



Café ([boldcafe.org](http://boldcafe.org)) is a monthly on-line magazine for and with young adult women made possible from support from women's groups active in Women of the ELCA ([welca.org](http://welca.org)), the women's organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

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# Retreat where you are

by Kimberly Knowle-Zeller

Are you looking to carve out some time for yourself? Are you looking to connect with your faith? Are you looking to deepen your sense of the sacred in our midst? Come and retreat. This one-day retreat is designed for you. And the gift of this retreat is that you can take part right where you are.

It's divided into three sections meant to fill one day, but if you can't take a whole day away, divide the retreat into three days. Each section has a scriptural reflection to center yourself. You'll need a Bible, candle, a cup, something to take pictures, and a pen and paper.

It's my hope that we can take time for ourselves. To remember that we are loved. To remember that the paths we take each day are sacred. To remember that we don't walk alone.

Come and retreat.

## Opening

What does your ideal morning look like? Sleeping in? Waking early before everyone else? Reading a good book? Drinking tea or coffee? Sitting in silence? Getting up to exercise?

Take one hour for yourself to do what you love. Get everyone in your house on board so they know that today is your retreat day. Treat yourself.



Find a space in your home where you feel at peace.

Light a candle. Reflect on three things that bring you joy.

### **Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, be close to me.

In the stillness and silence of this day,

In the wonder of creation,

In the sounds of life,

In the questions and doubts,

In the warmth and light,

Be close to me

And hear my prayers.

Amen.

### **Section one: Home paths**

This section takes place in your home, on those paths that you walk full of to-dos, anxiety, joy, hope, toys and memories.

Read Psalm 139.

Take some time to write or draw how you're feeling. Write or draw what's been going on in your life.

Grab a cup.

Look at the cup, feel it, notice its shape and design. Think about the cup as a way to look deeper into your spiritual journey.

Does this quote resonate with you? "The ordinariness of the cup reminds me that my personal transformation occurs in the common crevices of each day. The cup is an apt image for the inner processes of growth. The cup has been a reminder of my spiritual thirst. As I've held it, filled it, drunk from it, emptied it and washed it, I've learned that it is through my ordinary human experiences that my thirst for God is quenched. In the cup I see life, with its emptiness, fullness, brokenness, flaws and blessings." (Joyce Rupp)

Where in your life do you need to be filled up? What are some things you can pour out?

## Section two: Neighborhood paths

This section takes place in your neighborhood, on those paths that you take to school and work and running errands.

Read Galatians 3:26-28.

Go into your neighborhood or town.

Pray for the people and places around you. Whether you personally know them or not doesn't matter, simply pray for what you see. Pray for the people who live and work near you. For visitors. Pray for schools and gardens and places of employment. Pray for challenges and joys of living in this place.

Feel the connection to the ground as you walk and pray. An African proverb tells us, "When you pray, move your feet." Reflect on what difference it makes to pray for the people in our neighborhoods. Have you prayed while walking or exercising? Have you thought of serving your neighbor as prayer?

## Section three: Nature paths

This section takes place in nature (for example, a park, a walking trail, woods, fields, near a body of water, etc.), on paths that connect you with God's diverse and beautiful creation. Read Job 12:7-10.

Go somewhere where you can get away into nature. The hope is to find a quiet place to be surrounded by God's creation.

Walk. Sit by water. Lie on the grass. Notice your surroundings. Listen. Breathe. Be present.

Reflect on the following question: "Choose one facet of creation that you love. . . . Observe it, think about it, learn about it every chance you can, with this question in mind: if that element of creation were your only Bible, what would it tell you about God?" (Brian McLaren)

Bring something to take pictures. As you walk, take pictures of crosses that you see in your surroundings. Look in the trees, on the ground, on signs. Give thanks for God's creation and presence all around.

## Closing

Go back to that space in your home where you feel at peace. Light a candle. Reflect on your day: Where did you see God at work? Where did you find rest?



## Closing prayer

Loving Lord, thank you.

For this day. For rest. For family. For friends. For insights.

For a time of retreat.

Keep my eyes and heart open to your love surrounding me, this day and always.

Amen.

## Sources:

McLaren, Brian D. *We Make the Road By Walking: A Year-Long Quest for Spiritual Formation, Reorientation, and Activation*, 2014.

