

*Personal Retreat
Chapter 2023*

BETWEEN CHAPTERS

part one | honoring endings + new beginnings



To further guide you

in this year's personal retreat experience, we've created additional content to assist you! Check out a conversation with our Senior Pastor, Mike Ashcraft, and reflections from our staff by scanning the QR code or visiting portcity.church/retreat.



Introduction

"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

Psalm 90:12 (NIV)

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, it is a natural impulse to hit the pause button, to step back from the whirlwind of life's demands and take a moment to reflect. In the rush of modern existence, we often find ourselves swept away by the relentless currents of productivity and hustle culture, drowning out the quieter, more profound currents that run beneath the surface of our souls.

In a world where busyness and distraction seem to set the rhythm of our days, the ancient wisdom of scripture invites us to do something countercultural—to pause and reflect. What if the antidote to our frantic pace is not speed but stillness? Psalm 90:12 reminds us to consider our days and gain a heart of wisdom, to make space in our lives to hear the still, small voice of God amidst the dissonance of life.

Reflection is not self-absorption; it's a journey inward, a deliberate turning of our hearts toward the desires and intentions that beat within us. It's about aligning those desires with the heart of God, allowing His wisdom to flow into the depths of our lives. Stillness is an investment in the well-being of our souls.

Throughout the Gospels, we witness Jesus retreating to quiet places, seeking solitude, and communing with His heavenly Father. He understood the profound truth that perspective is not found in the speed of life but in the presence of God.

So, as we stand on the brink of a new year, let us be intentional about creating space in our lives to hear God's voice, to withdraw from the noise and distractions that surround us. In the stillness, clarity emerges, and we gain a fresh perspective that allows us to discern the path that God has set before us. Solitude, as Jesus knew well, is a precious gift we can offer ourselves—a gift that leads to wisdom, transformation, and a deeper connection with the source of life itself.

How to use this Guide

The Personal Retreat is a unique opportunity to pause, reflect, and draw closer to God as you navigate the transitions between the past year and the one that lies ahead. Take it at your own pace; you have the flexibility to engage with it in smaller, daily sections, each of which requires about 15-20 minutes of your time, or you can immerse yourself in the full retreat all at once. To make the most of this experience, find a tranquil, private spot, and silence your electronic distractions. Equip yourself with a journal and pen, as you'll engage with Scripture, answer reflection questions, respond to journal prompts, and seek moments of prayer throughout this journey.

Our hope is that this retreat becomes a valuable tool for you, a means through which God can refresh your spirit, refine your perspective, and clarify your vision for the days ahead.

Looking Back

REFLECTING ON 2023

“Once again I’ll go over what God has done, lay out on the table the ancient wonders; I’ll ponder all the things you’ve accomplished, and give a long, loving look at your acts.”

Psalm 77:11-12 (MSG)

Rather than rush forward, it’s important to take a moment to honor the journey we’ve just traversed. We’ve encountered moments of profound joy and heart-wrenching sorrow, experiences that filled us with celebration and contentment, as well as those that tested our endurance and left us mourning. Each of these encounters etched its unique mark on our souls, shaping us in ways both subtle and profound. What we must remember is that not a single experience was wasted, for God is the master of using all things for our good.

Contrary to popular belief, we don’t truly learn from experience itself; we learn when we reflect on our experiences with God and other people. Contemplating the past year allows us to gain insight into the transformation it worked within us. In every high and low, God was our constant companion, and His faithfulness, provision, and care were woven into the fabric of our days. Let’s make the time to notice. As we bid adieu to a year filled with both delight and disappointment, we can do so with gratitude. These experiences brought us to this precise moment, and they left their indelible mark upon us, shaping us in ways that are worth pondering.

The past year, with all its joys and challenges, is a chapter in our life story, not the entire tale. By first looking backward, we gain a clearer vision for the path ahead, granting us the confidence to step into the future. Instead of carrying the weight of the past into tomorrow, we can embrace the wisdom it has gifted us while shedding any burden of shame and regret. We serve a God of fresh beginnings and new starts, and as we remember the year gone by, our prayer is that He would grant us the wisdom to see its significance and the courage to let go of its weight, allowing the past to become a beautiful part of our future.

Snapshots of 2023

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.” **Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NIV)**

In a world that moves at the speed of a swipe, we often allow our digital memories to languish in the cloud. Even though our lives are constantly documented through the lens of our smartphones, we tend to underestimate the powerful spiritual tool that resides right in our pockets. Our phones, with their vast collection of photographs and social media posts, are a digital scrapbook, capturing the moments that define our lives. In a way, they serve as a time machine.

