

LIFE ASSIGNMENT: Personal Retreat

“Be still and know that I am God!” Psalm 46:10

“Let Me show you the man who comes to Me, hears My words and acts on them...” Luke 6:47

“Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples! Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it.” Isaiah 34:1

A Native American Indian and his friend were walking downtown in New York City during the deafening sounds of rush hour. Suddenly the Indian said, “Shhhhh! I hear a cricket.” “You’re crazy!” replied his friend. “You couldn’t possibly hear a cricket in all of this noise!” “No, I’m sure of it. Follow me!” the Native American led him 30 yards down the block and across a busy street to a big cement planter. He reached behind a small bush, pushed aside discarded candy wrapper and grabbed a cricket. “That’s incredible. You must have super-human ears!” “No,” responded the Indian, “My ears are no different from yours. They are just attuned to what is most important to my heart. For what is on our heart determines what your ears really hear. Fishing is utmost on my heart for this afternoon so my ears are on the alert for sound of crickets. Watch this!” He pulled a fist full of coins from his pocket and dropped them onto a manhole cover embedded in the sidewalk. At that instant every person within 100 feet stopped to see if the money could be theirs. “See what I mean? Our ears hear what is important to our heart! A man always pursues what is important on his heart!”



Men, the problem is not with our ears, it’s our hearts. We live in a world of noise and our hearts are often not attuned to the things which are on God’s heart. What is important to God has not really become important to us. In this Life Assignment we want to help you learn the vital importance as the spiritual leader of your family and perhaps a spiritual leader in your church family to listen to God. We want to help you invest either a half or full day to “draw near to God to listen” (Eccl 5:1).

Between now and our next GRIP gathering on Sept 12 we want you to be quiet before the Lord, the Creator God of the Universe for an extended period of time to listen to Him so that your Action Points reflect what is on His heart.

During this extended time of quiet before the Lord we want to encourage you to listen as you meditate on His Word and talk with Him as you respond in prayer. We encourage you to fast one or more meals during this time. Fasting is one way to develop a deeper hunger for God. (See “Reasons for Fasting” below for more background and insights on fasting.) Here’s a prayer that reflects the disposition we hope you have during this personal retreat.

“Father, my soul is more hungry for deep and intimate fellowship with You than my stomach is for food! Increase the sensitivity of my heart to Your Word and to Your will. May my life reflect what is important to Your heart. Help me meditate on Your Word and pour out the desires of my heart in prayer. Grant me insight into what Action Points You have for my life this GRIP season. And motivate me by the depth of Your love and grace. Use this time to cleanse my heart, clarify my thoughts, and heighten my sense of fellowship with You.”

“Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” Ps 73:25-26

“Now it came about when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.” Nehemiah 1:4

“Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.” Daniel 6:18

“So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.” Dan 9:3

“Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full...so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.” Matt 6:16, 18

“And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” Acts 13:2

SAMPLE: PARTIAL PERSONAL RETREAT DAY: 5-7 HOURS

This can easily be shortened or extended to fit your needs and situation. Make it meaningful to you.

Purpose: Clearly state and know the central purpose for this time alone with God. Example: *Lord my primary reasons for this half day with You is to (1) hear clearly what Action Points You want me to live out this GRIP season, (2) think through the priorities of my life as I am way out of balance (3) and to think of several practical ways to better love/listen to my wife as our relationship has been strained as of late!*

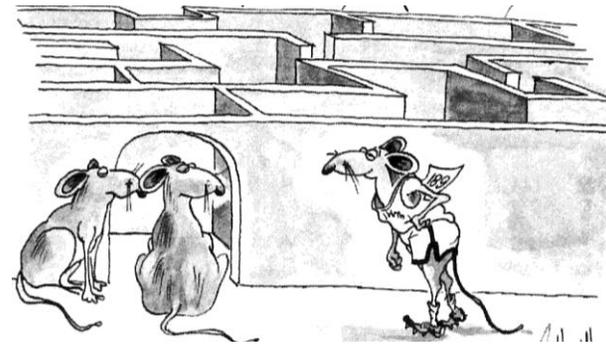
The night before your half day with the Lord

