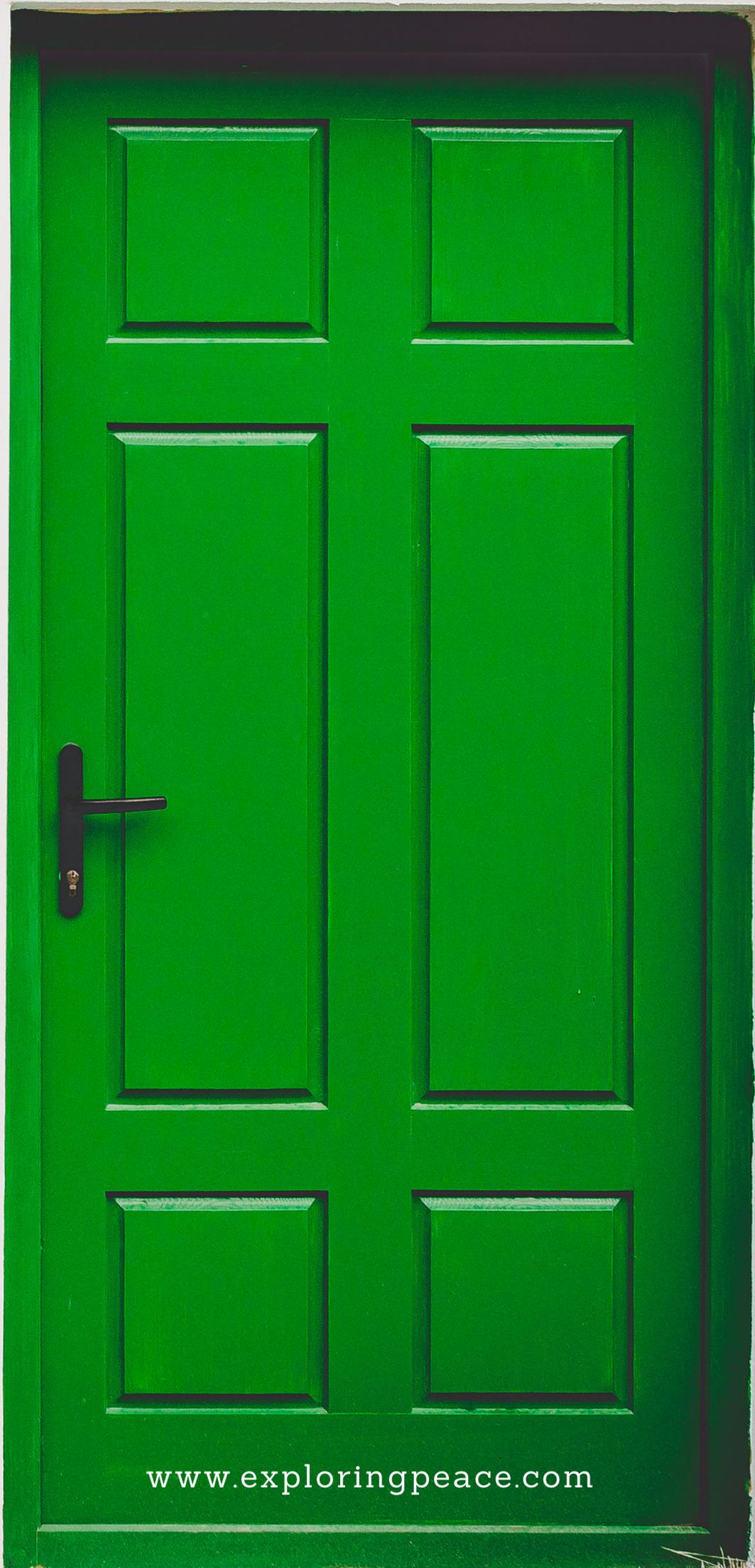


YOUR RETREAT

| AT HOME | FOR BODY & SPIRIT |



www.exploringpeace.com

Is your body tired? Are you worn down? Do you long for rejuvenation? Ever been curious about attending a retreat? Always wanted to go on a retreat but concerned about the time, money, or resources to commit? Wonder if it's worth it?

