

SPIRITUAL RETREAT

GUIDE

MIP
MINISTRYTOPARENTS.COM



HOW IT WORKS

This simple, two-step guide provides everything you need for spiritual, mental, and emotional rejuvenation. It includes two sections to be done consecutively.

1. MOMENTS OF CEASING (MY THOUGHTS)

2. MOMENTS OF LISTENING (HIS THOUGHTS)



WHAT YOU NEED

- Spiritual Retreat Guide
- A set of colored pencils, markers, or pens
- Pencil or pen
- Bible
- Journal (Optional)



FAQ

WHERE SHOULD THE GUIDE BE USED? This retreat guide can be used anywhere, at any time. For an ideal setting, try a private, quiet spot.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST? \$1 for colored pencils. (Optional: \$1 for a journal such as a Composition Book).

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE? Time depends on each individual's needs, but the average time is 2-3 hours.

CAN I REUSE THE MATERIAL? Yes! Moments of Ceasing can be used monthly, quarterly, or yearly for self-check-in. Moments of Listening can be used daily or weekly by replacing the Scripture verses.

MOMENTS OF CEASING

THOUGHTS ARE LIKE CURRENCY, AND THIS TIME IS DEDICATED TO HOW WE SPEND THEM.

We could be deep within the heart of the forest, surrounded by silence, with nothing but the sounds of nature, and yet be overtaken with noise. This unfortunate situation comes when the deafening, roaring, thoughts of our mind clamor for attention.

Is it ever possible to turn them off? Play the pause? Lower the decibel?

We believe so.

These exercises are designed to help identify the thoughts that want to be heard as if they are children crying to be seen. Sometimes our thoughts go on a loop because they just don't have a place to go. Other times, there is other work to be done.

Use these activities to identify and define the thoughts and their reasons for showing up. We hope this space gives your thoughts a safe place and thereby permits them to rest.

+ IDENTIFY

- 1 If you could represent 100% of the thoughts that go through your head in one day, how would you divide them into each category?

Tailor this list for you, tweak what's needed, and skip any that do not apply.

example

Job/Finances	30%
Marriage/Kids	20%
Spiritual/Physical/Emotional/Mental Health	20%
Rest/Hobbies/Relax Time	10%
Community/City/Country	10%
Future/Past	10%
Other:	0%
TOTAL	100%

