How to Host an Unforgettable Retreat

101 Tips and Tricks to Host the Best Retreat Ever

Written and compiled by Margaret Feinberg
Dear Friend,

Leif and I have the privilege to be a part of retreats around the country and see amazing ideas being put into practice everywhere we go. After people started asking us for ideas, we realized we were in a unique position to share these ideas with other leaders. We put this together as a resource you can utilize as you brainstorm your retreat plan.

Please recognize the ideas shared might not work for you or need to be tweaked to fit your ministry, but hopefully they will help you in some way as you plan and prepare for a great time together.

Some of the ideas listed are simple and practical, funny and unique, familiar or require you to step out on a limb and try something new. Either way, these ideas have worked—but remember the best ideas for your retreat are those that reflect the natural DNA of your community. Make sure whatever ideas you put into practice are true to who you are and who God has made your community to be.

To be able to come alongside what God is doing in your community is truly a privilege!

Blessings,

Margaret, Leif, and Hershey
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Initial Planning Stage

**Begin Praying:** It’s never too early to start praying for your event. Look for opportunities to launch prayer teams during the initial planning stages.

- **Start by praying for team members.** Check your motives, commit to seek God’s desire for the retreat, and be ready to set aside your own preferences. A frequent temptation can be to try to duplicate something experienced at previous events. Pray for wisdom and discernment over every aspect of the retreat planning.

- **Pray for those who will attend even before the first registration slot is filled.** Ask God to bring the people meant to attend. Pray against those things—including health, finances, family, work, scheduling—that may prevent people from participating.

- **Pray for the team members yet to be identified.** The more you plan, the more team members you will need to help. As you add members to the team, remember this is a great way to identify and raise up future leaders.

- **Pray for the speaker and worship team.** Ask for any specific requests that they might have when they commit to the event and then follow up a couple weeks before the actual event date to see if they have any additional requests.

- **Pray for wisdom, grace, and protection.** Ask God to begin speaking to each team member as you plan. Ask God for divine appointments and conversations throughout the planning process, during, and after the retreat.
Gather a Team: Invite a group of people to organize the event. You’ll want to select people who have a wide-range of gifts. Look for individuals who have a knack for details as well as those who can see the big-picture. Find people who care about design and decor, as well as those who grow excited about name tags and scheduling. If there’s a demographic you’re trying to reach with your event, make sure you invite several people from that demographic to be on your event leadership team. One of the great gifts of organizing an event is the opportunity to build new friendships and allow people to use their gifts and talents.

Identify Your Goals: Every retreat or getaway should have a clear purpose, a set of goals, and a plan for take-a-ways or follow-up. When you determine what you’re doing and why you’re doing it, then you’ll be better able to sort through ideas and possibilities more easily. The first question you need to ask is, “What do we want to accomplish through this event?” Possible answers include:

- Help participants grow closer to God
- Promote connection among participants
- Teach how the Bible applies to every day life
- Nurture spiritual formation or direction
- Equip participants to become more involved in ministry or take on leadership roles
- Launch an upcoming shift or vision within the ministry, group, or church
- Create a specific space for prayer, silence, reflection, or discussion about a particular topic.

What will determine if your retreat is a success? Once you know what you’re trying to accomplish, you can consider the best way to reach your goals and how to navigate away from ideas and activities that don’t help you fulfill them.

Budgeting: As you are organizing the event, you need to begin calculating costs including—speakers, travel, location, food, workshop sessions, special materials, giveaways, and unexpected expenses. In terms of budgeting, always spend less than you think you’ll bring in through registrations by a minimum of 20-percent as a cover for unexpected costs, lower than anticipated registration, and surprises along the way. A sample budget sheet is found on page 34.

Location, Location, Location: Where will your retreat be held? Will you host the event at the church or off campus? Will you select a nearby conference center or hotel? Will transportation or carpooling be necessary? Is accessibility a concern? Consider the season and possible road conditions as you plan. The location will affect the cost for participants as well as ease or difficulty of attending.

Prayerfully consider the best place to host your event—and God may surprise you with the answer.
Select a fabulous location. Depending on the size of your group, you may be able to hold your retreat in some unique locations. For example, one group held an overnight event at a ranch—complete with horseback rides and sleeping under the stars. Another group went camping. Another group held their event at a large home on a lake and offered swimming, wakeboarding, and water skiing during free time in the afternoon along with a delicious bar-be-cue. Be creative.

We recently were part of a retreat held at a mansion in California. As the organizing team prayed about the event’s location, the name of this prestigious resort kept coming to mind. The retreat leader set up an appointment to meet with a manager from the resort. The first words out of the manager’s mouth after they sat down were, “You’ll never be able to afford us.” Two hours later, the retreat organizer walked out of the meeting with a rate, within $10 per person of the previous year’s cost—for the entire weekend including meals. Ask God where He wants your next retreat to be held and courageously see what might be possible.

Do you have too many attendees for the location you want to use? Turn one conference center into two retreats. One California-based church loves to hold their annual retreats at a nearby lake. The only struggle is they’re outgrowing the largest meeting room the conference center offers. Next year they’re planning to take the retreat and divide the group into 125 each (which will help build community) and run two conferences side by side. They’ll have a local speaker and an outside speaker and organize the worship team so they can serve two groups. Both groups will have the same sessions—just the order of the presentations will be different.

Offer A La Carte. One retreat we visited was held at a local church. For those who wanted to get away, participants could book a room at a local hotel. After the night session, suites were available at the hotel for participants to connect, watch movies, and stay up way too late. This a la carte satisfied those who wanted to stay home and those who felt like they needed to get away.

Selecting a Speaker: When selecting the speaker or presenter for your event, consider your goals and budget first. Local speakers or a local pastor are often more cost-effective than flying in someone from another location, but nationally recognized speakers can create an excitement and draw attendees. Be sure to confirm the dates with the location site before you talk to the speaker. Often presenters may book a year or two in advance, so keep that in mind as you are preparing for your event.

In addition to the main speaker, consider using the event as an opportunity to raise up new and emerging speakers within your own congregation. You can do this by inviting individuals to teach an early morning devotional, an entire session during the retreat, or workshops.

Here are some questions to ask as you narrow down the primary retreat speaker:
• Have you seen the person speak—either live or online?
• Are they the best speaker for the objectives and goals you’ve defined?
• Do they have solid recommendations? Contact locations they have spoken at for a recent recommendation.