If you need to retreat without departing from daily life in this season, consider retreating for a week with me - in the comfort of your home. A retreat is less about escaping and more about intentionally coming into God's presence. This retreat is designed to refuel your body and spirit as you connect with your creator.

Here is how it works: for five days, you commit to doing something intentional to nourish yourself - body and spirit. There is no fee for this retreat. At the conclusion of your retreat, you are encouraged to consider visiting with a spiritual director to discuss your insights and reflections from the week. No idea what that means? No problem. You can find out more about the ministry of spiritual direction at www.exploringpeace.com. In the meantime, let's see if this retreat is right for you. Shall we?



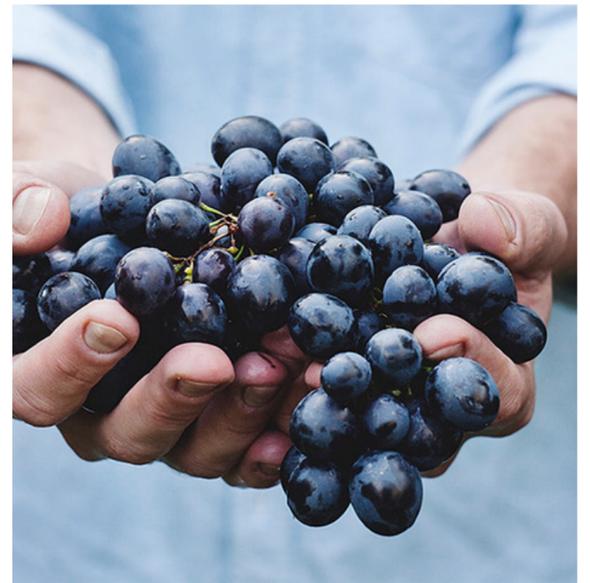
CONTENTS



01 GETTING
STARTED



08 DAY 1
THANKS



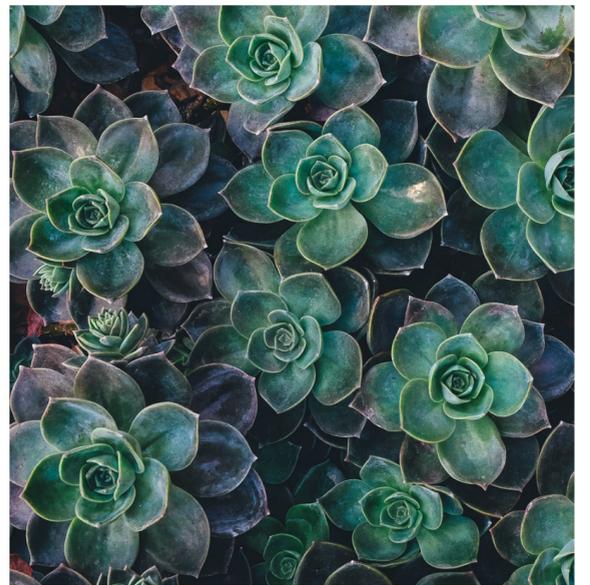
10 DAY 2
A SANCTUARY



13 DAY 3
FINDING JOY



15 DAY 4
REFRESHED



17 DAY 5
LISTENING



19 CONCLUSION

JOIN THE JOURNEY

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instagram.com/@WhitRSimpson
twitter.com/@WhitRSimpson
spotify/@WhitRSimpson

