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**COME AWAY WITH ME**  
A LOCAL RETREAT GUIDE



**ASHEVILLE, NC**

WRITTEN BY PETER IVEY  
ARTWORK BY ANNA LONG

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# THE INVITATION OF JESUS

## AN INTRODUCTION



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**"Come away with me. Let us go alone to a quiet place and rest for a while.' Many people were coming and going. They could not even eat." (Mark 6:31 WE)**

What a sweet and tender invitation we have here from our Savior and Friend, Jesus; and yet, in our "coming and going," our working and planning and worrying and pretending, many of us have become deaf to the sound of such an invitation, leaving us hungry. We have forgotten that our souls too need nourishment for the journey.

This is a unique season we find ourselves in, what with COVID-19 and the subsequent shut-down of schools, businesses, churches, and many of our other traditional social gatherings. As a result of such disruptions in everyday life, many of our false securities have been exposed. Can it be that the True Source of Life has risen to the surface of this tumultuous sea we are now swimming in? The volume of Jesus' invitation to "rest for a while" is always a whisper; yet opportunities to accept that invitation abound. We simply must choose to live in the moment and listen.

The world has been presented with an undeniable opportunity to slow down, to lay aside the "shoulds" and societal obligations, and to choose Life. The choice is ours. Will we answer the call or bury our heads in the sand?

This retreat guide was created out of a desire to help you to answer that call, to say "yes" to Jesus' invitation to deep and satisfying intimacy with Him, to retune your ears to the whispers of the Spirit, and to begin cultivating a daily rhythm of resting in the Lord.

I pray the Lord will meet you here and now.

Peter Ivey  
7/16/20  
Asheville, NC

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No matter who you are, no matter your age, race, ethnicity, gender, occupation, tax bracket, or social media status, Jesus' invitation to rest in His loving arms is for you, and, therefore, ***Come Away With Me*** is written for you.

As the definition of the word "guide" suggests, this retreat guide mustn't be seen as a hard and fast rule but rather as a signpost of sorts, a device meant to steady your soul and set you in motion, ushering you towards the feet of Jesus. Some of you may find it helpful to follow the outline closely, perhaps even as a template for future spiritual retreats. For some it may provide a general direction to be loosely followed, and that's okay too.

***Come Away With Me*** is designed to be completed as a three-day personal retreat. Each reflection has been written to build upon the next and, while it would be ideal to complete the guide over the course of three consecutive days, say, over a weekend, you can certainly complete the reflections at your own pace and still find them to be beneficial.

Lastly, each day has two suggested locations for you to choose from at which to engage in your retreat. All of the locations are within the city of Asheville and the surrounding areas in the hopes that God may also speak to you through the beauty of His Creation and the uniqueness of the city. Also included are daily quotes, prayers and a song to accompany each day's reflection. I hope that you'll consider engaging these particular and distinctive aspects of ***Come Away With Me***.

As you begin your personal retreat, I trust and pray that regardless of how you engage with the materials, the Lord will be faithful in meeting you wherever you may find yourself in life's journey.

## HOW TO USE THIS RETREAT GUIDE

**guide** | noun

- a** something that provides a person with guiding information
- b** signpost
- c** a device for steadying or directing the motion of something

### What you'll need:

- Bible or Bible app
- journal or notebook
- pencil or pen
- navigation to your daily retreat location



## PREPARING YOUR HEART

Before beginning the reflection for each day, spend some time in prayer, asking the Lord to slow your heart and mind and to give you ears to hear the whispers of His Spirit, whether it be heard through His Word, in the stillness and silence, or in the beauty of Creation.



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## A Prayer from Thomas Merton

My Lord God,  
I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me.  
I cannot know for certain where it will end,  
nor do I really know myself,  
and the fact that I think I am following your  
will does not mean that I am actually doing  
so. But I believe that the desire to please you  
does in fact please you. And I hope I have  
that desire in all that I am doing.  
I hope that I will never do anything apart  
from that desire. And I know that if I do this  
you will lead me by the right road,  
though I may know nothing about it.  
Therefore will I trust you always though  
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of  
death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me,  
and you will never leave me to face my perils  
alone.

## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

## The Jesus Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

"Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught because of what my enemy is saying, because of the threats of the wicked; for they bring down suffering on me and assail me in their anger. My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen on me. Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me. I said, 'Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and stay in the desert; I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm.' ... Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken...But as for me, I trust in you."

([Psalm 55:1-8, 22-23](#) NIV)

// What an honest outpouring of the heart we find here from King David, God's one-after-my-own heart, slayer of Goliath the Philistine, mighty warrior in battle. For someone of such high status, an open admission of fear and dread such as this would have been frowned upon in the ancient Near East, and quite frankly, it is still often frowned upon in our culture today. The unspoken norm of hiding our deepest insecurities, longings and disappointments from one another runs deep, so deep in fact that we often hide the core of our experience of life from those around us, from ourselves. We try to hide even from God. Busyness, fear and denial are often the culprits. Yet, Jesus is inviting us into the deep waters of His love if we will but slow down long enough to experience the true state of our souls and offer what we find to Him.

