

COMMUNITY GROUP RETREAT GUIDE

Highland Park
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

שָׁבָת - SABBATH - CEASE, STOP, REST

An Invitation to Retreat

Whether your group is brand new and looking for a way to deepen friendship, or your group has been going strong for a decade supporting each other through the highs and lows, we want to encourage you to take time away to enjoy the relationships you have with those in your community group. Life can be busy and move fast. God's Word is always there, inviting us to set aside time to stop from our work and rest in God's provision. Accepting the invitation to take a break from the important work of our lives reminds us that we depend on God, not ourselves. This is an important practice wherever we are on the journey of finding and following Jesus.

When

We recommend taking an entire weekend away together. Think 36-48 hours. Consider using a polling tool like Doodle to see what dates work for everyone in your group.

Where

See if someone in your group has access to a lake house, ranch, cabin or even camping gear. There are some beautiful State Parks within a couple hours of Dallas, like Eisenhower, Tyler, Lake Mineral Wells, and more. You can also reserve a hotel or Airbnb at Lake Texoma, Broken Bow, Lake Whitney, Lake Travis or anywhere else your group would like to stay.

How

- Before you get started, pray, and ask God for guidance and provision for the various needs for a meaningful time away.
- Is someone in your group gifted at organizing events and outings? Consider asking them to take the lead. The retreat does not have to be organized by the Community Group leaders.
- Discuss cost with the group and what cost would become a barrier to everyone's participation.
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- Remember that different people rest in different ways. For some who work with their minds, sabbath rest can be found in physical activity. For those whose work is physically demanding, it can be restorative to engage your mind. Leave lots of room in your schedule for spontaneous conversations and fun, even naps.
- Plan at least one fun activity for everyone (float the river, horseback ride, spades tournament, you name it!) and at least on intentional time for connection. (See section on sharing life updates as an option for intentional connection and prayer.)
- If your group is co-ed/couples, consider an activity for just girls and just guys.

RETREAT OBJECTIVE

1. **Enjoy one another**

Simply enjoy each other's company!

2. **Stop from work**

Log out of your work accounts and put away your laptops if you can. Don't over commit your time away with too much work like long travel to your destination, big elaborate meals to prepare, too many activities in the schedule, etc.

3. **Seek the Lord**

- Psalm 27:4 "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple."

Seek God together in prayer, worship, and scripture. You know the members of your group and their current seasons of life better than we do. What do members of your group need out of your time away? How can you bring it before God together?

RETREAT SCHEDULE EXAMPLE

Friday

| | | |
|--------------|--|---|
| Afternoon | Travel to retreat location, get checked in and settled | |
| Evening | Have dinner together | Dedicate your weekend through prayer over dinner |
| After Dinner | Settle in and connect | Option to have one of the group sessions the first night after dinner to give more time for free time or planned activity on Saturday |

Saturday

| | | |
|------------|------------------------|---|
| 8:30am | Solitude | Take time alone to take a walk, read, or check in with yourself |
| 9:30am | Breakfast | |
| 10-11:15am | First group session | Half of group shares life updates and receive prayer |
| 11:15-2pm | Free time and lunch | |
| 2pm | Planned group activity | |
| 5pm | Early dinner | |
| 7-8:15pm | Second group session | Other half of group shares life updates and receive prayer |

Sunday

| | | |
|---------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Morning | Breakfast and check out | Reflect on weekend over breakfast |
| Midday | Head home | |

LIFE UPDATES

Option for group sessions

Life updates are a good way to understand the current challenges and joys those in your community group are facing in their everyday life. A life update is different than sharing your testimony or life story, the goal is to focus on the last year and upcoming year.

Here are some guidelines and prompts to keep in mind when preparing your life update. You do not need to follow this list, but it is here to help you get thinking.

Guidelines

- Plan to share for about 10 minutes
- If you prepare notes, think bullet points not transcript
- Dedicate someone to keep time and lead the group to pray over the person sharing after their 10 minutes
- Some people will find it hard to talk for 10 whole minutes, others will have more to say than time allows. Be considerate and use your judgement on what is best for the group with time keeping. One way to do this is to set a 10 minute timer on a phone and when it goes off, ask the person sharing to begin wrapping up. Transition into praying over the person sharing by the 12 minute point
- Married couples should each share separately. They will have overlaps in their life updates but each face their own joys and challenges as well
- Share this page and the prompts with everyone before the retreat so everyone can think through their life update ahead of time.

Prompts

- Tell us about the last year, what were some major themes for you?
- Were there any important or defining moments? Accomplishments or losses?
- What has been your biggest source of joy lately?
- What challenges are you facing that you would like us to know about as your community group?
- Is there anything coming up soon or in the next year that is on your mind? Anything you are anxious or excited about?
- How can we support you and pray for you in this current season?

Prayer

After each life update, take 5 minutes to pray over the community group member based on what they have shared. Celebrate their joys and ask God together for provision where needed.

Group Session Schedule Example

Here is an example of what the outline for a group session could look like if you choose to share life updates for the intentional portion of your trip.

| | | |
|-------------|--|--|
| 10am | Start group session | Choose a scripture passage to open your session with |
| 10:05-10:15 | First person shares | |
| 10:15-10:20 | A few group members pray for person who shared | |
| 10:20-10:30 | Second person shares | |
| 10:30-10:35 | Pray for person who shared | |
| 10:35-10:45 | Third person shares | |
| 10:45-10:50 | Pray for person who shared | |
| 10:50-11 | Fourth person shares | |
| 11-11:05 | Pray for person who shared | |
| 11:05-11:15 | Wiggle room | Extra time to listen to person sharing, pray or close with scripture |

RETREAT RESOURCES

For Group Sessions

- ★ Life Update guide: included in this document
- [Right Now Media](#): consider choosing a conference to watch together on the retreat
- Read: Psalm 131, 23, 16, 3, 31, 46

Before You Go

- ★ Course: [Right Now Media: The Sabbath Practice](#). A four session course with discussion questions. We recommend doing this course as a group before going on your retreat
- ★ Watch: Bible Project [video on sabbath as a Biblical Theme](#)
- Read: Tired of Being Tired: book by Jess Connolly
- Read: The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: book by John Mark Comer
- Listen: Bible Project [series on Sabbath Rest](#)

For Fun

- [Spades tournament rules](#)
- [Deep Meaningful Conversations Deck](#)
- [Priorities Card Game](#)