

The Value of Retreats

By Doug Hamilton

What exactly is a retreat and why do we have them?

- Dictionary term of “Retreat”: the act of withdrawing, as into safety or privacy; retirement; seclusion.
- The Christian definition of a retreat is to have congregational meeting away from the norm with the intent purpose of drawing closer to God.

Four Goals that we should always have from a retreat.

1) Draw Closer to God in Prayer.

Luke 5:12-16 While He was in one of the cities, behold, *there was* a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”¹³ And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately the leprosy left him.¹⁴ And He ordered him to tell no one, “But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”¹⁵ But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear *Him* and to be healed of their sicknesses.¹⁶ But Jesus Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray.

- Life is pretty hectic and it was even more hectic for our Savior. He had so much responsibility that He had undertaken in this life. Countless times He was thronged with the people around Him. He had many pressures put upon Him, from needy people to those whom wanted Him dead. Wherever He went, turmoil would soon follow because His words cut equally at the hearts of men. It was times like this that He *often slipped* away to pray. We have many instances when Jesus had done this.

2) Draw Closer to God in Perspective

Matthew 5:1-12 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.² He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.⁵ “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.¹⁰ “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.¹¹ “Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.¹² “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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- This is referred to the greatest sermon ever given. It is more commonly known as The Sermon of the Mount. It was here that Jesus spent three chapters of giving a correct perspective of God. The Pharisees and lawyers had mutated the 656 works of the Law into a super complicated exercise in futility. What they ended up with was man-made law that ignored the entire spirit of the Law. When Jesus held His retreat on the Mount He show them the proper perspective.

3) Draw Closer to God's People

John 13:5-7 Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. ⁶ So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter."

- Jesus retreated to a large upper room for the last Passover. It was here that He washed the disciple's feet. It was a lesson on their need to love one another. He was teaching them to draw closer together with the bond of love.

John 13:33-35 "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'³⁴ "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."³⁵ "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

4) Draw Closer to God's Priorities

John 6:1-6 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). ² A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. ³ Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. ⁵ Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?" ⁶ This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.

- The crowds of people on their way to the Passover celebration in Jerusalem, "for the time was near". In order to avoid Samaria, the Jews that were making their way to Jerusalem would actually travel the southwestern coast of the Sea of Galilee, cross the Jordan, continue south along the eastern side of the Jordan in Perea until they had gone far enough to re-cross into Judea

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and on to Jerusalem. Many of these Jews that were making their track to Jerusalem had walked directly into the path of Jesus' ministry. It wasn't long before Jesus took them to His retreat on a mountain.

- It was on this mountain that He would begin exposing the people to a deeper perspective of the kingdom. Verse 6 states that Jesus intended a lesson to be learned and He prompted it with the request, "Where will these find enough to eat out here?" He knew what He was intending to do, but they did not. He knew that there was a lesson to be learned. He fed them with the multiplied bread and fish. They were expecting the unleavened bread awaiting them in Jerusalem, but on the retreat there would be none.
- While they were still licking their chops from the free miraculous meal, Jesus went across to the other side to Capernaum. This was many more miles farther from Jerusalem, yet they still followed Him. He was simply taking them to another retreat sight for the second half of the lesson.

John 6:26-27 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.
²⁷ "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."

- They were focusing on the bread of gut, but Jesus was trying to point out that He was the Bread of Life. God gave the Jews in the wilderness manna from heaven and Jesus was attempting to give them the Bread of Life which was found in Him. He was reordering their priorities. He wanted to be first in their lives and all the other items would fall into place.

What was done at our retreat?

- There were four lessons designed to bring a new perspective to our view of ministries.
 - 1) Darren spoke on Friday evening on having an elastic faith. Using rubber bands, he illustrated that we must stretch ourselves for the common good of the church.
 - 2) Alan spoke Saturday morning on the need to be service-based in our evangelism. We must connect with what the "consumer" of the gospel is already thinking. We find out what the need is and then connect with them through the need.
 - 3) Darren spoke again in the evening on overcoming barriers when it comes to our ministries. When we meet a barrier between us and a lost soul, we must not expect them to come to us, but we to them. Jesus

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went out to them and that is why they eventually practiced coming to Him, for they were taught it.

- 4) Sunday morning Tim spoke about having a sense of purpose and love. It is for the reason of glorifying God that we do those things. We are told to love the Lord thy God and to love thy neighbor as thyself. We have ministries for the primary purpose to bring glory to Him, not ourselves. That they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. The more we glorify God with the ministries, the more people will want to be a part of God.

Activities:

- Small group discussions concerning the ministries. The three primary questions discussed were
 - 1) What are we doing now to serve the community and how, if appropriate, could we do these ministries differently?
 - 2) What new ministries could we do to serve the community?
 - 3) What could we do to ensure these ministries are successful?
- It was done in such a way so that we are prioritizing our ministries to bring the most people in to Christ and the most glory to God.
- There was group prayer in which all the written discussion ideas from the small groups were laid before the elders and prayed for. We wanted to make sure that we surrendered these plans unto God before man.
- There was a ropes course that the group went on to generate team building and team spirit. There were other team-building exercises that came along with it. It was about people trusting people for people.
- Worship on Sunday morning will be simultaneous with our own. This is also symbolic of what we are attempting to do in our ministries. Multiple meeting in different location for the same goal, to glorify God. That is really what makes a ministries function properly, hence the purpose of the retreat.