If the first speaker you ask isn’t available, see if they have any recommendations for you. They have probably interacted with or heard a range of different speakers and might have a great idea for your event. If the budget doesn’t allow for a speaking fee, consider purchasing DVD curriculum and having someone virtually lead the retreat with a local facilitator. See page 32 for sample schedules for DVD curriculum led weekends.

**Speaker Negotiations:** Once you have selected the speaker, make sure you finalize all the details including honorarium, travel allowances, and any special requirements. Place all details of the agreement in writing. This helps right-size expectations and preserves the relationship. Whenever expectations aren’t clearly communicated, unnecessary frustration will result.

Some details to consider:

• **Will the accommodation at the retreat be acceptable for the speaker?**

• **Will the speaker be bringing a spouse or ministry partner?** If so, who will be covering the cost for that person’s travel and meals? Will that person need separate lodging arrangements?

• **Will the speaker be making their own travel arrangements and submitting receipts for reimbursement or will you?** If they are driving, ask them if they have a set mileage rate or be prepared to negotiate the mileage rate you can afford to pay.

• **Will the speaker expect to sell resources at the retreat?** If so, what arrangements are they making and what are their expectations from the host group regarding a table, power outlet, volunteers, and hours for selling product?

• **Will you base the event off a speaker’s list of topics or ask them to speak on a specific theme?** Some speakers are willing to speak on a specific verse or passage while others have spent years researching and will speak only on certain topics. Regardless of how the topic is selected, a high quality speaker can often tie in their research to your particular theme or will be upfront and tell you they can’t and provide other speaker recommendations to you.

• **When do you need the speaker to have session descriptions and titles to you?** If they are using session (speaking) notes they have used before, what information would you like them to prayerfully consider about your particular group?

• **Will the speaker be providing handouts or will you incorporate them into your materials for participants?** If you are printing materials for the speaker or creating your own, when will you need the digital files by and in what format? Don’t forget to consider the printing costs in your budget if this is something the speaker expects you to cover.
Look for opportunities to weave the theme into every part of the event so each participant knows the main idea you’re trying to convey.

**Theme:** The organization team should pray and ask God to reveal a theme and Scripture. Invite each leader to spend time praying and see if there are any common themes that emerge. Whatever theme the team selects, make sure the language is clear and the main idea is easy to grasp. Also consider making the theme sound catchy or memorable. Instead of calling a retreat “Sharing Jesus” or “Evangelism,” consider “Jesus—Too Good To Keep To Yourself.” Whatever theme you choose, look for opportunities to weave it into every part of the event so each participant knows the main idea you’re trying to convey.

Do not try to weave more than one theme into a retreat. We’ve been part of retreats that have tried to combine up to three different themes and ideas. The result is confusion and a lack of cohesion for the event.

“Be careful not to slip into the temptation of choosing a decorating theme and then trying to find a verse to go with it. One retreat had a ton of decorating ideas for a garden theme and chose a ‘garden’ verse. It felt forced and awkward.” --A retreat planner

**Meals & Snacks:** People always remember the food! When people make time to get away, they generally want to eat better than they would if they were home. When you ask someone, “*How was the retreat?*” they’ll answer with commentary on the food, the speaker, the beds, and the weather (probably in that order). When planning meals, don’t forget to be sensitive to participants with food allergies. If possible, find out about participants’ food allergies at registration. Be sensitive to those who have vegetarian, gluten-free, diary-free, or other dietary needs. Asian and Mexican meals tend to be more sensitive to those with dietary restrictions. This includes offering gluten-free options if you serve communion at your retreat. Don’t forget to include lots of snacks and drinks during the day.

Remember that people will have different food desires. Some people will want to eat healthy and look for nutritious food at every opportunity—fresh fruits and vegetables and lean options. Others will prefer chips, soda, and sugary treats. At one retreat we attended, I was thrilled to discover, instead of serving chips with the boxed lunches, the host had opted for a bag of celery and carrots with ranch dressing on the side. I thought the idea was brilliant until Leif pointed out that the trash cans were full of celery and carrot bags. Participants were grumbling they didn’t get chips with their sandwiches. Offer a variety of options for meals and snacks.

One Canadian retreat decided that every meal would have a bit of chocolate—and it was a hit. Everyone felt treated without going overboard on large desserts or sugar.

**Decorations:** Whether you are a gifted decorator or believe piles are a great way to display, you have people in your church that have the gift and would love the opportunity to use it for your event so you can focus on other things. Check with the speaker to see if they have any ideas that they can send you to spark creativity.
Make sure that you provide your volunteer decorator with a written budget, if you have one, that includes what you need to have (table arrangements, hanging signs, etc) to complement the theme of the event. Be sure to allow them the freedom to use their creativity to make your event look awesome, but remember to consistently tell them to stay within the budget.

**Scheduling:** Even if the event you’re about to schedule is the same event held every year on the same weekend or same date, check different calendars. Take a look at the holiday calendar, spring break calendar, sports calendar, school calendar, community calendar, and master church calendar. Look for any conflicting events or activities.

Over the years, we’ve been part of several events where the turnout was less than half of what was expected because no one realized the dates selected were the same as the high school football playoffs, spring break, a big children’s festival, or a large church outreach event.

Be sure to avoid converting the event into a big sales floor and distract from the purpose of the event.

**Sponsorship/Advertisement:** Some events provide a natural environment for businesses or ministries to advertise what they do in your area. A bakery might be willing to donate a dessert if they can put up a small display in the foyer, a notice in the paperwork, or are mentioned in the welcome notes. The women’s shelter would probably be thrilled to put up a poster or two explaining how your attendees could help minister in a tangible way. There are lots of other options. Get creative – it might help your budget or just be an opportunity to bless others. Just be sure to avoid converting the event into a big sales floor and distract from the purpose of the event.
Create a Pull Rather Than a Push: All too often, when advertising and promoting an event, we come across as though we’re asking, pleading, and at the worst moments, begging people to come. We’ve all sat through announcements where someone uses words like “Please, please” and “We really need you there” or “You won’t want to miss this.” That kind of marketing produces what I like to call a push. You’re pushing people to attend or sign up. But instead of pushing people toward your event, I’d like to challenge you to think of how you can create a pull. What can you say to make people want to sign up and bring all of their friends? What’s going to encourage them to want to sign up the very first time you mention the event and not wait until the last minute?

