PWOC LDP
Leadership Development Program

TOPIC: REST ALONG THE WAY—MINI RETREATS

The Bottom-Line Up Front:

- Life has a way of breaking us down—we live in a fallen world after all. Care for our souls does not happen automatically; we must be intentional. Even taking a few seconds for a Breath Prayer can change the course of our thoughts and emotions and can provide nourishment for our spirits—bringing renewal in our leadership and beyond.
- The methods listed below are merely suggestions; some will minister to you more than others. Feel free to tailor and tweak, and to make them your own. May you find rest for your weary soul. Jesus says in Matthew 11:28, "Come to Me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

As a Board, take about 15 minutes to actually practice several of the methods described below and 5 minutes for the questions at the end. Whoever leads this activity may want to make preparations for a few of the options. For example, consider using a pre-selected verse for the Scripture Meditation exercise. This will save valuable time and will make room for more practice.

1. **Breath Prayers:** Breathe deeply, focus on the truth of the words. Say the words in your mind as you breathe deeply, in and out. Keep breathing and praying until you feel peace seeping into your soul. Make up your own breath prayer that captures the depth of your need.

   Note that there is a slight pause between breathing in and out. Allow for the pause so that you do not hyperventilate.

   Breath prayers can be done anywhere at any time—while driving, in a waiting room, alone, in a crowd. This exercise is versatile and portable since it just looks like breathing to those around us.

   ↑=breathe in ↓=breathe out

   - Choose two names of God. Focus on their significance as you breathe in and out. Example: ↑ **Alpha** ↓ **Omega** *(He is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, and everything in between. He is all I need.)*
   - Choose one name of God (inhale). State what that name means in Scripture (exhale). Example: ↑ **Emmanuel** ↓ **You are with me**
   - Choose a name of God (inhale). State what that name means to you personally (exhale). Example: ↑ **Abba** ("Daddy") ↓ **I belong to You**

- Choose a Bible verse that has two phrases. Inhale one and exhale the other.
    - Example: ↑ **My soul finds rest** ↓ **In God alone** (Psalm 62:5)
- Choose a topic you are struggling with and declare that God is greater. ↑ **You are greater** ↓ **Than my <u>fear/anxiety/shame/weakness…</u>**
- Take a 30-second retreat using the first sentence of Psalm 46:10:
    - ↑ **Be still and know** ↓ **that I am God**
    - ↑ **Be still and know** ↓ **that I AM**
    - ↑ **Be still** ↓ **and know**
    - ↑ **Be** ↓ **still**
        ↑ *(deep breath in)* ↓ **Be**

2. **Scripture Meditation:** Take 5 minutes to allow the Living Word to refresh your soul. Choose a verse that is meaningful to you. Read it slowly. Allow the truth of it to sink in—let it nourish those depleted places. In practicality, "meditation" may be a verse on a 3x5 card, posted on the bathroom mirror, that you meditate on for 30 seconds at a time, throughout the day, as nature calls. It all counts! Be where you are; God will meet you there.
3. **Song Meditation:** Take 5 minutes to listen to a song that is meaningful to you. Be still. Focus your whole self on the words and on receiving their truth. Let God sing them over you. Let your heart open up all the way. Using earbuds may help the words sink deeper. This activity can be combined with a mundane task, so long as your whole attention can focus on the truth in the song.
4. **Hands Up, Hands Down:** Start with a 3–5-minute session. Close your eyes. Take time to just sit and listen for God's voice. Sit at a table with your palms face-up. Wait in expectation. As random thoughts come to your mind, do a "dump" by flipping your hands upside down. For example: A panicked thought floats across my mind that I don't have time to be sitting here—too much to do! I flip my hands upside-down and say a quick prayer, "Lord, I dedicate these moments to you. Help me to trust You with my schedule." Then I turn my hands over, palms-up, and sit in silent expectation. Note that you may want to have a pad of paper nearby to write down anything that comes to mind that you need to take care of later, which will help you "dump it" and refocus on being in God's presence. You will find you have to do a lot of "dumps" when you first start this practice. It will get easier the more you practice it—and the more you practice it, the more you will crave it. It will become not so much about hearing specific words from God as it will be about the space for your soul to commune with Him—to simply "be."
5. **Unplug:** Take a break from your phone, from electronics, from all the noise. Maybe take a walk or take a shower and allow your thoughts to quiet down and return to the Lord. Any chore can be transformed into an opportunity to unplug. Washing the dishes with the intent of allowing your mind to clear—inviting God into your space—becomes an activity of eternal value. Ordinary, mundane things can become holy things when they are set apart for God.

6. **Space Between Activities:** Consider taking a few minutes to put space between your activities during your day. Typically, we rush from one thing right into the next. Our To-Do List becomes one giant act of "doing" all day long. Choose to take a few moments to just "be" before rushing into the next thing. This practice can take many shapes and should be tailored to your needs, circumstances, and personality. Whatever activity you choose, let it draw your awareness back to God. He is the only One who can truly give us rest. Here are some ideas:
    - Use a breath prayer.
    - Use the Hands-up, Hands-down activity.
    - Put some music on.
    - Review/Preview: Review your previous activity and talk to God about it. Preview your next activity and invite Him into it.
    - Light a candle. Sit silently with it. Watch the flame dance. Allow your mind to clear.
    - Do something to pamper yourself: savor a piece of chocolate; go outside and breathe in some fresh air; close your eyes for a few minutes; freshen up…

7. **Is there a different activity that you would add? Is there something that has worked for you in the past?**

Which of these activities would you like to try this week? Be intentional. When will you do it? Where? How? Make a plan. *Take a few minutes to write it down. Share your plan with someone sitting near you.*