

RETREAT GUIDE
GROWING LIKE CHRIST
IN CHARACTER

Table of Contents

This retreat guide is a companion to a series of audio materials curated specifically for your retreat day. On the page number listed, you will find audio material, journal prompts, and questions that accompany each audio section.

PLEASE NOTE: There is more material here than you can digest in 1 day! See page 3 for suggestions on how to use the material in a way that allows ample space for silence & connection with God.

Introduction - page 2-3

Settling In - page 4

Examen - page 5

Visio Divina - "Barnacles" by Bette Dickinson - page 6-7

Lectio Divina - Acts 3:1-10 - page 8

Scripture Study - Acts 3:1-10 - page 9-10

Guided Reflection - Acts 3:2-6 - page 11-12

Closing & Benediction - page 13

Thank Yous - page 14

AUDIO GUIDE TRANSCRIPT

"Christian obedience should always be based on surrender to a person, not simply acceptance of an obligation. It is surrender to love, not submission to a duty."

— David G. Benner, *Surrender to Love: Discovering the Heart of Christian Spirituality*



Welcome to this guided spiritual formation retreat - Growing Like Christ in Character! This is the second of 4 retreat guides created in partnership with InterVarsity Spiritual Formation and Infinitum.

Each of these retreats are designed to help you grow in the three areas of the red ring above: ***Growing in Christ in Intimacy, Like Christ in Character, and With Christ on Mission.***

Our focus during this first retreat is growing like Christ in character. Throughout these quarterly retreat guides, we will be grounded in the book of Acts as we explore God's invitation for our lives to be formed more deeply in, like, and with Christ.

AUDIO GUIDES:

Look for the green play buttons - these include a link to the audio material. You may want to have your headphones, your Bible, and a journal handy as you listen. We encourage you to venture outdoors, or simply away from your screen and to practice engaging your whole body!

JOURNAL PROMPTS:

After engaging with the audio guide, use the text that follows as a prompt to keep you reflecting and engaging with God.

This space is a gift - a place for you to meet with God in a meaningful way - however God is inviting you to do that. There is no right or wrong way to use this retreat guide. Don't feel like you have to rush through or check off each part.

If you want to spend more time with something and linger with God, please do! In fact, you may want to pause and journal after various sections. Don't feel any pressure to 'get it all done' or engage in any way that feels unhelpful.

THINK: PRESENCE over productivity | CONNECTION over completion!

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

PLEASE NOTE: *There is more material here than your soul can digest in 1 day! Be sure to leave ample time between elements for silence and reflection with God. Here's how we recommend breaking it up and spreading it out:*

Half Day Retreat:

30 Min Settling In (page 4)

- 25 min Silence & Solitude
- 5 min Audio Introductory Blessing

30 Min Visio Divina (page 6-7)

- 12 min audio guide
- 18 min silence/journaling/reflection

30 Min Acts 3 Lectio Divina (page 8)

OR Acts 3 Guided Reflection (page 11-12)

- 15 min audio guide
- 15 min silence/journaling/reflection

30 Min Acts 3 Scripture Study (page 9-10)

5 Min Closing & Benediction (pg 13)

If you have time later, return to the Examen on page 5

Full Day Retreat:

30 Min Getting Ready (page 4)

- 25 min Silence & Solitude
- 5 min Introductory Blessing by Kahu (Pastor) Moanike'ala Nanod-Sitch

30 Min Examen (page 5)

- 10 min audio
- 20 min reflection questions & silence

30 Min Visio Divina (page 6-7)

- 12 min audio guide
- 18 min silence/journaling/reflection

30 Min Lectio Divina (page 8)

- 15 min audio guide
- 15 min silence/journaling/reflection

1 Hour Lunch - eat slowly!

30 Min Acts 3:1-10 Scripture Study (page 9-10)

30 Min Acts 3 Guided Reflection (page 11-12)

- 15 min audio guide
- 15 min silence/journaling/reflection/walking

Remaining Time (20min-2 hours):

Restoration & Silence

Do something that brings you joy and is restorative for your soul to be present with Jesus. Ex: Dance, paint, or play.

