



PACEM in TERRIS

HERMITAGE RETREAT CENTER

A M E N ' S R E T R E A T

Be Strong
and of Good Courage

A three-day retreat for men — addressing the specific interior landscape of manhood, the wounds rarely named, the freedom rarely claimed, and the God who meets a man exactly where he is.



Sacred Paths Retreat Series

Before You Begin

Who this retreat is for · What men rarely do · The invitation of these three days

Most men are not taught to go inward. They are taught to fix, to produce, to endure, to provide, to perform. Silence is unfamiliar territory. Emotional honesty is a skill most men have been quietly discouraged from developing. And so this retreat begins with a simple acknowledgment: what you are doing here takes a particular kind of courage.

This retreat will not ask you to become someone you are not. It will ask you to become more fully the person you already are — beneath the performance, the productivity, and the protective distance that men learn to keep from their own interior lives. God is waiting for you there.

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

— Joshua 1:9

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Two questions — write honestly, without editing

- What does it cost you, on a normal day, to maintain the version of yourself that the world sees?
- What is one thing about your interior life that almost no one knows?

Day One: The Wound

Theme: What has shaped you · The inheritance of manhood · Bringing the interior life to God

Every man has been shaped by what was modeled for him — and by what was absent. The father who was present or distant. The standard that was impossibly high or dangerously low. The wound that was never named because naming it felt like weakness. Today we go there — not to wallow, but to bring the wound into the light where it can be healed.

MORNING PRAYER · 30 MIN

David: the man after God's own heart

Read Psalm 22:1–19 — the psalm Jesus quoted from the cross. It is a man crying out in genuine despair, abandoned and mocked, with no sign of rescue. And yet he prays. He does not stop praying. The prayer itself is the courage.

Men are frequently told that faith should produce certainty, peace, and positive outcomes. David's psalms say something different: faith is what brings the honest cry to God, even from the bottom. Sit with Psalm 22 for twenty minutes. What is the cry you have not yet brought?

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me?”

— Psalm 22:1

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

The father wound and the Father's voice

Read Matthew 3:13–17 — the baptism of Jesus. Before anything else: a voice from heaven. 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Jesus has not yet done anything. The affirmation precedes the achievement.

Many men spend their lives achieving in order to earn the words they never received: 'I am proud of you. I am well pleased with who you are.' Journal: Did you receive those words growing up? If so, from whom, and what did it produce in you? If not, what has the absence produced? Bring both answers to God.

MIDDAY EXAMEN · 20 MIN

1. Gratitude: Name three things you are genuinely grateful for about your life as a man.
2. The wound: Name the specific wound from your history as a man that you most need to bring to God. You don't have to resolve it. Just name it.
3. The performance: In what areas of your life are you performing rather than living? Where are you managing an image rather than inhabiting a self?
4. The question: What is the question about God or faith that you most rarely let yourself ask?
5. Grace: What one thing do you want God to give you this afternoon?

SECOND PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

Jacob: wrestling until the blessing comes

Read Genesis 32:22–32 — Jacob wrestling with the angel through the night. He does not let go. He comes out of it limping. And he comes out of it blessed, with a new name: Israel, meaning 'he who struggles with God.'

The willingness to struggle honestly with God is not a failure of faith. It is a form of it. What is the thing you have been wrestling with — about God, about your life, about who you are as a man — that needs to be brought into the open and wrestled with honestly? Journal for the full period.

“Then he said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.’”

— Genesis 32:28

Evening

Read Psalm 46 — 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.' Then read just verse 10: 'Be still, and know that I am God.' For a man who lives by doing, being still is an act of trust. Practice it for ten minutes before sleep. Just be still. That is enough.

“Be still, and know that I am God.”

— Psalm 46:10

Day Two: The Calling

Theme: What you were made for · Strength in service · The man God is forming

There is a version of masculinity that is formed by culture — driven, competitive, self-reliant, armored. And there is a version that is formed by the Gospel — strong in service, courageous in love, secure enough to be vulnerable, free enough to be genuinely present. Today we look at what the second kind of man looks like.

