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# ©Introduction

Have you ever felt like you have a great group of girls in your youth group, but they have trouble connecting? Maybe they spend more time nagging each other and being catty than they do on developing relationships with each other. Or maybe you have a great group of girls who have deep relationships, but they're lacking substance in their relationships with the Lord. Whatever your situation, getting girls together and away from home for a weekend can help girls develop relationships and deepen their walk with the Lord.

The Teen Girl Retreat could be exactly what you're looking for. The main goal for the retreat is twofold. The first goal is for girls to grow deeper in their relationship with God. The second goal is for girls to grow deeper in their relationships with one another. As with most retreats, many girls will experience emotional highs in their relationship with the Lord and with others, but this retreat is designed to help girls sustain their new-found growth.

The Teen Girl Retreat can be exactly what you need it to be. It's designed to be flexible. You can pack everything into a day, or stretch the retreat out into a full three-day weekend. It's meant to be molded to fit your personality and the personality of your group. Most of the sessions are discussion-oriented, so girls can talk freely about where they're at and you can share from your own life experiences.

The Teen Girl Retreat includes a devotional time each morning, which is a great opportunity to launch your group into a new small group curriculum. Whether you're planning to start Friends, Girls Only, or another small group curriculum, this is an excellent opportunity to challenge girls to take ownership and responsibility for their own spiritual growth.

This retreat will incorporate thought-provoking discussion, quiet time for reflection, and plenty of time to kick back and have fun. Here are a few things to consider before you get started:

1. **Where to?** You may not have to have a huge travel budget or be able to take your girls to a four-star resort, but it definitely helps to get away. Consider having the retreat at your church, in your home, or at a retreat center. If your group is small, consider booking a large suite at a hotel.

If your group is large, check into reserving a retreat center or campground. Many retreat centers offer reduced rates in the off-season.

2. **Who's taking the lead?** As a girls' retreat, it's good for it to be a girls-only event. The Teen Girl Retreat runs well with a team of women, but can be

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run with as few as two leaders. Make sure all of the leaders involved know that this retreat will require their involvement and willingness to be vulnerable. Nobody gets to sit back and observe on this one.

3. **How much?** Your church may have the budget to cover the expenses for your retreat, but it is recommended that the retreat cost the girls something. We value what we pay for, so even a small registration fee to cover meals is recommended. On the other hand, many churches simply don't have a budget to cover events like this, but make sure that the registration fee doesn't restrict some girls from being able to attend.

4. **Who's coming?** Make sure you announce the retreat with enough advance for girls to make arrangements to come. Ask your youth pastor for permission to announce the retreat in youth group. Often students don't pay much attention to announcements, so invite girls personally and talk with parents. Make flyers for the girls with information about the retreat, where it will take place, what to bring, and how much it will cost.

Since the Teen Girl Retreat is mostly discussion-oriented, here are a few pointers for leading small group discussion:

- **Don't be afraid of silence.** Sometimes girls are formulating answers, processing emotions, or coming up with the boldness to speak up. Allow time for silence. It will probably feel pretty awkward, but sometimes allowing up to a few minutes of silence can be incredibly helpful. Ask the question again, rewording it with more explanation. Share from your own experience. As a last resort, call on an individual to speak up.

- **Avoid lopsided discussions.** Some girls will be much more willing to speak up than others, but make sure everyone gets a chance to share. You may find it necessary to gently cut some girls off and draw others out. Ask quiet girls to respond to something that's already been said rather than making her share about herself right away.

- **Press the issue.** Don't be afraid to ask girls to elaborate on their answers. Girls (especially younger girls) have a tendency to share about friends or things they've heard about rather than sharing from their personal experience. Ask "How did that affect you?" or "What did you think about that?" If a girl shares short or incomplete answers, don't be afraid to ask "Could you tell us a little more about that?"

- **Find the balance.** Girls love to talk, but sometimes the conversation might veer off into the land of completely unrelated topics. If this happens, gently guide the conversation back on track. Sometimes the off-topic subject is something girls really need to talk about. So be sensitive to that and allow the Holy Spirit to guide the discussion.

- **Consider your audience.** Know the attention span of the girls in your group. It may be helpful to divide girls into smaller groups by age. Younger girls may not be able to sit still and talk as long as older girls will want to. Plan to let the younger girls have some more free time to get up and move around.