One of the most effective ways we’ve seen to create a pull is to establish a cutoff number for the event. Let people know that when the slots are filled, no one else can sign up. This creates a sense of urgency. An Oregon-based church held a women’s event/retreat at a spa. Though the church had more than 2,000 women, they only had 50 spots and when they were gone—they were gone. When the leader made the announcement, she reminded people that last year the spots were filled immediately and encouraged any interested ladies not to wait. She was almost stampeded after the service.

What can you do to create a pull for your event? What can you do to create a sense of urgency? Remember a push may say, “You have to come!” but a pull will make you believe it.

An Exciting Invitation: When issuing an exciting invitation to the retreat, you’re going to want to use as many ways as possible because people respond to different invitations. Every time a new mode of communication comes around, you need to consider adding the additional form without reducing the already established outlets.

Some will want to see a pulpit announcement or video promotion at church. Others will need a weekly reminder in the church bulletin in the months leading up to the event or pick up a handout at the church resource center. Still others will want the opportunity to sign-up at church after the service. And a few will even want a personal text. One church handed out water bottles between every service with information cards attached inviting people to their retreat. Whatever innovative idea you use, be intentional about making the invitation and opportunity to sign up available in the different formats people in your church naturally respond to.

Consider four modes of engaging people: Announce, Envision, Challenge, and Invite:

- **Announce**: Some people will sign up simply because you told them about the event.
- **Envision**: Others will only attend if there is some vision cast for what this retreat can do for them, their family, marriage, parenting, and the world.
- **Challenge**: Some will not be interested without a challenge.
- **Invite**: Still others will need to be invited by someone they know well.
One great site for inviting people is [evite.com](http://evite.com). You can use the site to send online invitations to everyone you have an email address for. The website also allows you to track registration and send follow up messages to the people who do (or don’t) RSVP.

Another great option is to create a Facebook page. Create an event page and invite all the friends of your church. Ask people to share the event online and invite their friends. This is free, fast, and can get the word out to a lot of people. You may even want to create a short, funny and engaging video to post on YouTube. Check out this awesome video from our friends at Bayside in California for a college-aged retreat they held recently: [http://youtu.be/JgdAeReSJIVc](http://youtu.be/JgdAeReSJIVc)

And don’t forget to take advantage of newer social media sites like Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram. Even if you’re unfamiliar with one or more of these, someone on your retreat organizing team could be able to tackle these social media outlets to get the word out for you. Create a Twitter hashtag to be used before, during, and after your event.

Create a Twitter hashtag to be used before, during, and after your event.

To reach out to those in the community, consider placing a flyer at the grocery store and any faith-friendly business or outreach organization. Depending on the cost, place an ad in the local newspaper or add the event to the public announcement list on a local Christian radio show. You never know what God may use to bring someone to the retreat.

Drawing young people to your event is challenging for many ministries or churches where the average age skews older. If you ask someone in their late teens or twenties to attend your event, they’ll probably think you asked them out of courtesy the first time. Then, the second time you ask them in person, they may think, “This person really means it.” The third time you ask, they may start to consider attending the event because you really want them there. Somewhere between the fourth and fifth time, there’s a good chance they’ll actually sign up and attend. This is a lot of work—but the younger generation often wants to know you really want them there and why they should attend.

Be sure to keep a database of registered attendees with their email, Facebook, and Twitter information so letting them know about future events is easier.

Invite Others: We’re frequently amazed by the number of retreat planners that start emailing us a couple weeks before the event to let us know the anticipated numbers of attendees is much smaller than what they planned on. When we ask if they’ve considered inviting other churches to participate in the event, a light bulb goes off. Unfortunately, this is typically too late to have other churches join as they will only add a handful of registrants. One year, we actually flew into the same city three times in four weeks to do retreats for three different churches because the planners hadn’t considered connecting with one another to combine resources until it was too late.
Being wise with what God has given us is important, so rather than waiting until the last minute, consider asking one of your volunteer leaders to research and build relationships with the other churches in your area from the beginning of the planning process to see if you can partner with them on your event.

**Incentivize:** If you ever want proof that the number of commitment-phobes is a rising population in our country, host an event. Many people will tell you they want to attend your retreat, but the number of people who actually sign up early is steadily decreasing. That’s why incentives for signing up early are important. You’ll be able to better determine the number of people who will attend, which affects everything from the number of beds to quantity and quality of food. Early incentives often include a reduced cost of registration.

Consider offering a tiered registration fee. The cost is so and so by this date, 15% more by the next date, and 15% more right before the event. Having an early bird registration and a regular registration deadline help the most in our experience. Participants will want an “exception” from the “late-registration fee,” but they can’t argue if they missed the lower price cutoff. Build your budget off of the lowest price point so you aren't surprised at the end.

**Scholarships:** Consider the need for various scholarships opportunities from the beginning and discuss with your planning committee on how to make the event more affordable for those with financial struggles. This is a great opportunity to encourage church members to help others. I’ve seen churches use a two for one rate so an attendee can receive a discounted price for their ticket when they purchase a scholarship for someone else.

You might even want to offer a scholarship for someone that might be in a shelter of some kind. However, if you do this—don’t announce it from the stage (ever) and see if you could help provide appropriate clothing, rides, etc. to the recipient(s).
We were at one event where six or more women attended who were leaving the sex trade, but I never would have known if the leader hadn’t mentioned it to me in confidence before the event.

One other way to provide additional scholarship donations is through the registration form. Provide a space for registrants to earmark donations specifically toward retreat scholarships.

Set up the scholarship application process with a firm deadline. Each application should include some sort of deposit to ensure the individual’s commitment. This way scholarships aren’t left unused if an applicant changes their mind. The deposit, no matter how small, ensures the person is personally invested in attending.

Refunds: Identify and publicize your refund policy. Clearly communicate deadlines and any refund dates and amounts. Circumstances, often unforeseen, can keep people from attending an event after they have registered. By making the refund policy clear, you still leave yourself the opportunity to no enforce the policy if circumstances dictate grace, but you shoul dbe firm and consistent in enforcing the policy whenever possible.

Here are some suggested refund policies to consider:

- **Full Refund**: If known 30 days or more in advance of the event that a registered person or group cannot attend, for whatever reason, the individual or group will receive a full refund. After this date, no full refunds will be given.

- **Partial Refund**: If the notification of cancellation is communicated less than 21 days in advance of the event that a registered person or group cannot attend, for whatever reason, the group or individual will receive a partial refund of 50%.

