



# **Retreat**

[Matthew 14:22-23 \(NIV\)](#)

Fourth in a 9-part series titled: *Reset*

Pastor Matt Friend – July 8 & 11, 2021

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## **– OUTLINE –**

### ***Today's Big Idea:***

If we don't come apart, we will come apart.

### ***Today's Takeaway:***

- #1 – Develop rhythms of daily retreat.
- #2 – Develop rhythms of weekly retreat.
- #3 – Develop rhythms of quarterly retreat.
- #4 – Develop rhythms of yearly retreat.
- #5 – Don't be afraid to take seasonal retreats as needed.



### ***Resource Recommendation***

[\*Reset: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture\*](#)

By David Murray



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## **– NOTES –**

### ***Introduction:***

In a lab in South Minneapolis, there's a room that's 99.99% soundproof. It holds the Guinness World's Record for being the quietest place. It's made with 3-foot-thick fiberglass acoustic wedges, double walls of insulated steel, and concrete that's over a foot thick.

NASA rents out the room to train astronauts. Whirlpool used it to test washing machines. The Harley Davidson Company used it to make their motorcycles quieter. Steven Orfield, the President of the Company that created the soundproof lab, said that when he goes inside, he can hear the artificial valve in his heart tick. He continues, "The quieter the room, the more things you will hear." The sounds of silence actually become quite unnerving for most people, as the record for the longest stay in the room is just 45 minutes.

If you were given an opportunity to spend a day in the world's quietest room, would you? Some of us are asking, "Where do I sign up?" 😊

Actually, however, there's a reason that no one has been able to stay in that room for more than an hour. There's something within us that's scared to death of solitude and silence, of true rest and retreat.

This isn't a new problem of the modern age. Thousands of years ago, King Solomon pointed out this problem:

*What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart  
with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are*



*full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. (Ecclesiastes 2:22-23)*

Have you ever found yourself longing for silence and solitude, but freaked out by it when it finally arrives? Perhaps you've tried to read your Bible and pray, but your mind scurries in a thousand different directions? Maybe you've tried to take a day off or go on vacation, but find that you can't stop thinking about work?

Despite all of our efforts, achievements, and success, many of us find that our hearts do not rest. Our minds race and our hearts ache with anxiety even our beds at night. This isn't a "some busy-and-important people problem," this is an "everyone" problem.

If this last year has taught us anything, it's that we, God's people, are capable of feeling the same temptations that the world feels:

- Cynicism
- Negative self-talk
- Soul fatigue
- Disillusionment of goals and dreams
- Impatience with others
- Relational conflict
- Failing to meet our commitments
- Waking up more tired than when we went to bed
- Constantly dreaming of a different life
- A dread of going to work every day

Thankfully, there's a better way! Jesus is inviting us into a better way! I believe the next few minutes are worth the price of your attention. The Bible actually speaks to this and we'll discover the solution together.

### ***Today's Big Idea:***

If we don't come apart, we will come apart.



## ***Explanation of the Text:***

The true story from the life of Jesus (as recorded in today's text: Matthew 14:22-23) comes right after the time that he feed thousands of people with a little boy's *Lunchable*: five loaves and two fish. After teaching and doing this phenomenal miracle, Jesus retreats and climbs a mountain so he can pray. He was likely exhausted from the day's events, yet he knew that the health of his soul was more important than anything else.

I picture Jesus slowly, methodically plodding up the mountain, gazing out across the water and breathing in the salty air above the Sea of Galilee. Jesus, deep in his heart, trusted God the Father. He retreated from his work. He took time to simply enjoy the presence of his Father. Retreat is more than sleep. Retreat is intentionally receiving the fullness of what God has for us.

Jesus prioritized retreat and the model he gives us is not one of simply sleeping in or going to the movies. No one in all of history has had a more important task to complete than Jesus. Yet we see him putting his work down and retreating as part of the mission. Jesus teaches sometimes battles are won by retreating.

No matter what you are doing right now, regardless of how demanding your job is or the pressures of that project, the health of your soul is more important. Learn from his model of retreat. Jesus stopped his working, trusted that his Father knew best, and he went away to enjoy God.