Rupp, Joyce. *The Cup of Our Life: A Guide for Spiritual Growth*, 1997.

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# Women at the well

by Kimberly Knowle-Zeller

The Woman at the Well in the Gospel according to John has always been my go-to biblical character. For her courage. Her boldness. Her quick wit. Her gospel proclamation. And for her way of getting to know Jesus.

I feel a connection to her. I sense we're kindred spirits.

Barely two months after graduating from college, I boarded a plane and landed in The Gambia, West Africa, to begin my service as a Peace Corps volunteer. I found myself in a new land, with a new language, new customs and new food.

Each day I went to the well in my new home. For water. For connection. For hope. For peace.

And each day I was met by the woman at the well.

I saw her in the village, women who worked day in and day out feeding and caring for their children and families; cleaning, cooking and working the fields. Women who laughed and cried with one another. Women who shared their burdens and joys.

I saw her in myself wondering how I fit into this place. I saw her in myself thirsty for the living water. Eager to know the God who would meet me in the parched places of my soul.

The woman who met Jesus at the well was alone and didn't hesitate to ask him questions when he addressed her.

"How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (John 4:9)

At the time, Jews did not share with Samaritans. She knew her place in the world. Yet she didn't hesitate to question his statements:

"Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" (John 4:11)

Yes, she didn't belong according to society's rules, but she didn't let that stop her getting to know the Savior standing in front of her. At the well, she met Jesus and her world turned upside down.



## The women I met

In Africa, she taught me to keep showing up. Whether I was overwhelmed by being so far from home or burdened with questions of why I was there in the first place, she reminded me of the power of presence.

She reminded me to keep asking questions of those I met and of myself.

She reminded me to remember who I was and to not let others define me. She gets right to the heart of the matter with Jesus when they meet at the well.

“Where do you get that living water?” (John 4:11)

Then she listens to Jesus. And believes. And trusts. She shows me the way to living water. She points me to Jesus right there in front of me – at the well.

Now, back home, I’m a mother of a toddler. I’m a pastor. A writer. A spouse to a pastor. And I’m still searching for that living water. I’m still asking questions. I’m still unsure of what I’m doing. I’m still thirsty for meaning and connection.

So I turn to that woman at the well again.

Her story tells us that she went to the well at noon by herself, in the heat of the day. For me, motherhood often feels like that, the going alone.

The hard work that must get done. The loneliness. The wondering whether I’ll ever be free of diapers, the tantrums, the picky eating, the never-ending to-do list, the demands for my time, and the toys strewn across the floor – and that’s just before 9 a.m. And then there’s everything else to worry about in our country and in the world. The injustice, the wars, the violence, the constant demands for achievement. The worry of whether this great earth will exist for generations to come.

When I get to those moments, the feelings of desperation, the questions of worth, the anxiety for the future, the fear that I’m setting my daughter up for disaster, it’s then that I turn to the woman at the well. She’s there to bear the burden with me in the heat and loneliness.

She’s there to point me to Jesus.

“Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” (John 4:29)

Mother alone with child. In those weakest moments, Jesus comes to me, welcomes me and refreshes me. He asks me questions, too. And he knows me deeply. It’s there at the well that I can be like that woman – sassy, bold, curious, and questioning. And still, in my weakness and doubt and utter exhaustion, Jesus invites me into his vast love and his living water.

I know the days well when I need to go meet that woman. When I need to be reminded that I'm not alone. The days of endless to-do's and late nights. The days of worry. The constant vigilance. The spills and spit-ups. The days I can't take my eyes away from the headlines. The missed practices and recitals. The nights I want to never let go of my daughter. The carpool line. The days do come.

But the days do come, too, when I take that bold woman's lessons to heart. The days when I wake up expecting to meet the One who provides living water.

The days when I take one step after another trusting that I am not alone.

The days when I am granted the grace to know that I don't have to do it all. So I go.

I meet the woman at the well. I see her faith. I hear her questions. She's one of my girls. I know I'll find her there. She'll greet me or perhaps just give me a knowing look, and I'll know we're in this together. And for that moment, I'll rest. And I'll give thanks for life-giving and ever-flowing water. Today and every day.

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