- **No Refund**: If notification to cancel occurs after the event has started, no refund will be available.
Go Small to Go Big: Small group time is a great addition to a retreat as it gives participants the opportunity to discuss what they’re learning and studying in a more intimate environment. Schedule time for small groups to discuss and get together.

One church in Dallas has taken a different twist on the idea of going small to go big by shrinking the size of their annual retreat. They decided to take a weekend at a local hotel, tighten up the program, and hold two retreats with a maximum attendance of 150 each. The first retreat began Friday night and went through Saturday morning and the second event started Saturday afternoon and ran through Sunday. Participants still got to know each other because of the smaller size while taking less time away from their other responsibilities. If you choose this option, make sure you schedule time for your leadership to recover.

Whether through dedicated discussion time with a small group or shrinking the event itself, how can you encourage your community to go deeper with each other and build relationships?

Use Your Event to Connect the Generations: This is a passion of mine! Can the older generation cook for the younger? Can the younger generation lead worship for the older? How can you involve all generations in the event?

One Alaska-based church held a spa-themed women’s retreat. The church struggled to involve younger women in their women’s ministry, so they invited several twentysomethings (who were excited for the opportunity) to head up the “spa-portion” of the event. The twentysomethings found other volunteers, shopped for nail polish and make up, and decorated for the event. In the process, they built the relationships needed to feel as though they were part of the women’s ministry—and those relationships still continue today.

Does this mean taking a risk and letting a specific group of people lead and potentially fail? Yes! Do you schedule mentoring moments during the event where different types of people can share part of their walk with the Lord? Absolutely! But you have to ask yourself: What can I do to connect the generations?

During one retreat, we saw this put into practice during a marriage Q&A panel that included singles, newlyweds, new parents, and grandparents, facilitated by the events emcee. The stories and interaction was priceless as the different generations connected over their different life experiences.

Look for people who can share their story of God’s redemption, reconciliation, and renewal in their life.

Remember to Tell A Few Stories: One of my greatest delights is to hear people’s testimonies at an event. In several of the sessions, look for people who can share their story of God’s redemption, reconciliation, and renewal in their life. This can be a great equipping...
opportunity for someone in your church who is learning to speak publicly. Let them know their time is limited, but you probably want them to practice with you first to make sure their story is relevant and that five minutes is really five minutes.

Also, consider leaving time in the final session for a testimony or two of how God has been at work in people’s lives over the course of the event. One option is to do this in an interview format. Make sure there is only one microphone. If you’re the one holding the microphone, don’t let go of it. Hold it for the person to talk into. This allows you to gently pat the person on the back and pull the microphone away if someone is going too long or getting off track.

Ensure You Have the Right People in the Right Roles: Just because someone is an amazing planner doesn’t mean they should be the main point person on-site at the retreat. Three of the most critical roles in retreats include: Logistics Coordinator, Registration Leader, and Speaker Liaison.

- The Logistics Coordinator needs to be skilled at tracking multiple details on the fly with ease. This person needs to be able to solve problems quickly and creatively, communicate calmly and lovingly, and be able to discern when to step in as well as hold off in situations.

- The Registration Leader needs these same characteristics but also needs to be gifted with hospitality. Many registrants are a veritable mix of emotions when they arrive. Their first interaction is often at the registration desk! The purposes of the retreat should be embodied by the Registration Leader.
Provide mints, water, safety pins, Tide-to-go pens, and more for any speakers or emcees in case of emergency.

- The Speaker Liaison is known only to the Speaker and the planning committee. This person should check in with the speaker regularly—a week before the event, at arrival, meals, and before sessions to take care of any needs. This person should be equipped with a few bottles of water, breath mints, throat lozenges, Tylenol, static guard, safety pins, Tide-to-go, etc. Their role is not to hover over the speaker but to be inconspicuously attentive to the speaker’s needs.

Be aware that different speakers have different needs, so this person must be flexible and not a busybody or see this as an opportunity for personal ministry time and making lifetime friendships.
Number of Sessions: For many people, having a day away from home is no small feat. Ask them to escape for an entire weekend, and the cost rises—often in stress for other family members left at home and financially. Many events are moving to a one-night or local option to reduce costs.

For one-day events, two to three sessions with an additional workshop provides great scheduling options. If your retreat begins on Friday night and runs through Sunday morning, we’ve found four sessions provides enough teaching time but also allows for rest, play, and real connection among the group. A Friday night, Saturday morning, Saturday night, and Sunday morning schedule typically works well. Trying to fit in an additional Saturday afternoon session can leave attendees exhausted and feeling every bit as tired when they leave as when they arrived. Check out example schedules on page 30.

Elements of a Program: A well-designed program/bulletin/handout/brochure can go a long way in making a retreat flow smoothly.

Here are a few recommended elements:

• A general welcome. Introduce the speaker and theme as well as pray for the attendees.

• A short list of bios. Introduce the speaker(s), workshop teachers, worship team, and those running the event. Keep it brief, but consider including a fun detail and a photo of each person on screen if possible.

• Schedule. Print a brief schedule on the back of nametags. In addition, provide a more thorough schedule with locations of gatherings (if they’re in different locations).

• A map. If your event is at a conference center or place with multiple meeting rooms/spaces, include a legible map. The only thing worse than no map is one that has writing so small no one can read it.

• General housekeeping. If the retreat center/hotel/church has any guidelines or rules, let attendees know. Issues about food and drink in guest rooms, parking, smoke- and alcohol-free, etc. should be noted as well as check out procedures. Make sure people know where restrooms are and also how to get in touch with someone if they need medical help, i.e. camp nurse, etc.

• Special features. If you have a hospitality suite or prayer room for attendees, let them know when they are available and where.

• Description of workshops. If workshops are available, provide a detailed description of the title and what the workshop is about along with a bio or introduction of the workshop leader.

• A thank you page. Dedicate a page to express gratitude to everyone who helped make the event come together.
Online Programs: We’ve attended retreats and conferences where tech-savvy organizers publish the retreat schedule online through a website or phone app. The idea seems smart and forward-thinking, but is often laced with difficulties and lack of consideration. We’ve been to events where the app doesn’t work as well as intended and been to events where the internet service or phone accessibility is limited for a variety of unexpected reasons. In addition, placing the program online assumes every attendee has the socioeconomic status to be able to afford a smart phone. This isn’t fair or kind to those struggling financially. If you provide an online program, be sure to provide printed materials as well.

