

## Coming on Retreat

We are so happy you are coming to The Haven. Retreats were such an important factor in our own spiritual growth that of course we are excited when other people choose to come, quiet themselves and listen to God. Know that we will be praying for you. Please contact us with anything that you need.

The Haven was designed as a place where people can come and open themselves to God. It is quiet here and you will readily feel His presence. There are several areas for you to settle in, both inside and out. Our hope is that being here will help you connect with the quiet gentle spirit of God. Stewardship of The Haven is a tremendous a gift that God has entrusted to us and responsibility comes along with that. We are continually blessed by those who come to linger here. Your suggestions, requests and sharing your experience with us reminds us too of His great provision.

Suggestions from DeeAnn: "I wanted to include some of my own learnings about retreats. I hope you find them helpful as you prepare for this time here. It is good to come to retreat with a purpose in mind. Some of you are coming with a prewritten retreat and some of you are coming with a retreat someone else helped prepare for you. For many people it is good to have a plan. To come without a plan might be too difficult. However, you need to hold onto that plan loosely lest you squelch the movement of the Holy Spirit. Come to retreat ready to cooperate with the Holy Spirit's agenda and movement. Your objective is to be open to God. There are so many things that we cover or rush past for various reasons. This is the time to slow down, to listen well, and to yield to God's agenda for you. In some of my favorite retreats, God just held me and loved me with no mention of direction, or processing of life experiences. So again, come with an agenda, but hold onto your plan loosely."

When you arrive at the center it may take you a bit to slow down. Ask yourself: what do I need? Perhaps a nap is the perfect starter. Or a walk to work out some energy and help you to settle. You might sit outside and lift your face to the sun. Or you might want to listen to some praise music. (Don't forget to bring it!) Rest assured

you are secluded here so though you can see other houses, they cannot hear you, so sing away!”

When you arrive on retreat your body and spirit are moving into a different schedule. For the first couple of hours resist the urge to jump into the plan. Instead be attentive to your heart and your mind. Follow the trail and see where it takes you as it wanders. Make space for God and allow yourself to get uncluttered. You bring all of you on retreat: your body, your vices, your virtues, your memories and your experiences. When on retreat your defenses have dropped so you can see things with a new level of clarity that is intensified by the Holy Spirit. Do not despair or resist this, but rather try to be with God in this. Allow Him to help you to look at your true nature, your character including the progress He’s made in transforming you and the hope of what you will become as He continues to shape you. Resist the urge to cover yourself up, but rather be open to seeing yourself through His eyes.”

Prayer is really a conversation with God. Your retreat is a nonstop prayer. There are things here to assist you in getting started. You may walk down the hallway, read the beatitudes and thank God for all the ways that He blesses you. You might sit in the prayer room in a pew or on the floor and meditate on the cross and your gratitude for Christ. You might read the Lord’s Prayer pausing on each segment and allowing God to show you more about that prayer and His desire for you. You might cozy up in one of the sitting areas and listen to the birds and imagine yourself being held by God. You might go hiking and converse with Him about his creation. (Hiking directions are found at the Haven in the armoire in the living room).”

Also know that your choice to come on retreat is one that Satan will oppose. Satan opposed Jesus. (Matthew 4:1-11) You will be tempted to focus on your feelings more than God. You will want to come to Him all cleaned up so to speak rather than come as you are. You will be tempted to love God from your strengths rather than from your weakness and your need. Try to be aware of that and ask for His help in uncovering yourself. You may come to retreat with a desire to be loved and to experience God’s love. Try to open all of yourself to Him. But don’t be discouraged if

this is really difficult. I believe that God honors our intent, but sometimes He is working on other things in us. Try taking the posture of asking God to show you what He is doing. It is good to let other people know you are coming and to ask them to pray for you.”

Consider a spiritual director to help you **during** your stay:

Roe Dodgen is our spiritual director for the Haven and can be contacted in advance to meet you here. Working with a spiritual director while on retreat provides another set of ears listening to the Holy Spirit on your behalf and another set of eyes looking at God’s movement in your life and your responses to Him. Processing your experience out loud can be a very valuable piece of your time here.

Roe can be reached at 714-376-7192 or [roe@dodgen.com](mailto:roe@dodgen.com)