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GETTING STARTED

- This ebook is your guide for a 5-day retreat. Each day requires a minimum of 30 minutes, as well as a daily commitment to savor the world around you.
- Your retreat is held in the privacy and comfort of your own home and can even be adapted for your commute or office.
- There is no cost to participate in this retreat, it is a gift to you on your journey. Enjoy!
- Honestly, I would love to hear about your retreat. Will you consider sharing along the way or connecting at the conclusion of your retreat? You can tag me on social media with any of the following hashtags: #athomeretreat #exploringpeace
- This retreat was designed by me, Whitney Simpson. I am a spiritual director, retreat facilitator, author and yoga instructor offering you support in both body and spirit on the spiritual formation journey.
- You have been prayed for - before this retreat even landed in your inbox. Blessings on your journey.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- **Silence** - Allow yourself times of silence alone each day to reflect on your quiet time and daily exercises. You may choose to walk, pray or watch the birds out your window. Whatever you choose, reflect in silence without distractions (no phone, internet, books, etc.). As noted by author Jane Vennard, "silence is not the purpose of a contemplative retreat, but rather the vehicle for paying attention to God." Our goal this week will be to use and embrace silence as we listen for God. Please, no matter how noisy your world may be, do not skip this step (see "tips" if this is a challenge)!
- **Stretch** - Stretch your physical body at the start of each day with your favorite stretches or yoga practice. Not sure where to begin? Start by planting your feet firmly on the floor. Make sure your knees are unlocked and gently reach toward the sky. Lower your arms by your sides, as you move your head gently from side to side. Finally, let your head fall forward as you gently bend down to touch your toes. After a few breaths, slowly rise up and feel the energy in your body from your toes to the top of your head. Move gently and don't forget to breathe deeply. This simple beginning exercise is suggested by Jane Vennard in her book, "Be Still".
- **Make Healthy Choices** - Strive to feed your physical body with healthy choices so that you feel energized and alive. Choose fresh fruits and vegetables for the season and avoid most packaged foods. Take time to savor the taste of each meal and enjoy your food – the way it tastes, smells and appears. You may wish to prepare and implement a meal plan for your week to avoid last minute preparation and stress in the kitchen.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Hold the #hashtags - Yes, I love social media too! And I long to see your #athomeretreat taking place, so go ahead and capture that image. But see if you can wait until after your daily quiet time to post it.
- Limit Social Outings - This step is to allow you to retreat away from much of the busy world that demands our attention. Taking just one week off from the "extras" can refuel you and allow you to see and hear more clearly some of the distractions in your life. If it can wait a week, say no this week, and keep your space available for God.
- Involve Scripture - Each day you will be offered a passage to read and reflect upon in various versions of the Bible. Do more than read; savor God's word.
- Invite a Friend - You are encouraged to find one or more friends to participate with you on this retreat. Spiritual friendships give a sense of community and provide opportunity for reflection. This also allows you to pray for one another during your retreat week. Your friend can sign up to receive their free ebook at: www.exploringpeace.com/athomeretreat.
- Journal - Write down any moments when you may have felt, seen or heard God's presence in your quiet times. In addition, write down any distractions that took you away from God or that kept you from your quiet time. Take a few minutes each day to do this. You may choose a paper journal, your planner, or even your computer or other electronic device to make convenient notes.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Pray - Pray that God opens you up to whatever is in store for you to see, hear or reflect on in your life this week. Ask God for eyes to see you as God sees you. Ask God to be present with you. The following is a sample prayer that you may choose to pray as you begin your time. Feel free to make it your own:

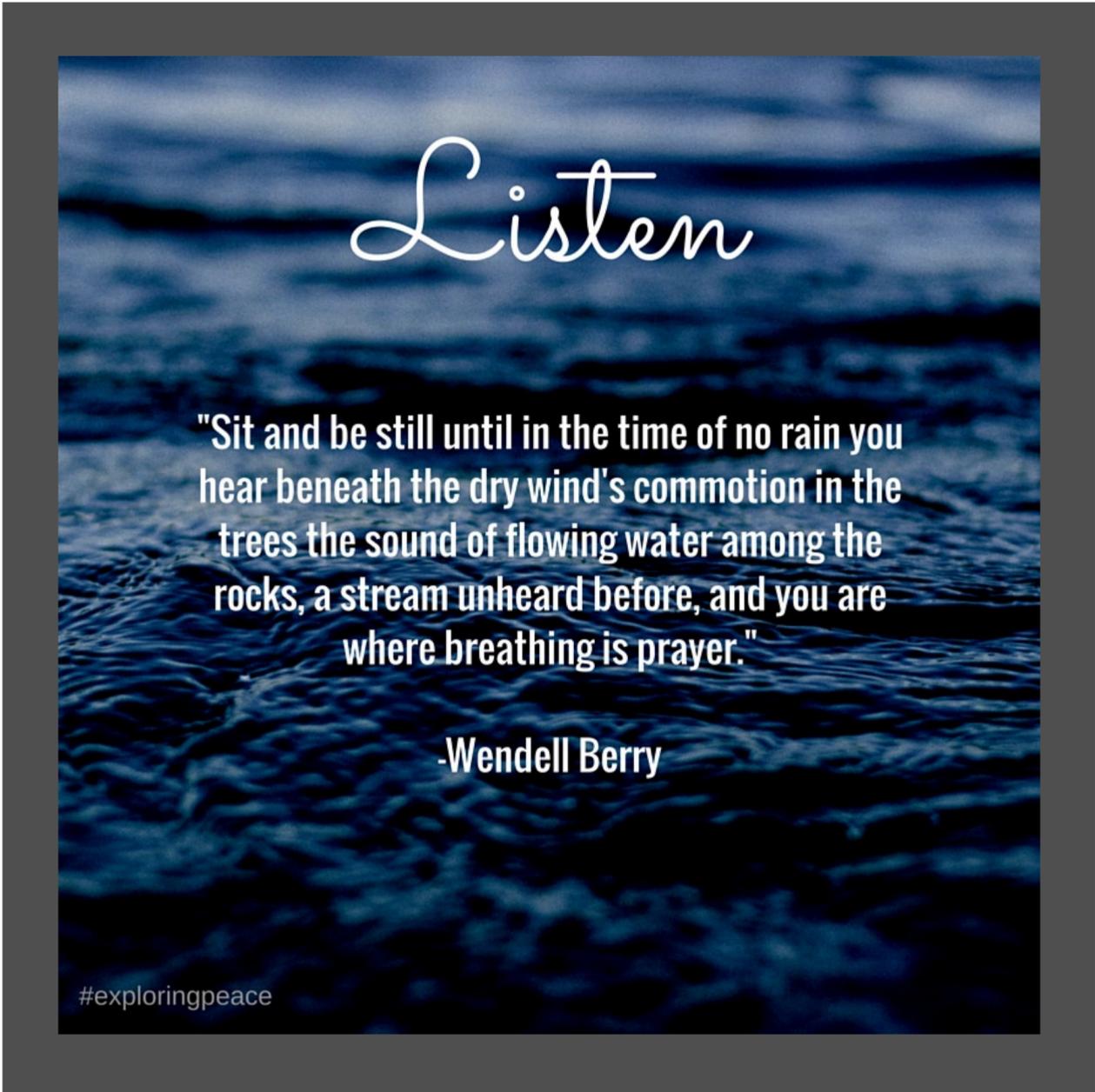
Dear God, Thank You so much for helping me make time in my life to focus on You. It feels selfish and hard to make myself a priority. I know that care of my soul is important. Help me to prioritize time this week to care for my body and spirit. Guide me as I recognize the things that drag me down and take me away from You. Help me to see myself as You see me and remind me how much You care for me. Amen.

TIPS FOR RETREATING AT HOME

- Prepare for your week. Let's start simply by setting your week up for success. As noted earlier, healthy food is an important priority on this journey of caring for body and spirit. Make sure your refrigerator is stocked with good foods you enjoy. Make sure errands are kept at a minimum this week. You may wish to prepare your home as if you were going on vacation before you start your retreat week. Of course, it will not remain perfectly intact. But, you may be surprised at how much it helps center your focus for the week when you think of your home as your very own sacred space or sanctuary.
- Pick a quiet place to begin and/or end your day. You want to find a place where you can enjoy the stillness of life before or after your daily activity begins. Your space might be your kitchen table or a chair in the corner of your bedroom or family room. It could even be a tree to sit under outside (if weather permits). All that matters is that you pick a spot so that you can escape at some point in your day to a designated location. Keep your favorite Bible and journal in your designated devotional space and prepare to get up earlier, set aside your lunch break, or go to bed later this week. You commit to spending time reflecting in this space each day.
- For office dwellers - Find a tree and enjoy your lunch outside or escape to your own private oasis – your car. If you truly can't get away from your desk, take 10 minutes to watch a relaxation video, enjoy some inspirational music, or listen to an encouraging podcast while you eat your lunch at your desk (visit www.exploringpeace.com/online-resources for suggestions).

