

PERSONAL RETREAT DAY

(adapted from Steve Hudson)

One of the mission-critical items for the Sonlife team is Personal Retreat Days (PRD). The name can be a little misleading. It is not a "vacation" day or a day of not working. It is an intentional day to guard your heart, minister from your strengths, align your priorities (Ministry Map), and find margin so you can lead from an overflow of rest.

PRD's are a core value and discipline for leaders at Sonlife. With any discipline, it takes practice, time, and consistency. Read the suggestions below to strengthen your experience.

- If you don't schedule it, it will not happen. Whatever day of the month you choose, keep a consistent rhythm.
- A personal retreat day is not a catch-up day. Leave the piles of work on your desk and get away with God. If you come back refreshed and renewed, you will have greater insight and wisdom in dealing with the piles of work on your desk. Don't succumb to the temptation to use the personal retreat day to catch up on all of the work that you are involved in.
- Slow down; it will take time. PRD's are a day to spend alone with God. Mark it off as an entire day free from meetings or appointments. Silence your phone and eliminate other distractions. This is a chance to re-align your spiritual and ministry life. It is primarily a day to connect to the heart of God. Pause. Listen. Obey.
- Find a location for your personal retreat day where you will not be constantly interrupted. If you have a spouse, children, or a device that continually calls for your attention, find a location other than your home. Suggestion for locations- another pastor's church (not your own where you may be interrupted), a quiet corner of the local library, or a park when the weather allows.
- Come into your PRD with a plan. During the month, jot down Scripture passages you want to study. Make notes of recommended books that you would like to read. Our minds may need guidance to focus, breathe and listen to the still, small voice. However, do not try to fit in too much content, i.e. books, podcasts, etc., that doesn't allow space for the Holy Spirit to guide and lead. This isn't a day to have a plan for God -- it is also not a day not to have an agenda. Somewhere in the middle is found structure and freedom. It is a beautiful symmetry of art and science. You will need to discuss with your supervisor how you can best capture the essence of a PRD.

Recommended PRD Structure

Part 1 - Scripture & Listening

Spend the first part of the day reading and meditating on the Scriptures... follow a reading plan, study a theme or main character in the Bible. A journaling Bible or a different translation that normally used may help gain a better understanding of Scripture. Use this time to allow the Word of God to speak to you. This isn't study prep or inductive research for teaching or coaching. What is God saying to you? How is He leading and guiding you to become more like His Son Jesus? Often

these insights become the focus for prayer and meditation during the next month.

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Part 2 - Reflection & Goals

Reflect, journal, and evaluate the previous month. What are you praising God for? What are the areas of disappointments and struggle? Spend time in prayer, asking for greater clarity and strength for the month ahead. After spending time listening to the voice of the Father, review your top 3-4 goals from the previous month and make sure you are continually aligned with your annual MAP. Review your yearly goals on your annual MAP and again go to God in prayer and guidance to show which ones need attention in the coming month. As a result of hearing God's guiding, set your top 3-4 goals for the month ahead. This task is mission-critical, to be honest, assess, calibrate, and set out the path in the month ahead. Update your calendar to reflect these goals; schedule your mission-critical priorities into your calendar including time for family, rest, study, teaching/training prep, administration, investment into your disciples, etc. Pray and submit to God the goals and calendar that you scheduled for the coming month.

Part 3 - Prayer & Ministry Letter

After reflection and goals, write specific prayer requests that came to light during your prayer time to share with your monthly prayer team and ministry partners. Spend time writing a monthly prayer letter to distribute to people who are committed to your life and ministry. This prayer letter should be organized around the key result areas of your ministry. Remember to highlight a variety of praises from previous requests and list the new requests for the coming month.

Parts 1-3 should be completed in 4-5 hours.

Part 4 - Spiritual & Leadership Development

After a lunch break, turn your time to concentrated spiritual formation and leadership development time. To help guide your time, strategically read or listen to books or podcasts that help develop your character and leadership priorities. After studying for a couple of hours, close your time journaling, listening to and talking with God.

Part 5 - Monthly Report

The final part of your day is to schedule your next PRD and submit your monthly report within 24 hours of your PRD to your supervisor.

This 5 part guidance is to help you structure your Personal Retreat Day. The key is to find a way of spending time with God that will encourage you to listen to Him and talk with Him. It is a day to refresh your soul and to refocus your priorities. It is an investment of time that will help make you more effective in your life and ministry for the coming month.

Remember: This is a day to enter into & enjoy the presence of the Spirit. Make sure that this day is set apart as "different" and that routine doesn't reign the day. Contemplate. Meditate. And go away renewed and refreshed!