

Spiritual Retreat Paper
CD 735: Spiritual Leadership

Gabe Tringale
ATS/New York City

CD 735: Spiritual Leadership

Spring 2023
Dr. Rob Reimer
2/21/2023

Last week I embarked on a one-day personal spiritual retreat. I was overwhelmed with daily life's stresses, and I felt that I needed time alone with God to recharge and refocus. And, of course, complete the assignment for class! In order to prepare for the retreat, I had to pray through my to-do list, declutter my email inboxes and clear my schedule. If I did not do those things, I knew I would have far too much on my mind to truly focus. Along with preparing in that regard, I also had to be realistic about this retreat compared to others. A few semesters ago, I completed a 24-hour retreat but was able to book a room and get away to a retreat center. I knew this one would be different. I chose to spend the day praying, worshiping, and reading the Bible, and it turned out to be a transformative experience. I spent time in a few different places. I had to get creative because I did not have the time and space to do an overnight retreat at a center or campground. I broke it up into three parts, spending several hours in a catholic church that was open to the public, several hours worshiping on my own in a quiet space, and several hours reading Scripture.

I started the day by taking a walk into town and onto a park trail to find a quiet spot in nature before heading to the catholic church. I brought my Bible and my journal and settled in for some quiet time with God. I started by reading through Psalms and then spent some time in prayer, asking God to guide my thoughts and show me His heart for me. As I prayed, I felt a sense of peace and calm wash over me, and I knew that He was with me, even in the simple, quiet moments. After that initial alone time, I headed to the church, which was within walking distance. The church was not particularly beautiful or awe-inspiring like some catholic cathedrals are, but it provided a sanctuary to sit and be still and focused.

My time in the catholic church, in solitude and silence, proved to be a meditative and therapeutic exercise. I was able to really clear my head. It was as if each passing minute yielded

a newer level of clarity. I think that because of all the different hats I wear and things I'm juggling, this is an incredibly important aspect of my quiet time and alone time with God. I have to be able to unplug enough that my mind gets cleared of all the distractions and responsibilities. The alone time in the church was great for that.

After my meditative solo time, I moved to a quiet room that was away from everyone else, put on some worship music, and spent some time singing and praising God. I sang songs that were familiar and also some that were new and original, and I felt my heart draw closer to the Lord. It was a powerful experience to worship God alone and offer songs that were raw and unpolished, and I felt a deep sense of connection to Him. This has been a theme of my life, to worship in all seasons and to worship when no one is around. I made a commitment long ago to spend less time on stage worshiping than I do off-stage worshiping. This was a great experience to be able to worship freely for several hours.

Next, I spent some time reading the Bible. I chose a passage from the book of Psalms and read it slowly, savoring each word. As I read, I felt God speaking to me through the text, and I gained new insights and understanding. I took notes in my journal and wrote down some reflections on what I had read. Psalm 100 is a beautiful expression of gratitude and praise, and it provides a roadmap for approaching God with a humble heart and a spirit of thanksgiving. The Psalm opens with an invitation to "make a joyful noise to the Lord," and it goes on to encourage us to serve God with gladness and to come before Him with singing. This is a powerful reminder that worship should be joyful and celebratory and that we should approach God with a heart full of gratitude. I love this passage of Scripture because it is so basic and fundamental for how we are to approach the Lord.

As I continued to meditate on the Psalm, I was struck by God's goodness and love. He is the creator of all things, and His steadfast love endures forever. This is a powerful affirmation of God's faithfulness and a reminder that I can always trust in Him, and turn to Him, even when I am not faithful. I was reminded of the importance of worship, gratitude, and trust, and the relationship between those aspects of our faith, and I was encouraged to approach God with a humble heart and a spirit of thanksgiving. Through the dry seasons, the fruitful seasons, the highs and the lows, God is with me, and I can turn to Him.

One aspect I enjoyed about this retreat is that throughout the day, I took breaks to walk around in nature and admire God's creation. I saw the beauty in the trees, the sky, and creation, and I felt grateful to be alive and have the ability to savor the good gifts of God. I spent some time meditating on God's goodness and love and thanking Him for all the blessings in my life. As the day drew to a close, I spent some time in reflecting. I looked back on the day and thought about what I had experienced. I realized that I had grown closer to God and gained new perspective on things in my life. I felt peace and I felt a steadiness that was clearly different. In conclusion, my one-day personal spiritual retreat was a powerful experience that helped me to connect with God on a deeper level. Through prayer, worship, and scripture reading, I was able to gain new insights and understanding, and I felt a sense of peace and calm that stayed with me long after the retreat was over. I will definitely remember that making time for this kind of spiritual exercise is available all the time, not just when I'm feeling overwhelmed or disconnected or run down. It's as simple as making the time and space to meet with God. I will be incorporating personal spiritual retreats into my calendar going forward. As I have previously discovered, I think I can make time and space to meet with God and experience restoration in his presence by setting aside a 6 or 8 hour period once a month or so. I would like

to eventually build up to a monthly or bi-monthly 24 hour retreat, but I know that will be difficult at this stage in life, while my kids are this age (12, 11, 9, 7). So for now, I will choose one weekday where I put my kids on the bus at 8:15am and then get away and alone with God until dinner time. I can get 6-8 hours that way. Of course when it's warmer weather and I can spend several hours at a time outside, this will be much easier.