



# *A Fresh Reminder*

Remembering God's Presence and Provision

*Retreat Guide*



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# Welcome

## *Welcome to the Pilgrim House guided retreat!*

In our experience, pilgrimage is best understood as a state of the heart that is enriched by a physical pilgrimage. Going on pilgrimage is a significant event, and lessons learned on the Camino normally take a while to sink in deeply after we return home.

Our goal at Pilgrim House is to offer support and resources for pilgrims who go on pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago. We have designed this guided retreat for pilgrims who have walked the Camino at some point in the past. Periodic retreats help us slow down, reorient ourselves to God, and sit with what is stirring in our hearts. We hope and pray you will find this time renewing as we look back on the Camino and pull out some “fresh reminders” to encourage us in our daily rhythms and moments.

Some of you are coming from busy schedules. Others feel burdened by circumstances and uncertainties in the world. However you find yourself, we believe the Lord has invited you to this retreat and is ready to lead you to a time of rest.

If you are able to leave for a day or two, it can be beneficial to get away from home and from your normal activities. If you cannot get away, plan for an extended time in a quiet place with minimal noise, work, or other distractions.

## *The Pilgrim House Team*





# Schedule Options

This guided retreat is flexible and can adapt to your needs. Depending on how much time you have, feel free to shape your retreat from the suggested options below to what works best for you.

We highly recommend the two-night retreat. This gives you time to settle into the retreat and take time between the retreat elements. We also recommend you minimize digital interaction and other distractions, and make sure you are in a place where you can read and journal comfortably.

## *Two-Night Schedule*

### **Day One**

(shape according to the time of day you begin)

Opening Reflection

Session I - An Unhurried Spirit

Take a walk or use the Finger Labyrinth

### **Day Two**

Breakfast

Session II - Lectio Divina

Lunch

Take another walk or use the Finger Labyrinth

Session II - Psalm 23 Reflection

Dinner

### **Day Three**

Breakfast

Session III - Compass Exercise

Lunch

## *One-Night Schedule*

### **Day One**

(shape according to the time of day you begin)

Opening Reflection

Session I - An Unhurried Spirit

Take a walk or use the Finger Labyrinth

### **Day Two**

Breakfast

Session II - Lectio Divina

Session II - Psalm 23 Reflection

Lunch

Session III - Compass Exercise

Take another walk or use the Finger Labyrinth

Dinner

## *Full Day Schedule*

Breakfast

Opening Reflection

Session I - An Unhurried Spirit

Take a walk or use the Finger Labyrinth

Lunch

Session II - Lectio Divina

Session II - Psalm 23 Reflection

Dinner

Session III - Compass Exercise

## *Half-Day Schedule*

Opening Reflection

Follow Session One all the way through

Session II - Lectio Divina

Session III - Compass Exercise



# Things to Bring

- **Retreat Guide** – you can use this guide in digital or printed format. There is also an ink-friendly version if you want to print out the guide, but do not want the pictures. If using the guide digitally, you may want to print the Finger Labyrinth and Compass exercises located on pages 23 and 39, respectively.
- **Journal and Pen**
- **Journals and/or photos from your time on the Camino**
- **Colored pencils, markers, or watercolors (variety of colors) for the Finger Labyrinth and Compass exercises**
- **Bible or Bible app**
- **Walking shoes**



# Opening Reflection

## *Blown By God Toward Newness*

The news is that God's wind is blowing.

It may be a breeze that  
cools and comforts.

It may be a gust that  
summons you to notice.

It may be a storm that blows you where you have  
never been before.

Whatever the wind is in your life,  
pay attention to it...

and the blessing of God,  
Father, Son, and Spirit,

will abide with you always. (Brueggemann, p. 183)

As we begin, be aware of any distractions or anxieties that need to be acknowledged and let go. Take some time to allow things to come to the surface and jot them down.



# *Opening Reflection cont.*

**What is on your mind right now?**

**What are your concerns these days?**

**Who are you thinking about?**

**What do you look forward to as you set aside time to take a retreat?**



# *Session One: An Unhurried Spirit*

## *Reflection: An Unhurried Spirit*

by F. Walter

Depending on where we live and our personalities, we may be used to a fast pace of life, where we highly value efficiency and getting stuff done. Many of us have a lot to do. Work, housework, school, activities, and caring for others might come to mind when we think about our different responsibilities, and of course we want to relax, too! Often we're tempted to fill each day as full as possible. We might feel that the more we get done, the more successful the day has been.

Even sitting still can be a problem for some of us. Our bodies are quiet but our minds are active and distracted with ten other things we could be doing. We are impatient to get up and go as soon as the situation allows. For me, when reality sets in that I do not have time to do everything at a leisurely pace, I start hurrying from one thing to another. When I feel that pressure, anything - or anyone - that interrupts me can be viewed as an obstacle.

If your life sometimes feels crowded and rushed, too, we are glad you can create space for this retreat. You came here ready to slow down. Perfect. Let's explore more of what it means to have an unhurried spirit, where our whole beings are not in a hurry at all.

First, take an internal inventory. How hurried do you feel in your spirit right now? Do you feel calm, or do you feel in a rush for some reason?

If you feel hurried, take a few deep breaths, release any pressure you might feel to get this or that done, and quiet your spirit.

