



Taking Time To Re ...

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Every year I make it a point to build in some intentional time away from my day-to-day schedule, away from my regular ministry. I leave my city and even my state looking for a place to give myself time to “Re...”

And so many words will fit here ...

recharge ... renew ... rethink
remember ... restore ... rebuild
revitalize ... rejuvenate ... refresh

And I’ve added a new word ... Revive ...

This is the name of a wonderful time of solitude and community provided by the highly trained staff at Glen Eyrie Castle in Colorado Springs. For decades the Navigators and NavPress have been providing books, tools, events and training for disciples of Jesus, and one event that I have taken advantage of several times is what they call “Revive” — a three day personal retreat on the beautiful campus of Glen Eyrie Castle.

I live in Dallas and so I intentionally built in some extra time of solitude by driving 11 hours rather than flying. There is so much open, beautiful space between Dallas and Colorado Springs. I made the drive alone in silence (no radio) and, upon arriving at Glen Eyrie, I had the opportunity to continue my time alone. In my orientation, after giving me a healthy list of available items, I was told that I could utilize all of them, some of them or none of them. I decided to move through the next 3 days somewhere between utilizing some of them and none of them, choosing more time to be alone in prayer, reading, thinking and planning.

And what an amazing place in which to think!

It was very cool in the evening with a dark, star-filled sky. And during the day I would sit, stroll, hike, read, journal and pray, all at a very slow pace. Greg Cope was my spiritual director and I so much enjoyed meeting with him in the morning and evening. I say he was my director, but

I should also say that his style powerfully illustrates a concept that I have taught in my own spiritual formation conferences:

*“Truth that dawns on a person
is always more powerful
than truth that is simply handed to them.”*

And Greg allowed thoughts and ideas to “dawn” on me. He gave me things to think about and nudged me in the right direction, but my time was always completely my own.

Those early experiences at Glen Eyrie were so helpful to me that I now create my own “revive” event. Each year I return to Glen Eyrie to spend a solitary week, alone with my own and God’s thoughts. I might bring one planned activity, usually something to read or write. But I always want to leave lots of “space.” As Henri Nouwen has written:

*The word discipline means “the effort to create some space in which God can act.”
Discipline means to prevent everything in your life from being filled up. It means
somewhere you’re not occupied, and you’re certainly not preoccupied. It means
to create that space in which something can happen that you hadn’t planned on
or counted on.* — from *Leadership Journal*

Over the last few years I have also begun taking a group of men each spring and a group of couples each fall. These retreats follow a year-long “Spiritual Journey” — a personal and group study of spiritual formation. At the retreat we divide our time between solitude and community.

We spend some time together each morning and evening, including breakfast and dinner. These periods of community provide a safe place to ask questions, share doubts and concerns, and to ask for help. The community disciplines of fellowship, friendship, unity, celebration and discussion will often provide the basis for a long-term spiritual friendship or group experience after we return.

Between our morning and evening community time, for 6 to 8 hours during the middle of the day, we are all completely on our own, learning to “re ...” — recharge ... renew ... rethink ... remember ... restore ... rebuild ... revitalize ... rejuvenate ... refresh. It is a time to set aside our routines, to turn off our technology and to clear our schedule as we use the tools of spiritual formation. We want to slow down and practice some of the slower, quieter spiritual disciplines, like silence, solitude, reading, reflection and prayer.

The wind, mountains, trees, sky, sunshine, stars and clouds are gifts from God to help us focus on our inner life.