- In the little Gospel of Mark alone, Jesus is recorded as having retreated nine times.
- After his baptism, he disappeared into the desert for 40 days.
- He withdrew to mourn the death of John the Baptist.
- Mark and Luke both describe him rising early and seeking "desolate places."
- On the night before his crucifixion, he went to the Garden of Gethsemane with the twelve, and left even them to go and



pray alone.

This pattern of withdrawal doesn't mark Jesus as a special case, and isn't a reflection of his divinity. Instead, it's a perfect expression of humanity. A body has limited resources, and what we do each day drains those resources; our physical energy drains, as does our psychological energy, our capacity for empathy, and even our capacity to make decisions. Jesus, incarnate and embodied, experienced these limits. Just as he needed food and oxygen and sleep, he needed solitude.

Saying this doesn't accuse Jesus of a flaw or an imperfection. Instead, it points out that being perfectly human means being contingent – requiring food and rest and solitude in order to live perfectly. Humanity isn't limitless and self-sufficient, but deeply dependent on God's provision.

We often imagine a perfect human as invulnerable to weakness. Superman, vulnerable on his own planet, is empowered by the light of our sun so that he is, essentially, indestructible. He doesn't tire. He doesn't require food or water. So long as he takes in the sun's rays, he is, well, super. Similarly, we often liken high-performance athletes to machines or beasts. Note, though, that this language dehumanizes them.

Far from being invulnerable and superhuman, Jesus is truly and deeply human. He is vulnerable to hunger and weariness. He is vulnerable to fear and anxiety – as the blood, sweat, and tears of Gethsemane demonstrate. He is perfect not because he never tires of the crowd and the work of ministry, but because he rightly responds to weariness, retreating to desolate places to rest and pray.

If we don't come apart, we will come apart.

Today's topic is *retreat*. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as “moving back or withdrawing to a quiet or secluded place in which one can rest, relax, pray, or meditate.” In the biblical sense, to *retreat* is to make space in my life for God alone.



We hear God's invitation to us in Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know that I am God."

In the Old Testament, God instructed His people to completely take a day off every seventh day. This was based on God's pattern seen in the creation poetry and as an outcome of their redemption.

Urs von Balthasar (a theologian no one has ever heard of) once wrote, "God's beauty is God's power to attract, to give pleasure, to create desire, to awaken joy and wonder." It's tough to gaze on beauty when we're in a hurry. So, God invites us to slow down, to retreat, to rest, and to spend time with him.

Blaise Pascal wrote, "All our miseries derive from not being able to sit in a quiet room alone with God." However, Jesus stands against the tide, countering the crescendo with regular retreat.

Retreat is heaven's way to let yourself be loved by God. Retreat is our opportunity to say to God, "I trust you with my whole life." Retreat is our opportunity to acknowledge we have limitations but God does not. Retreat is our opportunity to ground our hope in who God is, rather than what we do. Retreat is our opportunity to proclaim with our lives that God is the good, wise, gracious and all-powerful creator and sustainer of all, and we are simply and thankfully not.

The philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote, "A life spent entirely in public, in the presence of others, becomes, as we would say, shallow. While it retains its visibility, it loses the quality of rising into sight from some darker ground which must remain hidden if it is not to lose its depth in a very real, non-subjective sense."

Arendt wrote these words in 1958, in a world that was far less connected than our world is today. Nonetheless, she saw a trajectory – a tendency towards constant social activity and a demand from the public to be perpetually entertained. To Arendt, this was not only causing the evaporation of privacy and solitude, but the evaporation of the space to think and reflect. If only she could see



us now. When are we ever truly alone?

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### ***Today's Takeaway:***

#1 – Develop rhythms of daily retreat.

#2 – Develop rhythms of weekly retreat.

#3 – Develop rhythms of quarterly retreat.

#4 – Develop rhythms of yearly retreat.

#5 – Don't be afraid to take seasonal retreats as needed.

### ***Why Develop Rhythms of Retreat? Because...***

If we don't come apart, we will come apart.