Be ready to receive whatever the Lord has for you right now.

Be present in this moment.





# Session One: An Unhurried Spirit

## I. Slow down for loving union with God

Contrary to feeling hurried, when we are *unhurried* in our spirits, our hearts are still before the Lord. We can leave in his hands the things we need to get done. We are more fully present to the moment even if we have a lot of activity and responsibilities.

In his book *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, Pete Scazzero encourages us to “slow down for loving union with Christ.” He describes *loving union* as opening all of our hearts to the will and the presence of Jesus. Scazzero says we can do all the “right” things like read the Bible and practice spiritual disciplines, but we still have our hearts closed and resistant to Jesus.

In contrast, loving union is where our hearts are yielded and where Jesus has full access to all of our life. Slowing down enables us to pay attention to what the Lord is saying and then respond to his leading. (Scazzero, Chapter 4)

Passages throughout Scripture remind us to slow down for this kind of loving union with Jesus:

**Psalms 46:10** Be still and know that I am God.

**Proverbs 3:5-6** Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.

**John 15:4-5** Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

**Philippians 4:4-7** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Reading through these verses, it is incredible to think the Lord is not a God who hassles and hurries us. He does not rush us to get more done. Instead, through phrases like, “be still,” “remain in me,”



# Session One: An Unhurried Spirit

and “do not be anxious about anything,” the Lord gives us permission to slow down and keep turning to him for what we need.

If we look at the life of Jesus, we see he himself was never in a hurry. In fact, he waited until he was 30 years old to call his disciples. Even as he traveled from town to town, he took his time to answer questions, heal the sick, and teach.

For many of us, though, it’s hard to go counter-cultural and choose to slow down. Pete Scazzero encourages us to prioritize loving union with Jesus as more important than checking things off our to-do list.

**What do you think when you read the phrase “an unhurried spirit”?**

The Camino is also important in cultivating an unhurried spirit. For a time, we *did* choose to slow down. We let our provisions be given to us daily, and for the most part we didn’t worry about the next day. We were open to the people we met, and we had time to move slowly if we needed to think. I imagine many of us would report feeling more aware of the presence of the Lord on our Camino journeys, perhaps more so than in our normal routines at home.

A few years ago I walked the Camino Inglés. Prior to this pilgrimage, being in a hurry was my default mode of operation. Between work, kids, and frequent extra appointments, I often felt pressure to



# Session One: An Unhurried Spirit

move fast to get where I needed to be and to do things efficiently. Even on previous Caminos, I had raced for beds in albergues or pushed to finish walking before lunch time.

For the Camino Inglés, I arrived in Ferrol one evening and would start walking the following morning. After checking in to the hotel I headed to the supermarket. On the way back, I was walking quickly - as I normally did - since I felt rushed, as I normally did. I sensed the Lord nudge me, "Where are you going? Why are you *rushing*?" I stopped dead and looked around, thinking, "Why *am* I rushing? I have nowhere to be and no deadline to get there." I walked back to the hotel as slowly as I wanted to go.

This was a new concept, to go as slowly as I could rather than as quickly as possible. I tried to practice it for the rest of the Camino.

Of course, there was a difference between feeling hurried and feeling energetic. Some days on the Inglés I had a lot of energy and I did want to walk quickly. Still, my spirit was learning how to unwind and become more attuned to the Lord's presence.

**In your daily life, what triggers you to feel stressed or rushed?**

You might be a fast mover like I am! Or you might naturally take things slower. Perhaps you're aware that your spirit is still in a hurry even if you don't look it. As we cultivate an unhurried spirit, either for the first time or as we go deeper in the concept, looking back on the Camino can draw out important principles we can apply to our life at home. I hope you enjoy this fresh reminder.



# *Session One: An Unhurried Spirit*

## **II. Redefine time well-spent**

First, let's redefine what it means to spend our time well. Some of us come from cultures that value being efficient and disapprove of wasting time. Traffic jams or long lines at the bank can feel like irritating obstacles. Accomplishing a lot each day is also a strong value in these cultures. I used to stay up until 2am working, because there was always more to do and I wanted to work ahead as much as possible. This pattern was terrible for sleep, but I thought I was being “faithful” in my responsibilities.

On the Camino, we had a different concept of using our time well. Walking was the least efficient way to get around, and so was stopping for the day in the afternoon. Yet the majority of us chose to walk instead of taking other transportation. Moreover, we often chose to finish walking even though there was plenty of daylight left. Why? What was distinct about the Camino?

One answer is that priorities seemed different on the Camino. Sure, we wanted to complete that day's allotted kilometers. But there was more to our pilgrimage than walking, much less walking all 100km or 500km as quickly as we could. If I had rushed through my last Camino, I would have missed out on some sacred times with the Lord while I walked. I also may have said no to some long lunches, exploring a quirky park in Betanzos with a pilgrim friend, or having a cup of tea with a cafe owner. These moments unfolded because I felt unhurried and open to them. You might have highlights from your own Camino where slowing down gave you opportunities you otherwise would have missed.

**On your pilgrimage, what moments unfolded because you felt unrushed?**





# *Session One: An Unhurried Spirit*

It can be said that the fuller Camino experience includes important things like time with God, connecting with people, downtime, and taking care of daily needs. An unhurried rhythm is good and sustainable. The Camino is a rich journey where exertion, rest, solitude, and connection can be balanced. Sometimes these things happen simultaneously, and sometimes they happen separately, but on the Camino there is time for all of them to happen in an unhurried way.