- 6:30pm During dinner **explain to your family** what you will be doing during your time alone with the Lord and what you hope to accomplish. I.e. your purpose as stated above. Ask them to pray as you take a day to listen to God.
- 7:30 **Put together a plan** of what you want your time to look like with the Lord the following day.
- 8:30 30 minute prayer walk to **prepare your heart** for the next day.
- 9:00 **Call your GRIP partner** to let him know the details of what you have planned.
- 9:30 Get a **good night rest**.

Example flexible plan for a half day of prayer and fasting

- 6:00 am **Drive to friend's lake house** where it is quiet. Keep radio off!
- 6:30 Read and **meditate on Psalm 145 to center my heart** on His character with praise. Turn off my phone and computer.
- 7:00 **Read through Psalm 51** allowing God to bring my heart to repentance and to clean it out so that I can draw close to Him and focus on His plan for me during this GRIP semester. Meditate on His grace from **Romans 8** if there is time.
- 7:30 Work through the **GRIP book (Thumb. p19-23)** making sure that my 2-4 Action Points are specific and clear.
- 8:00 **Break.** Stretch. Sing/listen to praise song. Short walk.
- 8:30 Because there is tension in my marriage as my priorities are out of balance I must **reflect on Genesis 2:18-25, Ephesians 5:25-31 and I Peter 3:7-12.**
- 8:50 Work through **GRIP book (Pointer. p24-27)** making sure that my 2-4 Action Points are specific and clear.
- 9:30 Stop to pray for each of my children/grands and then work through **GRIP book (Middle. p28-30)** making sure that I have at least 2 specific and clear Action Points for each.
- 10:15 Take a **short nap** if tired or take a **brisk 15 run/walk** in the woods or kayak on lake. Stress the body to de-stress the mind!

- 10:45 **Prayer walk** praying over each Action Point thus far.
- 11:30 Work through **GRIP book (Ring. P31-34; 41)** and to make sure that my 2-4 Action Points are specific and clear.
- 12:15pm Work through **GRIP book (Pinky. p42-47)** making sure that my 2-4 Action Points are specific and clear.
- 1:00 **Adjust my priorities.** What must I say "no!" to in order to say "yes!" to God's best for me during this season of my life?
- 1:30 **Type up action points** and send to my GRIP guys.
- 2:00 **Head home.**
- 2:30 **Family time.**
- 6:00 Eat with family or take wife on a date to **share key take aways, convictions, insights, Action Points** that God put on my heart for the fall.



"There's that really cocky one I was telling you about that thinks he can win the rat race without God's power and perspective!"

REASONS FOR FASTING (adapted from *God's Chosen Fast* by Wallis)

1. Fasting is a discipline led by the Holy Spirit (Matt 4:2; I Cor 9:7).
2. Fasting is a powerful means to seek God's will in a specific matter in order to be heard on high (Judges 20:26; Acts 14:23; Ezra 8:23).
3. Fasting is often used to make our hearts contrite before God in repentance for sin (I Sam 7:6; II Sam 12:16, 21-23; Neh 9:1-3; Dan 9:3; Joel 1:14; 2:12,15; Jonah 3:5).
4. Fasting focuses our concern for God's work. (Neh 1:4-11)
5. Fasting is a cry to God for His protection (II Chron 7:14; 20:3; Ezra 8:21-23; Esther 4:13-16).
6. Fasting humbles our hearts before God (Ps 69:1-13; Is 66:1-2; Matt 5:4).

