



PACEM in TERRIS

HERMITAGE RETREAT CENTER

A FATHER'S RETREAT

The Father's Heart

Three days immersed in the love of God the Father — steadfast, pursuing, tender, and strong — as the source and model for every father's calling.



A Three-Day Self-Directed Silent Retreat

Foundation: Before You Begin

Why 'God the Father' · What this retreat offers every father

THE INVITATION

Fatherhood begins with being a child

You cannot give what you have not received. This retreat begins not with what kind of father you should be, but with the kind of Father who has always been pursuing you. The love of God the Father is not a performance standard — it is the wellspring from which real fatherhood flows.

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.”

— 1 John 3:1

THREE MOVEMENTS

The shape of this retreat

Day One: Receive — experiencing yourself as God’s beloved child.

Day Two: Reflect — what kind of father are you called to be?

Day Three: Release — surrendering your children and your role to the Father who holds all things.

AN HONEST BEGINNING

Where you are right now

Before your first prayer period, write in your journal: What is the honest state of your heart as a father right now? Not what you wish it were — what is actually true. God meets us here, not where we think we should be.

Day One: Beloved Child

Receiving the Father's love before giving it

Before you are anyone's father, you are someone's child. Today we receive — perhaps for the first time without defense — the love of God the Father poured out on you.

MORNING PRAYER • 30 MIN

The voice at the river

Read Matthew 3:13–17. Before Jesus performed a single miracle, the Father spoke: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Hear those words addressed to you — not when you succeed, not when you have earned it. Now. Here.

Journal: What would change in your fathering if you fully believed you are God's beloved son — not because of what you do, but because of who he is?

"And behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'"

— Matthew 3:17

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD • 45 MIN

The father who ran

Read Luke 15:11–24. Today, resist identifying only with the son. Look carefully at the father. He sees the son 'a great way off.' He ran. He embraced before there was an apology. He called for a robe, a ring, a feast. This is the Father toward you. How does it feel to receive such love without earning it?

MIDDAY EXAMEN • 20 MIN

1. Gratitude: three specific things from this morning.
2. Where did I feel God's love most concretely in prayer?
3. What in me still resists being loved freely?
4. What does the father in the parable teach me about my heavenly Father?

AFTERNOON PRAYER • 45 MIN

No condemnation

Read Romans 8:1–17 and 31–39. These are the declaration of a Father who has settled every debt. Sit with verses 38–39 for twenty minutes. Try to name something that could separate you from this love. Notice that you cannot.

“Neither death nor life... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

— Romans 8:38–39

Evening

Read Psalm 103:1–14 — the Father whose steadfast love is as high as the heavens, who remembers we are dust. Sleep tonight as a child who is held.

Day Two: The Father's Image

Called to reflect what we have received

A father reflects. He is the image of God the Father in his household — imperfectly, provisionally, but genuinely. Today we look at what God's fatherhood looks like in practice.

MORNING PRAYER · 30 MIN

What does the Father do?

Read Deuteronomy 1:30–31 and Psalm 68:5–6. The Father leads in the wilderness. He carries. He sets the lonely in families. When have you been carried? When have you carried another?

“In the desert you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way you went.”

— Deuteronomy 1:31

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

Presence over performance

Read John 17:1–26 — Jesus's prayer to his Father. Notice: he does not report his accomplishments. He speaks of relationship. The Father's deepest gift is presence, not achievement.

Journal: Are you more present or more performing in your fatherhood right now? What would a small shift look like?

SECOND PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

The difficult inheritance

Read Ezekiel 18:1–4. God refuses generational determinism. You are not bound to repeat what was done to you.

Journal: What did your father give you that you want to pass on? What do you want to deliberately choose differently?

AFTERNOON WALK · 30 MIN

Walking as prayer

Walk slowly, without a destination. Carry one question: ‘What kind of man do my children need me to be?’ Do not answer with words. Walk it.

Evening

Read Ephesians 6:4 — the entire fatherhood manual in one verse. Journal: where have you provoked, and where have you nurtured? Rest in grace for both.

Day Three: Released & Sent

Surrendering your children to the Father who loves them more

The hardest act of fatherhood — harder than provision or protection — is release. Every father must come to this: they are not ultimately yours to keep. Today we practice the holy letting go.

MORNING PRAYER • 30 MIN

Abraham and the mountain

Read Genesis 22:1–14. Notice what God provides at the last moment. The point is not cruelty — it is trust. ‘The Lord will provide.’ What is your mountain?

“So Abraham called that place ‘The Lord will provide.’”

— Genesis 22:14

THE SUSCIPE — A FATHER’S OFFERING

Father, I give you those you have entrusted to me. I have loved them imperfectly, but I have loved them. I cannot keep them safe enough. I offer them back to you — their futures, their failures, their faith. Take my strength, take my stubbornness, take my fear. Give me only your love and your grace, that I might reflect your Fatherhood in my own. (After St. Ignatius of Loyola)

SECOND PRAYER PERIOD • 45 MIN

What you leave behind

Read Psalm 128 and Deuteronomy 6:4–9 — the Shema. ‘Teach them to your children... when you sit at home, when you walk along the road.’ Fatherhood is a slow, daily, ordinary discipleship.

Journal: What one truth do you most want your children to know about God — and about you?

CLOSING • 30 MIN

Three gifts and a blessing

5. Name three things God gave you in these three days.
6. Name one specific way you will father differently this week.
7. Write a genuine, specific blessing for each child. Read it aloud. These words have weight.

Go, Beloved Father

You are your heavenly Father's child first. From that belovedness, you have everything you need. You will be imperfect. He will cover it. Go with peace.

"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and give you peace."

— Numbers 6:24–26

Core Practices & Extra Scripture

Daily tools · The spoken blessing · Extra scripture

PRACTICE

The daily examen for fathers

Each evening this week: Where did I reflect the Father's love today? Where did fear or pride take over? What does God want to say about tomorrow? Five minutes. Consistent. Transforming.

PRACTICE

The spoken blessing

Find a moment before each child sleeps to speak a specific, personal blessing: 'I am proud of who you are. God has good plans for you. I love you.' These words outlast everything else.

EXTRA SCRIPTURE

For further prayer

- Psalm 91 — He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
- Isaiah 40:28–31 — God does not grow weary; he gives strength
- Joshua 24:15 — As for me and my house
- Luke 11:11–13 — How much more will your Father give good things
- Micah 6:8 — Walk humbly with your God
- 1 Kings 2:1–4 — A father's charge to his child

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