# One-Day Schedule

9:00 a.m.	Breakfast
10:00 a.m.	Devotions
11:00 a.m.	"Take a Deeper Look"
12:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:30 p.m.	"Masks"
3:00 p.m.	"Goal-Setting"
4:00 p.m.	Clean Up
4:30 p.m.	Final Session
5:30 p.m.	Parents Pick-up



# One-Day Retreat

## When the Girls Arrive...

It's good to have a meal right away when girls arrive. It will help to break the ice. Girls will have something to do as they talk and get to know one another. Once everyone has arrived, welcome everyone, make introductions, and pass out the "Retreat Guidelines/Goals" handout. Talk through the handout with the girls and let them know what the goals are for the retreat.

student handout

## Quiet Time...

After you eat and get acquainted, take about 45 minutes to have quiet time together. Share "Teaching: #1: Bible Reading Simplified" with the girls. Let them take about 15 minutes to read their devotion and answer the questions. Share "Teaching #2: Prayer Simplified" and allow the girls about 10 minutes to pray. Let the girls take a break before starting the next activity.

leader page

leader page

student handout

## Take a Deeper Look...

Pass out the "Take a Deeper Look" handout. Pray with the girls and then have them answer the questions on their own. After you've given them time to answer all of the questions, discuss their answers. If you have a big group, split the girls up. Because of the nature of the questions, it's beneficial to break up by age group. Start out your discussion by letting the girls volunteer to share. If no one is sharing, share your answers. Your transparency with your girls will set the tone for the rest of the discussion. If you're still having trouble getting volunteers, pick someone to go first. Encourage all of the girls to share.

student handout

This session has the potential to become very emotional. Make sure each girl has plenty of time to share as she needs to. It can be really tempting, but do your best to refrain from giving advice or comforting her. Practice just affirming what she's going through. Utilize statements like, "I can understand why you'd be upset by that" or "It sounds like that really hurt you." Before you start discussion, put a tissue box in the

middle of the circle, but if a girl starts to cry, don't hand her a tissue. Without knowing it or meaning to, this can communicate "stop crying." Also, your girls will probably want to surround the girl who is emotional and hug her.

Encourage the girls to stay seated and listen while others are sharing.

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### Take a Break...

After the small group time has concluded, the girls will probably be very ready for a break. Take time for lunch. Allow time for the girls to spend time talking.

### Masks...

Pass out the "Self-Description" handout. Pray with the girls and then have them answer the questions on their own. After you've given them time to answer all of the questions, discuss their answers. Again, if you have a big group, split the girls up (using the same groups you used for "Take a Deeper Look"). The girls will probably be more comfortable sharing with one another by this point, and will probably be much more willing to start discussion. In this session, it's particularly important that you're willing to be vulnerable.

----- { student handout }

Again, this session has the potential to become very emotional. Make sure each girl has plenty of time to share as she needs to. It can be really tempting, but do your best to refrain from giving advice or comforting her. After this small group session, take a break and let the girls walk around or have a snack.

leader page }

### Set Some Goals...

Share "Teaching: Getting Started" with the girls. Pass out the "Goal-Setting" handout. After such an honest self-evaluation, the girls are probably ready to start making some changes in their lives. This is a great opportunity to launch into a new devotional series or Bible reading schedule. Pray with the girls and allow them plenty of time to set goals for themselves. Encourage them to share their goals with an accountability partner.

----- { student handout }

### Clean Up...

After you've completed the goal-setting activity, take a break and encourage the girls to help you clean up. Put the room back in order and make sure the room is ready for the next group who will use it.

### Wrap Things Up...

During this final session, encourage girls to share how they've grown or what they've learned throughout the day. This is a great time for the girls to meet with their accountability partner and pray. Make sure the accountability partners share contact information. Before the girls leave, pray a commissioning prayer over the girls and make sure they take their handouts and devotionals with them.



# ©Two-Day Schedule©

- 6:30 p.m. Arrival & Dinner  
7:15 p.m. Introductions/Go over guidelines  
7:30 p.m. Worship  
8:00 p.m. Craft  
9:30 p.m. Life's Most Embarrassing Moments



- 9:00 a.m. Wake-up/Breakfast  
10:00 a.m. Teaching #1/Devos  
Teaching #2/Prayer  
11:00 a.m. "Take a Deeper Look"  
Noon Lunch/Game  
1:30 p.m. "Masks"/Self-Description  
3:00 p.m. "Goal Setting"  
4:00 p.m. Clean Up/Pack Up  
4:30 p.m. Final Session  
5:30 p.m. Head Home



# ©Two-Day<sup>®</sup> Retreat

## When the Girls Arrive...

It's good to have a meal right away when girls arrive. It will help to break the ice. Girls will have something to do as they talk and get to know one another. Once everyone has arrived, welcome everyone, make introductions, and pass out the "Retreat Guidelines/Goals" handout. Talk through the handout with the girls and let them know what the goals are for the retreat.

{ student handout }

## Worship Together...

After you're done eating, spend time together in worship. If you have a girl or leader who could lead a few songs from her guitar or keyboard, coordinate with her ahead of time. If you don't have a worship leader available, worship together with a CD. Worshiping with a few songs can help to set the tone for the entire retreat.

## Crafty, Crafty...

After worship, do a craft together. Try making a journal together. This journal can be helpful for the girls as they grow in their relationship with the Lord.

