



PACEM in TERRIS

HERMITAGE RETREAT CENTER

A RETREAT FOR WEARY CAREGIVERS

You Are Not Forgotten

For those who give and give — who tend the sick, the aging, the fragile, and the difficult — and who have quietly forgotten that they also need care. Come empty. Leave held.



A Three-Day Self-Directed Silent Retreat

Foundation: Before You Begin

Who this retreat is for · The caregiver's particular exhaustion

YOU ARE SEEN

The invisible labor of caregiving

Caregiving is among the most demanding and least celebrated work a human being can do. It is physically exhausting, emotionally complex, spiritually draining, and often invisible. If you have arrived depleted, uncertain, perhaps even resentful — that is the honest starting place, and it is entirely welcome here.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

— Matthew 11:28

THE PARTICULAR CHALLENGE

Caregivers make poor recipients

One of the hardest things about caregiving is that it requires you to practice receiving — and most caregivers have deeply atrophied receiving muscles. This retreat will ask you to be cared for. To be still. To take rather than give. This may feel wrong. It is, in fact, the most important thing you will do here.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Two questions for your journal

- When did I last feel genuinely rested and replenished?
- What is the one thing I most need from God in these three days — if I am honest?

Day One: Be Still

Permission to receive · God as the caregiver

Before you can give again, you must receive. Today asks only one thing of you: let yourself be cared for. This is harder than it sounds. It may be the most countercultural thing you do all year.

MORNING · 20 MIN

Simply arrive

Sit down. Do nothing for ten full minutes. No reading, no journaling, no praying in words. Just sit. If guilt arises ('I should be doing something'), notice it, name it, and set it down.

You are doing something. You are practicing the discipline of being rather than doing. That is a spiritual practice of the highest order.

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD · 30 MIN

Elijah in the wilderness

Read 1 Kings 19:1–9. Elijah was burned out — so depleted he asked to die. God's response: no rebuke, no assignment, no five-step recovery plan. God let him sleep. Then God made food and said: 'Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.'

Journal: What does it mean to you that God's first response to burnout was sleep and food — not a sermon?

"The angel of the Lord came again a second time and said, 'Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.'"

— 1 Kings 19:7

SECOND PRAYER PERIOD · 30 MIN

Psalms 23: Being shepherded

Read Psalm 23 slowly, four times. The first for the words. The second to notice what you need most. The third as a prayer. The fourth in silence.

You shepherd others. Someone shepherds you. Lie down in the green pasture of this truth.

AFTERNOON · OPEN TIME

Rest without guilt

Sleep if you need to. Walk if that restores you. Eat something you love. Take a long bath. Read something entirely unrelated to caregiving. This afternoon is not scheduled. That is the point.

Evening

Read Isaiah 40:28–31. God does not grow faint or weary. He gives power to the faint. Sleep tonight as one who is permitted to be weak.

“He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.”

— Isaiah 40:29

Day Two: The Hidden Grief

Naming what caregiving has cost · Receiving mercy for the hard feelings

Caregiving involves grief that rarely gets named: grief over the person who was, resentment that dare not speak its name, guilt about the hard feelings. Today we name it all.

MORNING PRAYER · 30 MIN

Permission to be honest

Read Psalm 88 — the darkest psalm in the Bible, which ends with no resolution, only darkness. It is in the canon because God makes space for the prayer that has no tidy ending.

Journal: Write the version of caregiving you never say aloud. The resentment, the exhaustion, the grief, the prayers that feel selfish. Write it all. This is confession, not complaint.

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD · 30 MIN

The compassion fatigue is real

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7–10, 16–18. ‘We are hard pressed on every side but not crushed... Though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day.’ Paul is not speaking from a place of victory. He is speaking from ongoing depletion with a long horizon. That is caregiving.

Journal: What feels crushing right now? Can you bring it to God as it actually is?

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair.”

— 2 Corinthians 4:8

SECOND PRAYER PERIOD · 30 MIN

The mercy that covers everything

Read Lamentations 3:22–26 and Romans 8:1. There is no condemnation — not for the days you said the wrong thing, not for the nights you prayed ‘let this be over,’ not for the resentment that has surprised you.

Receive the mercy specifically, for the specific failures you named this morning.

AFTERNOON · 45 MIN

Who is caring for you?

Read Galatians 6:2 and 6:5. We bear one another’s burdens — and yet each one also carries their own load.

Journal: Who knows what you are actually carrying? Who is your Elijah-angel? If no one comes to mind, ask God to show you who could be.

Evening

Read Zephaniah 3:17. The Lord is in your midst — as one who rejoices over you with singing, who quiets you with his love. You are not a burden to him. You are his beloved.

“He will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.”

— Zephaniah 3:17

Day Three: Renewed to Return

Not the same · Sustainable love · The caregiver sent

You will return to caregiving. But you return differently: not as one who has to, but as one who, from a replenished place, chooses to.

MORNING PRAYER · 30 MIN

The cup that runneth over

Read Psalm 23 again — in full. ‘My cup runneth over.’ A cup that overflows gives to others from its overflow, not from its dregs.

Journal: What would need to be true in your life for your cup to overflow rather than empty? Name three specific things.

THE SUSCIPE — FOR CAREGIVERS

Lord, I give you the one in my care — their suffering, their needs, their decline or their healing. I have loved them imperfectly, and I have given more than I sometimes had. Take all of it. Take the love and the exhaustion together. And take me: restore what has been depleted, forgive what has been harsh, renew what has been broken. Send me back filled. Give me only your love and your grace. (After St. Ignatius of Loyola)

FINAL PRAYER PERIOD · 30 MIN

You are not alone in the caring

Read Isaiah 46:3–4. God says: ‘I have made you, and I will carry you.’ He does not say ‘I will watch you carry.’ He carries. This applies to you, and it applies to the one in your care.

Journal: What would it change in your caregiving to believe that God is carrying both of you?

“Even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.”

— Isaiah 46:4

CLOSING · 30 MIN

Three gifts and a sustainable plan

1. Name three things God gave you in these three days that you will carry back.
2. Name one person you will ask for tangible help when you return — and what you will ask for.
3. Name one practice — weekly or daily — that will replenish you. Write it as a commitment, not a wish.

Go, Beloved Caregiver

You are not forgotten. The one who tends the sparrow tends you. Return not as a depleted servant but as a cared-for child choosing, from a fuller place, to love someone who needs it.

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

— Galatians 6:9

Core Practices & Extra Scripture

Sustainable tools · What caregivers most need

PRACTICE

The daily two-minute sabbath

Once a day — preferably midday — take two minutes of complete stillness. Eyes closed, no input, no task. It is enough to remind your nervous system that you exist apart from your caregiving role.

PRACTICE

Ask for help — specifically

‘Let me know if you need anything’ is not an invitation people know how to answer. ‘Could you sit with her for two hours on Thursday?’ is. Practice the specific ask. It is a spiritual discipline.

EXTRA SCRIPTURE

For the difficult days

- Psalm 46:1 — God is our refuge, a very present help in trouble
- Matthew 25:40 — As you did it to the least of these, you did it to me
- Romans 5:3–5 — Suffering produces endurance, character, hope
- 2 Corinthians 12:9 — My grace is sufficient; my power made perfect in weakness
- John 13:34 — Love one another as I have loved you
- Psalm 62:1–2 — My soul finds rest in God alone

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