MORNING PRAYER · 30 MIN

Jesus as the model of integrated manhood

Read John 13:1–17 — the washing of feet. Jesus, 'knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands,' takes a towel and kneels before his disciples. The security comes first. The service flows from it.

Then read Mark 1:35 — Jesus rising before dawn to pray, alone, even at the height of his ministry. The man who washed feet and cast out demons also needed silence and solitude. Sit with both images for the full period. What does an integrated man look like?

FIRST PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

What you are building — the legacy question

Read Deuteronomy 6:4–9 — the Shema, the foundational instruction given to fathers. 'These commandments are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road.' The transmission of faith is not a program. It is a life.

Journal: What are you transmitting — to your children, your community, the people who observe your life? Not what you intend to transmit — what are you actually modeling? What do you want the answer to that question to be in ten years?

SECOND PRAYER PERIOD · 45 MIN

The parable of the talents — using what you've been given

Read Matthew 25:14–30. The servant condemned was not the one who failed — it was the one who buried his gift out of fear. What gifts has God given you that you have been burying — out of fear of failure, fear of exposure, fear of what others would think?

Journal: Name three specific gifts — strengths, abilities, graces — that you have been under-using or withholding. What is the fear behind the withholding? What would it look like to offer them?

Evening

Read Micah 6:8 — the entire biblical ethic of manhood in one verse. 'He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy, and

to walk humbly with your God.' Carry these three phrases into sleep. Which one most needs your attention right now?

“He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

— Micah 6:8

Day Three: The Sending

Theme: The man commissioned · Going back differently

Jesus's commission to his followers was not to manage programs or maintain institutions. It was to go — into the world, into relationship, into the specific places they already inhabited — carrying what they had received. Today we receive our own commission, and we practice the particular courage of going back as the man we have been becoming in these three days.

MORNING PRAYER · 30 MIN

Peter restored — the recommissioning

Read John 21:1–17. Peter — who denied Jesus three times — is not disqualified. He is recommissioned. Three times Jesus asks: 'Do you love me?' Three times Peter answers yes. Three times Jesus says: 'Feed my sheep.' Not: have you fixed everything? Not: are you ready now? Only: do you love me?

The answer to love is always service. What does Jesus's question mean for your specific life, your specific relationships, your specific community?

THE SUSCIPE



*Lord, take and receive what I have carried into this retreat —
the strength I have used well and the strength I have wasted,
the wounds I have hidden and the ones I have finally named,
the men I have been and the man I want to become.*

You made me. To you, Lord, I return what you made.

Do with it what you will.

Give me only your love and your grace.

*That is enough to go back into the world
and live like a man who has been with God.*

— After St. Ignatius of Loyola

FINAL EXAMEN · 30 MIN

6. Review your journal from all three days. What is the one word that gathers everything?
7. Name three things God gave you in these three days.
8. Name one relationship in your life that you will engage differently because of this retreat — and what specifically you will do.
9. Write a letter to a younger man in your life — a son, a nephew, a young colleague — one page. Tell him what you wish someone had told you.

Go, beloved man

You came here carrying more than you let on. You leave having set some of it down and picked up something better — not certainty, not achievement, but the knowledge that you are known and that the God who calls you by name is sending you back into your life with something to give. Go. Be strong and of good courage.

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

— Joshua 1:9

Core Practices & Extra Scripture

PRACTICE

The daily check-in

One minute, once a day. Ask yourself: What am I actually feeling right now? Not what I should feel — what I actually feel. Name it. Bring it to God. Men who practice this for thirty days report that it changes the quality of every relationship they have.

EXTRA SCRIPTURE

Men of Scripture — honest, flawed, and faithful

- Genesis 37–50 — Joseph: betrayed, imprisoned, and faithful
- Judges 6–8 — Gideon: the reluctant leader
- 1 Kings 19 — Elijah: the burned-out prophet
- Nehemiah 1–2 — The leader who wept and then built
- Luke 15:11–24 — The prodigal and the father who ran
- Acts 9:1–19 — Paul: the man who had to be stopped before he could be sent
- Philippians 4:11–13 — I can do all things through him who strengthens me

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