Becoming by Grace what He is by Nature

A PERSONAL RETREAT PLAN
JENNIFER KENNEDY DEAN
Plan an Extended Retreat

An extended retreat may be a few hours, or it may be 24 hours. Whatever time block is realistic for you, plan for an extended time of solitude and silence. Ideally you would plan to be away from your home or work environment simply because you could escape the sense of responsibility and the pull of the work that always needs to be done. You could be beyond the reach of telephones and daily interruptions. However, if it is not possible for you to get away, you can plan for uninterrupted solitude wherever you are.

The following pages are a suggested plan for an extended retreat. You may be doing this retreat alone or with others. If you are retreating as a group, I suggest that you plan much time alone with periodic times of sharing what God is saying. To help give structure to your retreat, you have these pages, and also an audio version of this plan called In His Presence. This is in an MP3 file on the CD in your Live a Praying Life leader’s kit. You can download this MP3 file to each person’s MP3 player or burn it on a CD.

These pages are only a suggestion. Create the extended retreat that meets your needs and speaks to your longings. The important element of your extended retreat is not what you do, but that you are taking time away to focus on God and seek His face.

This retreat plan includes a series of meditations built around the pattern of tabernacle worship. As you work through the meditations, do so with the expectation that God will speak to you. Be listening for Him. Do one, then go do something else--walk, relax, listen to music. Don’t rush through them.

Finally, I suggest that you not feel guilty if you feel the need to nap periodically during your extended retreat. This is to be a restorative time for you. As you fill your time with meditating on God’s Word and allowing Him to think His thoughts in you, you will find that when you’re sleeping, your subconscious mind is still communing with the Father. In fact, specifically ask Him to continue speaking to you even while you sleep.

Jennifer Kennedy Dean
**OPEN YOUR LIFE**

**MEDITATION ONE**

Open your heart to the presence of God. Spend these moments preparing your heart to receive all of His love. Pray this prayer slowly and reflectively, allowing each thought to take deep root in your heart.

Father, I want all of You. There is nothing in me that I want to hold on to more than I want to be filled with You. I release all that I am to all that You are.

**OPEN YOUR LIFE TO HIS PURPOSES**

“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jer. 29:11).

“The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me” (Psa. 138:8).

Respond to Him

**OPEN YOUR LIFE TO HIS WAYS**

“Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.... All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant” (Psalm 25:4, 10).

“The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and loving toward all has made” (Psa. 145:17).

Respond to Him
OPEN YOUR LIFE TO HIS AUTHORITY

“O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand” (Is. 64:8).

“Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture” (Psa. 100:3).

Respond to Him

Would you open yourself fully to Him? Experience the love that draws you ever deeper into His heart. Pray this prayer.

YOUR HOLY FIRE NOW BURNS WITHIN
AND PURGES EVERY SECRET SIN.
MY LIFE, THE BUSH; YOUR LIFE, THE FLAME
THAT LEAVES ME NEVERMORE THE SAME.

A HEART LIKE YOURS, MY ONE DESIRE.
DO YOUR WORK, REFINER’S FIRE.

(JENNIFER KENNEDY DEAN © 1999)
Use the eternal pattern for opening your life to God’s presence--the pattern He gave us when He first instructed Moses to build the tabernacle. The tabernacle was a copy and shadow of eternal reality (Heb. 8:5). Each stage of tabernacle worship is a two-layered picture. Each stage shows Jesus Christ, adding depth to our understanding of Him and His redemptive work. Each stage also represents a feature of the human make-up, showing us how to surrender more fully to Him. The tabernacle pictures both sides of the salvation relationship: Christ is in me and I am in Christ.

The tabernacle first teaches us that God has opened the Holy of Holies--the place of His presence--to us. But the tabernacle has another message for us. The stages of tabernacle worship teach us how to open our lives to Him--to allow Him full access to our minds, our wills, and our emotions.

We don’t need more access to Him. Jesus has provided all the access we need. But He needs access to us. He invites us to make ourselves available for His mighty work, first in us, then through us. We can have all of Him that we make room for. How much of Him do you want?