- **Free Time/Fun Activities.** Attendees may not be aware of the activities available at the event location. Make a thorough list of possibilities such as hiking, walking, shopping, boat trips, movies, etc.

- **Resources.** If your event offers resources including books or audio recordings, remind attendees they’re available and where to find them.

- **A description of foundational spiritual teachings.** You may want to include a page that provides a simple description of what it means to P.R.A.Y. (Praise, Repent, Ask, and Yield). Always include a page explaining what it means to Become a Follower of Jesus. Offer a sample prayer and encourage attendees who want to make this commitment to talk to someone in leadership.

- **Advertise plug-in opportunities at your church.** Is this event a natural segue to Bible studies, small groups, and activities already going on in your church? If so, then make a list of opportunities attendees can plug into and nurture relationships they’ve built at the event. If you have invited other churches, remember to share ways to plug into their church as well! Inviting others then not including them is a really bad idea.

  - Be generous with Scripture.
  - Add creative goodies in your welcome bag.
  - Think of fun decorations to go along with the theme.
**Workshops:** Afternoon workshops provide an opportunity for participants to dive deeper into specific areas of spiritual growth and fun. Consider limiting workshops to an hour, even 40-minutes, to keep people’s attention.

Offer a variety of workshops touching different ideas and activities that complement the overall theme. Look for opportunities to accommodate people’s different personalities, learning styles, and faith journeys. The titling and descriptions of the workshop should meet a felt need.

Make sure you have all the needed and requested material available for each workshop—including any needs for projectors, television screens, and handouts a week in advance. If any workshops involve playing music, film clips, or instruments, try to find a location for them apart from the others so there’s less of a disturbance. If you decide to offer workshops, choose doing fewer well over many done poorly.

Also, try not to schedule a drum circle worship beside a silent prayer workshop (we’ve seen it happen).

**Accommodations:** If participants are rooming together, angst can emerge. Some concerns can be alleviated by designating some rooms as “quiet” rooms (For example: I like to be in bed asleep by 10pm and would appreciate being in a room with people who feel the same.) and others as party rooms for those who will be up talking, laughing, and playing until the wee hours. Just make sure party rooms are separated from quiet rooms.

**Exercise:** Consider adding in some form of exercise into the schedule. A morning, afternoon, or evening hike. An hour with a personal trainer or kickboxing instructor. Or a Zumba session (if you have a volunteer from your church) can be a great optional activity for those who enjoy getting exercise each day.

**Giveaways:** Everyone loves a good giveaway. This isn’t just true of participants, but event organizers, too. Giveaways can be used to help motivate participants to arrive to sessions on time. If the first thing on the schedule is a giveaway and you have to be present to win, you’ll be amazed at how on-time attendance increases. If you want people to fill out their evaluations at the end of the retreat, use the completed evaluations to draw a winner for a giveaway. But giveaways must have value. Don’t give away items that people will want to donate to Goodwill.

Ask businesses and leaders within the church to consider donating products, services, gift certificates, and even cash for giveaways. If you’re struggling to find enough giveaways, consider purchasing ten $10 gift cards to a local coffee shop. Even if the prize is small, people still love to hear their name called out because they won something.
**Friday Night Interview Style:** If your retreat runs Friday evening through Sunday morning and is being held in a different location than your church campus, consider making the Friday night session into an interview with your speaker.

This can accomplish a few things:

First, those who do not get off work early enough arrive on time don’t feel as though they’re missing the first session of the retreat. If they’re a little late, they can jump right in—knowing the formal teaching time begins on Saturday morning. Second, this allows the community to get to know the speaker in a relaxed setting and environment. You can build momentum for this by inviting participants to submit questions ahead of time for the interviewer to ask. Some of the questions may be deep, but definitely sprinkle in a few lighthearted questions. Finally, if the interview session is kept to about 20-30 minutes then the majority of the time can be dedicated to worship. This allows attendees to connect with God one-on-one and transition from their busy lives to a retreat setting.

Here are some quick tips for a great interview:

- Gather questions from attendees ahead of time.
- Map out questions with the speaker well before the Friday night session begins, not two minutes before.
- Be sure to ask the speaker what their hope for the retreat is.

**REST**

Take the guilt out of skipping a main session or workshop by telling attendees that if they need to enjoy some downtime they have full permission to do so!

**Give Permission to Rest:** While worship, storytelling, and teaching are important aspects of a retreat, many of your attendees live such busy lives this may be one of the few times of the year they can truly get away and rest. Take the guilt out of skipping a main session or workshop by telling attendees that if they need to take a nap, spend some time alone to connect with God, or enjoy some downtime they have full permission to do so!

**Late Night Options:** Because it is the first night of an event and attendees are excited to be away from their day-to-day responsibilities it is wise for you to plan on giving them things to do after the formal gathering has ended. Some events have created a movie night and provided popcorn and various toppings or set up a trail mix bar as a snack option. Be aware that any movie you watch should be screened entirely by a couple of your planning team. Ask them to watch the movie from the perspective of the most reserved person that they know. If something is offensive or borderline, don’t use the movie. You don’t want to create an issue that distracts from the purpose of your retreat.

**Ongoing Communication:** Use slides in the main gathering session as well as erasable markers on bathroom mirrors throughout the weekend for ongoing reminders and promotions, such as “Join us for the morning hike at 7am meeting outside chapel” or “Don’t forget to introduce yourself to someone new!” or “Take time to be quiet today.”
**Evaluation Forms:** Always create an evaluation form and time in the schedule for participants to fill them out. At the end of an event, you or one of your team members may be tempted to read through the evaluations right away. This isn’t always a wise choice. After an event, team members are usually exhausted and any negative feedback may have an unnecessary extra sting.

Instead, set the evaluations aside until your retreat team has a chance to rest. Then, take time to pray and ask God for wisdom and discernment before you read the responses. Remember that in every crowd there will always be at least one person who doesn’t like everything. Usually, an event will have several. Take any constructive criticism you can learn from their comments, but avoid nurturing any overly defensive or offensive responses from your leaders.

One planner established a “Tuesday Rule” with organizers. The only task for the team at the end of the retreat is to celebrate what God has done through them. Tuesday is soon enough to look at the evaluations.
• **You’re Almost There Signage.** If your retreat is at a camp or location out of town, consider creating some low-cost signs with balloons to remind those who are driving, “You’re on the right path—we’ll see you soon!” and “You’re almost there—Only X Number of Miles to Go!” to encourage those on the way to the event. Even with a GPS and printed maps, we’ve all been to events where we wonder, “Are we going the right way?” Encourage your participants with signs, Scriptures, and humor as they drive.

