

What is a Silent Retreat?

Throughout history there are countless stories of people stepping away from the routine of life to seek deeper meaning and purpose. A life working, pursuing entertainment and comfort, and staying physically fit only takes us so far. More education, travel and being busy are a few of the countless ways to pass time, challenge time, or dull time. Nevertheless, something inside of us wants deeper meaning and purpose. Life is passing us by.

The first Christians and Jews went into the desert. Buddhists and Hindus have sought out caves or mountaintops. Philosophers and great thinkers have found basements, labs, or a hidden garden. Each of us has our favorite spot to get away – perhaps a nearby park, beach, or a cabin in a remote valley. Getting away is just the first step. Once we take our retreat from the traffic of life, what happens that brings deeper meaning and purpose?

Simplicity, solitude, and silence are common themes to the explorers of life's questions and the discoverers of life's answers. Our willingness to settle into some days of simplicity, living without plans, just being, opens a path. Spending time in one's own company allows us to find gifts in solitude that surprise us. To surround ourselves in silence supports us to find inner stillness where an experience of vastness opens where before there was tension or stress.



Some people naturally can just leave their daily routine and quickly enjoy simplicity, solitude, and silence. Others need more support or guidance to learn the ropes of living outside the box of normal identity. Almost everyone wants to know: What do I do with all my thoughts?

This is where the questions slowly fade, and the answers take shape. People begin a retreat looking for information about how to fix their lives. As their retreat unfolds, they discover experience and understanding that is deeper than fixing, more trusting in life itself. Mental work is giving way to peaceful awareness.

Purpose is found in simple peace. It is in these moments that thoughts turn into awareness, ideas become understanding, and searching settles into an inner well of trust. In our culture, what we do is how we measure achievement. In retreat what we receive, who we are focuses our attention. Receiving takes us into realms besides the world of what we are doing and what we are thinking. Receiving takes us from our mind through the doorway into our heart.



The ingredients of heart awareness, including clarity, love, generosity and inner knowing, are present. This inner experience yields meaning and purpose. The further we venture inside, the more meaning and purpose we find. What we discover inside changes our view of life in the world.

The important thing is to know is that there is an inner world where the deeper meaning and purpose we seek awaits us. Our mind can have all the questions and skepticism it wants. However,

the moment our awareness opens in the expansiveness of our heart, seeking becomes finding, doubt begins to trust. Under our mental activity is an emptiness. An expansive peace or light is unveiled. Beneath our thoughts, the information we have, a special wisdom is uncovered. The spring of life, an inner fountain of presence, is found. This lightness of being carries awareness into something that words can only attempt to describe as eternity. In modern culture with its emphasis on doing, intellectual achievement, and materialism our connection with eternity is what is missing.



It is getting from identifying ourselves as a personality to a broader awareness of being that is important. As gentleness and restfulness of our retreat settle in, self-doubt and protectiveness give in, give way, give up to something inside of us that is greater. The knot of our complicated self dissolves as we slowly, softly experience more of our heart. A good retreat offers a quiet, gentle shelter. We are safe. Instead of bouncing from one wave to the next of our thoughts and feelings, we discover a warm current, a bottomless ocean of being. Meaning and purpose are found in these waters.

From our inner vastness we understand we are no better or different from the people in our life, no matter how their personal circumstances appear. Self-importance disappears in this awareness. We see our equality with everyone and everything. Here compassion, understanding, and serving are who we are. Innocence, goodness, gratitude are the blood of our soul. Meaning and purpose are in our veins. Life is less about having results and more about the joy of living.

– Bruce Davis, Ph.D.

