



Relationship Retreat #2

This retreat has been prepared for you to do alone, or with someone else.

Because this time of isolation and stress has placed us all in uncertain and frightening circumstances, it is no wonder that our relationships may be experiencing strain. If you want to engage with God about what is happening between you and others, you may want to use this suggested resource.

Before you begin:

1. Plan an uninterrupted time away from distractions and noise. If you are quarantined with family members, you may need to find an outside space, go be in your car, or wait until others in your home are asleep. Try to plan several hours, if possible.

If you'd like to do this with another person, you will need to take safety precautions into consideration when planning.

2. Gather your Bible and a notebook. You may want quiet music if it helps you focus, but plan for an extended time of silence as that allows your mind to detach from outside input.

3. Pray beforehand, preparing your mind, will, emotions, and body to be in a space with God. Ask for the infusion of God's grace, trusting that He is present with you, no matter the problem or the pain.

If two of you are doing this, you may choose to pray separately beforehand, and also together as you begin.

Begin:

1. **Read 1 John 3:1. "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God; and so, we are."**

Pray, accepting humbly that you are a child of God and that it helps to have a child-like attitude as you come to him. Pray, knowing you are firmly held in the Father's love. Pray, asking your good Father to be in this conversation and to lead you into a stronger and healthier relationship with him and others.

2. Read this paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 13 from the Message:

Love never gives up. Loves cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others. Isn't always first. Doesn't fly off the handle. Doesn't keep score of the sins of others. Doesn't revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back but keeps going to the end. Love never dies...

Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

3. Based on what you've just read, go through the following list of questions and answer as many as you choose, depending on your time and capacity. As you read through each question, notice where you sense resistance. That may be a question you should consider. You may want to journal your answers and take time to allow the Spirit to guide and bring understanding.

If you are with someone else, both of you should chose questions with a willingness to share honestly.

During responses, practice good listening to the other person. Listen with openness. Listen without looking for points to refute later. Listen with an ear to the Holy Spirit, seeking to care for the other person more than yourself in this time. Try not to interrupt.

If you are speaking, ask the Holy Spirit to help you say the most truthful things. Refrain from “talking at” or preaching. Avoid making your answers about opinions or what you know, but rather about your own attitudes, actions, and experience.

- ✓ **When and how do you avoid doing the loving thing?**
- ✓ **Which of the statements about love are the most difficult for you?**
- ✓ **How does critiquing what others say keep you from really hearing what they’re saying?**
- ✓ **Which of the qualities of love do you most want to receive?**
- ✓ **How has your giving of love been about you?**
- ✓ **Which qualities of love have shaped you?**
- ✓ **Do you rationalize, deny, or blame others for your own ways of being unloving?**
- ✓ **As you consider Paul’s words about love, how would you say you have experienced God’s love for you?**
- ✓ **When has knowing about love been easier for you than actually loving someone?**
- ✓ **What would it look like to put effort into loving like this?**
- ✓ **Is there a question you feel God has impressed on you as you have thoughtfully considered this passage?**

4. Take some time for quiet. Let your mind and spirit slow down. You may want to sort, but don’t try to plan or analyze. Just allow God the Father to be present with you. He knows your hurt and your hope. He knows what he can do. He knows you. Be still.
5. End your time with prayers, either individually or together. Ask. Thank. Receive. Remember that God is love. He is lavish in his affection for you. His love never ceases.

You, his child, are loved.