10 Min Closing Breath Prayer & Benediction (pg 13)

Settling In

Getting Ready

Before sitting down to pray:

- Minimize distractions as much as possible.
- Consider putting your phone in airplane mode.
- Make sure you have some paper or journal, a pen, and your Bible.
- Divide the sections into times that work best for you.

Period 1: Silence and Solitude

Both can be challenging, but oh so necessary. You are taking time out for you and your well-being

-
- Take 10 min. to just sit still and relax your body.
- Take another 10 min. to quiet your mind. Focus on something that brings you peace to help quiet the noise in your head.
- What words or images come to mind when you see the words silence and solitude? What emotions arise?
- Entrust to Jesus the ministry you are not engaging in, so Jesus can minister to you. The One who calls us into ministry also calls us to STOP and rest. What does the word rest mean for you?
- In your own words, invite Jesus to be in this space with you. Ask him to guard your mind from anything he doesn't want you to think about during this time.



[An Introductory Blessing](#)
[by Kahu Moanike'ala Nanod-Sitch \(6 min\)](#)

Examen Re-imagined

ADAPTED FROM REIMAGINING THE IGNATIAN
EXAMEN BY MARK E THIBODEAUX, SJ



Examen Re-Imagined

10 min ed by Bethany Givens Blankespoor

Remember a Challenge from the Last Month

Ask God to show you the greatest challenge you faced in the last month. How did you meet that challenge?

Did you respond in spiritual freedom? Or did you respond with resistance to the movement of God's Spirit?

What were the consequences of your thoughts, feelings, words, and actions? If you feel moved to do so, give thanks, ask forgiveness, ask for healing.

Receive the Grace You Need:

Ask the Lord to show you what grace or virtue or spiritual fruit you may need to meet this challenge in the future (for example: patience, courage, generosity, peace).

Looking at the past few days, ask the Lord to show you what ways you are not being open to this grace. Ask the Lord for strength to be open to this grace from this moment forward.

Allow yourself to daydream about being "filled up" with this grace. What might tomorrow be like if you have this grace with you at all times?

Pray Dream for the Future:

Prayerfully daydream-about the joyful moment when you meet this challenge in a grace-filled way.

Visio Divina

"BARNACLES" BY BETTE DICKINSON



[Visio Divina - "Barnacles" by Bette Dickinson](#)

12 min led by Bette Dickinson

What thoughts or feelings does this painting evoke? Is there something God wants you to see? To hear?

Is there any way you can identify with this sea turtle covered in barnacles? What comes to mind as you consider what this turtle may be experiencing in this moment?

What prayer rises from within you as you reflect on this work?

Visio Divina Journal Prompts

"BARNACLES" BY BETTE DICKINSON

Is there something you have "picked up" -- something foreign (like a barnacle) to Christlikeness, that is blocking your thriving?

When have you felt vulnerable this year? What rose to the surface in you when you felt vulnerable?

How might God long to set you free...to remove the scales, to skillfully cut off the barnacles? How might this make you more human?

More yourself?

More like Christ?

Spend some time talking honestly with Jesus about what this brings up in you: your longings and hope, your fears and frustrations. Write them out.

Then let Jesus respond to you...

Write a Prayer:

As you imagine Jesus with you, putting to death everything that keeps you from life and freedom, write a prayer of response to him:

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: Tear into me, O Lord
Exhale: that I may be set free.

Lectio Divina

ACTS 3:1-10



Acts 3:1-10 Lectio Divina

15 min led by Rev. Phil Bowling-Dyer

3 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. 2 Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. 4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” 5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

6 Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. 9 When all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

First Reading:

Simply pay attention to the word or phrase that seems to jump out at you.

Second Reading:

Ask the Lord, “Why this particular word? How does this connect to my life?”

Third Reading:

What is God stirring in your heart connected to this word? Pray what is on your heart back to God.

Scripture Study

ACTS 3:1-10 (NIV)

BY SKIP MCDONALD, R.N. REGIONAL RESOURCE SPECIALIST, SE

3 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. 2 Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. 4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” 5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

6 Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. 9 When all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Leading Like Jesus

Peter and John were minding their own business when they encountered a lame man. They didn’t just walk on by, but stopped. God used them to turn this man’s life upside down!

Read Acts 3:1-10. Read it again slowly.

