

SOUTHWESTERN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD UNIVERSITY

Leadership Practicum

LDR 5333

Instructor: Dr. Rob Blakney

Assignment: Reader Response #3 – Invitation to Retreat (pp. 1-50)

STUDENT DATA:

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## READER RESPONSE

**Name of Book:** Invitation to Retreat: The Gift and Necessity of Time Away with God.

**Authors:** Ruth Haley Barton

**Pages read:** 1-50

**List 3 main points from your reading:**

1. Humans long for invitation, which means we are wanted (Barton, 2018, pp. 1-3).
2. In the retreating that Barton alludes to, we are invited to forgo distractions and get to the root of our pain and emptiness; it is an invitation to search introspectively and bring our unresolved issues to God (2018, p. 18).
3. A retreat becomes strategic when we understand that humans have rhythms of life (Barton, 2018, p. 42).

**Were these new concepts to you?**

I did not realize how much humans seek an invitation to validate them. It is true, whether it is by someone we admire or someone we find interesting, all humans crave wanting to feel invited. In high school, we all wanted to be asked by the popular kids. In ministry, we often seek the approval of popular pastors to validate our work. However, above anyone's invitation, God's invitation to retreat into Him is the most important and the one we must seek above all else.

**How can you apply the concepts in your context?**

I recently went on a three-day retreat to Phoenix with a group of pastors. The group that put the initiative together focuses on helping church planters to thrive spiritually during their pre-launch and early stages of planting. It was refreshing. We spent the days having great conversations and encouraging each other. One of the days, the program's leaders invited us to spend two hours in solitude without any screens or distractions. They asked us to write down

everything that would take us away from only focusing on Jesus for those two hours. I found that in line with what this book teaches. As a result, I had one of the most spiritually significant prayer times in my life.

**What was the real “aha” moment for you in this reading?**

My aha moment in this reading was that retreat is not merely a suggestion but a command (Barton, 2018, p. 6). From God’s establishment of the Sabbath, he set rhythms of life for people. We are to rest every week, but we also need to add this practice to our quarterly and yearly routines. The problem is that we often seek to be busy as a badge of honor. We carry our tiredness with pride. All our life demands and a healthy spiritual life based on life rhythms seem mutually exclusive (Barton, 2018, p. 10). I have struggled with taking time off. I prided myself on missing only one or two Sunday services a year for years. But the reality is that the world never stopped spinning once I started taking more Sundays off. Taking time off helps me internalize that I do not hold the universe; God does.

**Did you disagree with any of the reading?**

I initially did not agree with some of the premises of the book. Because I struggle with letting go, I like my retreat activities to be packed and scheduled. I want to know when things are happening. However, this reading has helped me realize that sometimes it is ok not to plan your own retreat and give up control of the schedule to others.

## Reference List

Barton, R. H. (2018). *Invitation to Retreat: The Gift and Necessity of Time Away with God*.

InterVarsity Press.