



Spiritual Retreats

A GUIDE

Stephen J. Weaver

SANDY COVE MINISTRIES

*“Come to me, all
you who are weary
and burdened, and I
will give you rest.”*

MATTHEW 11:28



“and my shoulders dropped...”

I have been going on retreats my entire life. Literally, I went on my first church retreat when I was 4 months old, and then for as long as I can remember, going away on retreats or conferences has always been a part of my life. And yet, it wasn't until a few years ago that I experienced a true *sense of freedom* through a guided retreat. For me, I carry my stress between my shoulder blades, so, I know rest is experienced when I feel my shoulders drop.

I will be forever grateful to Jamin Goggin for teaching and modeling what a true spiritual retreat looks like. Here is some of what I learned from him; I pray that it helps you let your shoulders drop, too.

– Stephen J. Weaver



Jamin Goggin
is a pastor, writer, and
theologian.

You can find out more about him
at www.metamorpha.com or
[@JaminGoggin](https://twitter.com/JaminGoggin).





*Retreat is something that we need to
cultivate our **relationship** with **God**.*

THE VALUE OF
retreat

*It is an **act** of **sacrifice**.
It is intentional **time** and **space**.*



TWO UNIVERSAL *purposes of retreat:*

1. *Rest...*

When we escape we *check out*, but when we rest we *check in* – to God.



“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

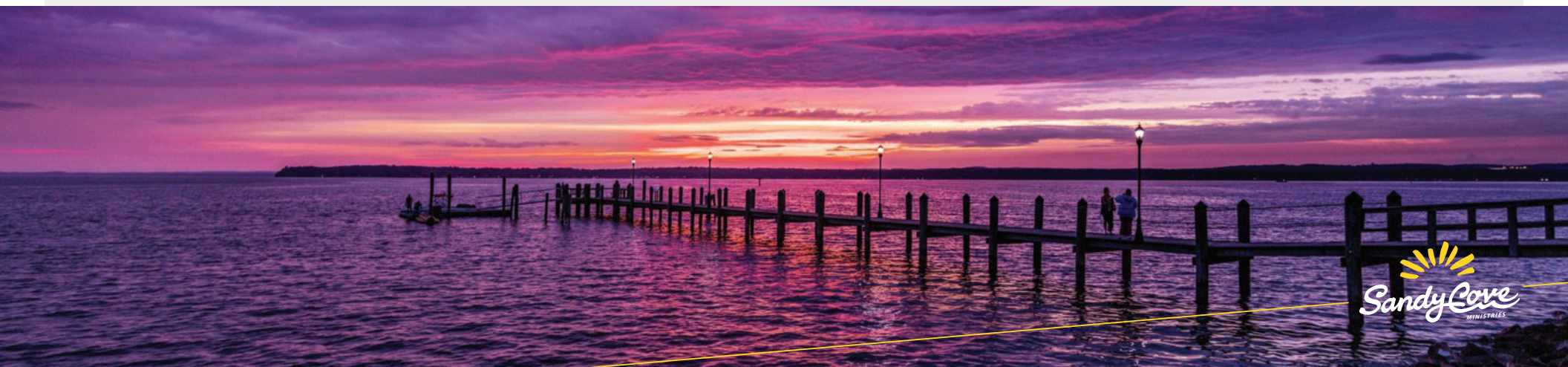
2. *Refreshment...*

It is about our wills being *realigned* with His.

Being *refreshed* means being *revitalized* or *renewed*. This process isn't always restful or refreshing, but it is necessary. My mom was always quick to point out that “renewing of the mind” in Romans 12 was better understood as “exchanging yours for His.” The Greek indicates a complete renovation, and if you have had a renovation in your home, or watch HGTV, you know that it is not often associated with refreshment.



“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” John 15:4 NIV





What *TO DO*

ON RETREAT:

✓ *Leave space*

Silence and stillness ~ Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God.”

✓ *Be flexible*

The only expectation that you hold to firmly is that God will be with you... everything else is written in pencil. It is not about a well-executed plan; it is about cultivating the relationship.

✓ *Offer everything*

Hold nothing back ~ Romans 12:1, “...offer your bodies as a living sacrifice...”

✓ *Be honest*

“We cannot experience love without being *known*, and we cannot be *known* if we are not honest. God cannot have a true relationship with our false self.” ~Jamin Goggin

✓ *Listen*

Michael Card says, “If you want someone to know that you love them, listen to them.” The same is true of God. If we want to love God, we must listen. There is a simple truth in our created beings: “two ears, one mouth.”

Silence tends to bring up things we have been trying to avoid; retreat provides unhurried space and time to HEAR from God.



What *NOT TO DO*

ON RETREAT:

Try to fix yourself

Trying to generate our own transformation is a move *away* from relationship, but opening yourself to God's transforming work is a move *into* relationship. We haven't saved ourselves. We won't grow ourselves.

Escape

Rest is about attachment. Escape is about detachment.

Judge

God's presence is not judged by an experience. We have made *experience* an idol when we chase the mountaintops. Real love is not about an experience; it says: "Love me for who I am, not for a transaction or benefit."

Avoid

Refusing to engage the invitations offered in the previous section can be the most common form of avoidance. Studying God's Word for a "deeper meaning" can itself turn into avoidance. Anything that moves you away from God is avoidance.

As you plan

FOR A RETREAT:

Schedule a time

Make it a sacred, non-negotiable, non-cancellable appointment; make it realistic.

Find a place

Comfortable for you; quiet, without a distraction or a hindrance.