Scrolling through the snapshots of the past year, you'll find more than just images; you'll discover a narrative of your life. Each photo, each post, is a chapter in your story, reflecting the joys, challenges, and growth that you've experienced. They document not just the significant milestones, but also the everyday intricacies that make life beautiful. Your pictures aren't just pixels; they're windows into the most meaningful moments of your life. They serve as a visual testimony of God's presence in your life, capturing moments of joy, hardship, and transformation.

Even though it seemingly goes against the rules of a spiritual retreat, we're encouraging you to embrace technology for just a moment and take out your smartphone. Scroll through your social media profiles or phone's album and look through the photographs from the past year. If you're not technologically savvy or don't find yourself snapping a lot of photographs, grab your calendar and day planner and glance back over all that transpired in 2023.

As you peruse the images and posts that document your journey through the past year, pause and consider the following questions:

1. What stood out to you about this year? What emotions, thoughts, and memories are you experiencing right now?

2. Complete the following sentence: 2023 was _____.
What makes you describe the past year in this way?

Delights

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights." James 1:17 (NIV)

"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 37:4 (ESV)

From the beginning, God gave us a desire for delight and the means to experience it, so it's no wonder that delight comes naturally to us. As humans, we are led by what we love! So it's not a question of if we delight, but what we delight in. All around us, there are things that spark joy, spur delight, and move us deeply. We enjoy a moving book, a compelling movie, or a tasty meal; we lose all track of time to our hobbies or hanging out with friends; we experience a sense of delight in nature, on vacation, or caring for our home. Delight can come in unexpected ways and at unexpected times. Moments of delight inevitably welled up within you as you looked back at your year through those photographs and social media posts - these pockets in time where life was good.

We can and should enjoy these blessings, but we need to take it a step further - not just delighting in the gift itself, but taking it all the way by finding our delight in the ultimate gift giver - God Himself. Delight is encountering something good and allowing its goodness to awaken us to what we want, and what our heart and soul ultimately want is a connection with its Creator, Sustainer, and Provider. **A heart of delight is a life tuned into God's goodness.** When we consciously express and communicate the aspects of our spiritual journey that bring us joy, we cultivate a sense of gratitude and appreciation for God's blessings in our lives.

Take a moment to see and remember all the ways God has been faithful, provided for you, and shown up in your life over the past year.

1. What were some of your favorite moments that took place in 2023?
2. How did they bring you joy, spark a sense of peace in you, and make your soul come alive?
3. In what ways did these activities or things help you feel more connected to God, as well as the people around you?

After reflecting on the above questions, write out a prayer expressing your gratitude to God for these gifts you got to enjoy.

Did someone help make the highlights of this year possible? Take a moment to write them a letter, make a phone call, or send a text message thanking them for what they meant to you over the past year.

Disappointments

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33 (NIV)

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

Psalms 34:18 (NIV)

For as much joy, beauty, and delight that took place over the past twelve months, there are places where we felt the sting that comes from spending our days living in a broken world. The echoes of the past year linger, leaving us with wounds—some visible, some hidden. There are those of us that 2023 served as a year marked by loss, adversity, suffering, and disappointment. In some way, these disappointments can feel like a death; something died within us - a dream, relationship, circumstance, etc.

Rather than living in denial, we must acknowledge the reality of our pain, and by doing so, we give dignity to it, honoring everything that happened this year. Grief and loss are inevitable aspects of the human experience, and this season calls for the courage to name our deaths, to recognize what was lost within or around us. Yet, the key is not to dwell in the pain but to process it—to grieve what we've lost and adjust to the new reality. By making a conscious effort to navigate the depths of our emotions, we engage in a delicate dance—acknowledging the pain, grieving it, and then letting it ascend.

In this journey, we discover that by confronting disappointments, we open them up to transformation. The wounds become a source of purpose, meaning, and renewal. This process invites us to approach God with vulnerability and authenticity, pouring out our hearts before Him in prayer. In the face of shattered expectations and wounded hearts, we are invited to sit with the discomfort, to acknowledge the ache, and to seek solace in God's presence and the unchanging character of God.

As we release the old, we make space for the new. The pain becomes a gift, a catalyst for growth and transformation. This season of processing and releasing is a profound opportunity to let go, to bless what was, and to welcome what will be. In embracing the fullness of our experiences, we find purpose and meaning even amid the pain.

Take a moment to embrace healing and find purpose in the wake of a challenging year by reflecting on the following questions:

1. What are three things you've had to grieve (or should grieve) over the past year? How can you bring dignity to the disappointment, pain, and loss you experienced?