my thoughts

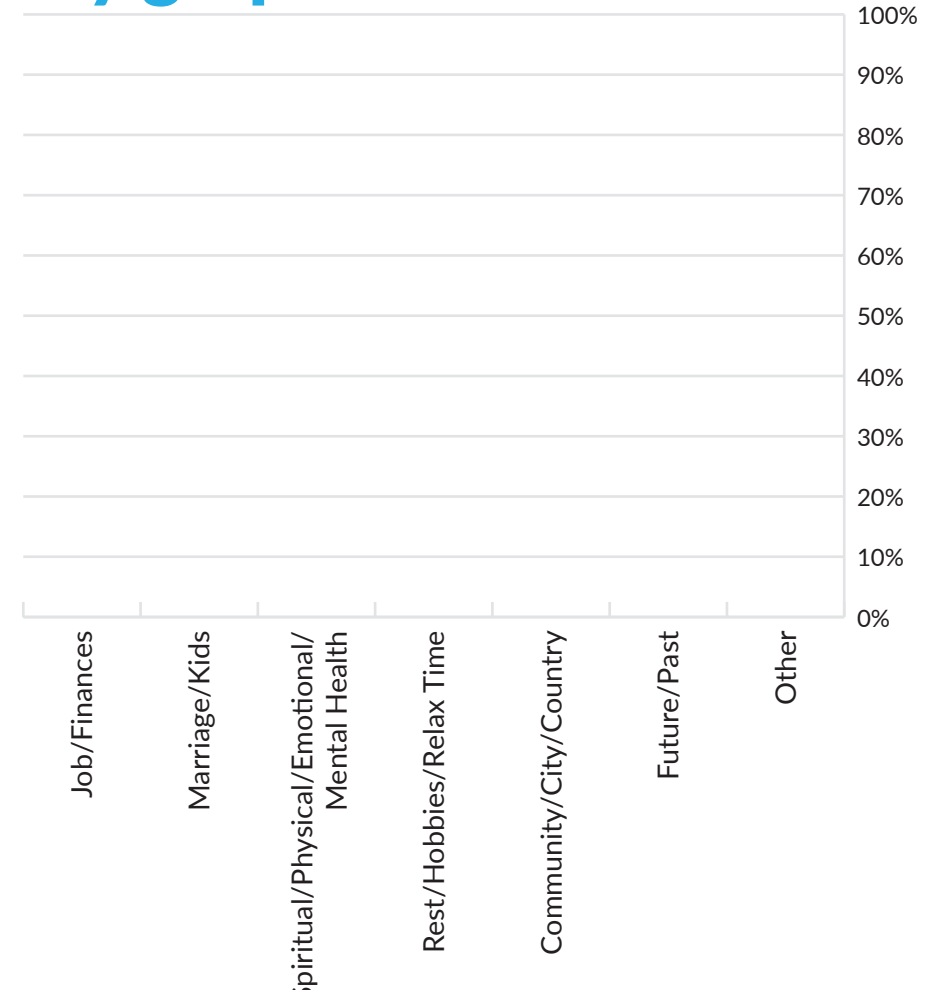
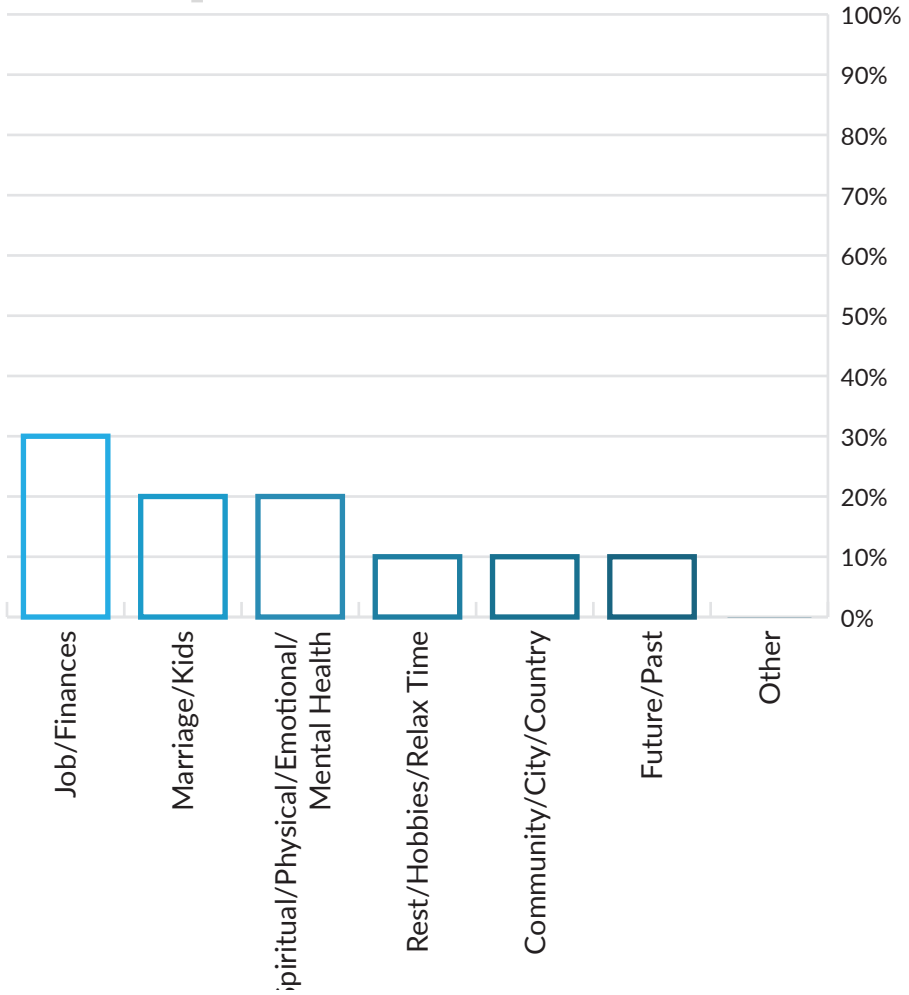
Job/Finances	
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Rest/Hobbies/Relax Time	
Community/City/Country	
Future/Past	
Other:	
TOTAL	