TIPS FOR RETREATING AT HOME

- For stay-at-home/work-at-home parents - It may seem impossible to find a moment to yourself, but you don't have to choose between parenting and God. Include your child in your retreat week. Invite them on your nature walks. Include children in times of quiet in their own room or another play area while you take your own "time out." If your children are very small, consider retreating on opposite weeks with another parent. Have them help put the kids down for a nap while you take a walk around the block or find other ways to incorporate brief times of solitude. If you are married, ask your spouse to support you in this time of rejuvenation with the understanding that your family will be better served when you take time for yourself. If you are a single parent, ask a friend to consider retreating on an opposite week so that you can help each other out during your retreat weeks. Be creative! We often limit ourselves and our time because we don't think outside the box or ask for help. This kind of soul care is worth it!
- There is no rush and there are no expectations. If the schedule or suggested activities do not meet your needs, feel free to follow the Spirit in a different activity or order of events. Enjoy your time and savor each activity you choose to participate in. It may take you longer than five days to complete the exercises you choose that are right for you. This invitation to retreat is a slow and steady journey with God, not a race. Savor the journey and embrace the quiet.



Listen

"Sit and be still until in the time of no rain you hear beneath the dry wind's commotion in the trees the sound of flowing water among the rocks, a stream unheard before, and you are where breathing is prayer."

-Wendell Berry

#exploringpeace

YOUR RETREAT

DAY 1

THANKS

Stretch, Breathe, Find your Sacred Space

Read Psalm 139:14 three times, pausing for 30 seconds to a minute between each reading and reflecting upon any words that stand out to you before you proceed to the next version:

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well. (NRSV)

I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works,
and my soul knows it very well. (NASB)

I thank you, High God – you're breathtaking!
Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration –
what a creation! (Message)

Breathe deeply, sit in silence, absorb these words until they become part of you and you are ready to face your day.

Today's activity:

Notice the intricacies of your body - feel your breath enter and exit your body, look closely at your fingerprints, pay attention to your heartbeat. Try to savor the taste of a ripe berry or other favorite fruit today. Truly enjoy its flavor and texture in your mouth. Write down in your journal some of the wonderful works you witness today, both in your own body and in the world around you.

Throughout your day:

Remind yourself that you are fearfully and wonderfully made!
Repeat this verse today as your personal mantra.

Pray:

Creator, thank you for this day, for my body, for the world and the pleasures that surround me. Amen.

YOUR RETREAT

DAY 2

A SANCTUARY

Stretch, Breathe, Find your Sacred Space

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19 three times, pausing for 30 seconds to a minute between each reading and reflecting upon any words that stand out to you before you proceed to the next version:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (ESV)

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (NKJV)

Didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in you and through your body. (Message)

Breathe deeply, sit in silence, absorb these words until they become part of you and you are ready to face your day.

Today's activity:

Think of a marvelous cathedral or beautiful church that you have visited or would like to visit. Consider the time and energy that is put into the care of that place of worship. Now, consider the care that needs to be taken of your temple. Find one thing today that you can do to better care for your body while you take a meditative walk around a local park, your neighborhood or a nearby church. Walk slowly and prayerfully. Allow your feet to touch the pavement from your heels to your toes.

Walk on grass and concrete and feel the difference in your feet. Notice the smell of the air and the appearance of the landscape. Absorb this walk with each of your senses. It may be tempting to put on your headphones, but instead, listen to the sounds that surround you, rather than music, for this activity.

