



If you are in the process of planning a men's retreat you probably are wondering what theme you should use. Here's a list of 40 great men's retreat themes all backed up by Bible verses to help get your mind – and heart – working in the right direction. In all things, seek the Lords' advice in prayer before deciding.



- 1 Taking Charge: You Will Part the Waters – Exodus 14:16
- 2 The Challenge: Fear Not, Stand Firm – Exodus 14:13
- 3 Do You Really Trust Him? The Lord Goes Before You Always – Deuteronomy 9:1-3
- 4 Be Joshua: Lead your People – Joshua 1:1-6
- 5 The Straight Path of the Strong – Josh. 1:7-9
- 6 Spiritual Combat: Do Not Lower the Lance – Joshua 8:18-19
- 7 Listening to God: He Calls You to His Presence – Samuel 3:1-20
- 8 By the Hand of God, Beat Down Goliath – 1 Samuel 17
- 9 For Those who Seek the Lord: Victory and Peace – 2 Chronicles 14:6
- 10 God Has a Plan, Let Him Show You – Jeremiah 29:11
- 11 Did You Know? You are a Blessed Man – Psalm 34:8
- 12 Get Up and Get Going: On Eagles Wings – Isaiah 40:31
- 13 Are You Man Enough to be Christlike? – John 15:13
- 14 Strength in God: Nothing Can Stand Against You – Romans 8:31
- 15 The Christian Man Goes the Distance – Romans 5:3-4
- 16 Defeating Evil in Your Life: Finding Truth – Romans 12:21
- 17 Cleaning Your House: How to Move On – Ephesians 4:31-32
- 18 Lean on God and Go Forward – Proverbs 3:5-6
- 19 Assurance: The Confident Man of God

- Deuteronomy 31:6
- 20 The Free Man in Christ – Galatians 5:13
- 21 God is Your Infinite Strength – Psalm 46
- 22 Getting Serious About God: Giving All to Him – Romans 12:1-2
- 23 Rejoice in Your Christlikeness – Philippians 4:4-7
- 24 Your Greatest Strength – 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
- 25 Service: The Authority of Christ – Mark 4:37-41
- 26 The Dignified Man – Romans 10:9-11
- 27 Struggle and Victory: Climbing Out of the Pit – Genesis 37:43
- 28 The Riches of the Prayerful Man – Luke 11:1-13
- 29 How to Have Faith Like Iron – John 14:12-14
- 30 Confidence in God's Promises – 2 Samuel 22:31
- 31 The Sanctified Man: God's Finished Work – 1 Chronicles 28:20
- 32 The Clean Man is the Strong Man – Job 17:9
- 33 Jesus: Rock, Fortress, Savior – Psalm 18:1-2
- 34 Get Closer: Trust in Him – Nahum 1:7
- 35 No Worries – Matthew 6:25-27
- 36 Fear Nothing when You Fear God – Matthew 10:28
- 37 The Impossible Now – Mark 9:23
- 38 In Him and With Him: You Bear Fruit – John 15:4-9
- 39 God Given Character – Romans 5:3-4
- 40 Courage: Keep Your Guard Up! – 1 Corinthians 16:13

Increase your ladies retreat attendance

by **Christian Retreats Network**

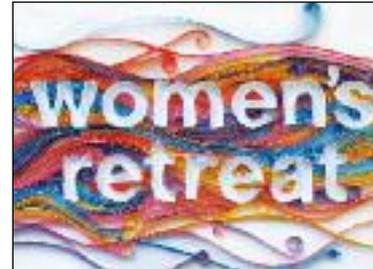
Ladies retreats are important events organized for adult women by the Church with the purpose to refresh, renew and restore. These are generally weekend events aimed at providing a refreshing and relaxing experience with lots of fun, great food and opportunity to connect with others and God. It's an important event on the Church calendar and requires planning to make it successful and well attended.

Choose the right location

Retreats are generally planned at large or small off-campus locations depending on the expected number of participants. Finding the right retreat location is a key factor influencing the cost as well as the ease of attending the event by participants. The event can be planned in unique locations, such as ranch with horseback rides and sleeping out in the open under stars or in a resort location close to a lake with facilities for swimming and boating. Where the retreat is planned is the probably the most important factor deciding the kind of attendance your event will receive.

Choose the right speaker

Selecting the speakers for the event is also an important decision. While it may be most cost-effective to invite local speakers, flying in someone who is well recognized from another location can be expensive but it may create an exciting atmosphere around the event and greatly improve attendance. It's important to keep in mind that inviting



such nationally recognized faces may require in-depth planning, because they are often booked for more than a year or two in advance for different events planned at different locations.

Check calendar first

While it may be important to hold the event at around same time every year in order to maintain continuity and not miss permanent and regular participants, it may help a great deal if the dates on which the event is held are kept a little flexible. One may check different calendars, such as holiday calendar, sports calendar, spring break calendar, community calendar, school calendar as well as the master church calendar, and accordingly make some changes, if required to the retreat schedule so as to avoid any clash with other important interests people may have on certain dates.