If we think about our lives as a continuation of our pilgrimage, we can re-calibrate our priorities to balance these same elements: exertion, rest, solitude, connecting with God, and spending time with people. Time well-spent then becomes having a balanced day, not just being efficient or getting a lot done. Instead of viewing interruptions as obstacles, we can view them as opportunities to be fully present in the moment. For example, praying can be a valuable use of time if we get stuck in traffic. Or if we are caught in a long line, we can look around and appreciate the diversity of the humans around us (like on the Camino!). Remembering the balance and unhurried nature of the Camino can help us redefine what it means to spend our time well at home.

**During your Camino, how did you define a “good” day?**

**Prior to this retreat, how would you have defined a “good” day?**



# Session One: An Unhurried Spirit

## III. Making room for other people

Speaking of appreciating the people around us, many of us have fond memories of the pilgrims we met on the Camino. We had the sense that as we walked, we had time and energy to be hospitable and gracious to each other. We “made room” in our hearts to welcome other pilgrims into our circle, even if just for a brief moment. You may have stories in which others made room for you and showed you kindness.

**Take some time reflecting on how open you were to others while you walked the Camino. How were others open to you on the Camino?**

Once we are home it can be a different story. Sometimes we are so focused on our own agenda that it’s difficult to offer our time or energy to other people. People who interrupt us or need our attention may get a mixed welcome from us.

However, in today’s rushed world, our intentionality in making room for other people could speak volumes to them about God’s love. Christine Pohl writes,

“The manner in which we welcome people, the interest we show in them, and the time we take for them communicates to them that they are valued.” (Pohl, p. 179)



# *Session One: An Unhurried Spirit*

Receiving people in an unhurried manner shows them that we value them. Approaching people in an unhurried manner can do the same. In these ways we bring the Camino values of openness and friendliness back home.

**How would making room for others in your heart make a difference in your everyday life?**



# Session One: An Unhurried Spirit

## IV. Respect your limits and reserve your energy

During a day on the Camino, the majority of us walked anywhere from 10km to 35km. Finishing the stage meant taking thousands of steps over the course of several hours. There was motivation to respect the process and take the time necessary for all the walking to unfold. We took breaks when we needed to use the bathroom, eat something, or just rest before climbing the next hill.

When we were on the Camino, we respected our physical limits and usually didn't commit to more than we could handle. Most of us did not plan to walk five straight 40km days; if we did, reality would settle in pretty quickly and we'd be shattered by the second day! We had our limits and learned for ourselves what constituted a reasonable amount of kilometers to walk each day.

**What limits did you come to respect on the Camino?**

Respecting our limits is a good practice in our daily routines as well. If you know yourself and your limits, you can make reasonable goals for each day. There are many things you *could* be doing today, but what can you do while maintaining an unhurried spirit? There may be only so much you can do before you end up grumpy and exhausted. What can you save for tomorrow so you can move through today with a comfortable, unhurried pace? All of us will have different answers, but respecting our limits helps us stay present to the Lord and reserve energy for other important things.

This last point is significant: reserve energy to do the important things you need to do later in the day. Just as on the Camino we reserved energy to get groceries and deal with our dirty clothes, in our normal routines we need to save energy to fulfill our variety of responsibilities.





# Session One: An Unhurried Spirit

For example, if you're a student, you may need to reserve energy so you can study well for an upcoming exam.

If you are a parent, you may need to reserve energy so you can cheerfully play Legos or Uno with your kids and give them the best of you.

If you have a full-time job, reserving energy for grocery shopping after work might be essential.

If you are retired, you may need to reserve energy to be available for grandkids or other young people who need encouragement.

While we're at it, getting enough sleep is a good example of respecting our limits and a way to build up our energy reserves. The older I get, the more I value it!

**What limits do you have in your normal routine that you need to respect so you can maintain an unhurried spirit?**

**What are some important responsibilities for which you need to reserve energy?**



# Session One: An Unhurried Spirit

## V. Choose Contentment

Every day on the Camino, at some point we would choose to stop and say, “I’ve walked enough today.” Then we would clean up and enjoy the rest of the afternoon. We had walked enough, and we didn’t fret about the kilometers we *had not* walked. We were content.

Similarly, we can choose contentment when we are home. There is a time to work hard and be diligent. However, one of the key practices for cultivating an unhurried spirit is knowing when to say, “I’ve done enough for now,” or, “I’m going to slow down so I can be fully present to the Lord and to the moment.” We do not have to worry about what we leave *undone* when we choose to be content with what we have accomplished so far.

Another important aspect of contentment is receiving what the Lord has for us on a given day. I once walked with an Australian pilgrim named Greg. He woke up one morning covered in bedbug bites, which threw the next few days of his Camino into a bit of turmoil. Suddenly he had to inspect, wash, and dry all his gear. He also had to find a pharmacy, buy cream, and regularly apply it to his itchy spots. And they itched! Sometimes we would see him mindlessly scratching as he walked or sat on a bench on a break. The bedbugs were definitely something unexpected he had to deal with.