Search your soul for the focus of your retreat

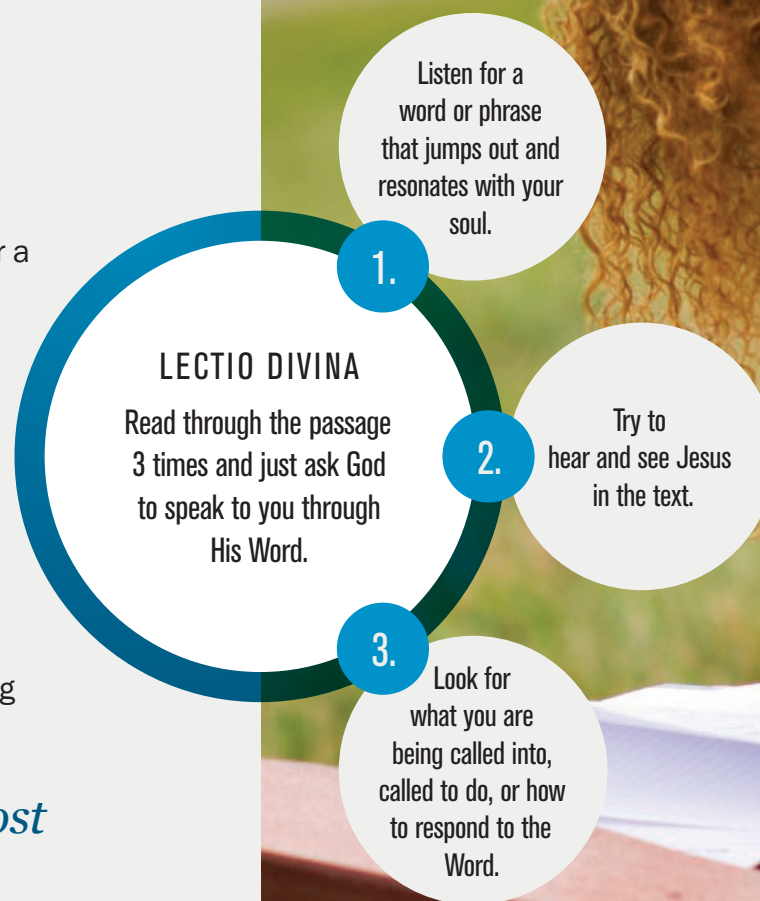
Don't aim at an overhaul; pick an area where you want to strategically see specific growth.

Plan your time

Whether it is 2 hours or 24 hours, sketch out a schedule that you plan on following. Aim at nothing and you will hit it every time.

Choose the disciplines that will most effectively fit your focus, such as:

- Read your Bible
- Read a devotional book or other Christian book
- Journal your thoughts
- Write out your prayers
- Practice Lectio Divina





Lectio Divina

EXERCISE

Read through James 1:1-8 (MSG) *three* times, asking God to speak to you through His Word. Look for a word or phrase that resonates with your soul; hear and see Jesus in the text; discern how you should respond to the Word.



1.

“I, James, am a slave of God and the Master Jesus, writing to the twelve tribes scattered to Kingdom Come: Hello! Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that, under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don’t try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way. If you don’t know what you’re doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You’ll get His help, and won’t be condescended to when you ask for it. Ask boldly, believingly, without a second thought. People who “worry their prayers” are like wind-whipped waves. Don’t think you’re going to get anything from the Master that way, adrift at sea, keeping all your options open.”

2.

3.

*“The best thing
any of us have to bring
to leadership is our own
transforming self.”*

RUTH HALEY BARTON

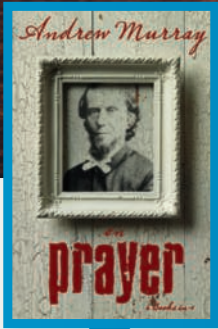
Reflections

*My heart has
heard you say,
“Come and talk with me.”
And my heart responds,
“Lord, I am coming.”*

PSALM 27:8 NLT



Recommended Reading



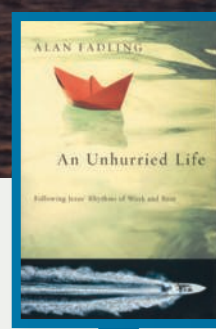
**Andrew Murray
on Prayer**
Andrew Murray



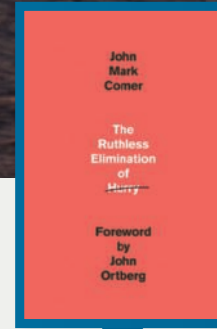
**Crazy Busy: A
(Mercifully) Short
Book about a (Really)
Big Problem**
Kevin DeYoung



**The Deeply
Formed Life**
Rich Villodas



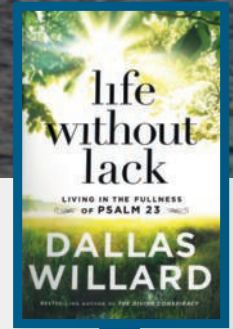
**An Unhurried Life:
Following Jesus'
Rhythms of Work
and Rest**
Alan Fadling



**The Ruthless
Elimination
of Hurry**
John Mark Comer



Beloved Dust
Jamin Goggin &
Kyle Strobel



**Life Without Lack:
Living in the Fullness
of Psalm 23**
Dallas Willard



About the Author

Stephen J. Weaver has a long and rich history with Sandy Cove Ministries. Stephen became President & CEO of Sandy Cove in 2014 and, prior to that, served for seven years in the role of Director of Program Ministries. His journey with Christ began at age 10 through the ministry of youth camps at Sandy Cove. Stephen spent much of his teenage and young adult years working various jobs at Sandy Cove, starting in the dish pit. Prior to Stephen's return to Sandy Cove in 2008, he spent nine years in Nashville where he worked in all facets of the Christian music industry.



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