

# Your Guide for a Personal Spiritual Retreat

“You will call on me and come and  
pray to me and I will listen to you.  
You will seek me and find me  
when you seek me with all  
your heart.”  
Jeremiah 29:12-13

**Hillcrest**  
Ministering God's Love To A Hurting World.

## PERSONAL NOTES

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Dear Friend,

We want to give you a gift! This little book is intended to encourage and challenge you as you continue your journey in pursuit of God's call on your life. It's a guide for a personal spiritual retreat.

As you look at this year of school, ministry, family and work, you may find yourself in need of some renewal or direction for the next phase of your life.

We know that time is precious, but we want to challenge you to set aside three hours for this special time with God. Take the time as a gift for yourself, but even more importantly, see it as a gift to your kind and loving Heavenly Father who relishes time with His children.

This guide is designed to move you through:

**LISTENING**

to God's heart of love for you.

**EXAMINING**

your heart and life before God.

**RESPONDING**

in praise and obedience to God's direction.

Let God meet you where you are right now in your life. Allow the Spirit to move and breathe something new and fresh into your heart...listen to the still, small voice that is often drowned out in the rush of every day living. We believe you will hear whispered words of love.

We value the opportunity to be involved in your life in the months ahead. We trust that our friendship will grow and that we will know what it means to encourage one another toward true community.

-The Pastors and Staff at Hillcrest

## How To Make The Most Of Your Spiritual Retreat

## PERSONAL NOTES

1. Find a place that is comfortable and enjoyable to you: a beach, park, garden or your living room couch.
2. All you need is your Bible, pen and this guide.
3. Let the content of this guide direct you, not drive you. It is much more important that you meet God than fill up the pages of this journal.
4. Use the time and empty pages to write. If journaling is not a habit, allow yourself to be stretched to do something new.
5. Because this guide moves you through a process, it is best done in one, three-hour block. Although some have done it in three, one-hour blocks, we encourage doing it all at once.
6. Have an expectant heart for God to show up and reveal truth to your life.

