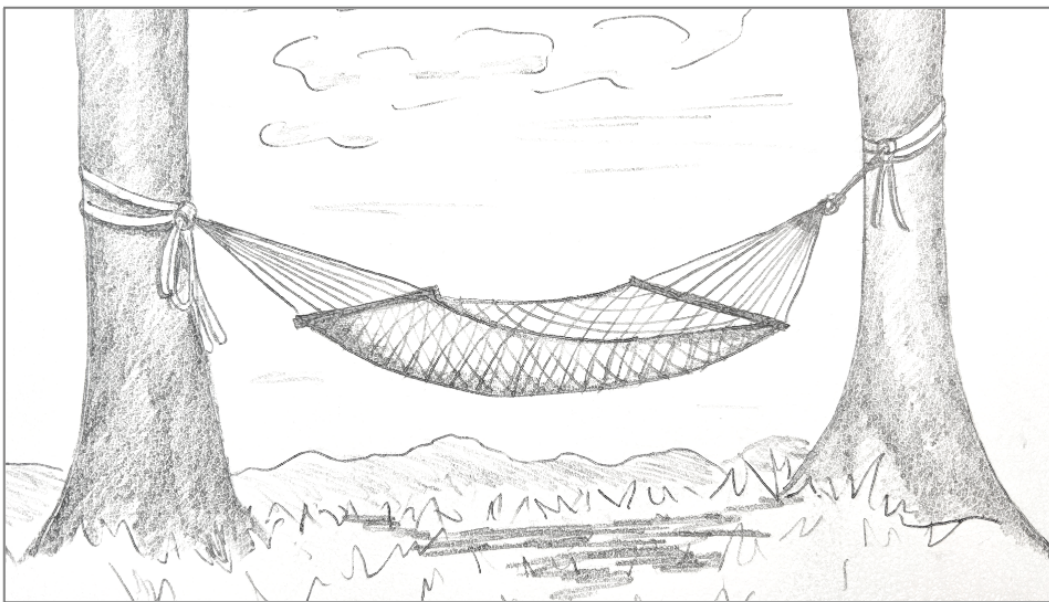




Personal Retreat Guide

Summer 2025



He makes me lie down in green pastures...

He restores my soul. - Psalm 23

"Our spiritual life depends on His perpetual coming to us, far more than on our going to Him. Every time a channel is made for Him, He comes; every time our hearts are open to Him, He enters, bringing a fresh gift of His very life..."

- Evelyn Underhill

Way to go!

You have set aside some time to slow down, to be still and notice. Not easy at all. Well done. I wonder what this rest for your soul will be like? What the Lord might show you, and what he might invite you into? He has good things for you.

I recently learned that the Chinese character for “busy” is made up of two characters: “heart” and “death.” Fascinating to think about and so accurate. When we fill our lives beyond capacity, there is a death in our hearts, and we miss the good gifts of God.

When we slow down, we start to feel again and notice. While this can be a little challenging at first, it is also healing, and the Lord is eager to meet with us in those places.

Walk through this guide however is most helpful to you. There is space for reflection, prayer and Scripture. Write in a journal or here on these pages. He has good things for you as you “come away with him, for a little while (Matt. 11).”

Praying as you enter in...

In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. - Isaiah 30:15

Lord, it is hard for me to slow down today. I feel like I should be doing...
Or, I'd rather be...

My mind is consumed with...

I confess that I have been wanting to make certain things happen...

Please help me to let go of... so that I may enter into the rest you have for me.

What has happened in your life over the last few months?

Scroll through your calendar or photos. What people, events, work, and travel have been part of this season?

April 2025

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May 2025

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June 2025

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July 2025

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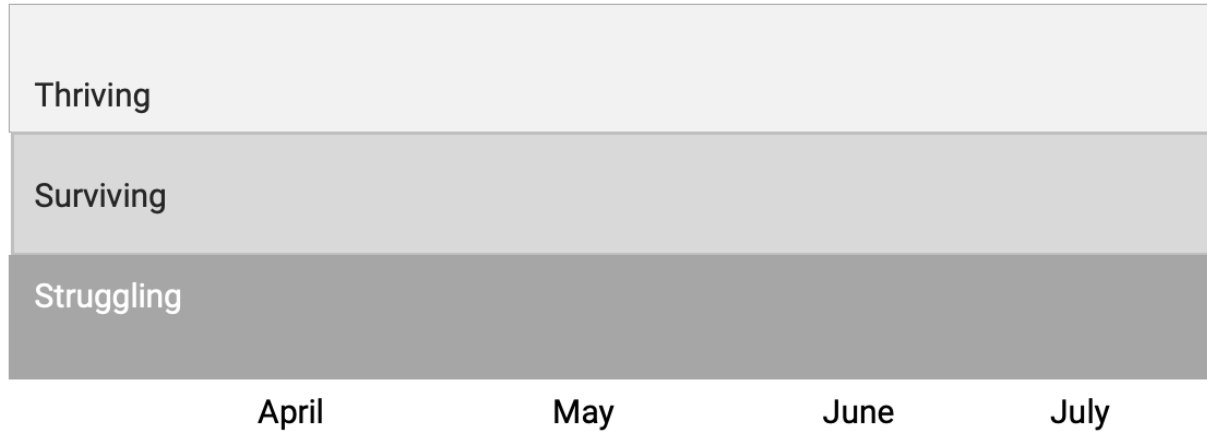
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How would you categorize these months?