Offer a sign-up incentive

There are many people who are

interested to be part of the retreat but keep delaying their decision till the last minute for no apparent reason and many a times they have to cancel their program because of reasons such as non-availability of flight tickets, etc. Such drop-outs can be minimized by providing early sign-up incentives. One can have a tiered registration fee offering discounts for those registering early.

Don't forget social media

It is important to let the word out about the event using different tools. Announcing the event in a big way using social media tools is not difficult. A Facebook page may be created for the event inviting all the friends of the church.

These people may in turn be requested to invite their friends and share the Facebook page with others. One can also take advantage of other social media tools such as Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram. Don't forget to always include a budget for promotion, especially if you want to draw from outside your church or organization. Consider using traditional marketing strategies such as placing flyers in local grocery stores, business establishments, colleges, or an advertisement in local Christian magazines.

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Checklist for Retreat Planning

Let's have a retreat! Sounds like a good idea.

Why?

A retreat is a chance for encounter with self, with God, with other people, with creation, with issues. A retreat is, literally, a "strategic withdrawal." When we retreat, it is not for the purpose of just getting away and staying away. Everything involved in getting away, and all that is done while away, involves coming back. We go to the mountains not to see mountains, but to see the valleys in new perspective.

On a retreat we hope to deepen our relationship with God, to look at our lives — deliberately focusing on issues and questions through reflection and meditation, and discussion and dialogue with others — in order to come back with a renewed sense of direction for living.

Jesus modeled this pattern of engagement and withdrawal and it is instructive for contemporary disci-

ples as well.

Retreats deepen the fellowship of a community through shared experiences and can helpfully focus the energy of a group, whether your purpose is to do planning, problem solving, or team building, or to tackle a topic of interest or concern.

Who is the retreat for? Are you planning for:

- Members of the church only?
- Members of your church and their invited guests?
- Members of several churches in your area?
- Any interested persons in your community?

Remember, people attend what they help to plan, so if you're looking to reach a larger audience than just your established group, involve others ... invite them to assist in planning for the retreat as well. Don't just invite them once all the planning is done!

When can we go? Make sure to

check school calendars for concerts, big games, tests, etc., that would affect the attendance of your particular audience. Look also at times when in-service days or other days off might allow for a possible new pattern — like a Thursday evening through Saturday, for instance, or a Sunday afternoon through Monday night. Some adult groups have found that creating an alternative of interest to some people while others are involved in a major cultural event (the Super Bowl, Mother's Day, prom, a big tourist event in your town), is a worthwhile and much appreciated ministry.

As you plan for your retreat, there are many things to keep in mind. You'll find helpful input from your conference camp/retreat ministry leaders — don't hesitate to ask for ideas that work well or considerations that are especially helpful at the site you are using. Many people have asked us for a checklist to guide their planning. Here is a topical list, then a timeline, and finally some tips from experienced leaders — offered to assist you.

Planning checklist

- ___ Reasons for having a retreat
- ___ Goals for this retreat
- ___ Theme
- ___ Dates
- ___ Location
- ___ Leaders
- ___ Activities and program components
- ___ Contingency plans
- ___ Meals
- ___ Finances
- ___ Schedule
- ___ Transportation
- ___ Snacks
- ___ Policies
- ___ Publicity
- ___ Registration
- ___ Evaluation
- ___ Other:
- ___ Other:



A retreat is an intentional time apart to experience a new awareness of the presence of God. It is an opportunity to get some distance and see things in perspective. It requires a pace that is unhurried and conducive to rest and relaxation in order to come back with a renewed sense of living as disciples of Christ.

Steps to take

6-12 months ahead

Determine the reason for this retreat.

Appoint a coordinator and form a retreat-planning team.

Pray for guidance, direction, and purpose.

Write down the objectives for the group sponsoring the retreat.

Choose a theme based upon the purpose of retreat.

Write down the specific objectives for the actual retreat.

Write down the major blocks of time and activities.

Include food preparation, if needed.

Check these against objectives.

Look at your church calendar for when a retreat could best be held; choose the best time considering other schedules as well.

Choose the best facility for your purpose; make sure deposit is paid; confirm reservations.

Choose leader(s) or resource person(s) for your theme.

OR

You can let a specific person choose topics, based on your objectives.

Decide honorarium based on fees and expenses if a visiting leader is chosen.

Begin promotion — communicate excitement about objectives, dates, schedule as known.

2-3 months ahead

- Saturate all aspects of planning with prayer!
- Keep promoting via bulletins, news, mailings, handouts, and word of mouth.
- You will need to communicate the following:

1. specific information, including objectives;

2. registration fees and deadlines (consider collecting registration with a deposit so participants will commit to the time away and you'll have funds to pay facility deposit or program supplies ahead of time);

3. itinerary with the time schedule.

