

Retreat Option: Body, Mind and Soul

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” Deuteronomy 6:4,5

In ministry we use our whole selves: body, mind and soul. In this retreat outline, you are encouraged to consider how well you are caring for your whole self. Why do this? Because if one part of our life slips, the others are affected. Poor physical health may mean less motivation or energy, which in turn makes our work seem like drudgery. Neglecting our intellectual growth may mean that we repeatedly turn to the same sources for information and the work we produce (sermons, for example) begins to sound the same. And while we spend a great deal of time tending to the souls of others, if we neglect our own not only do we suffer, but those under our care will suffer as well. Anxiety will replace peace and irritability, compassion. In sum, good self-care means you are more able to rest in God’s care and celebrate his grace.

This retreat may be helpful in raising areas that need more of your attention. If you are so minded, you can use what you discover to help you chart goals for the next 3 months – 1 year. The feedback may help you better balance life and ministry, and assist you in caring better for yourself.

Before you go on the retreat, you are asked to invite three people close to you (spouse, friend, elder, colleague) for his/her perspective on your self-care. There are three pre-retreat questionnaires, one for each section (body, mind, soul). At least one week before you plan to engage in the retreat, present the three questionnaires to people who know you well. Ask them to pray about their answers and to respond honestly to the questions. Then they are to seal their responses in an envelope and return the questionnaire to you before you go on your retreat. (While you may give more than one questionnaire to a person, it will probably be most helpful to have three different people involved.)

Items to bring on the retreat:

- ✓ 3 completed questionnaires from friends, sealed in their envelopes
- ✓ Bible
- ✓ Journal
- ✓ Pen
- ✓ Stationary to write thank-you’s to the three friends

Body

Today's Date is _____

When was your last physical? (date) _____

Last dental exam? _____

Last eye exam? _____

Are you due for any diagnostic tests (depending on sex: prostate exam, Pap smear, mammogram, etc)? If so, which ones?

Are you currently on any medication? (List)

When was it prescribed, and when was the last time the dosage was assessed?

How would you rate your overall health on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 10 excellent?

Do you have any areas of concern about your health?

Do you have any areas of progress or improvement as far as your physical health?

If you could do three things to improve your overall health, what would you do?

The Envelope Please.....

Read through your friend's comments regarding your health. Pray the written prayer of your friend out loud.

In what areas do you and your friend agree?

In what areas do you and your friend disagree?

Were there any surprises in your friend's comments?

Quiet yourself before the Lord. Close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing. When you are open to hearing from God, proceed.

Take out your Bible and read aloud Psalm 139: 13-18. Read it a few times through silently. What words or phrases particularly stand out? What do you sense God is saying to you about your body?

Your Creator loves your body; how it functions and grows and heals itself. God made the very substance of your being. God delights in you. Are there any ways in which you can offer your physical self to God? Any ways in which you can better care for the gift of your body?

When you have completed this part, take a break. Go for a walk, enjoy a snack, take a nap—choose to do something good for your body.

Mind

Finish these sentences:

1. My favorite book or author in elementary school was _____
because . . .

2. My favorite teacher in Middle School/Junior High was
_____ because . . .

3. In High School, my favorite class was _____ because . . .

4. If I could go back to college, I'd take more classes in this area
_____ because . . .

5. When I was in seminary, I found this subject boring/hard/distasteful:
_____. I think I felt that way because . . .

6. When I was in seminary, classes in this area inspired me:
_____. I think I felt inspired because . . .

7. On a scale of 1 (loathed it with every fiber of my being) to 10 (absolutely loved every minute), I would rate my enjoyment of the academic process of learning as:

In elementary school	_____
In middle school	_____
In high school	_____
In college	_____
In seminary	_____

8. Presently, I really enjoy learning about (you can have more than one answer here) _____ because . . .

9. If given the choice, I would rather
- a) read about a topic I'm interested in
 - b) hear a lecture about a topic I'm interested in
 - c) go to a participatory workshop about a topic I'm interested in
 - d) talk to someone I know who knows about the topic I'm interested in.

Look back over your answers to the above questions.

If your enjoyment of the formal learning process changed over time, why did it change?

Do you enjoy formal learning now?

Generally speaking, are you more affected or inspired by people (e.g. teachers) or ideas (e.g. subject material)?

When you seek out continuing education, do you seek out people (e.g. you seek out any seminar where Barbara Brown Taylor is speaking) or ideas (e.g. you seek out anything having to do with New Church Development)?

When was the last time you felt that your mind was stretched? How did that happen?

If you could add something to your life to aid you in stretching your mind, what would you add?

The Envelope Please.....

Read through your friend's comments regarding your mind. Pray the written prayer of your friend out loud.

In what areas do you and your friend agree?

In what areas do you and your friend disagree?

Were there any surprises in your friend's comments?

Quiet yourself before the Lord. Close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing. When you are open to hearing from God, proceed.

Read Proverbs 18:15 and Philippians 4:4-8 out loud. What words or phrases seem particularly relevant? What do you discern God telling you about your mind?