Respond to Him

We enter the courtyard of the tabernacle one way. The courtyard only has one possible entryway. We open our lives to all that God has prepared for us through the One Who is the Way. Every step of the way, let’s celebrate Him. Let’s keep in mind that He makes it possible for you and for me to open our lives and receive all that God has available for us.

As you close this meditation time, spend time worshiping Jesus Christ. Sing songs that exalt Him. Tell Him you love Him. Honor Him with your praise and worship. Consider this:

**JOY IN THE HEAVENS AND PEACE ON EARTH FOR UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN AND HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS**
ALL TO JESUS, I SURRENDER
MEDITATION THREE

As you enter the courtyard, you encounter first the altar of sacrifice. In your mind’s eye, it takes the shape of the cross of Jesus. At the cross, you see that Jesus paid the full price for every sin you have ever or will ever commit. He took the full weight of God’s wrath against your sin on Himself. He became the sacrifice on the altar in my place.

It may have been a very long time since you thanked Him for the cross. Ask the Spirit to show it to you as if you were seeing it for the first time. Use the words of this wonderful hymn, thinking through them, saying them with all your heart, to worship Him.

 WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS,
ON WHICH THE PRINCE OF GLORY DIED,
MY RICHEST GAIN I COUNT BUT LOSS,
AND POUR CONTEMPT ON ALL MY PRIDE.

FORBID IT, LORD, THAT I SHOULD BOAST,
SAVE IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST MY GOD;
ALL THE VAIN THINGS THAT CHARM ME MOST,
I SACRIFICE THEM TO HIS BLOOD.

SEE, FROM HIS HEAD, HIS HANDS, HIS FEET,
SORROW AND LOVE FLOW MINGLED DOWN;
DID E’ER SUCH LOVE AND SORROW MEET,
OR THORNS COMPOSE SO RICH A CROWN.

WERE THE WHOLE REALM OF NATURE MINE,
THAT WERE A PRESENT FAR TOO SMALL;
LOVE SO AMAZING, SO DIVINE,
DEMANDS MY SOUL, MY LIFE, MY ALL.

ISAAC WATTS, WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS
Now the cross becomes Your altar. The altar on which He calls you to place yourself as a living sacrifice.

“I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship” (Rom. 12:1).

Close your eyes and with the eyes of your heart, see yourself at the altar, the empty cross. Prepare your heart. Ask the Spirit to speak clearly to you--to surface the thoughts that He wants to speak to you about. Tell Him that you have no other desire except to respond honestly and openly to His Voice. As you place each thing on the altar, name it. Tell Him, “This is Yours. Use it however You want. You own this now.”

On the altar, you will place all that you are, all that you have been and all that you will be.

Respond to Him

Place on the altar you past--every hurt, every mistake, every good memory, every painful memory.

Respond to Him

Place on the altar your present--your struggles, your needs, your ongoing hurts, your joys; those things that bring you pleasure and those things that bring you pain. Surrender it with these words: “This is Yours, Lord. This is Yours, Lord. Create from it what You will.”

Respond to Him
Place there your relationships. Let the Spirit walk you through each important relationship in your life and let Him speak to You about each. Turn them over, one by one. Pause long enough to listen.

Respond to Him

Place on the altar your desires and dreams. Name them. Surrender them. Trust Him that the desires He has for you are not less satisfying than the desires you have for yourself. His plans for you are beyond your imagination.

Your own flesh-born desires are most likely a watered-down, scaled back version of His desires. Release them to Him so He can do more than you can ask or imagine. Make this your prayer. “What you will. As you will. When you will.”

Respond to Him

Offer Him your body to act out His righteousness. Offer the parts of your body as a living sacrifice, no longer instruments of unrighteousness, but now instruments of righteousness. Ask Him to look out at your world through your eyes. Ask Him to speak through your mouth. Ask Him to work and to touch with your hands. Ask Him to use your feet to go where He wants to go in your world.