{ leader guide }

## Life's Most Embarrassing Moments...

After your craft, let the girls change into their jammies and play a game together. "Life's Most Embarrassing Moments" is a great game to get girls comfortable with one another. This game is sure to get your girls laughing and open to sharing.

{ leader guide }

## Breakfast...

Let the girls sleep in a little bit and have breakfast together. It doesn't have to be anything too elaborate, but make sure the girls get something good to eat. It's going to be a full day!

## Quiet Time...

After you eat and get acquainted, take about 45 minutes to have quiet time together. Share "Teaching #1: Bible Reading Simplified" with the girls. Let them take about 15 minutes to read their devotion and answer the questions. Share "Teaching #2: Prayer Simplified" and allow the girls about 10 minutes to pray. Let the girls take a break before starting the next activity.

{ leader guide }

{ leader guide }

{ student handout }

### Take a Deeper Look...

Pass out the "Take a Deeper Look" handout. Pray with the girls and then have them answer the questions on their own. After you've given them time to answer all of the questions, discuss their answers. If you have a big group, split the girls up. Because of the nature of the questions, it's beneficial to break up by age group. Start out your discussion by letting the girls volunteer to share. If no one is sharing, share your answers. Your transparency with your girls will set the tone for the rest of the discussion. If you're still having trouble getting volunteers, pick someone to go first. Encourage all of the girls to share.

{ student  
handout }

This session has the potential to become very emotional. Make sure each girl has plenty of time to share as she needs to. It can be really tempting, but do your best to refrain from giving advice or comforting her. Practice just affirming what she's going through. Utilize statements like, "I can understand why you'd be upset by that" or "It sounds like that really hurt you." Before you start discussion, put a tissue box in the middle of the circle, but if a girl starts to cry, don't hand her a tissue. Without knowing it or meaning to, this can communicate "stop crying." Also, your girls will probably want to surround the girl who is emotional and hug her. Encourage the girls to stay seated and listen while others are sharing.

### Take a Break...

After the small group time has concluded, the girls will probably be very ready for a break. Take time for lunch. Allow time for the girls to spend time talking.

### Masks...

Pass out the "Self-Description" handout. Pray with the girls and then have them answer the questions on their own. After you've given them time to answer all of the questions, discuss their answers. Again, if you have a big group, split the girls up (using the same groups you used for "Take a Deeper Look"). The girls will probably be more comfortable sharing with one another by this point, and will probably be much more willing to start discussion. In this session, it's particularly important that you're willing to be vulnerable. Again, this session has the potential to become very emotional. Make sure each girl has plenty of time to share as she needs to.

{ student  
handout }



It can be really tempting, but do your best to refrain from giving advice or comforting her. After this small group session, take a break and let the girls walk around or have a snack.

leader  
guide

### Set Some Goals...

Share "Teaching #3: Getting Started" with the girls. Pass out the "Goal-Setting" handout. After such an honest self-evaluation, the girls are probably ready to start making some changes in their lives. This is a great opportunity to launch into a new devotional series or Bible reading schedule. Pray with the girls and allow them plenty of time to set goals for themselves. Encourage them to share their goals with an accountability partner.

student  
handout

### Clean Up...

After you've completed the goal-setting activity, take a break and encourage the girls to help you clean up. Put the room back in order and make sure the room is ready for the next group who will use it.

### Wrap Things Up...

During this final session, encourage girls to share how they've grown or what they've learned throughout the day. This is a great time for the girls to meet with their accountability partner and pray. Make sure the accountability partners share contact information. Before the girls leave, pray a commissioning prayer over the girls and make sure they take their handouts and devotionals with them.



# Three-Day Schedule

7:00 p.m. Arrival & Dinner  
8:00 p.m. Introductions/Go over guidelines  
8:15 p.m. Worship  
9:00 p.m. Life's Most Embarrassing Moments  
10:00 p.m. Late Night Game



9:00 a.m. Wake-up/Breakfast  
10:00 a.m. Teaching #1/Devos & Prayer  
11:00 a.m. Craft  
12:30 p.m. Lunch/Free Time  
2:00 p.m. "Take a Deeper Look"  
3:30 p.m. Game  
4:00 p.m. Letter-Writing Activity  
5:30 p.m. Dinner/Free time  
7:00 p.m. Worship  
7:45 p.m. "Masks"/Self-Description  
10:00 p.m. Late Night Game



9:00 a.m. Wake-up/Breakfast  
10:00 a.m. Quiet Time/Devotions  
Teaching #2/Prayer  
11:00 a.m. Goal-Setting

Noon

Lunch

1:00 p.m.

Clean Up/Pack up

1:30 p.m.

Final Session



# ©Three-Day Retreat©

## When the Girls Arrive...

It's good to have a meal right away when girls arrive. It will help to break the ice. Girls will have something to do as they talk and get to know one another. Once everyone has arrived, welcome everyone, make introductions, and pass out the "Retreat Guidelines/Goals" handout. Talk through the handout with the girls and let them know what the goals are for the retreat.

student  
handout

## Worship Together...

After you're done eating, spend time together in worship. If you have a girl or leader who could lead a few songs from her guitar or keyboard, coordinate with her ahead of time. If you don't have a worship leader available, worship together with a CD. Worshipping with a few songs can help to set the tone for the entire retreat.