Throughout your day:

Stand in amazement that God created your body and every last intricacy of your heartbeat and breath. Realize that the sanctuary you seek is available to you at any time since you are dwelling in God's temple. Consider what keeps you from treating your body as a sanctuary, and see if you can eliminate some of those things, or at least prioritize care for yourself this week.

Pray:

God, I honor the gift of my body as created by You. Amen.

YOUR RETREAT

DAY 3

FINDING JOY

Stretch, Breathe, Find your Sacred Space

Read Psalm 126:2-3 three times, pausing for 30 seconds to a minute between each reading and reflecting upon any words that stand out to you before you proceed to the next version:

Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy.

Then it was said among the nations,

“The LORD has done great things for them.”

The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. (NRSV)

We laughed, we sang, we couldn't believe our good fortune.

We were the talk of the nations - “GOD was wonderful to them!”

God was wonderful to us: we are one happy people. (Message)

We were filled with laughter, And we sang for joy.

And the other nations said,

“What amazing things the LORD has done for them.”

Yes, the LORD has done amazing things for us! What joy! (NLT)

Breathe deeply, sit in silence, absorb these words until they become part of you and you are ready to face your day.

Today's activity:

Practice loving yourself today and finding joy in who God made you to be. Go to a yoga class, get a massage, take a long bath or a hot shower, buy yourself flowers or write yourself a love letter from God. Think back to childhood - were there activities you loved? What simple activity could you do today to reconnect with that joy and find laughter? Go blow bubbles, dance in your living room, hula hoop, or make a mud pie in the back yard! The possibilities are endless. Be creative and be yourself! Just make sure you laugh today!

Throughout your day:

Practice talking to yourself in a loving way. As you look in the mirror today, see yourself as God made you.

Pray:

Jesus, allow me to see myself through Your eyes today and find joy in the person You made me to be. Amen.

YOUR RETREAT

DAY 4

REFRESHED

Stretch, Breathe, Find your Sacred Space

Read Jeremiah 31:25 three times, pausing for 30 seconds to a minute between each reading and reflecting upon any words that stand out to you before you proceed to the next version:

I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint. (NIV)

I will satisfy the weary,

And all who are faint I will replenish. (NRSV)

I'll refresh tired bodies;

I'll restore tired souls. (Message)

Breathe deeply, sit in silence, absorb these words until they become part of you and you are ready to face your day.

Today's activity:

Get out an old box of crayons or a fresh package of markers and use a journal or the paper from your recycle bin, the medium isn't important. Proceed to scribble or draw what is on your mind.

Write down the names of every person you want to pray for today.

Draw or write any requests that seem to be weighing you down.

Tell God what is on your heart and then present your "art" to God.

Throughout your day:

Allow God to refresh you. Listen to relaxing music while you work or do chores (visit www.exploringpeace.com for music links or suggestions.) Take all that is on your heart and give it to God.

Let God replenish your body and soul today by releasing your burdens. Find God in the mundane today, especially those tasks you do regularly that seem to be unimportant or that no one notices (dishes, laundry, phone calls, spreadsheets, etc.). Let God's light shine on you today during those moments and be refreshed and restored.

Pray:

Holy Spirit, fill me with your presence. Replenish my soul. Amen.

YOUR RETREAT

DAY 5

LISTENING

Stretch, Breathe, Find your Sacred Space

Read Isaiah 28:23 three times, pausing for 30 seconds to a minute between each reading and reflecting upon any words that stand out to you before you proceed to the next version:

Listen to me; listen, and pay close attention. (NLT)

Listen and hear my voice; pay attention and hear my word. (CEB)

Listen and hear my voice; pay attention and hear what I say. (NIV)

Breathe deeply, sit in silence, absorb these words until they become part of you and you are ready to face your day.

Today's activity:

As your retreat week comes to a close, it is time to reflect on God's activity in your body, mind and spirit this week, and listen to what He may be telling you. There are no expectations for what you experienced this week. Embrace what spoke to you personally. If you have not written down some of your reflections from this week in your journal, take time to do that now so you can reflect on what God may be trying to show you.