2 Look at the % of each subject. Using the graph below, outline a column to match the percentage marked above, but do not color or fill it in.



example

my graph



+ DEFINE

Thoughts often center around emotions. It is the why to the what. Using the four basic, primary emotions (Happy, Sad, Fear, and Anger), let's determine the behind-the-scenes emotions on thoughts.

- 1 Pick one column from above and think about the percentage you wrote down. For example, let's assume you wrote 30% for the Job/Finances category.
- 2 Think about why those thoughts are present through the lens of the four emotions and break the percentage down.

For example, are my thoughts about my job centered on exciting possibilities for the future or the next event? (Happy) Do my thoughts focus on what I wish could change, and I see the options? Am I overwhelmed with the responsibilities and need a shift in my job? (Anger) Am I afraid of losing my job? Is my boss pleased with me? (Fear) Do I long for change that I know cannot happen? Have I lost something important, like a co-worker's trust? (Sad)

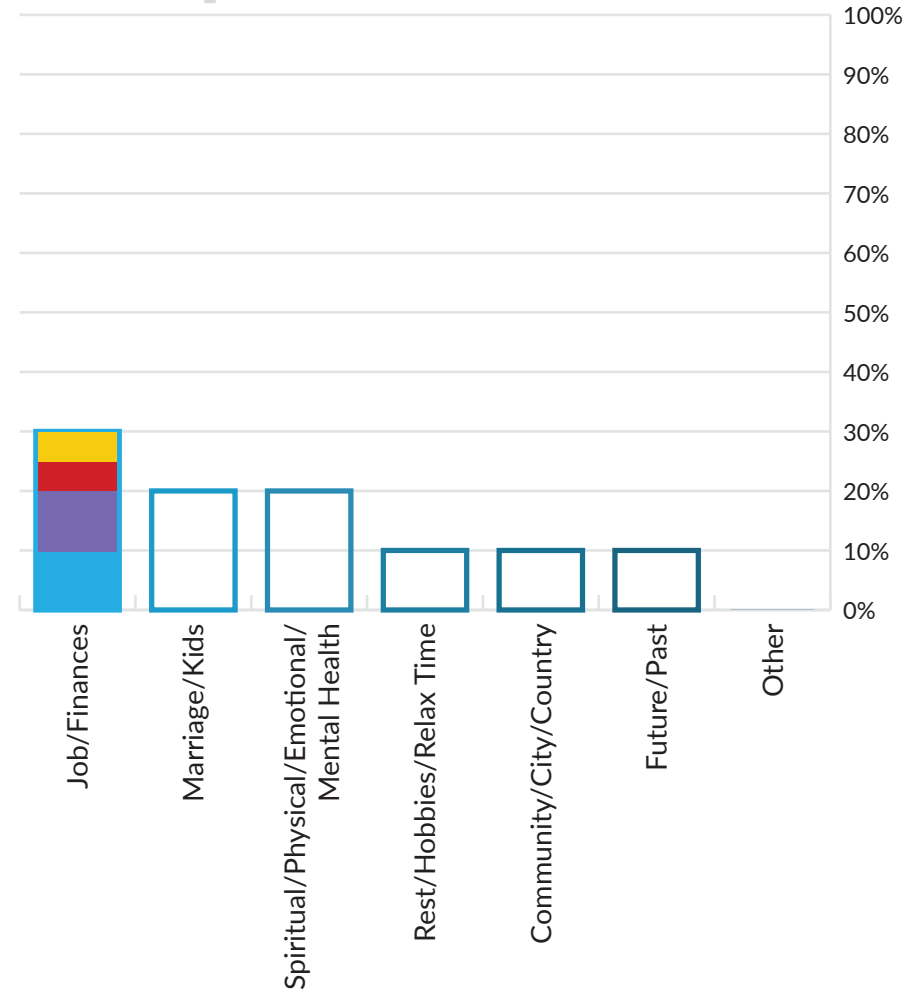
Job/Finances makes up 30% of my daily thought life, and of those thoughts, they are:

Happy 5%
 Anger 5%
 Fear 10%
 Sad 10%

- 3 If you have colored pencils, markers, or pens, gather those now. Assign a color to each emotion. See the example.



example



- 4 Fill in the column with the emotions based on their corresponding colors.
 For example, if the Job/Finances column is 30%, based on our example above, the column is filled with 10% blue, 10% purple, 5% red, and 5% yellow.
- 5 Go back to the other columns and analyze what fuels the thoughts using the four primary emotions: Happy, Sad, Fear, and Anger. Color the remaining columns.

RELEASE

1 Hold the sheet away from you to give the paper some distance. Is there a column, height or color, that stands out to you? Is there one that makes you go hmhhh? Spend some time thinking about it and write down what comes to mind.

2 **QUESTIONS**
If you could increase a % of one column, which one would it be? Why?

If you could decrease a % of one column, which one would it be? Why?

Is there one primary color through the graph? Which is it? Why do you think it is?

Is there one color you wish to see more? Why?

Is there one color you wish to see less? Why?

3 **FREE-FLOW WRITING**
Free-flow writing is an exercise where you pick a set amount of time, such as 3, 5, or 10 minutes, and write about a subject. This writing is for your eyes only without regard to editing, spelling, manners, grammar, etc. Be real, raw, and honest.

Look at the columns above and pick one for writing. Decide your time. Write out as many thoughts and emotions that come to mind, and be as straight-forward as you can. Go.

MOMENTS OF LISTENING

IT'S IN THE SILENCE WHERE OUR SOULS HEAR HIS GENTLE WHISPERS THE LOUDEST.

After the roars fade into the distance and the tangled web of thoughts unclutter, we are left with silence. For some, the sound of silence is a far-distant memory of a time long gone. For others, it is a welcome respite for a weary mind, and for others, it evokes a warm fondness for a pleasurable gift that never ceases to end.

And...

...it is here we hear the loving and relational God the Father gently whisper to us with His modest, simple, pleasant, reassuring voice.

Whether you hear this voice periodically, consistently, or rarely, we created exercises to assist in listening, for listening is an active art that involves all senses.

We hope and believe that you can converse with Him, free from all other roles and responsibilities, except one: a child of God.

HOW IT WORKS

This activity is a spiritual exercise that involves four basic components: reading, meditating, praying, and resting. Formally called *Lectio Divina*, or sacred reading starts with the belief that the LORD God is a personal God who longs to communicate with His loved people individually and collectively.

The first documented recording dates back to the third century A.D. with Origen, Cyprian of Carthage (1,746 years ago.). Some scholars believe it dates back even further to the Jewish practice

where the LORD introduced His people Israel to **meditate**, **ponder**, or **imagine** Him and His Word, i.e., Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:2 and the Hebrew word *hagah*.

Augustine of Hippo (St. Augustine) and John Cassian were leading voices in the 5th century and St. Benedict for the 6th. In the 12th century (1101-1200 A. D.) Bernard of Clairvaux re-ignited its practice. It continued as an individual practice, referenced by Gerard of Zutphen (14th Century) and John Calvin (16th Century.). Although much of its history has roots within the Roman Catholic church, Protestantism embraced it by the 19th century.