So this is where we begin, taking inventory of your soul and bringing it before the Father, inviting Him to meet you where you are at and to find rest in His loving presence. //

## DAY 1

HOW IS IT WITH YOUR SOUL?

**Locations: (a) Local or (b) Hike**

a) [UNCA Botanical Gardens](#)

b) [Bearwallow Mountain](#)

**A Song for the Journey**

[Steffany Gretzinger](#)  
[Out of Hiding](#)

"Let me, then, confess what I know about myself, and confess too what I do not know, because what I know of myself I know only because you shed light on me, and what I do not know I shall remain ignorant about until my darkness becomes like bright noon before your face."

**St. Augustine, Confessions**



## DAY

### 1 CONT'D

#### Prayer

Father, give me the courage to take an honest look at the current state of my soul, to be willing to acknowledge the insecurities, longings and disappointments that I have been experiencing, as well as the joys, triumphs, and breakthroughs that have come my way. Slow my heart, mind and body so that I might be fully present to you now.

Come and sit with me, Lord Jesus. Amen



#### Reflection

- 1) What word or phrase stands out in today's passage? How might this relate to what I am currently experiencing in life?
- 2) What insecurities, longings or disappointments have I been experiencing that I need to acknowledge to God, to myself, and to others?
- 3) What joys, triumphs or breakthroughs have I been experiencing that I have yet to acknowledge or celebrate?
- 4) In what ways have I been experiencing God's presence and provision in my life?
- 5) In what ways have I been experiencing God's absence in my life?
- 6) In what ways have I been growing spiritually?
- 7) What, if any, questions of spiritual uncertainty have I been asking or experiencing?
- 8) In one or two words, how is it with my soul?

**Close your time of reflection in honest prayer, sharing with God everything that has been uncovered today.**

"The one who died for us - who was raised to life for us! - is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture: 'They kill us in cold blood because they hate you. We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.' None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing - nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable - absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us."

(Romans 8:31-39 MSG)

// Despite the fact that in Genesis 1 God calls us, His image bearers, and all of Creation, *very good*, most of us struggle to acknowledge the glory we shine forth in God's eyes as Christ-followers. We are quick to name our sins and shortcomings, our failures and our blemishes, and yet it can be such a challenge for us to name what is beautiful, precious and holy within ourselves. And as a result, we fail to rest in God's healing, secure, and unconditional love for us.

In today's passage from Romans, the Apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear how secure we are as Christ-followers in the love of the Father. There is absolutely nothing that can change the fact that you are loved by God. No failure at work. No failed marriage. No wayward child. No loss of community. No sexual addiction. No global pandemic. No spiritual doubt or question. No depression or anxiety. No part of our human experience can separate you from the love of God. //

## DAY 2

RESTING IN  
GOD'S LOVE

### Locations

a) French Broad River Park

b) Fawn Lake & Lake Julia Loop, Dupont State Forest

### A Song for the Journey

Chris Renzema  
God Is Love

"O God, help me to believe the truth about myself, no matter how beautiful it is."

**Macrina**  
**Wiederkehr**



## DAY 2 CONT'D

### Prayer

Father, I want to learn to rest in your love for me. I want to learn to trust your love for me, to grasp the reality that you don't love me because you have to but because you want to, because you've chosen to, because I am yours. Show me the ways in which you've made your love for me known, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant they may have been.

Come and sit with me, Lord Jesus. Amen

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### Reflection

1) What word or phrase stands out in today's passage? How might this relate to what I am currently experiencing in life?

2) When I think of God's posture towards me, do I first think of His love, or is it a thought of disappointment, anger, or indifference? How is this impacting my life, my relationships with others, my journey with Jesus?

3) In what areas of my life am I currently needing to experience God's unconditional love for me? When, where, or with whom do I feel unlovable, deficient, lacking?

4) Through what experience(s), moments, or interactions in my life have I received a sense of God's love for me?

Close your eyes and ask the Lord to take you back to that moment in your mind and linger there. In that sacred memory, what do you sense, both internally and externally? What do you see? What do you feel now as you revisit this past moment?

Make it a habit to come back to this moment regularly as a way in which to guide your soul back into the loving arms of God. This moment is one of your most precious gifts from the Lord, one to be cherished and held close.

**Close your time of reflection in honest prayer, sharing with God everything that has been uncovered today.**





"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'"

([Matthew 3:13-17](#) ESV)

// "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Most likely, these are words you are familiar with, profound words that were spoken by God the Father to His Son, Jesus, within earshot of all who were present at Jesus' baptism to affirm that he was indeed anointed by God, loved by God, sent by God. These words of endearment marked the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry.

How many of us hear these words and embrace them as our own, as terms of deep affection and love spoken over us by our Heavenly Father? If we look at Scripture, we see that we can indeed embrace the same belovedness in the eyes of God as Jesus did, and all because of Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf.