Greg had a wonderful attitude, though. Whenever we mentioned his angry red bumps he would say with a big smile, “Oh, don’t worry about me! This is the greatest day ever! We’re on the Camino!” His joyful perspective was an example for us. He was content.

**How can you regularly choose contentment in this season of your life?**



# *Session One: An Unhurried Spirit*

## **VI. The big picture**

Many of us appreciate the Camino for helping us get back to basics. In our normal routines we can find balance and simplicity as we cultivate an unhurried spirit. When we slow down for loving union with God, redefine time well spent, make room for others, respect our limits, and choose contentment, we follow Jesus' example of trusting God for the outcome of our days. Our hearts can be unhurried because we trust in the One who leads us through the pilgrimage of life.

**Reflecting on what you have read, how might you now define a “good” day?**

**What other reminders or new insights from this reflection do you find especially helpful?**



# Session One: An Unhurried Spirit

## *Tips for hurried moments*

There will still be times when we feel squeezed by stress and hurry. Regularly taking an inventory of your internal state can help you become more aware of when you feel rushed. In those moments, try these tips:

- Take a deep breath.
- Physically slow down whatever you are doing. Don't rush. Make your body slow down to reinforce your spirit slowing down.
- Try saying a "breath prayer" (a short prayer that can be said in a single breath). Some examples are:
  - "You are here. Thank you, Lord."
  - "Your grace is enough."
  - "I will be still and know that you are God."
- Consider whether you need to take a break when you are finished with your current task.
- If you are with someone, be thankful for their presence and enjoy your time together.





# Activity Option: A Slow Walk

Go for a walk and practice the discipline of going slowly. Breathe deeply and slowly. Settle into your pace. Notice when you feel hurried and slow down your spirit in these moments.

## Contemplative walking guidelines (optional) (Brown, p. 55):

1. During the first half of your walk, practice **releasing**:
  - Notice what distracts and hinders you.
  - Confess any sins.
  - Release any concerns or burdens to the Lord.
2. At the halfway point, practice **resting**:
  - Take a break and simply enjoy the Lord's presence with you.
  - Linger as long as you wish, receiving whatever gifts of Scripture, peace, or insight God gives.
3. When you are ready to begin your journey back, practice **returning**:
  - Allow the Spirit to strengthen and empower you as you take God's presence and gifts out into the world.



# Activity Option: Finger Labyrinth

If going for a walk is not possible, an alternative is to print out the Finger Labyrinth found on page 23 and trace it with your finger as you go through the same practices of **releasing**, **resting**, and **returning**.

You might enjoy coloring the labyrinth first to make it easier to trace.

This paper labyrinth is a replica of the floor labyrinth laid into the nave of the Chartres Cathedral in France. (Wikimedia Commons contributors 2020)

# *Activity Option: Finger Labyrinth*



# Session Two: The Lord is My Shepherd

## Lectio Divina - Psalm 23

*Lectio Divina*, or sacred reading, is an ancient way of reading Scripture in order to let it sink in deeply. It consists of prayerfully contemplating Scripture not just to capture the main ideas of a passage, but to let it speak to us. We read the Bible slowly and reverently, looking to encounter the living God in the midst of our daily lives. (Brown, pp. 102-5)

In this exercise, you will read Psalm 23 a total of three times. Each time, allow the Lord to bring something to your attention. The first time you will simply experience the text. The second time you will pay more attention to what is stirring in your heart. The third time you will go deeper and ask the Lord what He is saying to you through the passage. Try not to hurry or rush, and **don't worry about writing anything down as you read**. You will have ample time to journal after the three readings.

**Slowly read Psalm 23 out loud.** As you read, be aware of a word or a phrase that catches your attention and invites you to ponder it. Don't analyze it. Simply experience the Psalm and listen for something that speaks more loudly than the other words. After you finish reading the passage, take a few minutes to contemplate the word or phrase.

### Psalm 23

<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

<sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,

<sup>3</sup> he restores my soul.  
He guides me in paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup> Even though I walk  
through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.





# Session Two: The Lord is My Shepherd

**Slowly read Psalm 23 out loud, a second time.** Listen now for how the word or phrase connects with your life. What is God saying to you in this word? Pay attention to any thoughts or feelings that arise as you sit with the passage.

## Psalm 23

<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

<sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,

<sup>3</sup> he restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup> Even though I walk  
through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.

**Slowly read Psalm 23 out loud, a third time.** Go deeper now and listen for God's invitation to you. Pray about what you have been noticing. What is God saying to you?

Now spend some time recording what you noticed in your journal. What is the Lord stirring in you?



# Session Two: The Lord is My Shepherd

## Reflection 2: Psalm 23

by F. Walter

One of the most easily recognized metaphors for life is that it is a journey or pilgrimage full of incident, joys and crises, periods when we are toiling uphill and times when the sun is always shining on our back. Life is a journey with God, with ourselves and with others - a community of pilgrims, learning as we go. Viewed as a pilgrimage, life clearly requires of us the same qualities of courage, determination, flexibility, resilience and hope that we see in the focused, time-limited pilgrimages we undertake in our holidays. In both cases the most important gift to hold on to is the promise of God to be our guardian and our guide. (Pritchard, p. 6)

As we continue our study of Psalm 23, we find it offers us fresh reminders of the Lord's care and deep love for us.