7. Fasting is a primary part of worship. (Luke 2:37, Acts 13:2-3)
8. Fasting grows and comforts us through times of deep sorrow (I Samuel 31:13; II Samuel 1:12; 12:16, 21-23; Psalm 35:13; Daniel 6:18).
9. Fasting helps to guide us with great effectiveness in discerning and achieving God's purposes (Matt 6:16-18).
10. Fasting is often used to "change God's mind" in seeking a different outcome to a circumstance/problem (Jonah 3:5, 10).
11. Fasting brings freedom to our lives and others (Is 58:6).
12. Fasting can give us added insight, perspective and wisdom which we do not now have (Daniel 9:2,3,21,22).

WARNING! Don't fast to be seen and **impress** others with your spirituality or to feel good about yourself. Rather, fast to **express** to God the thoughts, desires of your heart and listen to what is on His heart for your life. (Zech 7:5; Matt 6:16-18; Luke 18:12).



IDEAS AND PRINCIPLES

- **Make a plan** of what you will read, think through or reflect upon ahead of time. Always begin with a primary purpose for your time before the Father. It might be that you have a relationship that needs repairing, priorities which need realignment, a decision that needs discernment, a worry or fear that needs God's perspective, a habit which needs to be broken, or a temptation for which you need additional strength to resist. It could simply be that you enjoy just being alone with the King of the universe. However, in this case, one of the primary things to focus on is the writing of your Action Points for each of your GRIP fingers. Whatever the concern, make sure your focus is clear from the outset so that your heart and mind stay centered. If you need help putting together a plan ASK YOUR GRIP GUY!
- **Set aside a period of time.** Start small (a meal or two) to experience success. Remember, fasting and prayer are hard work. It is like beginning a physical exercise routine. Go slow, and take baby steps.
- **Search your heart** - All of us have experienced a garage/shed full of so much clutter that we can't even move. Sooner or later we are forced to invest an entire day to clean up and throw out all the unwanted stuff that makes the garage useless. It's the same way with our lives. God desires for us to keep short accounts with Him. So, before the Lord, make a list of all the accumulated and unaddressed sin in your life which keeps you from Christ. Psalm 51.

- Here are a few questions that may prompt your confession:
 - Do I need to forgive someone? Do I need to ask forgiveness?
 - Have I hurt someone?
 - Where have I been divisive?
 - About whom have I slandered, gossiped or spoken negatively?
 - What have I stolen as of late?
 - To whom have I failed to give credit where it was due?
 - Lord, where have I sinned sexually?
 - Have I given a false report, lied or misled someone?
 - Do I harbor hatred, anger, wrath, prejudice, jealousy or envy?
 - Do I have selfish ambition or greed lurking in my soul?
 - Where have I rebelled and said "NO!" to You Lord?
 - How does my life match up to I Corinthians 13?
 - What has my attitude been like recently?

Once you have made the list of things which need to be flushed out of your life consider burning it before the Lord at the end of the day as a way to celebrate His grace, forgiveness and incredible freedom.
- **Create your own activities.** We suggest a balance between prayer, reflection, meditation, relaxation and the study of God's Word.
- **Enlist others to confidentially pray for you.** Ask your spouse, GRIP partner, or 1-2 folks from your church small group to pray for you throughout the duration of your time alone with the Lord.
- **Pass on your impressions.** Report back to those who were praying for you some of the impressions or breakthroughs you sense occurred during your fast. Husbands, at an appropriate time, share with your wives what you sense God was speaking to your heart during your extended time alone with Him.
- **Start the time in praise and adoration in order to both focus on the Lord** and declare that you are more hungry for Him than you are for food, TV, recreation, etc.
- **Read passages from Scripture and perhaps a chapter of a related book** that will help you focus on a certain issue, concern or problem.
- **Take time to reflect and think deeply.** Rather than rip through this assignment, pause often to chew on a word, phrase or thought asking, "*Lord, is there something here You are trying to tell, teach, train or transform me?*"
- **Journal the insights, questions or applications you gleaned** from your time with the Lord in the form of a prayer.