Survey all that you have placed on the altar. See the Fire from heaven come down to consume it. His presence changes it all into something altogether different. The altar, consecrated by the blood of the Lamb, is holy and everything that touches it becomes holy (Ex. 29:37). Holy means set aside exclusively for the Lord’s use.
As you move through the courtyard, next you reach the bronze laver or basin, the place of cleansing. The receptacle filled with water where the priest washed hands and feet before entering the Holy Place.

You have already been cleansed internally at the altar of sacrifice. An ongoing cleansing is always in process as the Life of Jesus flows through you, washing away toxins and bringing new, fresh life to your soul. But you have to be continually washed from the world that clings to you.

The interesting thing about the laver is that it is made out of bronze mirrors. When you look into the laver, you see truth reflected-- the truth about yourself. James 1:23-24 says that the person who looks into the Word of God and doesn’t change in response to it, is like a person who has looked into the mirror, then walked away and forgotten what he saw. So the basin represents for us the Word of God--the place where sin is brought to our attention.

But the water in the laver also represents the Word. Jesus said that we are washed clean by the Word He speaks (John 15:3). At the same place where we are confronted with our sin, we are given sin’s detergent. Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more.

Let the Spirit speak to you about elements of the world that are clinging to you-- things He wants to wash away. Is there a situation in your life that causes you to confront your own flesh-life? Maybe you’ve been asking God to take it away, but He’s saying, “No, I need this situation to reveal your self-life. I’m not going to take away the situation. I’m going to take away your reaction to the situation.” Will you let Him do as He pleases? Listen to Him.

Respond to Him
Now you walk deeper into the Life of the Spirit as you go inside the tabernacle, leaving the outer court and entering the Holy Place. You open your life further to His indwelling Presence. You become more available for His filling.

The beauty of the tabernacle is hidden to those outside. From outside, there is no form or comeliness that we should desire it. The splendor is only experienced from inside. Only within the context of a personal, genuine relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior can we see His true beauty. As you surrender all of your being to Him and let Him bring holiness to your life, He manifests His beautiful presence. He transforms you into His likeness.

Respond to Him

**YOUR FAME SPREAD AMONG THE NATIONS ON ACCOUNT OF YOUR BEAUTY,**
**BECAUSE THE SPLENDOR I HAD GIVEN YOU MADE YOUR BEAUTY PERFECT,**
**DECLARES THE SOVEREIGN LORD.**

*Ezekiel 16:14*
**Light of the World**

**Meditation Six**

Inside the tabernacle, move to the first piece of furniture, the lampstand. You are drawn to it because it is the only source of light in the tabernacle. No windows exist to allow light from the outside. The only illumination is the light of the menorah, a seven-fold lampstand.

Jesus indwelling us with His very own Life is the illumination that causes us to be able to see and understand the truths of the spiritual realm. It is His Life operating in us that brings faith into being because faith requires that we see what is invisible to the physical eye. Faith requires that the eyes of our hearts be enlightened that we may see the hope of His glory and the riches of His inheritance in the saints and His incomparably great power for us who believe (Eph. 1:18-19).

The lampstand is the picture of your mind--your intellect and reasoning ability--illuminated by the Life of Jesus. Here you will surrender this element of your soul. Ask Him to sanctify your mind--your imagination, your intelligence, your thought patterns, your memories.

In His presence, looking into His face, ask Him for deeper insight into the things of the Spirit. Ask Him to enlighten the eyes of your heart. Invite Him to bring the Light of His presence into every corner of your mind.

Respond to Him

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**O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.**

*You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.*

*Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.*

*You hem me in--behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me.*

**Psalm 139:1-5**
SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD, FALL FRESH ON ME
MEDITATION SEVEN

The lampstand is fueled by olive oil. In the Scripture, oil is always the picture of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ-- He is the fuel that energizes your life when your life is lived from you spirit-core. Just as the lampstand had to be continually filled with oil, we are to be continually filled with the Spirit. Just as the lamp was never to go out, so our lives are to burn without interruption. The Word gives us two commands along these lines:

1. Be continually filled and re-filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).
2. Don’t quench the Spirit (1 Thes. 5:19).

Spend time asking the Father to, first, fill you with His Spirit. Ask Him to fill you to overflowing. Ask Him to fill you so full that He flushes out anything that is cluttering your heart.

