

2017 Retreat Guide

The world at your fingertips, or disconnect to reconnect?

By **Stephanie L. Boothe**

In an era when society is one push of a button away from the rest of the world, there is still a need to “disconnect” from time to time.

And several retreat venues in the area offer just that.

Nicolle Wright, business administrator for YMCA Trout Lodge, said Trout Lodge and Camp Lakewood allow individual organizations to determine whether to allow guests to “connect” during their retreats.

“I am not aware of any groups with a specific policy, but we do have some who discourage the use of the Internet and cell phones while they are here. For those who choose to stay connected, we do offer complimentary Wi-Fi.”

Wright, however, said there are some benefits to having that outside connection. She said corporate retreats might use the Internet for training and brainstorming session. Some groups will need Internet access to conference with others not on site.

“Also, a lot of our groups connect with us via social media while there here, which is great because it allows others to see YMCA Trout Lodge and Camp Lakewood from a personal point of view,” Wright said.

Chris Shillito with the Shalom Retreat Center agreed social media could be useful in spreading the message. However, he cautioned it must be used correctly.

“A lot of what’s on (social media) is not conducive to a Godly life,” Shillito said. “If it’s used in a God-honoring way, it’s a great resource. When used in the right context and the right way, it’s a good resource. But you have to be careful.”

“Because God’s ways are not quick and fast - it’s a slow burn - there needs to be time to sit and mediate and ponder and pray.” Shillito said. “You have to be able to look away from your phone.”

Wright admits it can be difficult for people to feel unconnected. She said there is only one cell phone provider with signal at their location, and they work hard to make sure guests know this ahead of time. And while it may be a cause for concern up front, she said guests usually leave feeling a sense of relief for the break.

“Upon departure, most of these people talk about how relaxing their retreat or vacation was because they had no choice but to be disconnected,” Wright said. “After all, we don’t have wi-fi at the water front.”

Balance is key, Wright said. And the opportunity to “unplug and reconnect” is one reason many guests come for a visit.

“They want to disconnect to reconnect with others, which we encourage as much as possible,” Wright said.



For Shillito, the best balance is to simply turn devices off. It’s also a sign of respect and sends a message to others.

“A healthy balance would be not even having it available, and protecting that time and space that others are wanting to share what they’ve signed up for,” Shillito said. “If you’re wanting to avoid the appearance of disrespect or neglect, then just avoid it during those times. Just do it at a time that’s appropriate.”

Shillito suggested guests only utilize their

devices – when necessary – on breaks, when they are not engaged in conversations with others or listening to presentations. Taking it one step further, he said those lessons should start with parents to their children.

“We definitely need to be teaching plugged in etiquette,” Shillito said. “How to carry on a conversation, how to stay focused in a group setting without looking at our phones.”

However, there are times, Wright said, that guests may need to remain connected to the outside world, and that’s not something the staff prohibits or discourages at Trout Lodge and Camp Lakewood.

“I would say the biggest reason someone would need to be connected is if they are a medical professional or there was a medical situation at home to monitor,” Wright said.

“Otherwise, beyond general check-ins with family, I would recommend guests limit their connectivity in order to participate in Lodge activities.”

For such situations, Shillito said the Shalom Retreat Center keeps records on emergency contacts and will provide the center’s wi-fi password to one member of the organization using the facilities.

After all, the purpose of a retreat is to “retreat” from one’s daily routine.

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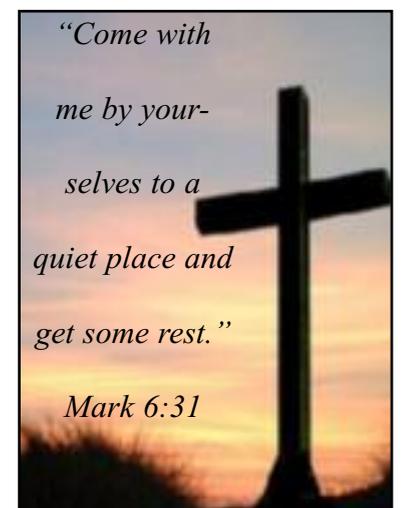


round and provides a great environment for families, churches and businesses alike.

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Five reasons why you should go on a Christian retreat

By **John Buckerige**

The gospels tell us that Jesus frequently went on retreat. Before his public ministry began, he spent 40 days in prayer. The Gospels record how Jesus often went off alone to pray (Mark 1:35) and at other times told his disciples; 'Let's get away from the crowds for a while and rest' (Mark 6:31).

When Jesus broke into Paul's life as he travelled to Damascus to persecute Christians he told him to go into the city, where he would be told what to do. For three days Paul fasted from food and water as he waited to receive the spiritual direction of Ananias (Acts 9:1-9). Those, three days were a retreat as Paul waited to hear what God wanted to do with him next.

From our Jesus' example to the present day the pattern of taking a retreat is a recurring and vital thread.

Retreat to stop

Modern life can be highly pressured and hectic, leading many to feel burnt out. We ignore God's creation principles of taking a Sabbath Day to stop, rest and be recreated at our peril. Regularly taking time out not to do – but just to 'be' with God, to stop, withdraw from the everyday and to spend time to rest before we go again is wise and godly.

Prioritising a day or longer to spend time in silence, reflection, confession

and meditation means slowing down and stopping, which some consider a luxury, but by stopping we can gain so much, above all by experiencing a refreshment in our soul, body and mind.

Avoid taking books to read, just a Bible and a notebook and pen is all you need. Anything more and you will not stop but find yourself working through a book, making lots of notes and missing on the value of stopping for a long pause.

Retreat to listen

To retreat means leaving your normal location and activities to go to a place of safety, quiet, and seclusion. By going to a retreat, we physically remove ourselves from life's distractions, the call of chores, and the demands of people in order to make space for God.

Look for a retreat setting that includes a special time of silence, not as a penance, but so that listening to God's Holy Spirit is easier. The aim should be to get to know God and yourself better by stopping and listening.

The thought of even half a day, let alone 24 hours or more with your phone switched off, may terrify you. But no emails, texts, tweets or other social media will reduce distractions and make it easier to tune into listening to God's still, small voice and gain fresh perspective.



Retreat to grow into a new spiritual discipline

Many Christians, particularly in the 21st century, find silence intimidating. You might want to choose a retreat based on silence or similar guided retreats that offer a beginner's guide to going on retreat.

I attended a Be Still & Know retreat recently and was amazed at how quickly 60 minutes of silence zoomed by when I put these principles to work. I'm someone who finds the idea of silence and meditation challenging and potentially a bore. But the day gave me a healthy appetite to spend more time apart with God exploring spiritual disciplines like silence and meditation. I

met many others at this retreat who were similarly enthused and equipped to dig deeper.

Attending a guided retreat can do just that – provide practical help and guidance which you can then take and use in the future, giving you the confidence and practical spiritual tools to take further retreats on your own.

Retreat to go forward

Some years ago when my wife and I told some friends at church we were about to attend a weekend course on 'enriching your marriage', they looked concerned and asked if we were okay. Some people assume the same about retreats – that you only go if you are in

trouble, but in fact, it's a sign of a balanced approach which seeks to enrich and protect your relationship with God. Sure, some people use it as a last resort, but the normal Christian life should include retreat as a regular and healthy part of living and growing in faith.

So retreat to make progress, withdraw to face the challenges of modern life, stop to make a fresh start, listen to gain fresh perspective and take time away from the crowds because Jesus, our great example and pattern did.

– John Buckerige is CEO of the Premier Christian Radio Group whose goal is to enable people to put their faith at the heart of daily life and to bring Christ to their communities

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