• **A Retreat Greeting Team.** One retreat we’ll never forget was hosted at Old Oak Ranch outside Sonora, California. When we drove up to the event, three ladies were waiting under a huge sun umbrella with a cooler full of iced bottles of water and tiny packages of homemade chocolate chip cookies. The women had a ball hanging out together and their excitement and warm welcome were contagious.

• **Hospitality Basket.** We can forget so much when we’re traveling, which is why putting together a hospitality basket for the most prominent restroom(s) at your retreat is a good idea. Pick up a few travel-sized toothpastes, toothbrushes, floss, soap, shampoo, conditioner, combs, and other personal items, and a multipack of earplugs is an added bonus for the attendee whose roommate snores. Don’t forget to create a hospitality basket for the speaker and for the leadership team’s headquarters.

• **Room Drops.** If you have access to people’s rooms during sessions, consider placing a verse for the day on their pillow along with a treat.

• **Create a Prayer Wall.** One of the simplest and easiest ways to allow retreat members to pray for each other is by placing a few stacks of sticky notes and pens around the room. Ask attendees to write their prayer requests on the sticky notes during a time of worship. Place sticky notes on windows or large eraser boards. Invite attendees to spend time praying for the requests of others throughout the retreat. If you use different colored sticky notes, the collection of prayers can look like a stained glass window.

• **Make an Adopt-a-Prayer Basket.** Invite participants to write their prayer requests down on a slip of paper and drop the request into a basket. Then invite participants to withdraw a different request to pray for.

• **Place Your Schedule on the Back of Nametags.** Those little name tags go a long way to help take the awkwardness out of meeting new friends. They can be important to fostering community, but they’re also not very fun to wear. A simple, practical way to make them more helpful for participants is to place a quick outline of the schedule on the back of the name tag. This naturally encourages people to wear their nametags, as well as helps participants who misplace their programs know where they’re supposed to be and what’s coming up next. Bring blank nametags and a sharpie to replace lost ones or when a spelling mistake happens.

• **Remember Those With Chronic Pain and Illnesses.** Nearly half of Americans live with a chronic illness and more than 95 percent of
those illnesses are invisible. Many struggle to participate in retreats because of accessibility issues, pain, and tiredness. Many who attend will make specific requests that may seem outlandish or prima donna-ish, but often are necessary for the person to make it through the day. Whenever you hear a request for a bottom bunk bed, a plug-in for the cabin (for someone who struggles with sleep apnea and needs a machine), or a particular dietary restriction, take the request in stride and keep the details private.

As someone who struggles at times with physical limitations, I assure you we don’t want to be singled out. For those who are chronically ill, consider noting on your promotional flyer “If you any need specific accommodations to make it possible for you to attend, please contact _______ a month ahead of time so we can make any necessary arrangements.” The smallest effort made to include and accommodate goes a long way in making a difference in peoples’ lives. For additional research and help, check out www.restministries.com.

Provide a Small Gift that Serves as a Reminder. Consider brainstorming with the speaker about some kind of token that will be a tangible reminder of attendees’ experience of the retreat. This does not have to be costly—a scrap of fabric in a symbolic color, a mirrored tile from a craft shop, or a small nail are a few examples I’ve seen work well.

Offer healthy options, but some may still prefer chips. Give each attendee a themed bookmark with verses to remember. Give meaningful, memorable reminders of the retreat.
1 **Letters to God.** Invite participants to write letters to God that you will send back to them later in the year. Instruct participants to craft letters about the topic of the retreat and the work God is doing in their lives at the moment.

2 **An Hour of Silence.** Consider creating an hour of silence during your retreat. This can be done in the main area where participants gather or a smaller room. Begin by preparing the space by lighting a few candles, bringing in a few extra pillows for people to sit on, and providing some paper and pencils for people to use. Ask participants not to speak. If they must communicate, encourage them to write notes rather than break the silence. Invite participants to get up and walk around, journal, read the Scripture, or pray. Give them freedom to embrace the hour of silence as they feel the Holy Spirit leading them. Then begin the time with a prayer or musical sound that will also conclude the time. You may want to read a Psalm together as a group or use a chime to begin the time. Let participants know that when they hear this Psalm or sound again, the hour is over.

3 **Giveback.** Contact local organizations before the retreat to learn about their immediate needs. Invite each participant to contribute an item (or find donations). Encourage individuals to come together as a group and be the hands and feet of Jesus. Schedule a time after the retreat to deliver the bags to the local ministry.

4 **God Promise.** Go through Scripture or do a Google search for the promises of God in the Bible. Place each one in an envelope and put them in a basket. When participants arrive on the first night, invite each participant to draw an envelope out of the basket as a personal word of encouragement from the Scripture. I have seen some retreats print God’s promises on the back of bookmarks for each attendee.

5 **Prayer Rooms.** One church created four different prayer rooms where participants guided themselves through an Abiding, Cleansing, Identity, and Remembrance room.

6 **Sacraments.** Many times the meaning of the sacraments can be lost in the modern world. Set up stations with passages written out as well as the history of each sacrament. Consider ending the rotation with a place to participate in communion. For an extra bonus, include some unofficial sacraments such as feet washing.
Connect with the Old Testament. If your retreat falls near Passover or the Lenten Season, consider creating a Seder meal. Describe the history behind the meal, as well as what it meant during Jesus’ time in the New Testament.
15 Ways to Increase the Fun Factor

1 Fun in a Photobooth. Ask a volunteer who is great at taking photos to set up a photobooth during free times. The participants can strike a pose with the props provided (mustaches, silly hats, feathery boas, big glasses, et). Post the pictures on the church Facebook page (to encourage people to “Like” your ministry or church page). Organize a slideshow during the last session of the retreat or at the next weekly gathering.

2 What We Share in Common. Divide participants into groups of four to six and challenge each group to find four things they have in common. Challenge participants to go beyond their gender or shoe size to find something a little deeper. Maybe participants all have at least two siblings, graduated from high school during the same decade, or have the same type of pet. Invite each team to share their similarities with the entire group. The group with the most unique four commonalities wins.

