

The Urgent Care Your Soul Needs to Restore Your Peace

Don't you wish there were urgent care facility for weary souls we could check in to now and then? I can just picture the staff at the triage center going through the checklist:

Busyness? Fatigue? Family issues? Work pile-up? Health malfunctions? Money woes?

Sometimes "all of the above" pile on top of each other like a pile of the old-fashioned pick-up sticks. At least that is the case for me and my friends. You too?

Sure, we can get good at detangling the demands from time to time—most of us have taken Coping Skills 101. But sometimes the crises outlast the cope. One set of emergencies flows into the next, and even the quiet days can be fraught with anxious thoughts.

Most of us are quick to reassure ourselves that some break in the schedule is just a week or two away. As soon as the kids are either out of school or back in, or the project at work is finished, or we take our vacation, or we get home from our vacation, or the renovations are done, or the paper gets turned in, or the campaign is over, then we can take a break.

We all know how that usually works out. A whole new set of circumstances is waiting in line—and the break gets put off once again for just a couple more weeks.

We might decide to go instead for a quick pick-me-up. Isn't that what the magazine articles recommend? I have a storeroom full of "tips to get through the day." But while a quick nap, cup of tea, chocolate (even dark!) or a browse through the mall might help once or twice, as a constant go-to are like taking an aspirin for a migraine.

Looking for a longer-lasting cure? Consider a personal retreat.

“A what?” you might ask. “What is a personal retreat?”

I like the definition Ben Campbell Johnson and Paul Lang offer in their book *Time Away: A Guide for Personal Retreats*: “Retreat is a temporary withdrawal to be renewed, to regroup and to find the strength you need to go forward.” The personal part means you go by yourself. This is more than an afternoon free time at your church’s annual women’s retreat.

A personal retreat, aka a getaway with God, is like hooking up to an IV of grace and rest. Picture that image. Nothing is more restorative than spending a day with Jesus and feeling His love.

Getaways with God are not just for the “super spiritual” girls. In fact, if you want to go on a retreat just to get some time alone, that’s OK. Don’t confuse a retreat with a vacation, though. A retreat beckons you to snuggle up with God and let Him love on you. Save the shopping and movie watching for another time.

This is not a “nun for a day” program. It is an intimate time hanging out with the one who knows you better than anyone else does and who loves you like crazy. Try thinking of your personal retreat like a spiritual spa. Doesn’t that sound inviting? For a day or two, you check yourself into a place to rest, pray, listen to God, feel His love, take a walk and enjoy a nap or two.

While most women I know would drool at the opportunity to have even an afternoon off from their responsibilities, somehow the notion of actually making it happen can be somewhat intimidating. Beloved women of God who would not hesitate to take a day of shopping if someone offered often have a hard time taking that very same time to go on a retreat. Perhaps

it's because the concept seems so mysterious. But the rewards of a retreat last much longer than the new items purchased at the mall.

Sure, a lot of women can get by without a personal retreat. But are you a "get by" girl or a "go after" girl? Ladies, we are responsible for our own spiritual practices. Our pastors, our husbands, our moms and our friends can't make our renewal happen. Just as it's up to us to read our Bibles, only we can orchestrate a day or two away with Jesus.

"Where do you do this?" you might ask. That's certainly a common question!

Many venues can work for a getaway with God. The essential component is space to be alone without interruptions. If you are on a tight budget, a convent or retreat facility usually fits the bill for anonymity and few distractions. Check the website or call ahead to see if they serve meals and if special requests can be accommodated. Do they have a fridge available for you to bring your own meals? Is there a place to walk? Is silence the norm? A Google search can provide links for retreat centers.

Sometimes you might prefer a hotel-like environment. A dear friend of mine waits for the winter hotel specials in Chicago and plans her retreat for that time. I discovered a charming bed-and-breakfast about an hour's train ride from my home that became my retreat venue for a few years. Silence was not to be had, but there was a lot of quiet.

For a no-cost retreat, consider asking a friend who is gone during the day if you can use her place, or trade homes with a friend for a weekend. When my children were starting morning programs in school, I asked a neighbor from church if I could use her apartment for a morning retreat while she was downtown at work. I didn't have the luxury of an overnight or even a full day, but the change of venue and close proximity created

just the place I needed.

An outside retreat at a public garden, large park or on the beach can work in the right kind of weather for a shorter retreat. Bring along something comfortable to sit on and create your own sacred space.

One word of caution: Staying home to retreat may seem like an ideal solution, but if possible, get out of your house. Too many distractions of undone chores, ringing phones and chicken to thaw out for dinner can derail the best of plans.

Picking the day and place are the first steps, the rest can be filled in later.

Next time you find yourself on your way to that urgent care for the soul, try taking a detour into a personal retreat instead. {eoa}

Letitia Suk is an author and life coach who is passionate about helping women create a purposeful life and experience the fullness God offers. She has served as a hospital chaplain for nearly a decade and is a sought-after speaker for women's events and retreats. Suk has had more than 100 articles appear in various print publications and is the author of *Rhythms of Renewal* and *Getaway with God: The Everywoman's Guide to Personal Retreat*. Suk lives in the Chicago area with her husband, Tom. They have four grown children and three grandchildren.

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