The first line is **"The Lord is my shepherd."**

In his classic book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, shepherd Phillip Keller writes about his experience owning a flock of more than 200 sheep. He shares that sheep do not "just take care of themselves." The shepherd needs to give them endless attention and meticulous care to ensure that they eat well, stay safe from predators, and remain close by.

Isn't it interesting that David, being a shepherd himself, found it fitting and accurate to call the Father God his shepherd? Phillip Keller writes, "[David] knew from firsthand experience that the lot in life of any particular sheep depended on the type of man who owned it. Some men were gentle, kind, intelligent, brave, and selfless in their devotion to their stock. Under one man sheep would struggle, starve, and suffer endless hardship. In another's care they would flourish and thrive contentedly." (Keller, pp. 1-11)

On this side of history, we get to see how Jesus shepherded those around him with love and compassion. He called himself the good shepherd, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep." (John 10: 14-15). As we read the Gospel books we watch him patiently leading and teaching his disciples. We see how



# Session Two: The Lord is My Shepherd

he cared for the sick, the crowds, and the children he met. Of course, we also see how he laid down his life to reconcile us to him.

That *this* Lord is our shepherd today and knows us, leads us, and cares for all his flock is wonderful. Someone else is in charge of me, and I can respond and follow. I don't need to have all the answers or meet all of my needs myself, but I can trust that the Lord has my best interests at heart and will take care of me. This is a deeply restful place to be.

## **“I shall not be in want.”**

This verse does not claim we will never need something nor go through hardship. Even in the short slice of life we spent on the Camino, there were times when we were hungry, cold, and tired. Some of us may have suffered injury or other loss. Still others of us may have had relational stress with other pilgrims.

In our home life, some problems can go much deeper and seem unresolvable.

However, we will never lack the “expert care and management” (Keller, p. 15) of our shepherd even when we go through difficult times. He has his eye on us.

The psalmist Asaph wrote in Psalm 73:23-26:

Yet I am always with you;  
you hold me by my right hand.  
You guide me with your counsel,  
and afterward you will take me into glory.  
Whom have I in heaven but you?  
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.  
My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength of my heart  
and my portion forever.

If you have walked with the Lord for a while, you likely have stories when the Lord met your need in a clear way and proved himself to be the strength of your heart. Perhaps it was a sense of peace as you



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heard some hard news or said goodbye to a loved one. Or he gave you wisdom as you made an important decision. It may be that he sustained you with energy to be the primary caretaker for someone, day after day.

My father was one who knew God as the strength of his heart. He was diagnosed with stage IV cancer one winter and passed away just a few months later. From his diagnosis until his passing, he suffered from constant pain and weakness. Radiation treatments caused him to lose his voice, a big loss for someone who not only taught for a living but also loved telling jokes. Through the months, my dad shared he was experiencing the Lord's presence in deeper ways. He often said, "His grace is enough for me each day."

My loss is deep, and you may be going through a painful loss, too. In these situations, we find ourselves grieving and longing for events to have turned out differently. The Lord our shepherd is here, caring for us and giving us the spiritual and emotional resources we need to get through these difficult times. In his book *Life Without Lack: Living in the Fullness of Psalm 23*, Dallas Willard writes, "A life without lack is a life in which one is completely satisfied and sustained, no matter what happens. *No matter what happens!* It's not merely a matter of gritting your teeth and hanging on. It is a matter of real provisions directly from God to you." (Willard, p. xxi)

**"He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul."**

Phillip Keller, in *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, writes:

The strange thing about sheep is that because of their very makeup it is almost impossible for them to be made to lie down unless four requirements are met.

Owing to their timidity they refuse to lie down unless they are free from all fear.

Because of the social behavior within a flock, sheep will not lie down unless they are free from friction with others of their kind.





## Session Two: The Lord is My Shepherd

If tormented by flies or parasites, sheep will not lie down. Only when free of these pests can they relax.

Lastly, sheep will not lie down as long as they feel in need of finding food. They must be free from hunger...

It is only the sheepman himself who can provide release from these anxieties. It all depends upon the diligence of the owner whether or not his flock is free of disturbing influences. (Keller, p. 24)

Keller goes on to describe how the shepherd tirelessly works to meet these four requirements. Through warding off predators, watching out for bullying behavior, preventing insects and ticks, and leading the flock to different pastures, the good shepherd finally gets rewarded when his sheep lie down and rest.

What strikes me in Keller's account is the importance he places on his sheep finding rest. This is his heart toward his sheep, and it is a profound look into God's heart for us. Remember, God does not rush us along, but he actually gives us permission to rest. When he created the Sabbath and also designed us to require sleep, he established rhythms to restore us on a regular basis.

Restoration also comes when we regularly practice confession. In Session One we reflected on slowing down for loving union with Jesus, where our hearts are open (instead of resistant) and Jesus has full access to all our life. Giving Jesus this kind of access will undoubtedly bring to light areas where we have sinned. Acknowledging these areas and asking for forgiveness lead to restored relationship with the Lord.

Reciting this traditional prayer can be a good place to start during a time of confession:

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.