First, Paul tells us in [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) that "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." We not only received forgiveness for our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus, but we also took on his righteousness, his moral uprightness and purity, in the eyes of God.

When God looks at you, He sees the righteousness of Christ. He sees Jesus.

## DAY 3

LIVING AS THE  
BELOVED

### Locations

a) [Woodfin River Park](#)

b) [Max Patch](#)

### A Song for the Journey

[Sarah Kroger](#)  
[Belovedness](#)

"I have called you by name, from the very beginning. You are mine and I am yours. You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests...I look at you with infinite tenderness and care for you with a care more intimate than that of a mother for her child...I will not hide my face from you. You belong to me."

### Henri Nouwen, Life of the Beloved



## DAY 3 CONT'D

**beloved** | adjective

**a** dearly loved

**b** dear to the heart

### **synonyms**

cherished, darling,  
dear, favored, favorite,  
loved, precious

### **Prayer**

Father, grant me the grace and courage to claim my belovedness. Expose the false identities that I have walked in for so long, the lies I have listened to about who I am, and the fears that have held me back from claiming my rightful name. Thank you, Jesus, for your death and resurrection, for your loving sacrifice on my behalf, that has allowed me to be clothed in your righteousness and to become your child.

Come and sit with me,  
Lord Jesus. Amen



And not only that, but He sees you as His own daughter or son: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 [John 3:1](#) NIV).

You are God's Beloved, and with you He is well pleased, here and now, because of Jesus. These aren't words that you have to strive for or hope to hear once you pass from this side of eternity to the next. They are yours to claim and live out of now because of Jesus. Your belovedness is at the core of who you are, a solid rock to stand on amidst life's turbulent seas, your truest identity that, once embraced, will set you free to be who God created you to be in the world, all for His glory and for the joy of your soul. //

### **Reflection**

1) What word or phrase stands out in today's passage? How might this relate to what I am currently experiencing in life?

2) Try on God's name for you - Beloved. Repeat these words to yourself, "I am the Beloved of God, with whom He is well pleased."

How does it feel when you repeat these words to yourself? Joyful? Freeing? Uncomfortable? Do you feel resistant to them? Why or why not?

3) How might my life look differently if my belovedness was the foundation from which I lived each day? (i.e., What fears, insecurities, or doubts might begin to fade? What parts of myself might I begin to embrace, celebrate and share with others? How might it change the way in which I view others in my life?)

**Close your time of reflection in honest prayer, sharing with God everything that has been uncovered today.**

## A M E N

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

#### Books

[Surrender to Love](#)  
by [David Benner](#)

[The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry](#) by [John Mark Comer](#)

[The Examen Prayer](#)  
by [Timothy Gallagher](#)

[Abba's Child](#)  
by [Brennan Manning](#)

[Life of the Beloved](#)  
by [Henri Nouwen](#)

[Devotional Classics](#)  
by [Richard Foster](#) and  
[James Bryan Smith](#)

#### Podcasts

[Potter's Inn Soul Care Conversations](#)

[Renovare Podcast with Nathan Foster](#)



"To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. Make me know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you I wait all day long. 'Come,' my heart says, 'seek his face!' Your face, Lord, do I seek. Give ear to my words, O Lord; give heed to my sighing. Listen to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you I pray. Amen."

([Psalms 25:1,4-5; 27:8; 5:1-2](#) ESV)

// I hope and pray that over the past three days, you've sensed the Lord's presence, felt the Holy Spirit shine His holy light into the nooks and crannies of your heart, and grasped a renewed sense of how dearly loved you are by your Heavenly Father.

I also pray that retreating with Jesus would become a daily practice for you, that you would carve out space throughout each day to listen to The Voice that calls you Beloved, and that in turn, you would experience deep and satisfying intimacy with your Creator, Savior, and Friend. For *this* is the life you were created for, a life of satisfaction in Jesus.

I have come to believe that what God reveals to us in solitude is meant to be shared with others. Words of wisdom and healing that you might have received over the past three days could also be a means through which God calls another to the throne of grace. So before you set ***Come Away With Me*** aside, consider someone in your life with whom you can share your experience and encourage them to try this retreat guide for themselves.

Lastly, I have included some resources in the right margin of this page, resources that I have found helpful in fostering my own friendship with Jesus. I hope that you might find them helpful too.

May God bless you and keep you. //

## NOTES

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**COME AWAY WITH ME** WAS CREATED IN AFFILIATION WITH THRIVE ADVENTURES, A NON-PROFIT OUTDOOR MINISTRY WITH OPERATIONS IN MAINE, NEW MEXICO AND NORTH CAROLINA.



[THRIVEADVENTURES.ORG](http://THRIVEADVENTURES.ORG)



MAKE SURE TO CHECK OUT MORE OF **ANNA LONG'S** INCREDIBLE ARTWORK AT [WWW.ETSY.COM/SHOP/THELIVELONGDAY](http://WWW.ETSY.COM/SHOP/THELIVELONGDAY)