

## Invitation to Retreat: The Gift and Necessity of Time Away with God

**Ruth Haley Barton**

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Ruth Haley Barton's refreshing *Invitation to Retreat* gives guidance to Christians longing for more time with God.

Modern life is harried, to say the least. Yet people resist taking advantage of retreats because of misconceptions about them, such as that they're extra-long work meetings or overly packed gatherings. Barton writes about the retreat as an opportunity to fill one's soul through time alone with God.

A revival of Jesus's enticing invitation to "come away with me and rest a while," Barton's book is a how-to for adopting the countercultural practice of retreats in modern life. It answers earnest, anxious, and hungry questions such as what to do on retreat, what such time really means, and whether retreats are worth it. Poems by Barton and others punctuate the text and reinforce ideas of the beauty, joy, and spiritual artistry of retreats.

Though it covers the basics—the purpose of a spiritual retreat; planning; practice—the book also digs deep; for example, examining the roots of contemporary exhaustion. Real-life examples make it accessible, showing how to overcome roadblocks, including worries about time away from one's ministry, family, and other good things; the notion of the ministry of absence is particularly freeing.

Takeaways at the end of each chapter balance practicality with heartfelt intent. Structuring time, remaining physically active, and being open to giving God the lead are all encouraged. A section on the vital but often overlooked step of reentering daily life after a retreat shows how to continue to reap the benefits of a retreat's prayer and discernment.

*Invitation to Retreat* paints an alluring picture of what a retreat can really be: a generous use of time, a way to savor rest, or a space to hear God more clearly. Barton's book provides the permission and understanding that are needed to revel in the spacious practice of retreat.

MELISSA WUSKE (September/October 2018)

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