# Session Two: The Lord is My Shepherd

Sometimes we need to find restoration through forgiving others. Loving our enemies and forgiving those who hurt us are extremely difficult commands to follow. In fact, it may take years for our hearts to come to a place where they can bless, rather than curse, those who have harmed us. The Lord patiently guides us into forgiving others. Ruth Ann Batstone writes,

Humanly speaking, forgiveness is impossible, but that is when we must remember that it does not begin with us. It begins with God. His generous forgiveness, which cost him so much, was not offered because we deserved it, but because he is a gracious, loving, and merciful God. When we are humbled to see our need and gratefully accept that forgiveness, we are changed by that transaction with God. Our relationship with God is restored and our hearts are filled with love, gratitude, worship, and a desire to serve the God who loved and forgave us. Out of that reservoir of grace and mercy, God enables us even to forgive the unforgivable, though in ourselves that would be impossible. But God often invites us to be part of something impossible, and then he does the impossible through us.

Forgiveness *requires* that supernatural intervention! If you think it is easy, either you are in denial or you have never been deeply hurt. It requires a supernatural change in our hearts. But the gospel has the power to change us in unimaginable ways. (Batstone, pp. 115-16)

Forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same thing. Sometimes reconciliation does not occur at all. However, when we respond to the Lord's invitation to forgive someone and let go of any bitterness, he leads our hearts deeper into freedom and restoration.

**“He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”**

Because the Lord is leading our lives, he knows how to bring us into a mature faith where we have wisdom and a deep love for others. While his role is to lead us, our role is to follow him.

At times we may have a hard time submitting to his leadership. Our pride gets in the way. We might have habits we are not willing to give up. Or we are impatient with people and we don't care to change. Maybe we don't want to do something we know the Lord wants us to do. We just want to go our own way.



## Session Two: The Lord is My Shepherd

Looking back on our time on the Camino, this self-assertion had to yield to following the yellow arrows and going the right direction. Otherwise, we wouldn't have made it to Santiago. Those who painstakingly marked out the path knew the best way to reach Santiago and had our interests at heart. Going our own way, especially if it were our first Camino, would have put us in remote and perhaps even dangerous places. In contrast, by following the yellow arrows, we did not need to worry or stress about figuring out where to go. We could simply walk and enjoy the journey.

In life, if we want to be more like Jesus but we are unwilling to follow his leading, it may be an arduous journey. Examining our hearts, are we willing to submit ourselves to the Lord's leading, or do we think we know better? Submitting to him will allow him to bring us down paths of righteousness. I believe this gets easier the longer we walk with him. As he demonstrates his care and love for us over the years, our confidence in him grows. We may find that we submit to his guidance more joyfully than we did ten or twenty years ago!

The good news is that the Lord knows where he is taking each of us, and it's not up to us to figure out our steps. We can respond to his leadership, walk with him, and enjoy the journey.

**“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.”**

I want to share one more thing about my father. He was hospitalized for pneumonia, but it was soon discovered the cancer had spread to his lungs and he was facing an end-of-life situation. He passed away just 12 hours after the doctor determined he was suffering from respiratory failure.

Very early that same day, my dad heard a voice inside him saying, “You will be with me soon; you have finished your work in this world.” A few hours later, the doctor informed us in a video call that our father was dying. We were all shocked. But my dad texted us during the call and shared the words the Lord had spoken to him. He then texted, “My life is ending. My mind is peaceful and I think the voice is from the Lord. I am happy to be resting with the Lord.”

My dad was able to be in complete peace even as his lungs were failing. The Lord gave him all the strength and comfort he needed to endure those final hours. In the very moment of my dad's greatest need, the Lord made himself real and clear. My dad did not fear any evil. In fact, he was ready to go and rest with the Lord.



# Session Two: The Lord is My Shepherd

Dallas Willard writes, “It seems like Jesus was constantly saying to his friends, ‘Fear not! Fear not!’ Imagine what that would be like. No fear of life, aging or death, disease or hunger, no fear of any person or creature, not even the loss of all your possessions. You can live without fear even in the midst of a world dominated by fear... While the psalmist clearly knows about life’s dangers, he can still say, ‘I will fear no evil.’ Why?” (Willard, p. xviii)

## **Because:**

**“For You are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”**

As my father’s experience demonstrates, it is because the Lord is with us that we can walk without fear through our most difficult days.

Walking through the valley of the shadow of death with a *weak* shepherd would do us no good. The Lord is not a frail shepherd who is overpowered and beaten if a thief comes upon us. He is not a nervous shepherd who himself walks in fear. Nor is he an aloof shepherd who doesn’t care what happens to us. But our shepherd is the loving, Almighty God, and we never have to fear because the strong God is with us. He is strong enough to carry our burdens, and he is powerful enough to actually do something about them according to his will.

Dallas Willard encourages us again, “What do you fear? Whatever came to mind, I want you to know that you have nothing to fear. If you doubt this, I urge you to ask God to give you a peace about this. Let me say it again: no matter what you fear, you can live without that fear. You do not have to be afraid of anything. Nothing. Because God is with you, you can live without fear.” (Willard, p. 32)

Psalm 138:3 says, “When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted.” What would it be like to go through life boldly, without any fear or anxiety because the Lord is with us?

**“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”**

In these lines David highlights the Lord’s generosity. Willard writes, “We do not know if [David’s enemies]



## *Session Two: The Lord is My Shepherd*

are sitting at the table with him, but they are in his presence. I imagine that David, lacking nothing, and realizing that he certainly does not deserve this kind of divine accommodation, stops and serves his enemies, offering them food and drink and inviting them into the fellowship of the Shepherd's sufficiency." (Willard, p. 171) This is an interesting interpretation, one with which you may or may not agree.