- Visit the site, if possible, to familiarize yourself, particularly if you haven't been there before.

1 month ahead

- Keep praying.
- Keep publicizing through bulletins, news, mailings, handouts, and word of mouth.
- Assign specific tasks to teams.
- Orient, train, and motivate leaders/teams.
- Give clear job expectations to leaders.
- Be clear with leaders about time commitments.
- Follow up with individuals regarding their progress on tasks assigned.
- Familiarize your leaders with the facility use agreement and relevant policies.

2-3 weeks ahead

- Continue to pray.
- Keep publicizing, ESPECIALLY by word of mouth.
- If cooking food, plan meals based on registrations.
- Hand out itinerary and things to bring.
- Check in with leaders about progress with their areas.

1 week ahead

- Pray some more!
- If you need to, meet with planning committee once more to finalize.

Retreat

- Enjoy!
- Have a time for reflection and feedback with participants.
- Hand out evaluations before closing program.

Post-retreat

- Meet with planning committee to go over evaluations.
- Make note of what worked and what didn't for the next time.
- Follow up with individuals to

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Seven questions to ask before booking

Whether you are facing the first event or you already have some experience, planning a retreat requires a lot of work and attention to detail. However, it's not as "scary" as it may seem and we're here to help! God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. To help with planning a restful event, we have created this list of seven questions to ask your retreat venues before booking.

What types of events do you host?

This should be the starting point. It may not seem like a big thing, but it needs to be asked. There are retreat venues that only cater to adults and will not host a youth camp, for example. This question also needs to be asked if your event is one less commonly associated with a christian retreat venue (e.g. company meetings).

What size group can venue accommodate?

This is another important aspect, because some smaller venues can only accommodate a few tens of people. It's also good to ask what the lodging situation is, since most venues have different types of lodgings. Large groups may have to be housed in buildings with differing amenities and rates. Keep in mind that some venues may require a minimum number of attendees for a reservation.

What is your policy on deposits?

Budgeting is a very important part of event planning, so ask if the venue requires a deposit, how much of a deposit and when it would be due. Some venues require a deposit based on the size of the group. Also, ask what the policy for returning the deposit is.

Can I change the details of my reservation?

Expect the unexpected. After you

make a reservation, some people may become unable to attend. Ask your retreat venue if you can alter the number of rooms reserved. The venue may have a time limit on changes or charge you for these changes.

What facilities/activities do you offer?

Retreat venues offer all kinds of activities and it's important to know what they are. Not only to be able to plan activities suited for your group, but also because you will probably be required to schedule them with the venue, in advance. Ask which activities are included in the package and which cost extra. Also, if you plan on holding seminars, ask about the availability of a conference hall and if that hall comes with its own audio/video equipment.

Are there any special policies/rules/restrictions?

All venues will have a code of conduct, rules of admission, medical policies and other things you need to know about. For example, venues may forbid smoking anywhere on their grounds, may not allow pets or may impose curfews.

What is the food like?

Always ask whether or not food is provided and what the typical menu consists of. If there are people with special nutritional needs in the group, you have to know if the retreat venue can cater to those needs.

Some venues may have the answers to these questions on their websites, others may ask you to call one of their counselors. It helps to always plan well ahead: make the reservations as early as possible and communicate all your needs to the venue's staff before you arrive.

Special thanks to Lake Williamson of the Christian Retreats Network for sponsoring this article.



CHECKLIST

continued from page 9

continue meeting your objectives.

- Note: The Christian Camping International publication "Seven Steps for Effective Retreats" (part of their Focus series) is quite good. I recommend it highly. You can reach CCI at www.cciusa.org.

Tips from experienced retreat leaders

- Personal contact via word of mouth is the BEST promotion!
- Choose at least three people to invite people individually.
- When deciding price, give scholarships instead of lowering price.
- Budget for a positive balance (i.e., charge \$5 extra to cover unexpected expenses).
- Usually 24-48 hours is typical for length of retreat — but it can be more or less.
- Be sure to allow for flexibility,

spontaneity. Be open to the Spirit!

- Over-plan (plan for more than you'll actually include in any one event) so there are no lapses, but allow for flexibility.
- Allow time for worship, unstructured time, input, reflection, and reaction.
- Individual sessions should be 90 minutes maximum.
- Always plan optional strategies in case of a change of circumstances (i.e., weather factors).
- Choose a site that is not too far away and not too close — it's good to have a sense of being apart from your usual setting.
- The site should match your objectives for gathering.
- Be able to specify what kind of space you need (spaces for gathering the whole group together, as well as breakout spaces for small group activities, for example).
- Consider the number of people desirable for your particular objectives. Bigger is not necessarily better.

- Touch base with your planning committee at least once during the retreat to review schedule and process, and make any adjustments required.

If appropriate, offer classes or groups for follow-up after the retreat.

—Provided by the The United Methodist Church, Discipleship Ministries

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