## Life's Most Embarrassing Moments...

After worship, let the girls change into their jammies and play a game together. "Life's Most Embarrassing Moments" is a great game to get girls comfortable with one another. This game is sure to get your girls laughing and open to sharing.

leader  
guide

## Late Night Game...

Enjoy your time together. Watch a movie or play one of the games suggested in the leader guide.

## Lights Out...

Make sure the girls get a little bit of shut-eye. The next couple of days will be pretty taxing emotionally, spiritually, and physically, so try to get everyone to at least think about sleeping around midnight.

## Breakfast...

Let the girls sleep in a little bit and have breakfast together. It doesn't have to be anything too elaborate, but make sure the girls get something good to eat. It's going to be a full day!

## Quiet Time...

After you eat, take about 45 minutes to have quiet time together. Share "Teaching #1: Bible Reading Simplified" with the girls. Let them take about 15 minutes to read their devotion and answer the questions. Allow the girls about 10 minutes to pray. Let the girls take a break before starting the next activity.

leader  
guide

student  
handout

### Crafty, Crafty...

Do a craft together. Try making a journal together. This journal can be helpful for the girls as they grow in their relationship with the Lord.

### Take a Break...

Take time for lunch. Allow time for the girls to spend time talking.

### Take a Deeper Look...

Pass out the "Take a Deeper Look" handout. Pray with the girls and then have them answer the questions on their own. After you've given them time to answer all of the questions, discuss their answers. If you have a big group, split the girls up. Because of the nature of the questions, it's beneficial to break up by age group. Start out your discussion by letting the girls volunteer to share. If no one is sharing, share your answers. Your transparency with your girls will set the tone for the rest of the discussion. If you're still having trouble getting volunteers, pick someone to go first. Encourage all of the girls to share.

{ student  
handout }

This session has the potential to become very emotional. Make sure each girl has plenty of time to share as she needs to. It can be really tempting, but do your best to refrain from giving advice or comforting her. Practice just affirming what she's going through. Utilize statements like, "I can understand why you'd be upset by that" or "It sounds like that really hurt you." Before you start discussion, put a tissue box in the middle of the circle, but if a girl starts to cry, don't hand her a tissue. Without knowing it or meaning to, this can communicate "stop crying." Also, your girls will probably want to surround the girl who is emotional and hug her. Encourage the girls to stay seated and listen while others are sharing.

### Play a Game...

After the small group time has concluded, the girls will probably be ready for a break. Play a quick game. Use one of the games suggested in the leader's guide or use one of your own.

### Write a Letter...

Pass out the "Letter Writing Guidelines" handout. Split the girls into pairs (try to pair girls with others they may not know well yet). Pray with the girls

{ student  
handout }



and instruct them to write a letter to their partner. The letter will include two things the writer admires about the other person, and one area for change. This activity will help girls learn to give and receive compliments and criticism. These letters will be a great source of encouragement for the girls. Let the girls write for 15 minutes and encourage the girls to write for the entire time. After the girls have written their letters, instruct them to exchange the letters and talk about them. Make sure the girls stay focused on their partner for the entire discussion time.

After the discussion time has ended, have the girls share with the group about what they learned from the letter (about themselves and about their partner).

### Take a Break...

After the letter writing activity, the girls will probably be very ready for a break. Take time for dinner. Allow time for the girls to spend time talking.

### Worship Together...

After you're done eating, spend time together in worship. If you have a girl or leader who could lead a few songs from her guitar or keyboard, coordinate with her ahead of time. If you don't have a worship leader available, worship together with a CD. Worshiping with a few songs can help to set the tone for the evening session.

### Masks...

Pass out the "Self-Description" handout. Pray with the girls and then have them answer the questions on their own. After you've given them time to answer all of the questions, discuss their answers. Again, if you have a big group, split the girls up (using the same groups you used for "Take a Deeper Look"). The girls will probably be more comfortable sharing with one another by this point, and will probably be much more willing to start discussion. In this session, it's particularly important that you're willing to be vulnerable.

----- { student handout }

Again, this session has the potential to become very emotional. Make sure each girl has plenty of time to share as she needs to. It can be really tempting, but do your best to refrain from giving advice or comforting her. After this small group session, take a break and let the girls walk around or have a snack.



### Late Night Game...

Enjoy your time together. Watch a movie or play one of the games suggested in the leader guide.

### Breakfast...

Let the girls sleep in a little bit and have breakfast together. It doesn't have to be anything too elaborate, but make sure the girls get something good to eat. It's going to be another full day!