- As you consider “caring like Jesus,” what words or phrases stood out for you from this passage?
- What do you notice about Peter’s interaction with this man?
- In what ways were both Peter and the beggar vulnerable in this passage?
- Consider verse 6: How do you respond when people expect something from you that you cannot give? Is there anything you are expecting of others that they cannot give you?
- How might surrendering those you lead to Jesus allow them to experience his restoration?

- What things block you from caring and ministering like Jesus and in Jesus' authority?
- Think for a moment about a person or people group in your life who may be experiencing barriers to wholeness physically, spiritually, or emotionally. Ask Jesus: what do you want for this person? What can I give?
- Pause and consider - how may Jesus want to free you to care and minister more like him?

Character of a Christ-Centered Leader

Peter leads by first acknowledging the limitations of what he has to offer. When faced with the vulnerability of our limitations, the temptation may be to cover and hide them. We lead out of our ego and rely on our skills, strategies, and strengths for effective ministry. However, like barnacles weighing down on a sea turtle, these things can keep us from the freedom of vulnerable dependence on Jesus and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

As the world around us grows more chaotic, leaders are often stretched to the brim. In those stretched places the need for leaders that looks like Jesus is revealed. More and more, Christian leaders need to learn how to let the Holy Spirit lead through them. Leading in one's own strength could lead to poor outcomes.

Consider exploring Christ-centered leadership in two ways:

1. What has leadership looked like for you in these trying days? Think of at least two negative leadership encounters that you initiated. How did those challenge you in Christ-centered leadership?

2. How has Jesus met you in your leadership roles? Think of at least two positive leadership encounters that you initiated. How did they encourage you towards Christ-centered leadership?

Acts 3 Guided Reflection

READ ACTS 3:2-6



Acts 3: 2-6 Guided Reflection

15 min led by Rev. Phil Bowling-Dyer

Journal Prompts

- Vs. 2: This man's physical condition prevented him from living into the fullness of who he was created to be. Reflect on your own life for a moment. Are there any barriers keeping you from thriving in your life and work? (e.g. Physical, social, psychological, emotional and spiritual barriers.)
- Vs. 3: Are there any ways you feel particularly vulnerable or dependent on others like this man?
- Are there ways you have put expectations on others to meet your needs? Healthy ways? Maybe some unhealthy ways?
- Vs. 4: Who in your life has helped you feel seen, known, and loved like Peter and John did for this man?
- Are there any ways you have felt passed over or unseen by others recently? Allow a memory to surface if there is one. Imagine Jesus in this memory, stopping and beholding you. How does it feel in your body and soul to be seen by Jesus?

- Vs. 5: Give Jesus your full attention in this moment. Hold his gaze. What do you want him to do for you?
- Vs. 6: The beggar thought what he wanted was silver and gold, but underneath that desire was a deep need for healing and restoration. What are some surface desires that you have been looking for to fix your situation? Bring those desires to Jesus.
- Now ask Jesus -the one who knows our truest longings even more than we ourselves do if there is a deeper longing? Spend some time listening.
- Journal with the question: "What do I really desire?" Write stream of consciousness until you get to the bottom of it. Until your soul says, "There. Yes. That is what I want."
- Now, bring THAT desire to Jesus. How does he respond? What words of restoration does Jesus speak over you right now?



Closing

As you wrap up your time, draw close to Jesus. Hear him saying that he is with you.

Your calling is not to be done alone.

Through his Spirit, he will give you all that you need for your good, and his honor.

Blessings to you!

Benediction

From the Anglican Tradition of Worship:

*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.



Thank You!

We hope this retreat guide has helped you grow in Christ in intimacy through waiting!

Mark your calendar for our next retreats:

With Christ on Mission - September 28th
Centering the Margins - November 30th

Thank You to Our Partners!

Contributors and Audio Guides:

Bethany Givens Blankespoor
Bette Dickinson
Brenda Wong
Skip McDonald
Carolyn Carney
Rev. Phil Bowling-Dyer
Kaku Moanike'ala Nanod-Sitch

Audio & Tech Support:

Brandon Laird & Infinitum Team

Web Design:

Mark Breneman
Stephen Braaksma