

RETREAT & CAMP GUIDE

Retreat planning: How to create a retreat plan for your church

BY JESS SCHLOAD

Planning a retreat? Here is your chance to be a hero! The more you plan in advance, the more organized you will be, and the overall outcome will be higher quality.

Most companies, churches and organizations will not simply hand over money for you to host a retreat – even if they asked you to plan it. Your company will want to know rough budget estimates and details about your event. Even if you are in charge of your own budget, it is still helpful to take the step of preparing a basic plan to organize and save your thoughts. So let's get started!

How to prepare a basic plan

Your plan should include at least four things: a summary, a goal, the audience, and the budget.

1. Summarize the event

Your summary is a basic snapshot of your retreat in three sentences or less. With no additional information, anyone that reads your plan should be able to understand what the event is from a high-level perspective. It is appropriate to include a basic goal in this summary. For example:

• This leadership retreat will bring together the leaders of (fill in the blank)



company/church/university for program and budget planning for the next year.

2. Determine a timeline

When is this retreat? Are you planning it in the winter or in the spring? Include the target timeframe of the event, the promotion period, and any other important milestones. Make sure you understand the timing of your participants. How much lead time do they need? Tip: start from the end (the retreat date) and work backwards. For example:

- Retreat planning: Jan.-May
- Website page created: March 1
- Promotion: March-June
- Retreat Date: mid-June

3. Set a goal (or two or three)

All retreats should have at least one simple goal. Are you planning a retreat on behalf of a business, university, or other organization? If so, consider the mission

of the organization and create a goal that aligns with this mission. Goals can be high-level, or they can be very specific. Set enough goals that someone reading your

plan can start to picture your retreat. For example:

- 3 days
- 20+ participants
- Overnight accommodations at a camp retreat center
- Team-building activities
- Completed program plans and budget for next year
- Enhance leadership skills
- Promote togetherness and a sense of community

4. Define your audience

First, ask yourself these questions: Who are you inviting to your retreat? Are they males and females? Adults only, or are children invited? Next, dig a little deeper into your audience. What do your attendees care about? What are they interested in? This does not dictate who is allowed to come. Rather, it outlines the group for which the retreat is intended. Doing this

■ Please see PLAN next page

to serve you.

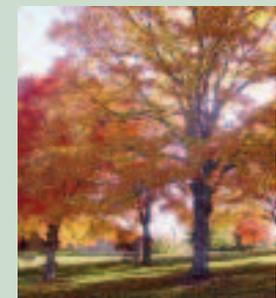
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PICK A GOAL AND WEAVE YOUR THEME

GOALS

Every retreat or getaway should have a clear purpose, a set of goals, and a plan for take a ways or follow-up. When you determine what you're doing and why you're doing it, then you'll be better able to sort through ideas and possibilities more easily. The first question you need to ask is, "What do we want to accomplish through this event?" Possible answers include:

- Help participants grow closer to God
- Promote connection among participants
- Teach how the Bible applies to every day life
- Nurture spiritual formation or direction
- Equip participants to become more involved in ministry or take on leadership roles
- Launch an upcoming shift or

vision within the ministry, group, or church

- Create a specific space for prayer, silence, reflection, or discussion about a particular topic.

What will determine if your retreat is a success? Once you know what you're trying to accomplish, you can consider the best way to reach your goals and how to navigate away from ideas and activities that don't help you fulfill them.

THEMES

The organization team should pray and ask God to reveal a theme and Scripture. Invite each leader to spend time praying and see if there are any common themes that emerge. Whatever theme the team selects, make sure the language is clear and the main idea is easy to grasp. Also consider making the theme

sound catchy or memorable. Instead of calling a retreat "Sharing Jesus" or "Evangelism," consider "Jesus—Too Good To Keep To Yourself." Whatever theme you choose, look for opportunities to weave it into every part of the event so each participant knows the main idea you're trying to convey.

Do not try to weave more than one theme into a retreat. We've been part of retreats that have tried to combine up to three different themes and ideas. The result is confusion and a lack of cohesion for "Be careful not to slip into the temptation of choosing a decorating theme and then trying to find a verse to go with it. One retreat had a ton of decorating ideas for a garden theme and chose a 'garden' verse. It felt forced and awkward."

-A retreat planner

PLAN

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small brainstorm and jotting down a few notes will help you later as you plan activities and promote the event. For example:

- Males and females
- 35-55 years old
- Doctors, CEOs, administrative professionals, team leaders
- Many have children
- Volunteers
- Live in _____ city/state/ neighborhood

5. Propose a budget

Money is a big factor for most retreats. Research and compile estimates for the larger cost categories. The costs should be realistic – not too high, and not too low. If they are too high, you might not get approved. Too low? You might be stuck with a penny-saver budget. Your venue will be one of your larger expenses. A four-star retreat center will require a much higher budget than a camp retreat center. Be sure to include an estimate for overnight accommodations and meeting space. Other large budget items to consider include: travel and transportation; food and beverage; and marketing and promotion. Also, be sure to subtract the estimated cost per person in your budget to show how costs will be offset. If the goal of the retreat is to raise money, include estimated earnings from fundraising activities, which could be a silent auction, offering, etc.

6. Your retreat plan should be able to fit on 1-2 pages

Now that you have finished creating your retreat plan, you have a nice guide to use moving forward. The items that you

Why retreats are so important to our faith!

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," (Matthew 11:28).

Rest is a theme that is easily found in the Bible. Not only is it something that scripture is saturated in, but it is something that we believe is absolutely necessary in life.

When life becomes heavy, it is often the case that the only medication to cure such stress comes when one retreats to find peace and quiet. Through this escape, time can be spent contemplating goals, planning the next steps to take in life, finding some quiet, or maybe even coming closer to Christ; but how can something as simple as getting away save a life? Is this rest really something that vital?

At Sky Ranch Cave Springs, we wholeheartedly believe that it is. It is often in those times when people encounter Christ, the only thing that can truly save a life; and we focus on that life change so heavily that our whole mission at our camp is centered on creating a space for that encounter to take place. It is in this encounter that people are truly transformed for the better, and that



is something that is both necessary and priceless.

So often we hear stories of people who were ready to throw in the towel before they came for a retreat here with us, and it is stories like these that remind us of the true power that getting away from the hustle and bustle of life can carry.

So whether you are looking to find peace and rest, you need some time to get away and refocus, or you need that life change, our team at Sky Ranch Cave Springs would love to partner with you and your group so that you can discover the rest and life-change that a retreat can provide.

-Tim Finch, Retreat Coordinator.



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have already identified should help you get budget approval, provide direction on event promotion, help you choose a retreat theme, and overall, organize your thoughts. Having your plan ready also helps the retreat center - the staff can bet-

ter support the goals of the retreat. Often they have ideas about ways to use the facility that you never would have known.

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