

Building Your Ministry Through Effective Retreats

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Definition of Retreat: Communal living with a stated purpose.

1. Communal Living:

- a. Traditionally in a natural setting, but any kind where people will live in community.
- b. The “Set Apart” Factor
 - i. Minimize distractions of every day life.
 - ii. Physical distance from everyday responsibilities.
 1. Otherwise, participants may not disengage with everyday and engage with the retreat community.
- c. By design it builds relationships and community
 - i. Breaks down the barriers to ministry between participants.

2. With a Stated Purpose:

- a. Need to have a definable purpose, goals, and objectives for a retreat.
 - i. Spiritual objectives
 - ii. Relationship building
 - iii. Facilitate a specific type of activity

3. The combination of these two is the key to the unique opportunity of a retreat.

- a. The concentrated time of teaching and relationship building, which is otherwise not available a couple hours a week, is the key to its effectiveness.

How to Plan and Promote A Successful Event:

4. Goals and Objectives:

- a. **Know why you are having a retreat!**
- b. Goals: Your specific purpose for the retreat. (*Where is it you want to go?*)
- c. Objectives: Your detailed plan for accomplishing your goals. (*How you are going to get there.*)
- d. Determine and define the needs of the participants:
 - i. Age:
 1. Understand the age group characteristics for your group.

- ii. Genders:
- iii. Participant Profile:
- iv. Participant Expectations
 - 1. Why did they come?
 - 2. What do they want to get out of a retreat?
 - 3. How much time are they willing to give to the program objectives and how much do they want for themselves?
 - 4. Need to balance your goals with the participants expectations

5. Be intentional about the spiritual content:

- a. Don't dump it on the speaker.
- b. Work carefully with the speaker to insure their style and content will be well received and meet a need with your group.
- c. Be intentional to insure all the other activities support the spiritual ministry.

6. Site Selection:

- a. Based on the retreat objectives and participant profile.
 - i. Type of accommodation
 - ii. Recreational opportunities
 - iii. Inspirational setting
- b. Distance from church
- c. Type of facilities
- d. Food service and menu options
- e. Cost of facilities
- f. Visit the retreat location ahead of time to see and discuss all the options with retreat staff.

7. Pricing:

- a. Set the price based on all costs.
 - i. Include program supplies, speaker, music, etc.
 - ii. Budget for a margin to use for unexpected expenses
 - iii. Build in a deposit for the next year.
- b. Use a church subsidy to give scholarships, full or partial, instead of reducing fees.
- c. Determine a cancellation policy before a refund is requested.

8. Effective Planning and Implementation

- a. Plan, Plan, Plan:
 - i. Develop a detailed schedule
 - ii. Balance program with free time based expectations for your participants
 - iii. Plan ahead; Leave no detail for the last minute
- b. Implement, Implement, Implement
 - i. Everything ready in advance

- ii. All props and supplies in hand before the retreat
- iii. Staffing recruited in advance.
- iv. Meet, brief, train all supporting staff in advance.
- v. Advance materials to all the participants so they know:
 - 1. Where they are going
 - 2. What they will experienced and what is expected of them in advance; No surprises.
 - a. What to bring / What not to bring:

9. Promoting:

- a. Well in advance
- b. Clear target audience
 - i. Children: Promote to parents
 - ii. Youth: Promote in areas and devices parents will see
 - iii. Women: Big booth in social area with smiling women
 - iv. Men:
 - 1. Promote to wives.
 - 2. Men need personal invite and peer pressure.
- c. Use all opportunities for promotion:
 - i. Church bulletin / calendars
 - ii. Bulletin boards
 - iii. Church web site appropriate to age group
 - iv. The Call List; people still respond to personal invitations
 - v. Social Media

10. Evaluate Immediately:

- a. Written evaluations from participants
- b. Group evaluation with your retreat volunteers
- c. While it is fresh combine into a written plan of things to do differently next time.
- d. Evaluate the original goals and objectives in light of the perceived outcomes and feedback from participants.
- e. Provide the retreat center with a written evaluation so they can better serve you and other guests.
- f. Prepare a report including success to the church pastor or board so that they understand the value of the retreat to the church and the participants.

11. Prayer:

- a. “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord. (Isa 31:1)
- b. It is easy to get caught up in the process of planning and implementing a retreat and forget why we are doing it.