## **SPIRITUAL:**

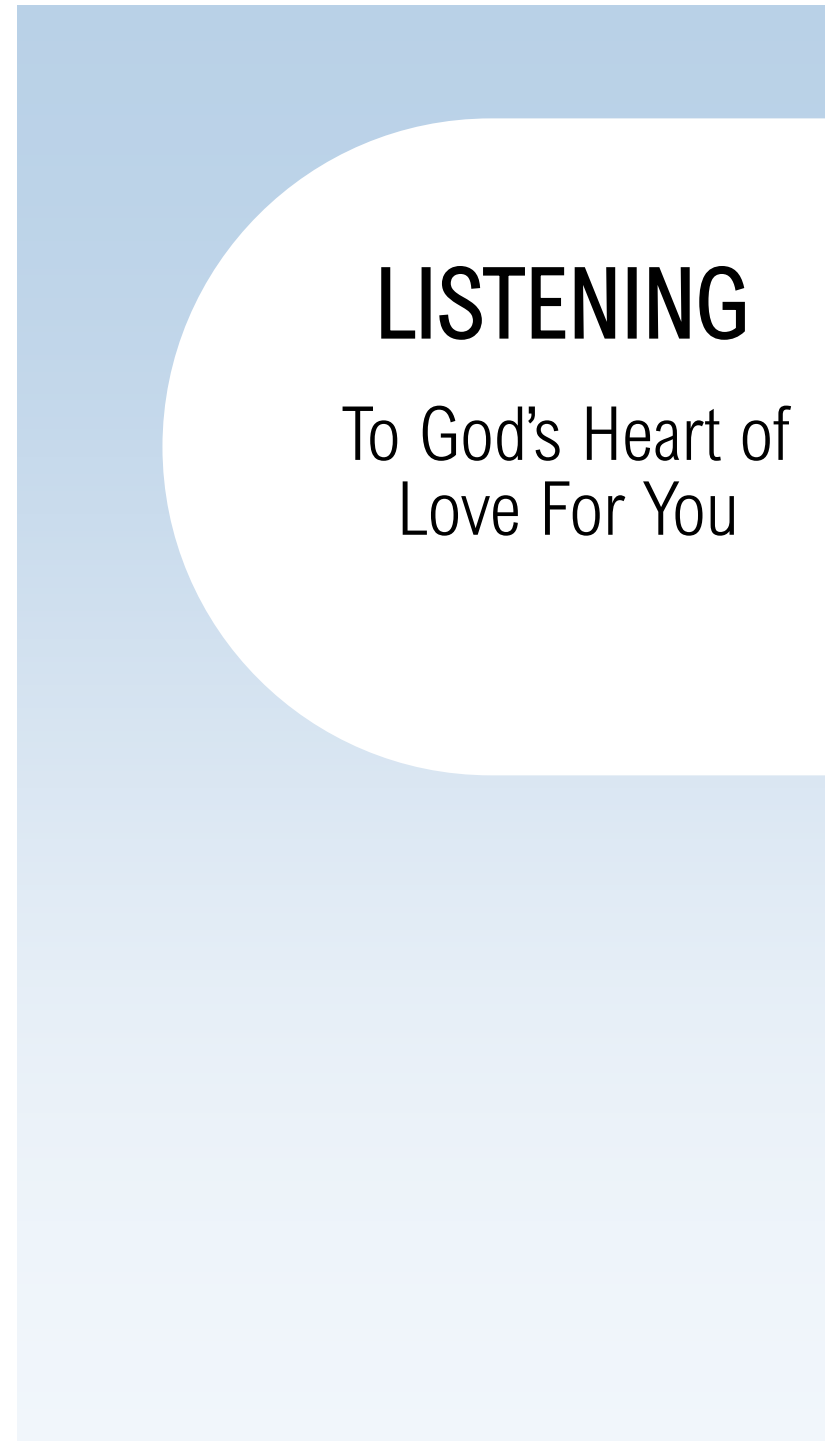
Strengthen Faith -

Developing Spiritual Disciplines -

## **MINISTRY:**

Present Commitment -

Ministry Dreams -



Solitude and silence unwind our hearts and minds. The activity of our lives makes so much noise, we often miss God's messages of love.

Ask God to guide you as you pray:

*"Hear my cry, O God: listen to my prayer.  
From the ends of the earth I call to you,  
I call as my heart grows faint;  
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."  
Psalm 61:1-2*

Continue to read this passage and let your heart slow down.

## SOLITUDE

Without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life. Solitude begins with a time and place for God, and Him alone. If we really believe, not only that God exists, but also that He is actively present in our lives - healing, teaching and guiding - we need to set aside a time, a space to give Him our undivided attention.

Jesus says, "Go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place." (Matthew 6:6)

Bringing solitude into our lives is one of the most necessary, but also most difficult, disciplines.

Solitude is not a spontaneous response to an occupied and preoccupied life. There are too many reasons to not be alone. Therefore, we must begin by carefully planning some solitude.

-Henry Nouwen

## PERSONAL:

Health (heart and body) -

Attitude & Character -

## RELATIONSHIPS:

(strengthen connections or seek to bless)

Family -

Friends & Work -

## Responding to this next season of your life...

No doubt God has been speaking to you about specific things in your heart and life. In the desire for life-change, let's move to action steps.

Look back over the pages of this journal. Is there immediate business you need to take care of? (Mending a broken relationship, changing some habits, removing some barriers, etc.)

List them here:

Take some moments for the next few pages to establish some realistic goals and objectives for the next three to six months based on key areas in your life. Put the following page in your calendar, on your mirror, in your car or a place you will be reminded of the direction God has been moving.

As you begin, pray:  
**Lord, I submit to you these plans...  
move and change as You see fit.**

Relax and settle your heart. You may be feeling restless. Gaining a bigger perspective on your life can be facilitated through journaling because you are forced to slow down your soul and think about your life.

Spend twenty minutes on the next few pages, writing down restless thoughts or feelings that have surfaced as you have quieted down. There are also extra pages at the back of this booklet for additional thoughts and notes.

Write on these pages in a way that is comfortable for you. Simple words and phrases work as well as complete sentences.

Thoughts will untangle as you write and God will continue to direct you in this time.

What season of life do you feel you are in?

What are the feelings and frustrations associated with this season?

What is going right in your life?