### Quiet Time...

leader  
guide

After you eat and get acquainted, take about 45 minutes to have quiet time together. Share "Teaching #2: Prayer Simplified" and allow the girls about 10 minutes to pray. Pass out the Devotion #2 and give the girls about 15 minutes to read and answer the questions. Let the girls take a break before starting the next activity.

student  
handout

leader  
guide

### Set Some Goals...

Share "Teaching #3: Getting There" with the girls. Pass out the "Goal-Setting" handout. After such an honest self-evaluation, the girls are probably ready to start making some changes in their lives. This is a great opportunity to launch into a new devotional series or Bible reading schedule. Pray with the girls and allow them plenty of time to set goals for themselves. Encourage them to share their goals with an accountability partner.

student  
handout

### Take a Break...

After the letter writing activity, the girls will probably be very ready for a break. Take time for dinner. Allow time for the girls to spend time talking.

### Clean Up...

After you've completed the goal-setting activity, take a break and encourage the girls to help you clean up. Put the room back in order and make sure the room is ready for the next group who will use it.

### Wrap Things Up...

During this final session, encourage girls to share how they've grown or what they've learned throughout the day. This is a great time for the girls to meet with their accountability partner and pray. Make sure the accountability partners share contact information. Before the girls leave, pray a commissioning prayer over the girls and make sure they take their handouts and devotionals with them.



# Leader Guide



# Life's Most Embarrassing Moments

The purpose of this game is to break the ice and get girls comfortable sharing with one another.

Have each girl write down her most embarrassing moment. (It's fun for leaders to participate too!) Have her write her name on the top of the page, but explain that the only way anyone will find out who the story belongs to is if they guess correctly. Divide the girls into teams (groups A & B). Keep the stories separated by team as well. Elect one leader to read the stories out loud. Read a story from group A while group B guesses who the story belongs to (it helps if the team elects a spokesperson). The team only gets one guess per story. If the team guesses incorrectly, the owner of the story can choose to reveal her identity.

If you have a small group, don't divide into teams. Have the girls write down their guesses for each story. After all the stories are read, have the girls reveal their stories. Give a prize to the girl who has the most correct answers.

If you want, keep score and provide the winning team with a prize. This will definitely be a game to keep everyone laughing!



# ©Craft Idea©

One great craft idea is to make journals. This is something to help girls remember the fun they have and commitments they make throughout the weekend.

## Journal Idea #1

## Repurposed Book

### Supplies:

Old books with cool covers. The older the better.

It helps if the binding is disconnected from the cover.

You'll need a book with at least 1½ to 2-inch wide binding.

Used book stores, flea markets, or garage sales are great places to look. If you've got time, take the girls along to go shopping.

Spiral notebooks (small enough to fit inside the old book).

Ribbon, rope, or leather (about 12 inches per journal)

Scissors

Glue Gun

### How To:

1. Cover from the book. Make sure to keep the front and back covers connected. You can usually just cut along the front and back cover pages and remove the book part of the binding.
2. Cut the ribbon, rope, or leather in half and glue one piece to each cover.
3. Remove the cover pages from the book. Place the notebook inside the cover of the book. Make sure there's a ½ - to 1-inch margin around the cover of the book.
4. Place the cover page on top of the notebook cover and glue around the three outside edges of the book. (You're not gluing the spiral notebook to the book cover. You're creating a book jacket for the notebook).

## Journal Idea #2

## Personalized Folder

### Supplies:

Folder with three-hole fasteners

Loose-leaf paper

Markers, scrapbooking paper, glitter, etc.

### How To:

1. Put 20-30 sheets of loose-leaf paper in each folder.
2. Let the girls decorate the cover of the folder.

# Teaching #1: Bible Reading Simplified

To quote the classic Sunday School tune “Read your Bible, pray every day, and you’ll grow, grow, grow.” If you hang around church for very long, you’ll hear people telling you how important it is to read your Bible every day. Well, it’s a pretty big book. It can be a little intimidating. That can raise a few good questions:

Which one should I choose? If you go to your local Christian Book store, you’ll probably see like 8 zillion different versions and editions of the Bible. NIV, KJV, NKJV, AMP, NASV, the Message, Student Edition, Women’s Devotional, Large Print, Thin line... and the list goes on. So, how do you choose the right Bible for you? Look through the different Bibles. Read some of your favorite passages in different versions. Be sure to choose a version that you understand.

The New International Version (NIV), Contemporary English Version (CEV), or New American Standard Version (NASV or NASB) are good versions to start with. Personally, I like to have several different versions on hand to look at the same passage in different versions. The different editions (student edition or women’s edition) usually mean that there will be extra devotional comments (usually in the margins). If you think you’d like something like that, go for it. For my devotions, I like to use a study Bible. It has extra commentary and includes a lot of background information that can help you understand the context of the passage.

If you’re feeling a little too overwhelmed, ask your youth pastor, youth leader, or sponsor to go with you to help you choose the right Bible for you.