3 Don’t Assume They Won’t Want to Do It. If your venue offers activities, make them available to participants. One retreat organizer didn’t think the fifty-something women attending her event would want to do the zipline so she declined the offer from the retreat director. She spent the weekend trying to explain to women why they couldn’t zipline.

4 Make Attendants Go Wii. As an alternate activity, consider hosting a Wii Tennis Tournament or Bowling Championship. If possible, have several Wii’s available on multiple television screens or on side by side projectors on the wall. You may also want to consider mixing in Xboxes (Halo!) or go old-school with an Atari and some good old-fashioned Frogger and Donkey Kong. This is a great option if the weather doesn’t always cooperate.

5 Don’t Forget the Cards and Board Games. While you don’t need to make this an organized event, lay a few decks of cards and a board game or two like Scrabble, Monopoly, Apples to Apples, Settlers of Catan, Pictionary, and Scattegories around the venue. You’ll be amazed how attendees naturally pick them up, start playing, and connect with each other!

6 PJ Night. If you have a women’s event, choose one of the nights to throw a pajama party (guys can do something with the funniest t-shirt). Let women attendees know ahead of time and ask them to wear their PJs/t-shirts and bring snacks to the Saturday night session. You’ll loved what people come up with! We’ve seen all kinds of gals put together fun PJ combinations with groups of five or more women wearing the same outfits—including jewelry, slippers, and robes! You may even consider holding a contest with prizes—be
sensitive to those who don’t want to participate or parade around in pajamas.

7 **Invite a local massage therapist.** Consider inviting a local massage therapist and a nail technician to serve the participants of your retreat. Ask them to charge a reasonable fee and invite participants to sign up for time slots during the free time you’ve built into the schedule.

8 **Bracelet Game.** Upon registration, give each participant a small plastic bracelet. During the first session, explain that throughout your time together the goal is to encourage participants to catch one another in acts of kindness. If you see someone doing something kind, give them a bracelet. At the end of the retreat, ask which participant has the most bracelets and give the person a fun prize.

9 **Minute to Win It.** Create games based on the television show. Select people to compete in minute to win it challenges before every main session. Offer prizes for the people who win these next to impossible challenges.

10 **Play the Wallet or Purse Game.** You’d be amazed at what men keep in their wallets and women keep in their purses. You can choose to do this activity as an entire group or divide participants into teams by table, row, church, etc. Make a list of scavenger items and call out the items one by one. Whenever an individual (or if you’ve divided into teams) doesn’t have an item, they’re out. The person or team with the most items wins. Items may include particular credit cards, amounts of cash, special coins, or for women—a tissue, comb, candy, Bed Bath and Beyond coupon, lip balm, nail polish remover, etc.
[Insert Church’s name]’s Got Talent. During your opening announcements, encourage people to use their free time to team up and recreate a scene from a favorite movie. Using costume and props, allow each team to perform in front of the main audience. The group that evokes the most cheers and laughter wins. We had the opportunity to attend a talent show that had become a wonderful annual tradition at the event. Check out one of the video’s here: goo.gl/lAA4a.

Hire a Dance Lesson Teacher. From a square dance hoedown to a salsa dance fiesta, spice up the retreat by teaching the participants new moves. Top off the evening with a dance off and prizes for the best dancer, quickest learner, and the wallflower.

Whose Line Is It Anyway? Search Google for improv skits and games to play with the crowd. Have brave and outgoing volunteers up in front while the whole crowd participates in offering themes, words, and phrases to play along.

Charades. As each participant registers, ask them to write down an animal, movie title, celebrity’s name, location, or song title. Use the responses for a game of charades. The people acting can only reveal whether it’s a person, place, or thing as well as how many words it is. Be sure to catch this on film as some acts can be hilarious to re-watch later.

Scavenger Hunt. Divide the group into teams and equip each team with a digital or a video camera (many smart phones work great for this). Give each team a list of objectives and a time limit. Assign a point value to each objective and make sure everything is caught on tape to play for everyone later on. Cater this to your specific event and retreat. If you’re on a campground, have them take pictures climbing trees, finding a four-leaf clover, and meeting Smokey the Bear. If you are in an urban setting, send the teams to various stores or houses for a Bigger or Better contest in which each team starts out with a small object, knocks on a door, and asks if they can trade it for something bigger and better.
6 Tips for the Budget Minded Retreat

1 **Bring Snacks.** Often hotels won’t allow you to bring snacks, but if one of your members donates a specific food or beverage and you clearly communicate this is a possibility before you sign any contract, they may make an exception. Asking never hurts.

2 **Opt for a Mini-Retreat.** Consider hosting the event from 9am until 3pm to lower costs for the location, speaker, food, travel, and activities. The cost will often drop by 50%-75% and allow more people to attend.

3 **Unite with Other Churches.** Consider sharing the burden of cost with other churches in the area and work to build unity in the body of Christ.

4 **Upcycle Retreat Themes.** If your children’s ministry recently had an Under the Sea VBS or the college-aged group hosted a Hollywood Ball dance, see what items can be upcycled into your event’s theme. Save costs on lights, decorations, tablecloths, and centerpieces. Or consider what items or materials could be upcycled later on when planning your theme. One retreat used large squares of organza for three different events.

5 **Partner with Another Ministry from Your Church.** If you’re leading a men’s retreat, invite the participants of the women’s ministry to provide one of the meals. In exchange, your group will do the same for their event.

6 **Use DVD Curriculum for the Teaching Portion or the Worship Portion of the Retreat.** A live leader with a professionally done worship video can be very effective if musicians are lacking in quantity (or quality). Many retreat organizers are turning to DVDs to provide the theme, Biblically based teaching, discussion guides, and activities. For examples of tips on organizing and scheduling your own DVD-based retreat, see Appendix page 32.
Silent retreats offer people the opportunity to get away and embrace something hard to find in
the hustle and bustle of daily life: quiet.

One of my friends, who has led multiple silent retreats, notes a silent prayer retreat is about
creating a sacred space of silence and separation from everyday life to be aware of God’s
presence and discern His voice. Prayer is supposed to be a conversation involving speaking and
listening. But let’s be honest, we do 99.9% of the speaking and don’t pause to listen in most
public or private prayer. Contemplative prayer is active listening, not just “doing nothing for a
long time.” A lot happens in the silence.

The first hour of silence should be set aside for people to become
comfortable with the quiet. Gently remind participants this can be the
most difficult part as they transition from clamor to silence.