Place dots along the chart below
based on how you were doing throughout these months.



What feelings have you experienced?

Circle the ones you've had – it's all part of noticing
what's going on in and around you.

Amazed	Eager	Irritated	Sad
Angry	Embarrassed	Jealous	Satisfied
Annoyed	Energetic	Joy	Scared
Anxious	Envious	Lonely	Self-conscious
Ashamed	Foolish	Lost	Shocked
Bitter	Frustrated	Loving	Silly
Bored	Furious	Miserable	Stupid
Comfortable	Grieving	Motivated	Suspicious
Confused	Happy	Nervous	Tense
Content	Hopeful	Overwhelmed	Terrified
Depressed	Hurt	Peaceful	Trapped
Determined	Inadequate	Proud	Uncomfortable
Disdain	Insecure	Relieved	Worried
Disgusted	Inspired	Resentful	Worthless

Praying as you notice...

When have you felt close to God...loved by him, at peace, consoled, or cared for? *Thank him for these times...*

When have you felt far from God...scared, overwhelmed, abandoned, alone, betrayed or desolate? *Ask him if there's anything he'd like you to notice about those times...Ask where He was.*

What is your deepest need right now...? What do you really want and desire from the Lord? *Ask the Lord to meet you in that place.*

Thinking about God's restoration...

This summer our sermon series will include a look at the Ten Commandments. You'll remember one of those is to keep the Sabbath holy – to set apart one day a week that is not for working but rather for rest and renewal. It's hard to do.

In Exodus, God says the Sabbath is a gift created for us. It's a break from our work, a time to rest and play, and *receive* rather than produce. He modeled the living out of this gift for us at creation.

Exodus 20:8-11

⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work...

¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

In Deuteronomy, Scripture revisits the Ten Commandments, and in this presentation, God helps us look back and remember through Israel's history, that they (and we) are no longer slaves to Pharaoh. The Lord has set them (and us) free from such task masters. Our Lord is not a task master, though he does have good work for us to do.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

¹² "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work... ¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

It is easy to legalize Sabbath keeping with lots of rules and starkness and a general lack of fun. This is what happened for the Jewish leaders – they tightened the bounds of Sabbath so severely that they squeezed the joy right out of it. This was never God's intention. Our work has a way of ruling over us, determining our value, etc. On the Sabbath, the Lord wants us to remember that he is the one who gives us value, gives us work, gives us good gifts. The Sabbath is for our restoration and renewal.

Reflection

What is it like to think of this commandment as a gift? What challenges you? What feels hopeful?

What do you think the Lord's desire is behind this weekly break from work? Why did he model it for us?

Pause for a moment... What delights you? ...What brings you joy? What is fun and playful for you? If you struggle to think of these things, ask the Holy Spirit to help bring things to mind.

What would it be like to choose a day each week to enjoy these things? Maybe it's on Sunday, maybe it's another day of the week. Maybe it's the evening of one day into the afternoon of another. What would it be like to plan for this day and look forward to it, setting aside "work" for a while, whether or not it's actually done?

Imaginative prayer...

Read this story from John 5 a few times. Read it aloud. Read it quietly. Enter in, prayerfully. Imagine Jesus talking to you.

¹Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. ²Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. ³Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. ⁵One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, **"Do you want to get well?"**

⁷"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

⁸Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." ⁹At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

Can you imagine being the man? Stuck and hurting for so long. This may come very easily if you have been sick. But if you haven't, are there places where you have "not been well" that the Lord might be asking you about?

If we receive the Lord's rest and restoration, things change in us. Pastor and author Mark Buchanan writes, "Restoration shocks the system. It alters not just our health – it alters our world. All that we establish to placate or indulge or accommodate our sickness disintegrates with those stark words, 'Take up your mat, and go.'"

What invitation might the Lord be extending to you? How might Sabbath rest be a part of this healing?

“May the Son of God, who is already formed in you, grow in you, so that for you He will become immeasurable, and that in you He will become laughter, exultation, the fullness of joy which no one can take from you.”

- Isaac of Stella

Want to read more on rest? Check out *The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath*, by Mark Buchanan. Much of this guide was inspired by his reflections in that book.