



Take a break!

**THIS IS HARD, Y'ALL.
EVERYONE DESERVES A BREAK.**

Week long vacations or even a day trip to the spa are not in the cards for most of us these days. But even the most stressed and overstretched of us can find two hours somewhere to rest, renew and recharge.

Make plans to take this two hour mini-retreat within the week!

PREPARING FOR YOUR MINI-RETREAT

Choose a Space

It could be a corner, a closet or an entire room. You might want to plan to spend the entire time outside. But choose a space where you can be (at least somewhat) apart from other people. Add or take away whatever you need to from the space to make yourself comfortable.

Set Expectations

If you live with other people, give them plenty of notice about your retreat date and time. Make sure they know that you are to be left alone during this time. This may take some advance activity planning, schedule shifting or even screen time rule bending.

Ditch Screens

Leave your computer, tablet and phone behind. Equip yourself with a Bible, notebook, writing utensils and a large bottle of water.



SCHEDULE

0 to 20

Relaxation and breath exercises

Drink 8 ounces of water

Stand and stretch for five minutes

30 to 60

Take a prayer walk around your neighborhood

60 to 90

Do Biblical Reflection exercise

Drink at least 8 ounces of water

Stand and stretch for five minutes

90 to 110

Journal using prompts

110 to 120 End in with a few final moments of silence, personal prayer and deep breaths before returning to real life.

This is a suggested schedule. Please, *please* do not feel tightly bound to it. You may want to spend more time walking and less time with the Bible reflection. This is YOUR retreat. Use it in ways that feed and sustain you.

Relaxation and Breath

Find a comfortable seated position in a chair or on a cushion or outside on the ground. Begin to tighten your body starting at your toes. Slowly move the tightening up through your calves and legs, through your torso and arms, all the way up to your shoulders and neck until your whole body is tense and tight. Take a deep breath and as you exhale, release your entire body all at once.

Repeat this exercise at least two more times or until you can feel the loosening of tension your body is holding.

Breath

*Breathe in to the count of four
Hold your breath to the count of four
Exhale to the count of four.*

Repeat this exercise. You may want to up your count as you become used to the breathing, but keep the time you inhale, hold and exhale the same. (ie don't breathe in five and then exhale three).

When you're ready to move on, begin breathing in and out deeply.

As you breathe in, imagine that you are breathing in all that is good in the world-- beauty, love, hope, peace

As you breathe out, expel those things that are weighing you down, holding you back and causing you pain.

Prayer Walk

There are a number of ways to do a prayer walk.

One type of prayer walk is just to simply pray while you walk. If you need some structure, start with confession (the things you've done or said that you wish you hadn't), supplication (the things you and others need help with) and end with gratitude.

Another type is the mantra prayer. Pick a single word like "peace" or a single phrase "Guide me in ways to help others" and repeat it throughout your walk. Again, some people find this type of prayer easier when they are in motion as the rhythm of the walk seems to keep the mantra flowing.

Yet a third way is to pray for the people and places you pass along your walk. pray for the people in the houses and any businesses you may pass. Give thanks for what you see in nature.

Enjoy your walk.



Bible Reflection

Read 2 Kings 6:15-17

Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria was angry with Israel. And he was all set to take them down, but every time he tried, it was if they knew what he was going to do. As if there was a spy in his ranks sharing all the information with the enemy. And that made an already angry king positively furious.

Then one of his men told him it wasn't a spy. That Israel had this holy man who could predict what Syria was going to do and passed that info along to the king. That's why Ben-Hadad couldn't win. So, the Syrian army headed to Elisha's house. They didn't have snipers or drones to take out an enemy back then, so they just sent the whole army.

Now one might posit that, being a prophet, that Elisha should have known it was coming. But his servant didn't. Can you imagine waking up on a Saturday morning, slowly getting out of bed, making your way to the front door to pick up the paper before you sit down with some coffee and finding yourself surrounded by the entire Syrian army? They were completely surrounded. The enemy far outnumbered them and were closing in.

Elisha's servant chose to do what most of us what do in a situation where we are outnumbered and unarmed...he panicked. Which, given the circumstances seemed a pretty reasonable thing to do.

But Elisha is all calm and collected. Do not be afraid, he says. A phrase we hear over and over and over again in our scriptures—around 272 times (depending on who is counting and what translation they are using).

Do not be afraid.

There are more of those who are with them than those who are with us. Are you kidding? Have you just completely lost your mind? Probably what Gehazi said.

Elisha asks God to open his servant's eyes, and all of sudden Gehazi can see that the army of the Lord surrounding the army that is surrounding the city of Dotham.

Though I imagine most of us cannot share a story quite so dramatic, we all have a story about a time when we felt completely surrounded by the enemy—out numbered, out gunned and outsmarted. We all have times when we abandon our claimed theology and are sure that we have got some bad Karma going on, or that the universe has turned against us or that the odds will never again be in our favor. And in those times, even if we can't see the armies of the Lord backing us up, we are never alone. Be not afraid. There will always be more of those who are with us than those who are with them.

Bible Reflection

(Feel free to write down your answers or just reflect on these questions. I often find that writing some stream of consciousness answers often helps me gather my thoughts.)

Has there been a time in your life where you felt the presence of God in midst of a scary situation?

Does the image of God's angel armies surrounding you in troubled times bring you peace?

What are other images of God that give you strength and courage when you are afraid?

Where do you see or how do experience God at this time in your life?

Journal Prompts

Here are some ideas for journaling time.

(If you're not much of a writer, feel free to draw or color as you reflect on these ideas)

Consider this prayer time and lift of the things you write (or color or draw) to God.

Things you are grateful for

Things you are worried about

People you are concerned about

Things to celebrate

Things to confess/get off your chest

I hope you feel refreshed and renewed and better equipped to take on your life.

I also hope you'll stay connected to Doubting Believer. You can follow me on Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram. And check out the Doubting Believer blog at www.doubtingbeliever.com

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