Where should I start? Starting at Genesis and working your way through the Bible is great to do at some point in your life, but if you’re just starting to get into reading your Bible, you might run out of steam doing it that way. I think it’s good to read a portion of the Old Testament, a passage from Psalms or Proverbs, and a portion of the New Testament every day. That way, you get a little something from everywhere. Pace yourself. You don’t get a prize for reading the fastest, so take your time. Let it soak in a little bit. Re-read passages. Write down verses that are encouraging or challenging to you.

What does this mean? Some passages in the Bible are a little difficult to understand. This is when it can be really helpful to use a study Bible. When looking at a difficult passage, I like to ask three questions.

continued on next page



- What did it mean then? Take a look at the cultural context of the passage. Use your study Bible or ask a pastor or leader to determine what the original author meant when the passage was written and how the original readers understood the author.

- What does it mean now? Once you understand what it meant to the original audience, it can be a lot easier to understand what the passage means in the United States in 2008.

- How can I apply this to my life today? Once you understand what it meant then and what it means now, think about what it means in your life. Is there something that you need to change or do differently? Does it change the way you think about other people? Does it change the way you view God?

Hopefully, this will help you start to read your Bible every day so you can grow, grow, grow.



# Take a Deeper Look

Take time to answer these questions. Pray about your answers and be as honest as possible. Feel free to use the back if you need more room.

Pray with the girls and have them answer the questions on their own.

Start out your discussion by letting the girls volunteer to share. If no one is sharing, share your own answers. Your transparency with your girls will set the tone for the discussion.

Make sure each girl has plenty of time to share as she needs to.

It can be incredibly tempting, but do your best to refrain from giving advice. Just affirm what she's saying – "I can understand why that would upset you"

#1 Who or what holds my life together, other than God?

#2 What brings relaxation into my life?

#3 How does God fit in my life? What is He to me (friend, creator, savior, etc.)?

#4 Where are things running thin? In what areas are you on the verge of really struggling (fears, big questions, temptations, etc.)?

#5 What is the thing that you've been hiding from almost everyone?

After you've given them time to answer all of the questions, discuss their answers. If you have a big group, split the girls up by age/grade level.

Remind the girls that they'll get out of the retreat what they're willing to put into it.

Don't be afraid to challenge girls to elaborate on their answers – "Tell us more about that" or "What do you mean when you say \_\_\_\_\_?"

Make tissues available, but if a girl starts to cry, don't hand her a tissue. Without knowing it or meaning to, this can communicate "stop crying." Affirm what she's saying – "It sounds like that really hurt you." Encourage girls to stay seated and listen to what's being communicated.

# ©Guidelines for Letter Writing

**[ Read ]** You're about to write a letter to someone. Write about two things you like about the other person and then write about one thing the other person could change. Make sure you're honest and gentle. Here are some things to keep in mind when you're writing:

#1 Pray together before writing.

#2 Begin your letter with "Dear (name)"

#3 Stay with your partner the entire time (don't talk to your neighbor).

#4 Try to write for the entire time. If you finish writing about the three things you're supposed to write about, ask questions about the other person, or share something about yourself.

#5 Above all, be kind, godly, and honest. This exercise is for your benefit and for the benefit of the other person.

Let the girls write for about 15 minutes and remind them to keep writing for the entire time.

After the writing time is over, you're going to exchange letters. Take time to read carefully about what the other person has said. After you're both done reading, talk about what you read/wrote. Here are some things to keep in mind when you start to discuss the letters:

#1 Ask questions about what the other person has written (ex: "What did you mean when you said \_\_\_\_\_? Could you give me some examples?")

#2 Concentrate on the strongest feeling and talk about that first. A strong feeling might be one that you don't understand or have never realized about yourself.

#3 Take turns talking. Let the other person finish what they're saying (and listen the entire time) before you respond.

After the girls have discussed their letters, come together and have them share what they learned through the activity – about themselves and about their partner.

# Self-Description

Pray with the girls and have them answer the questions on their own.

Start out your discussion by letting the girls volunteer to share. If no one is sharing, share your own answers. Your transparency with your girls will set the tone for the discussion.

Make sure each girl has plenty of time to share as she needs to.

It can be incredibly tempting, but do your best to refrain from giving advice. Just affirm what she's saying – "I can understand why that would upset you"

Take time to answer these questions. Pray about your answers and be as honest as possible. Feel free to use the back if you need more room.

If you were looking in a mirror and being completely honest, how do you see yourself?

If you could use a mirror to look inside, what would you find? How do you see yourself on the inside?

How do you want others to see you? What are some of the masks you wear?

After you've given them time to answer all of the questions, discuss their answers. If you have a big group, split the girls up by age/grade level.

Remind the girls that they'll get out of the retreat what they're willing to put into it.

Don't be afraid to challenge girls to elaborate on their answers – "Tell us more about that" or "What do you mean when you say \_\_\_\_\_?"