Some questions to help get you started include:

Do you need more time for daily rejuvenation?

Do you like incorporating new foods into your diet?

Did you enjoy your time in nature?

Where did you feel God most present this week?

When did you feel furthest away from God's presence?

Throughout your day:

Reflect on your week. Have you fed your body and your soul this week in new or different ways? Did you hear God speak through one activity more than another one? Revisit your journal notes today. Consider what elements of your retreat week you would like to implement into your daily life. Celebrate this time you have spent in solitude. Thank God for what has been revealed to you this week about yourself and the world around you.

Pray:

God, I am listening. Allow my body and spirit to continue listening in the days to come. Amen.

YOUR RETREAT

CONCLUSION

Retreat Conclusion:

My prayer for you as this week concludes is that you feel more whole, lovely, and radiant in your own body and that Christ has been awakened in you in some small way.

We awaken in Christ's body
We awaken in Christ's body
as Christ awakens our bodies,
and my poor hand is Christ, He enters
my foot, and is infinitely me.

I move my hand, and wonderfully
my hand becomes Christ, becomes all of Him
(for God is indivisibly
whole, seamless in His Godhood).

I move my foot, and at once
He appears like a flash of lightning.
Do my words seem blasphemous? --
Then open your heart to Him

and let yourself receive the one
who is opening to you so deeply.
For if we genuinely love Him,
we wake up inside Christ's body

where all our body, all over,
every most hidden part of it,
is realized in joy as Him,
and He makes us, utterly, real,

and everything that is hurt, everything
that seemed to us dark, harsh, shameful,
maimed, ugly, irreparably
damaged, is in Him transformed

and recognized as whole, as lovely,
and radiant in His light
he awakens as the Beloved
in every last part of our body.

-Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022 AD)

Reflection:

Worship is a very important part of celebrating how God made you. Close your retreat week in some form of worship - at your home church, with a friend in their congregation, outdoors, or even

on your yoga mat. Use this as a way to say “thank you” to God for what you may have been shown this week.

You are also encouraged to reflect with a spiritual companion about your retreat week. You may even choose to participate in a spiritual companioning session with a spiritual director as part of this retreat.

Sharing personal experiences from times of solitude enhance spiritual discernment. It is often a friend or spiritual companion that points out or holds one accountable to what God may be trying to reveal in one's life. God's work may seem small or confusing to us until we verbalize it with another person. Sharing these times also keeps us safely grounded so that we are certain that we are listening to God and not to ourselves. Spiritual directors are trained to assist others by companioning with them on the spiritual journey. If you are interested in finding out more about spiritual direction and companionship, feel free to contact me or visit www.exploringpeace.com to learn more about this ministry. There is also a link where you can search for trained spiritual directors in your area.

May you continue to practice times of retreat with our Lord and experience God's blessings.

Peace,

Whitney R. Simpson
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To schedule a spiritual direction session following your retreat, visit www.exploringpeace.com and click “book appointment.” Cost and details of private sessions are listed on-line. Location is never a barrier, as sessions are held virtually.

For Your Reference

Bible Translation Abbreviations:

Common English Bible (CEB)

English Standard Version (ESV)

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

New International Version (NIV)

New King James Version (NKJV)

New Living Translation (NLT)

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Message (Message)

Links to a relaxation music playlist for your retreat as well as additional online resources can be found at:

www.exploringpeace.com/online-resources.html

Resources referenced in compiling this retreat and for further reflection include:

Silf, Margaret. *Going on Retreat: a Beginner's Guide to the Christian Retreat Experience*. Chicago, IL: Loyola, 2002.

Vennard, Jane E. *Be Still: Designing and Leading Contemplative Retreats*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2000.

Vennard, Jane E. *Praying with Body and Soul: a Way to Intimacy with God*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1998.

AT HOME RETREAT

May this journey of life
awaken your body
and your soul.