Those attending a silent retreat should be encouraged to avoid coming
with a list of questions for God to answer. The point is not to come
and fill up the silence with spoken prayers, but sit still and be quiet.
Encourage participants to avoid music and cell phones (unless an
emergency arises).

One pastor in Denver organized a 40-hour silent retreat to begin celebrating Lent. No talking
was allowed once the silence began. For this particular church, the silence was broken at the
end of the weekend when you passed the communion elements to your neighbor and said,
“The body of Christ, broken for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.”

Participants were given a pad of paper to write notes to others. However, between breakfast
and lunch, no communication was allowed. Not even background music played during this time.

Here’s a copy of their schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Schedule #1 for a 40-hour Silent Retreat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 p.m. Check-In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 p.m. Silence Begins /Unpack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 p.m. Community Gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 p.m. Free Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 a.m. Breakfast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A few options to consider for your silent retreat:

- Set up a confessional booth. Staff the booth by someone unaffiliated with your church who will hear confessions and pray with participants throughout the weekend.

- Offer 30-60 minute appointments with a spiritual director throughout the weekend.

- Collect different types of prayers and print them out with instructions. Place them into a basket. Invite participants to pick one and go practice that type (such as thanksgiving, adoration, confession, etc).

- Create the “Stations of the Cross.” Put together a series of artistic representations depicting Christ carrying the cross to His crucifixion and the hours before He died. Consider adding your own creativity or community involvement. One church decided to create a hands-on experience by inviting participants to hammer a nail into a plank, write a sin on a card and then shred it, followed by lighting a candle.

- Develop a Prayer Guide that leads people during the silence. Invite them to spend time in different “prayer rooms.” These can be physical rooms whether or not you have the space—allowing participants to settle or walk anywhere on the retreat grounds. Each room can have a theme.

This is a sampling of the great ideas we’ve seen. If you have any ideas you would like us to consider adding to this list, please drop me a note at info@margaretfeinberg.com—We’d love to hear from you!
Organize A DVD-Based Retreat: One great option for churches with smaller attendance or a limited budget is, instead of hiring a retreat speaker, consider using a DVD-based Bible study for the teaching portions of the retreat. The fee for the retreat should include the cost for each member to receive a workbook for the DVD study. Encourage participants to bring their Bibles, but always bring a few extra for those who may need one.

Those who have led DVD-based retreats recommend placing discussion time directly after watching the DVD. Also, several commented that extended personal quiet times to interact with the workbook questions is helpful.

One church in Kentucky has done this multiple times. A group of women rent and share cabins and cook their own food to keep costs down. Then they play the DVD presentation on a large screen during the main session times. Here’s a sample schedule for two of their retreats. The first uses a four-session DVD and the second schedule uses a six-session DVD.

**Sample Schedule #2 for Overnight Retreat Based On Four-Session DVD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Depart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Worship/Video Session 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Snacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Late-Night Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 a.m.</td>
<td>Worship/Video Session 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 a.m.</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 a.m.</td>
<td>Snack/Pack-Up/Load Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Video Session 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Worship/Video Session 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion/Worship/Closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Depart for Home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Schedule # 3 for Overnight Retreat Based On Six-Session DVD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Depart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Video Session 1/Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Break/Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Video Session 2/Discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Friday**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Video Session 3/Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Pack-Up/Load Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Video Session 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Video Session 5/Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Video Session 6/Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Depart for Home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Saturday**

Be creative and flexible in the way you schedule a DVD-based retreat. One church in California was able to keep the cost of their entire retreat to $20 per person by using a 4-session DVD and limiting the event to a single day. Here’s a peek at their schedule:

Sample Schedule #4 for Single Day Retreat Based on Four-Session DVD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Welcome, Worship, and Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:25 a.m.</td>
<td>Video Session 1/Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Personal Quiet Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Video Session 2/Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:20 a.m.</td>
<td>Personal Quiet Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Worship and Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:20 p.m.</td>
<td>Video Session 3/Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Personal Quiet Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Video Session 4/Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Personal Quiet Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Worship and Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Wrap Up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Sample Budget:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Income</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$$ from Retreat Budget</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship $$ raised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(___ X $____)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th><strong>Expenses</strong></th>
<th><strong>Budget</strong></th>
<th><strong>Actual</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin (nametags, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker (travel, fees, welcome</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>basket, mileage, meals/accomm for</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>speaker &amp; personal assistant, etc)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals/ Accommodations ($___/person, incl taxes &amp; gratuities)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Decorations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snacks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bathroom Baskets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thank Yous</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goodie Bags ($5/woman)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Door prizes ($1/woman)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complimentary Registrations</td>
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<tr>
<td>(including scholarships)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Meet Margaret

Margaret Feinberg is a popular Bible teacher and speaker at churches and leading conferences such as Catalyst, Thrive and Extraordinary Women. Her books and Bible studies have sold over 600,000 copies and received critical acclaim and extensive national media coverage from CNN, the Associated Press, USA Today, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post and more.

She was recently named one of 50 Women to Watch by Christianity Today, one of the 30 Voices who will help lead the church in the next decade by Charisma magazine and one of the ‘40 Under 40’ who will shape Christian publishing by Christian Retailing magazine. Margaret lives in Morrison, Colorado, with her husband, Leif and their superpup, Hershey.

Now that you’ve read the official bio, here’s the kick off your shoes and drink iced tea on the back porch version:

Margaret spends most mornings with her good friends Coffee and God. Without Coffee, mornings would be difficult. Without God, life would be impossible.

You’ll often find Margaret (puppy-in-tow) adventuring outdoors—she enjoys hiking, river rafting, and scanning the night sky for the Northern Lights and shooting stars.

She boasts an exceptionally dry sense of humor that she attributes to her Jewish father. Little known secret: He was recently inducted into the Surfer’s Hall of Fame, and her mom earned her captain’s license for 60-ton ships. They’re pretty amazing. You’d like them.

Married to Leif for almost a decade, Margaret’s known for losing things like her sunglasses on her head, keys in her hand, or her phone for the 12th time in the same day. Luckily, Hershey hasn’t been left anywhere... yet.

For being a writer, friends say she has a surprisingly narrow vocabulary and uses a lot of the same phrases including, “I’m game,” “Whahhooo!” and “Oooh! Let’s do it.”

Always up for an adventure, Margaret is known to drive 50 miles to chase down a food truck and snag Groupons for skydiving on a whim. She prefers watching comedies and laughing until her tummy aches over doing sit ups.

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