Make tissues available, but if a girl starts to cry, don't hand her a tissue. Without knowing it or meaning to, this can communicate "stop crying." Affirm what she's saying – "It sounds like that really hurt you." Encourage girls to stay seated and listen to what's being communicated.



# Teaching #2: Prayer Simplified

Have you ever made a decision to pray more only to be frustrated by how little it seems like you actually have to say to God? It's difficult to find time, and if you do find the time, sometimes it feels like you're talking to a brick wall. Prayer might not be as easy as it looks.

However, prayer is important. In his book *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster says, "Prayer catapults us onto the frontier of the Spiritual life." Prayer is our method of communication with the Creator of the universe. Prayer allows us to bring our requests before a good and living Father who loves us.

Let's take a look at some ways to simplify this prayer thing:

#1 Pray like Jesus. When Jesus prayed in Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV), He was trying to teach the disciples how to pray:

<sup>9</sup>"This, then, is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,

<sup>10</sup>your kingdom come,  
your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup>Give us today our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup>Forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

<sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one."

Jesus makes prayer look really easy. He calls on the Lord, He asks that the kingdom of God would come on earth, for what He needs, that we'd be forgiven as we forgive, and that we'd be delivered from temptation. All of these are excellent areas to focus on when we pray.

#2 Make a list. Even though we mean well, sometimes we forget the people and things we want to pray for. It's helpful to make a list of the things in our own lives, people, and issues that we want to pray about. A list can help you stay focused on the Lord and what you're praying for. Don't forget to take time while you're praying to let God search your heart. Make room for the Lord to show you areas of your life that aren't pleasing to Him. Let Him show you what is pleasing to him. Pause to tell the Lord how much you love Him.

#3 Write it down. It can also be really helpful to write down what we pray for and when our prayers are answered. When we are in need of something big, it can be really encouraging to take a look back over our lives and see how many times God has answered our prayers. Writing things down can also help you stay focused.

As you pray, remember that prayer really is simply talking to God. You don't have to use any fancy language. He speaks your language. Talk to Him in your own words. Prayer is the way to let Him know what's on your mind – what you're thinking and feeling. Practice staying quiet and waiting to hear what He has to say back to you.



# Teaching #3: Getting Started

Have you ever decided to set aside time to spend with the Lord only to find that as soon as you sit down, the phone starts ringing, the neighbor's dog trees a coon and won't stop barking at the top of his lungs, or someone turns on the TV, which is of course, featuring your favorite show of all time. It can be difficult to learn to set aside time to spend with the Lord. One of the biggest keys to having an effective devotional life is setting yourself up to succeed.

Here are a few tips for getting started the right way:

**Supplies.** Make sure you have a Bible (in a version you can understand), journal, pen, and maybe a devotional book. If you need help with any of this stuff, let a leader know.

**Pick a time.** The mornings are the best time (see Psalm 5:3). I know, I know: teenagers aren't supposed to be functional before 10 AM. Well, it is actually possible, and as you develop good habits now, it will be easier to maintain these habits into your adult life. If you absolutely find it physically impossible to spend time with the Lord in the morning, try to choose a time when your house is quiet and you can get time alone. The most important thing is trying to be consistent, so if you snooze through the alarm, try to make time later in the day.

**Get by yourself.** This can be particularly difficult if you share a room or have a big family. Be on the lookout for times during the day when you can find a place to be alone. If the weather is nice, try going outside.

**Turn stuff off.** Try to remove all of the distractions in your room. Turn off the TV, computer, and (gasp!) phone. I promise, if you turn off your phone for 30 minutes, it will still be there beeping, vibrating, and lighting up when you turn it back on.

**Clear your mind.** Even if you turn off your phone, TV, and computer, sometimes it's still difficult to turn off your wandering thoughts. Sometimes trying to clear your mind of distractions can cause you to think of things you need to add to your to-do list, people you need to call, what you might wear to school tomorrow, or what haircut you want to get next. Sometimes if you just write down what you're thinking about to remind yourself of it later, you can clear your mind of it and regain your focus. Sometimes, you'll just have to pray that the Lord will help you focus your thoughts on Him.

**Turn on some tunes.** Sometimes it helps to have some worship music playing softly to help you stay focused. Try making a mix of some of your favorite slower worship songs. Even though it's worship, sometimes fast, loud music can be just as distracting as listening to the radio.

Putting these few pointers into practice can help you get started and learn to develop a strong devotional life.

# Goal Setting

Pray with your girls and allow them plenty of time to set goals for themselves.

Now that you've taken a close, honest look at where you're at, it's time to decide where you want to go from here. Take time to answer these questions. Pray about your answers and be as honest as possible. Feel free to use the back if you need more room.

What are some specific things you'd like to change about your relationship with God?

What are some specific things you'd like to change about your relationship with your family?

What are some specific things you'd like to change about your relationship with your friends?

What are some words you'd like people to use when they describe you? What changes can you make to have those words be true of you?