What is clear is that God is generous and does not run out of what we need. This abundance is more than just material blessings. David mentions his enemies, and he has walked through the valley of the shadow of death, so we know he already has been through hard situations. Yet he can still say his cup is overflowing.

**"Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."**

These final lines of Psalm 23 recall the promise of eternal life with Jesus, the beautiful fulfillment of a long walk together on earth. The Lord is our strong shepherd who will lead us to our eternal home at the end of our days on earth.





# Journaling Questions: Psalm 23

**In what specific ways did the Lord care for you during your time on the Camino?**

**What other experiences in your life have proved the Lord's care for you?**

**Where might the Lord be leading you to quiet waters and restoration? (Do you need to make more time for rest? Do you need to spend time in confession? Are there people the Lord is asking you to forgive?)**

**Are you receptive to the Lord's leadership, or are there areas in your life in which you want to go your own way? Where do you struggle with letting him guide you in paths of righteousness?**





# *Journaling Questions: Psalm 23 cont.*

Psalm 138:3, says, “When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted.” What would it be like to go through life boldly, without any fear or anxiety because the Lord is with you?

David says that his cup overflows. Do you view the Lord as generous? How has your view of his generosity affected your relationship with him?

What new insights or reminders did you have about the Lord as your shepherd?

# Session Three: Compass Exercise

Our final activity is a personal compass, a contemplative practice that helps us observe how different elements of our lives interact together. The points of the compass act as a metaphor for different areas of life. It is helpful to see our values, experiences, and choices laid out in one place.

It is in the now - in the present moment - that we are called to follow God. It is here that we live and move and have our being. To stand fully in the present is the reason we look at the past for understanding. It is also the reason we look forward in faith to what we cannot yet fully see. The present always stands between memory and hope. This is the vantage point from which you understand the past and look forward into God's future for you.

Jeremiah 6:16 reads:

“This is what the LORD says:  
‘Stand at the crossroads and look;  
ask for the ancient paths,  
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,  
and you will find rest for your souls.’”

Asking for the good way at our own life's crossroads means taking a closer look at where we are and where God is leading. A personal compass can be an invaluable tool for such personal navigation in our lives, especially when we find ourselves in uncharted territory. (Cepero, p. 93)

Begin this reflective exercise by finding a quiet space. Spend some time resting in God's presence, asking him to open your eyes to his movement in your life. You may find this psalm helpful to pray:

Search me, God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.  
- Psalm 139: 23-24

# Session Three: Compass Exercise

Take a piece of drawing paper, the larger, the better. Draw a circle, dividing it into four quadrants. Leave an area in the center of the circle open. **Alternatively, you can print out the compass template provided on page 39.**

In each of the quadrants, draw or write the reflections you have had during this retreat. Feel free to be creative as you do this, using other media (such as song choices, watercolors) as you wish.

The following questions are suggested guidelines for each compass direction. Answer the questions you find important and feel free to leave the rest. (Au and Cannon, pp. 432-51)

## **EAST: The direction of the rising sun.**

- Where is God calling you to embrace something new in your life?
- What are you taking hold of?
- Are you aware of issues or areas in need of healing or change?
- In which relationships is the Lord calling you to invest more deeply?

## **WEST: The direction of the setting sun, the direction of endings and letting go.**

- What needs to be released, ended, or shed?
- Where do you need to slow down?
- Are there limits that need to be adjusted?
- What beliefs and attitudes do you need to repent of, or die to?
- Is there anyone whose forgiveness you need to seek? Is there anyone the Lord is prompting you to forgive?

## **NORTH: The direction of the North Star, representing your guiding light, your spiritual values, and mentors.**

- What images or names of God nurture and sustain you?
- In what ways has God proven himself and his character?
- What key Scriptures help you define your life's direction and purpose?
- What values are important to you?
- Who else deeply loves and guides you?
- Who have been dear and faithful friends?

# Session Three: Compass Exercise

**SOUTH:** The direction of sunny exposure. This direction is marked by your lively energy, imagination, and spontaneity.