Imagine a priest being anointed with the anointing oil as the Lord commanded. The oil was poured over his head. It dripped off his hair and off his beard and ran down over his vestments and onto the ground. Ask Jesus to pour out His Spirit on your life to such a degree that your life drips with the power of the Spirit.

Wait in His presence. Give Him time.

Respond to Him

Now, let Jesus Himself be the Flame that ignites the oil. Ask Him to show you anything in your life that is causing the Fire to go out; anything that is quenching the Spirit.

Respond to Him
YOUR WILL BE DONE
MEDITATION EIGHT

Now, still in the Holy Place, move to the table of shewbread, or the bread of the presence. Here you are reminded that He is not a God far away, but that He has put His Life into you. Just as your body receives life and nutrients from food, your soul receives Life from Him. Just as your body becomes a partaker of the food you eat because your cells absorb its life, so your soul becomes a partaker of His nature as your life is absorbed in His and He begins to express Himself through you.

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust” (1 Peter 1:2-4, NASB).

Respond to Him

The bread of the presence pictures your will. As you are fully indwelt by His Life, He begins to transform your desires and your will. “For it is God who works in you to will... according to his good purpose” (Phil. 2:13). Jesus is expressing His will and His desires through you. What is His will? “‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work’” (John 4:34). As you feast on the bread of the presence, you realize that your food is to do the will of Him who sent you.

Surrender this aspect of your soul. Tell Him that you release every desire other than the desire to do His will. Your food is to do the will of Him who sent you.

Respond to Him
Heart to Heart
Meditation Nine

Now move to the altar of incense, the place of intercession. It is positioned just in front of the veil that covers the Holy of Holies.

On the altar of incense, incense burns over ashes taken from the altar of sacrifice. Our privilege of interceding has its basis in the blood of Jesus. You only have the awesome privilege of interceding because Jesus fulfilled the requirement for the payment of your sin-debt and made you a priest, whose privilege and responsibility it is to intercede.

At the altar of incense, having yielded both your mind and your will to Him, now allow Him to fill your emotions. Let Him pour His own love into your heart (Rom. 5:5) as you let it rise to Him in intercession. As He has filled your mind with His thoughts; as He has filled your will with His desires; now He will fill your emotions with His emotions. As you yield yourself to His presence, you will find the Spirit of the Son in you is crying out, “Abba Father” (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

Take time in His presence, still before Him. worshiping at His feet, to allow Him to fill you with His own love and His own desires for the people for whom you intercede. Don’t rush in and intercede out of your own earth-bound, time-bound love. Let His love rise up in you.

Respond to Him
OH, THE LOVE THAT DREW SALVATION’S PLAN
MEDITATION TEN

You find yourself now standing before the veil beyond which is the Holy of Holies, the very presence of the living God, and Jesus, robed in majesty, honored, exalted. Before you walk through the veil to pour yourself out in pure worship, with your life fully open to Him, again thank Him that He initiated the way and opened the veil so that you can live in His presence.

Take time to be filled with reverence. Take time to consider what an astounding privilege it is. Take time to consider what it cost the Son and what it cost the Father to open a new and living way into the Holy of Holies.

Respond to Him
Holy, Holy, Holy
Meditation Eleven

Come before His throne with thanksgiving and praise. Here is pure worship and adoration. In the inner sanctuary of your soul, take a position of worship before Him and worship with abandon. Lose yourself in Him. Let everything else fade away and focus your heart on Him. Here, your body and soul now fully surrendered to Him, worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Let worship rise up in you.

Father, as I soak myself in Your presence, saturate me with Yourself. Seep into my spirit pores until I am filled with You. Let me breathe in your love for me and breathe it out again toward You. You are my treasure and my heart knows no other home.

Respond to Him
YIELDED AND STILL
MEDITATION TWELVE

Does there seem to be a central theme in all that God is saying to you right now? What is the essence of the thought He is pressing on you? What thought can you not escape?

Respond to Him

THE LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.
NUMBERS 6:24-26
Jennifer Kennedy Dean
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