The girls are probably ready to start making some changes in their lives. This is a great opportunity to launch into a new devotional series or Bible reading schedule. Set some goals as a group as well as individuals.

After everyone is done setting goals, encourage the girls to share their goals with their accountability partner.



# Appendix: Handouts



# ©Retreat Guidelines©

- #1 Be Honest. It is extremely important that you are honest in everything you say and do. If a comment is shared in honesty, it must be received and not shot down because it makes you feel uncomfortable.
- #2 Participate. You must verbally and physically participate in dialogue and activity times even if you are uncomfortable participating. Your willingness to do and say things that you would not normally do or say will open others up to trusting you. There are no right or wrong answers.
- #3 Get Outside the Box. You must be willing to get outside the box for the rest of the retreat and stretch to the limits of your comfort zone. Lead by example.
- #4 Be Respectful. Remember that we all respond and listen in different ways based on our upbringing. Do not be disrespectful in any way throughout our time together. If we are to communicate, we must be willing to hear and listen to what others are saying and value their statements as a gift.
- #5 No Cell Phones. It's important to focus this weekend. Leave the texting and talking behind. It will still be there for you at the end of the weekend.
- #6 Respond Appropriately. If statements are shared with emotion, do not go and throw your arms around that person. An appropriate response to emotion is to put a hand on that person's back.
- #7 Keep the Trust. Whatever is shared here remains here. Nothing is to leave here. Information is not power and should not be treated as such. In our work to unite, a natural part of this weekend will be a connection made with others that are here, which is based on trust. Trust is built through information and should not be broken when one person views information as power and begins to gossip.

## ©Retreat Goals

This retreat can be exactly what you want it to be. The main goal for this retreat is twofold. The first goal is to grow deeper in your relationship with God. The second goal is to grow deeper in your relationships with others. No matter how awesome your relationship is with the Lord, there's always more. No matter how many incredible and deep friendships you have, there are always new friends to make and new depths for your relationships.

We're going to take an honest look at where we're at, challenge ourselves to go deeper, and begin to set some goals for ourselves to maintain growth.

During this retreat, you're probably going to experience some emotional mountain-top moments with God and even in your relationships with others. These moments are great, but we want to give you tools to help you sustain your growth beyond the emotional highs.

It's our prayer that we all take a step deeper in our relationship with the Lord and in our relationships with each other.

# ©Devotion #1

Read Matthew 5:1 to 7:29

This passage is the sermon that sums up Jesus' earthly teaching. At the time Jesus gave this sermon, it totally revolutionized the way people thought about religion. Why do you think this sermon was so revolutionary?

Is there anything in this sermon that could be revolutionary today?

What are some verses/passages that stand out to you? Why? Does anything in this passage change the way you want to live your life?



# ©Take a Deeper Look©

Take time to answer these questions. Pray about your answers and be as honest as possible. Feel free to use the back if you need more room.

#1 Who or what holds my life together, other than God?

#2 What brings relaxation into my life?

#3 How does God fit in my life? What is He to me (friend, creator, savior, etc.)?

#4 Where are things running thin? In what areas are you on the verge of really struggling (fears, big questions, temptations, etc.)?

#5 What is the thing that you've been hiding from almost everyone?



# © Guidelines for Letter Writing

You're about to write a letter to someone. Write about two things you like about the other person and then write about one thing the other person could change. Make sure you're honest and gentle. Here are some things to keep in mind when you're writing:

- #1 Pray together before writing.
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After the writing time is over, you're going to exchange letters. Take time to read carefully about what the other person has said. After you're both done reading, talk about what you read/wrote. Here are some things to keep in mind when you start to discuss the letters:

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- #3 Take turns talking. Let the other person finish what they're saying (and listen the entire time) before you respond.



# ©Self-Description

Take time to answer these questions. Pray about your answers and be as honest as possible. Feel free to use the back if you need more room.

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How do you want others to see you? What are some of the masks you wear?



## ©Devotion #2

Read 1 John 3, 4

When John wrote this letter, the philosophy of gnosticism (silent "G") was starting to gain popularity. This belief was based on the idea that spirit is entirely good and matter (everything else) is entirely bad. Because of this belief, they stopped believing in salvation through Jesus, and started believing in the importance of knowledge as the way to salvation. Gnosticism also led to a lack of morality. Breaking God's laws didn't have any consequences. Knowing this, how does it affect the meaning of 1 John 3?

Does it seem like this philosophy has survived to the present day? What does this passage mean for our culture today?

According to 1 John 3:21-24, what did Jesus command us to do? Are we, as Christians, doing a good job of this right now? Why or why not? If not, how can we fix it?

In the book of 1 John, the word love occurs 43 times (most of those are in chapter 4). Knowing what you know about Gnosticism, why was it so important for John to talk about love? How could belief in gnosticism eventually lead to a lack of love for others?

How does loving God translate into loving others?



# Goal Setting

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