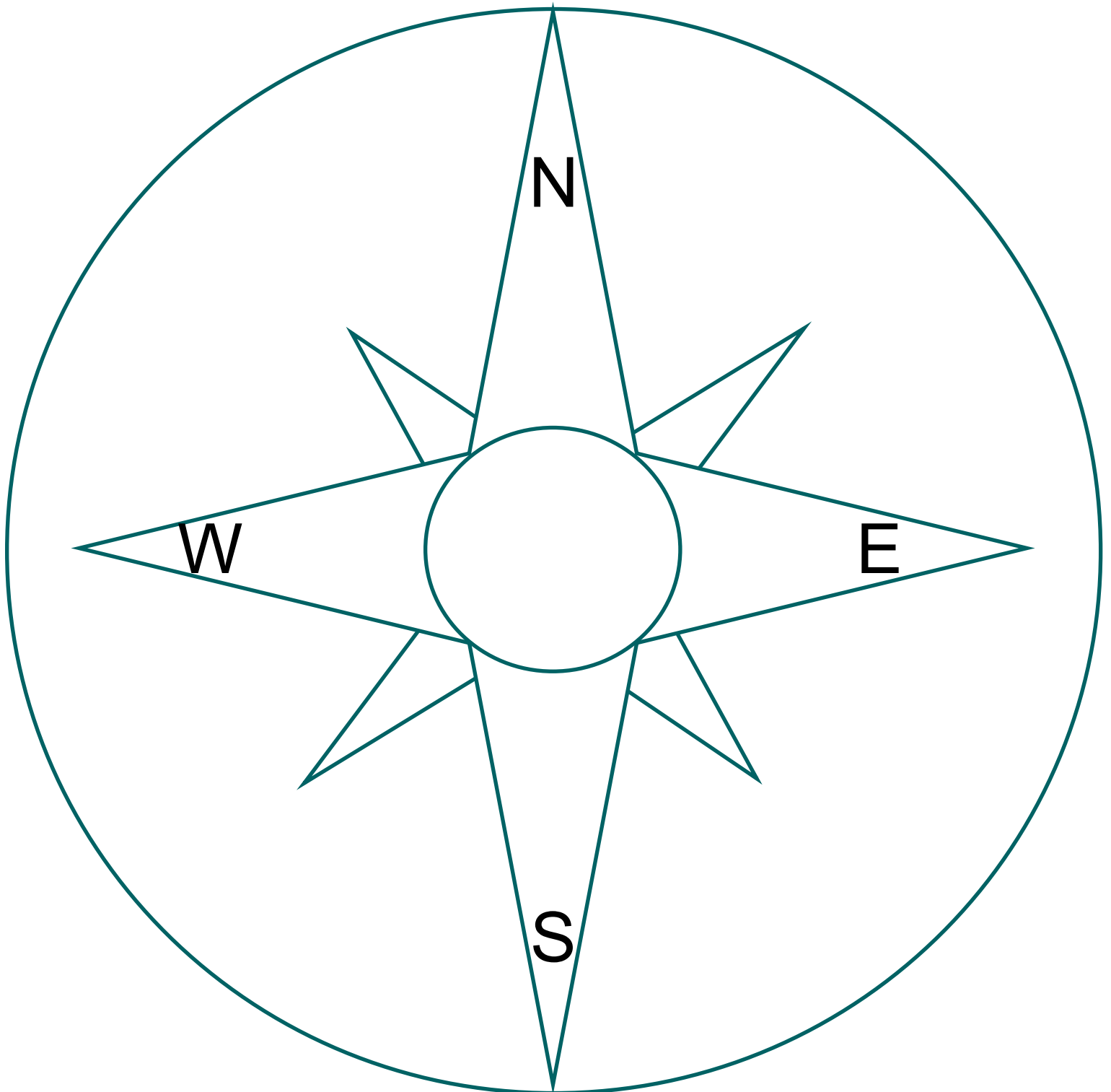
- Where is God sparking new creativity in your life?
- What do you long to do or be? (Remember that God speaks through our desires, and that when our deepest desire is to love God and love our neighbor, we can trust that God may well be leading us through our other desires.)
- What activities are life-giving for you?
- How do you nurture yourself?
- What gifts do you have that the Lord is leading you to use more fully?

When you finish your compass, spend some time reflecting, praying, and journaling. You may find that some of the things you wrote down are compatible. On the other hand, some items will be in conflict with each other and will require you to choose among them. Letting go of one thing in order to welcome in something new is normal. Allow the Lord to guide your thoughts. Where are you saying yes? Where are you struggling to say yes?

When you are ready, write YES in the **CENTER** of the compass to represent your YES to your life and to living it fully in Christ. You can also draw an image if that is helpful.

**What would a full yes to God in your whole person, physically, mentally, and spiritually look like?**

# *Session Three: Compass Exercise*







# *Closing Blessing*

As you close your retreat and head back to your normal routine, may you carry home the gifts God has given you during your time away. Be blessed!

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,  
wherever he may send you.

May he guide you through the wilderness,  
protect you through the storm.

May he bring you home rejoicing  
at the wonders he has shown you.

May he bring you home rejoicing  
once again into our doors. (Pritchard, p. 61)



# *In Closing*

## *About Pilgrim House*

Open since 2014, the Pilgrim House Welcome Center offers support to pilgrims who have just finished the Camino. We invite you to come by when you are in Santiago and explore our space. Within Pilgrim House, you will find a living room where you can spend time with fellow pilgrims and a quiet reflection room where you can take time for solitude. Additionally, we provide resources designed to help you process or debrief your Camino.

To help meet practical needs, we also offer laundry service, backpack storage, and boarding pass printing.

## *Contact Us*

We are available if you would like to share about your retreat experience or if you need to talk with someone about what the Lord stirred in your heart as you went through the retreat. You can reach us at [pilgrimhousesantiago@gmail.com](mailto:pilgrimhousesantiago@gmail.com) or through the contact form at [www.pilgrimhousesantiago.com](http://www.pilgrimhousesantiago.com).

## *Support Pilgrim House*

Pilgrim House is a donor-supported ministry. If you are interested in making a donation, please visit <https://pilgrimhousesantiago.com/support>. Your gifts help us provide an oasis in Santiago for future pilgrims.

Thank you!

*- The Pilgrim House team*

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