1 READ

Before you read the Scripture, ask the Spirit to bring to mind one word or phrase from the text (try not to choose yourself or force it), then read the text slowly and out loud. As you read, actively listen for a word that stands out. Use your imagination here and insert yourself into the story. Picture yourself standing on the battlefield with David, next to the leper as Jesus touched him, or sitting in the room with the people of Ephesus as Paul's letter was read out loud.

Is it a person, place, thing, or phrase? What made you go hmmm? What caused a second glance? A tilt of the head? A peak in interest?

2 REFLECT

Read the passage slowly and out loud again. This time, actively listen for the word...the phrase, place, thing, or person that stood out. Afterward, meditate on the questions below. Write down what comes to mind.

- Why do you think you connect with this one place, thing,

phrase, or person (There is no particular answer, so just guess on the why.)?

- If a person stands out, how do you think they felt or thought in the moment that is recorded? What is your best guess regarding their needs: spiritually, emotionally, physically, mentally? As their story plays out, why do you think they acted the way they did? Why do you think they made that choice?
- What is the Lord trying to say to them about His Love Story?
- How does God/Jesus/Spirit seem in the passage? What does He do or not do?
- What does this one word, phrase, or person have in common with your everyday circumstances?
- What do you think/feel the LORD is saying to you?

3 RESPOND

The four letters, R.S.V. P., often grace the cover of wedding invitations. The initials stand for a French phrase, “répondez, s’il vous plaît,” which means “reply if you please.” The third part of this exercise is the response to the invitation.

God has invited you into a conversation with a word, such as a place, thing, phrase, or person. Wherein the first two parts of this exercise were active listening, now it moves into a conversation. It becomes relational. It is prayer.

Here, your labor of love is vulnerability, dependence, and trust.

Responses look different for each person as the message from the LORD is tailor-made for each individual and their story. This step of conversing can often be an interactive one.

4 REST

The last part of the exercise is to bring the experience full-circle. Immerse yourself in the Sabbath-rest that Jesus provides where you no longer labor spiritually or work out for God’s love, and His gentle presence is enough.

Continue in your daily comings and goings with an intentional awareness of what was said or happened. Think over the word God whispered to you, and thank Him for speaking. Often, this activity leads to worship of some sort.

LISTENING EXERCISE

I KINGS 19

READ

Take a deep breath and quiet the mind. If the thoughts continue to clamor for attention, practice the Moment of Ceasing exercise.

Ask the Spirit to bring a word to mind...phrase, thing, place, or person. Read slowly and out loud I Kings 19 and use your imagination to insert yourself into the story. As you read out loud, listen actively for a word that stands out.

Is it a person, place, thing, or phrase? What made you go hmmm? What caused a second glance? A tilt of the head? A peak in interest?

REFLECT

Read the passage slowly and out loud again. This time, actively listen for the word...the phrase, place, thing, or person that stood out. Afterward, meditate on the questions below. Write down what comes to mind.

- Why do you think you connect with this one place, thing, phrase, or person (There is no particular answer, so just guess on the why.)?
- If a person stands out, how do you think they felt or thought the moment that is recorded? What is your best guess regarding their needs: spiritually, emotionally, physically, mentally? As their story plays out, why do you think they acted the way they did? Why do you think they made that choice?

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RESPOND

How do you want to respond to the word from I Kings 19? Do you offer words? Actions?

REST

You are given the gift of Sabbath-rest in Jesus. You no longer work or perform for God's love. He is gently calling to you through the whispers. Enjoy.

How do you wish to rest in this truth you have learned from I Kings 19?

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Surrender to Love and The Gift of Being Yourself by Dr. David Benner

The Inner Voice of Love by Henri Nouwen

Hearing God by Dallas Willard