God loves a curious mind. God created this world for us to explore and enjoy. In what ways can you offer your mind to God? How can you care for the gift of your mind?

When you have completed this part, take a break! Give your mind a rest.

Soul

Name the time within the last six months in which you were most aware of the presence of God.

Name the time within the last 3 months in which you were most aware of the presence of God.

Name the time within the last week in which you were most aware of the presence of God.

Are there any commonalities in the above experiences (location, time of day, presence or absence of other people, etc.)?

In what place do you most readily become aware of the presence of God?

At what time of day?

How often do you incorporate being in that place and time into your life (daily/ weekly/ monthly/ annually)?

Describe what it feels like to you when you are most aware of the presence of God.

What has God told you, taught you, reminded you of during these times?

How open do you feel your soul is? Is there any sin or inclination toward sin that you do not bring before God?

The Envelope Please.....

Read through your friend's comments regarding your soul. Pray the written prayer of your friend out loud.

In what areas do you and your friend agree?

In what areas do you and your friend disagree?

Were there any surprises in your friend's comments?

Quiet yourself before the Lord. Close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing. When you are open to hearing from God, proceed.

Read Mark 1:32-35 and Psalm 105: 1-5 aloud. Meditate on the words of the psalm. Are any words or phrases resonating with you? What is God saying to you, or what are you saying to God about your soul?

Your soul was created to live eternally in the presence of God. God is always delighted when his children turn their souls toward him. Sit quietly and turn your soul toward God.

When you have completed this part, take a break. Let God delight in you!

Putting It All Together

Hopefully you have developed a greater awareness of your whole self: body, mind and soul. You have been reminded of the love of God for you, and how he has given you a body, a mind and a soul so that you can delight in him and he in you.

Write a prayer of thanksgiving to God for all he has given:

Are there any goals that you have for yourself as a result of this retreat?

I will care better for my body by:

I will care better for my mind by:

I will care better for my soul by:

Write a short note to each of the people who prepared a questionnaire for you. Thank them for their help, and invite them to hold you accountable for the goals you have outlined above.

Receive this blessing as you go on your way:

“May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely;
and may your spirit and soul and body
be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.”

1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24

Pre-Retreat Questionnaire: Body

Your friend will be leaving soon to spend some time on a retreat. This retreat will focus on the Body, Mind, and Soul of your friend. You are invited to participate in your friend's understanding of her/himself by completing the questions below which have to do with the Body. Please pray through your answers, and respond honestly. When you are finished, seal your answers in an envelope and return this questionnaire to your friend.

1. From what you observe, what are some practices your friend engages in that are healthy for his/her body?
2. From what you observe, what are some practices your friend engages in that are unhealthy for her/his body?
3. To the best of your knowledge, does your friend see his/her physician regularly for annual check-ups and testing procedures?
4. To the best of your knowledge, does your friend seek out medical attention when needed (e.g. for an unexpected illness or injury)?
5. If you could encourage your friend to do three things to care better for her/his body, what three things would you suggest?
6. Write a prayer for your friend that thanks God for the gift of his/her body and intercedes for her/him in this area.

Pre-Retreat Questionnaire: Mind

Your friend will be leaving soon to spend some time on a retreat. This retreat will focus on the Body, Mind, and Soul of your friend. You are invited to participate in your friend's understanding of her/himself by completing the questions below which have to do with the Mind. Please pray through your answers, and respond honestly. When you are finished, seal your answers in an envelope and return this questionnaire to your friend.

1. From what you observe, does your friend express a curiosity about that which s/he does not yet know? If so, in what ways is this expressed?
2. From what you observe, is your friend reading regularly and widely (meaning, books having to do with ministry as well as fiction, non-fiction, magazines, journals, etc.)? If the answer is yes, how do you observe this?
3. What seem to be areas about which your friend is particularly interested?
4. How does your friend seek out more information about those areas?
5. If you regularly listen to your friend preach, how does her/his intellectual life affect his/her sermons?
6. What are three suggestions you could make that could encourage your friend's intellectual growth?
7. Write a prayer for your friend that thanks God for the gift of his/her mind and intercedes for her/him in this area.

Pre-Retreat Questionnaire: Soul

Your friend will be leaving soon to spend some time on a retreat. This retreat will focus on the Body, Mind, and Soul of your friend. You are invited to participate in your friend's understanding of her/himself by completing the questions below which have to do with the Soul. Please pray through your answers, and respond honestly. When you are finished, seal your answers in an envelope and return this questionnaire to your friend.

1. From what you observe, what are some practices that your friend engages in that care for his/her soul?
2. From what you observe, how would you describe your friend's current relationship with God?
3. From what you observe, name an area or two of apparent vibrancy in your friend's spiritual life.
4. From what you observe, name an area or two of apparent struggle or weakness in your friend's spiritual life.
5. If you could suggest three things for your friend to consider in caring for his/her soul, what would you suggest?
6. Write a prayer for your friend that thanks God for the gift of his/her soul and intercedes for her/him in this area.