8. Which of the five purposes of the church truly grip your heart:

- Discipleship
- Evangelism
- Fellowship

- Ministry
- Worship

9. Are you a “good fit” for your role in your area of ministry?

10. Does God want you to take greater ownership in expanding the leadership of this ministry?

Some ideas I have:

**Take a moment and pray for your pastors. Pray that God grants them wisdom in vision and decisions.**



6. What support do you need to make this happen?

7. How has God SHAPED you for your ministry?

**S**piritual Gifts: What are they?

**H**earth: What do you love to do?

**A**bilities: What are your natural skills?

**P**ersonality: How are you unique?

**E**xperiences: What positive or negative experiences have impacted your life?

What do you feel is missing from your life?

If thoughts begin to form for making grocery lists, phone calls or to-do lists, don't feel discouraged. It is natural for other thoughts to flood your mind when you slow down. Simply jot notes off to the side, take a deep breath and refocus on your Spiritual Retreat.

*Psalm 69*

*(In parts)*

*Save me, O God,  
for the waters have come up to my neck...  
I have come into the deep waters;  
the floods engulf me.*

Lord, sometimes life does seem overwhelming, I remember feeling  
this way at times.

*May those who hope in You  
not be disgraced because of me;  
God of Israel.*

God I know You are in control.  
I wonder if my responses to life keep others from seeing truly how  
awesome You are.

*May those who seek you  
not be put to shame because of me.*

**I'm hurting Lord.**

*But I pray to You, Lord,  
in the time of Your favour;  
in Your great love, O God,  
answer me with Your sure salvation.  
Answer me, Lord, out of the goodness of Your love;  
in Your great mercy turn to me.*

Jesus I'm so desperately dependant on You.  
I know it is only Your grace and mercy that will see me through.  
Stay near to me Lord.

3. Are you confident of God's call to ministry in this season of your life?

4. Are there activities presently in your life that are crowding out time for ministry? Or - is God moving you to some other commitment? (If you come to that conclusion, that's okay.)

5. Do you need to make changes to be more effective in your area of ministry? What are they?

Ask yourself and write honestly:

1. How has God used you this past year in the lives of those around you?

2. Who have you built significant relationships with and what has made them effective?

-Do you know where these people are spiritually?

-How can you help them grow in their faith?

Take a moment and pray for them.

Read one of the following Psalms that speaks to where you find yourself in this moment. Rewrite it as a prayer.

Pour out your heart before the Lord, as David modeled for us, and express your heart, your hurt, your joy and your doubts.

**Today if you are feeling:**

**use Psalm:**

-that God is distant

33

-worried

37

-insecure

46

-guilty

51

-overwhelmed

57

-lonely or confused

62

-joy filled

89

-thankful

96

The Psalm on my heart...

How has God been speaking to you during this time?

What has He been directing you toward?

As you examine your commitment to this next season of ministry, lay out your heart and willingness to His will by praying:

**Yes Lord, whatever You will.**

Pray this line to God right now.

The following scriptures and songs are aids to your worship time. Remember, it is much more important to worship and praise than to get through the material.

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## Scripture for Personal Worship

Psalm 113  
Psalm 116  
Psalm 121  
Psalm 136  
Psalm 138  
Psalm 145

Isaiah 12  
Isaiah 40  
Isaiah 55  
Matthew 5:1-11  
Romans 8

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We minister to each other out of the overflow of our walk with God.

During this time in your Spiritual Retreat, respond to God by obeying His leading for your ministry.

*As the deer pants for the water,  
so my soul longs after Thee.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
and I long to worship Thee.*

*You alone are my strength, my shield,  
to You alone may my spirit yield.  
You alone are my heart's desire  
and I long to worship Thee.  
-adapted from Psalm 42-*

You are still in the process of slowing down your soul and listening to the sweet voice of Jesus.

From your previous journal pages you may have uncovered some things that are making you quite uncomfortable. Maybe your physical surrounds aren't right. That's okay, you can still find inner silence.

**It's easy to change. It's easier not to.**

**"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but  
nothing can be changed until it is faced."  
-James Baldwin**

Submit your cares, your worries, your guilt, your list of things to do, your need to fix yourself or others and prayerfully...

*"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand,  
that He may lift you up in due time.  
Cast all your anxiety on Him  
because He cares for you."  
1 Peter 5:6-7*

**REST.**

**LET GO.**

Underneath our longings is a true, spiritual hunger to know Jesus more intimately... and only He can truly meet us in this moment. Listen to the words He whispers to your heart...

*I am the Lord your God.*

*I rejoice over you.*

*I have called you by name.*

*Child, you are mine.*

*I will be with you wherever you go.*

*There is nothing that can separate you from My love.*

*Come to Me.*

*I know you are tired.*

*Sit for a while and know of My love.*

*I am your shield and fortress - a rock.*

*Rest in the shadow of My wings.*

*I am big enough to handle all that you carry.*

*Give it all to Me.*

*I care about you.*

*There are many good things that I have planned for you.*

*I long for you to know My heart of love.*

*That same love that took me to Calvary is the same love that I offer to you in this moment. It covers a multitude of sins.*

*Draw near to Me and I will draw near to you.*

*You will find Me when you search for Me with all of your heart.*

*Rest in Me.*

*Be still and know that I am God.*

From a place of forgiveness, surrender and humility, reflect on the goodness of God.

*"Praise Him for His acts of power;  
praise Him for His surpassing greatness."*

*Psalms 150:2*

On the following pages, move your focus and thoughts (meditation) to God's character so you can worship Him. At this point, the temptation is to focus on yourself and your own thoughts and feelings. Even if you feel restless and uncomfortable in this moment, open up your heart to encounter God's greatness. Trust His power to transform you, not your ability to figure things out.

Here are some suggestions:

- Walk around - walk and pray. Don't allow physical fatigue to squelch your worship.
- Look at the nature around you. What does God reveal about Himself to you?
- Sing and pray out loud.
- If one scripture, song or thought captivates your heart, camp out there. Give God glory and praise and receive His words of love and care.

*"How priceless is Your unfailing love, O God!  
People take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.  
They feast on the abundance of Your house;  
You give them drink from Your river of delights."*  
*Psalms 36:7-8*

# RESPONDING

In Praise and  
Obedience to  
God's Direction

In this time of rest, do you think God has been speaking to you? About what?

# EXAMINING

## Your Heart and Life Before God

**Confess.  
Surrender.  
Relinquish.  
God is in control...**

Have you been fighting Him?  
Are you allowing your present circumstances, griefs and joys to  
transform you into looking more like Him?

*“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you  
face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing  
of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish  
its work so that you may be mature and complete,  
not lacking anything.”  
James 1:2-4*

*“For as high as the Heavens are above the earth,  
so great is His love for those who fear Him;  
as far as the East is from the West,  
so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”  
Psalm 103:11-12*

**Do you need to move around right now?  
Get up and walk, stretch and move positions.**

Continue on in your time of reflection, but now we will make a  
move to reflect on God's goodness and grace.



*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."  
John 10:10*

The Holy Spirit will convict you toward holy living. The enemy seeks to devour us with guilt and shame.

Open you Bible and read the following passages back to God as a prayer:

- Psalm 51
- Psalm 103:11-12
- Psalm 139

### Create In Me A Clean Heart

Create in me a clean heart, O God  
And renew a right spirit within me  
And renew a right spirit within me

Cast me not away from Thy  
presence, O Lord  
And take not Thy Holy Spirit from  
me  
Restore unto me the joy of Thy  
salvation  
And renew a right spirit within me

-Keith Green-

### Refiner's Fire

Purify my heart  
Let me be as gold and precious  
silver

Purify my heart  
Let me be as gold, pure gold

Refiner's fire  
My heart's one desire  
Is to be holy  
Set apart for You, Lord  
I choose to be holy  
Set apart for You, my Master  
Ready to do Your will

Purify my heart  
Cleanse me from within  
And make me holy  
Purify my heart  
Cleanse me from my sin  
Deep within

-Brian Doerksen-

The unexamined life is not worth living.  
-Socrates

*"If we claim to have fellowship with Him  
and yet walk in darkness,  
we lie and do not live out the truth.  
But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light,  
we have fellowship with one another,  
and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin."  
1 John 1:6-7*

What specific areas is the Holy Spirit convicting you of?

What truth is God trying to reveal to you?

What do you need to confess that is keeping you from experiencing forgiveness?

What experiences have been helpful in your personal growth and relationships with others?

What do you sense the Holy Spirit directing you to do in the areas of character and spiritual growth?

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."  
1 John 1:9*

Are there any patterns emerging that you need to pay attention to?

Think back on this year. What significant events have been painful?

As you seek truth in your inmost being, what is driving you in your actions? Is it your need for perfection? Others' approval? Others' praise? The need to feel significant? Bad Habits? Pleasing Jesus?