2. How has the tension between disappointment and hope played out in your own life as a follower of Jesus Christ? In what ways did you wrestle with believing that God works everything out for good?

3. Can you see any examples of God's closeness in these difficult moments?

After reflecting on the above questions, write out a prayer of lament where you bring the hurt, pain, and loss to God, as you seek to lean on God's presence, purpose, and provision for what's to come.

Did someone you know make a positive impact in your life during the midst of a difficult season? Take a moment to write them a letter, make a phone call, or send a text message expressing your gratitude for the love, care, and concern they provided you this year.

Lessons Learned

“Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.” Proverbs 1:5 (NIV)

“A discerning person keeps wisdom in view, but a fool’s eyes wander to the ends of the earth.” Proverbs 17:24 (NIV)

The past year, with all its twists and turns, has been a journey of joy and challenge, victories and defeats. We’ve danced through the highs and trudged through the lows, and in the midst of it all, God has been weaving a story—a story uniquely ours. In the stillness of reflection, we uncover the hidden treasures of the past. It’s like God’s way of giving us a spiritual magnifying glass to examine the intricacies of our journey. As we revisit the moments that made our hearts sing and the ones that brought tears, patterns emerge—patterns that reveal God’s hand at work.

Taking a step back and reflecting on the condition of our hearts and souls may have stirred feelings and experiences that have remained dormant, overlooked, or disregarded. There was growth worth celebrating and reminders of God’s faithfulness, circumstances whose impact would’ve been shortchanged if we didn’t slow long enough to notice. This time of reflection perhaps brought to the surface blind spots and patterns that keep us stuck in a cycle.

There’s a beauty in the ebb and flow of our experiences. The joys remind us of God’s faithfulness, and the challenges teach us reliance on His strength. Reflecting on the past year isn’t about dwelling on what’s gone but extracting the wisdom and truth embedded in each experience. In this reflection, let’s not forget the grace that carried us through it all. The Holy Spirit gently nudges us, not to condemn but to illuminate. It’s an invitation to grow, to align our hearts with God’s design.

Awareness and articulation are the first steps in aligning our hearts in a direction that produces the transformation we desire. After pinpointing God's work within our hearts, we must continually keep it before us. Change occurs when we keep God's wisdom in view and abide in Him. Today, we want to consider the lessons learned over the past year so we can carry them forward, allowing them to shape our journey to come. God's story for us is still unfolding, and the chapters of the past year, and the wisdom they provided, have paved the way for what lies ahead.

Consider all the lessons you have learned and wisdom gained over the past twelve months. Use the space below to write them down. They can be lessons, both positive and negative, big or small, funny and serious. Now, look at the list above and consider:

1. What theme(s) do you see emerging from this exercise?
2. How would you describe what God has been teaching you?

Finally, write down your greatest lesson learned or piece of wisdom gleaned in the following areas:

MYSELF

RELATIONSHIPS

FAITH JOURNEY

EMOTIONS

GOD

Accepting Your A.L.L.

Your Actual Lived Life

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

Psalm 118:24 (ESV)

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a LIVING sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

Romans 12:1 (NIV)

We find ourselves, amid the tension of the messy middle - the space that resides between the year we've left behind and the one that is off on the horizon. It is here where we often get caught up in the trap of fixating on our destination or nostalgically holding onto days that have passed. It's precisely in this middle space that God extends a compelling question: "Why are you here?" It's not a rebuke or a judgment; rather, it's a gentle invitation for Him to engage with us, lavishing boundless compassion and grace.

To navigate the present, we need to embrace the reality of our current moment—the life we're ACTUALLY living, not the one we yearn for, once experienced, or meticulously planned for the future. This is our life before God, complete with its moments of goodness, challenges, and imperfections. It's an invitation not just to accept but to express gratitude for God's provision and His presence right here and right now.

However, these encounters aren't always comfortable. Sometimes, God's voice disrupts our status quo, shaking up our convenience and pushing us beyond the confines of our comfort zone. His words compel us to face neglected areas of our lives. In these moments, we must not only welcome God to meet us where we are but also recognize that He calls us to take the next step of faith right from that very place. May we summon the courage to embrace our lives, express gratitude, and move forward in faith, trusting in the ever-present love and guidance of our compassionate Creator.

Take a moment to reflect on your current circumstances.

1. If God were going to ask, "Why are you HERE?," how would you respond?

2. How would you describe the current condition of your heart? What do your actions, thoughts, and words actually reveal about your heart?

3. What is the dominant emotion you are feeling right now? How is this emotion displayed in your actions and words? Why is this specific emotion overpowering others, and what is fueling its power?

4. If your life was a book, how would you title the chapter closing out 2023?

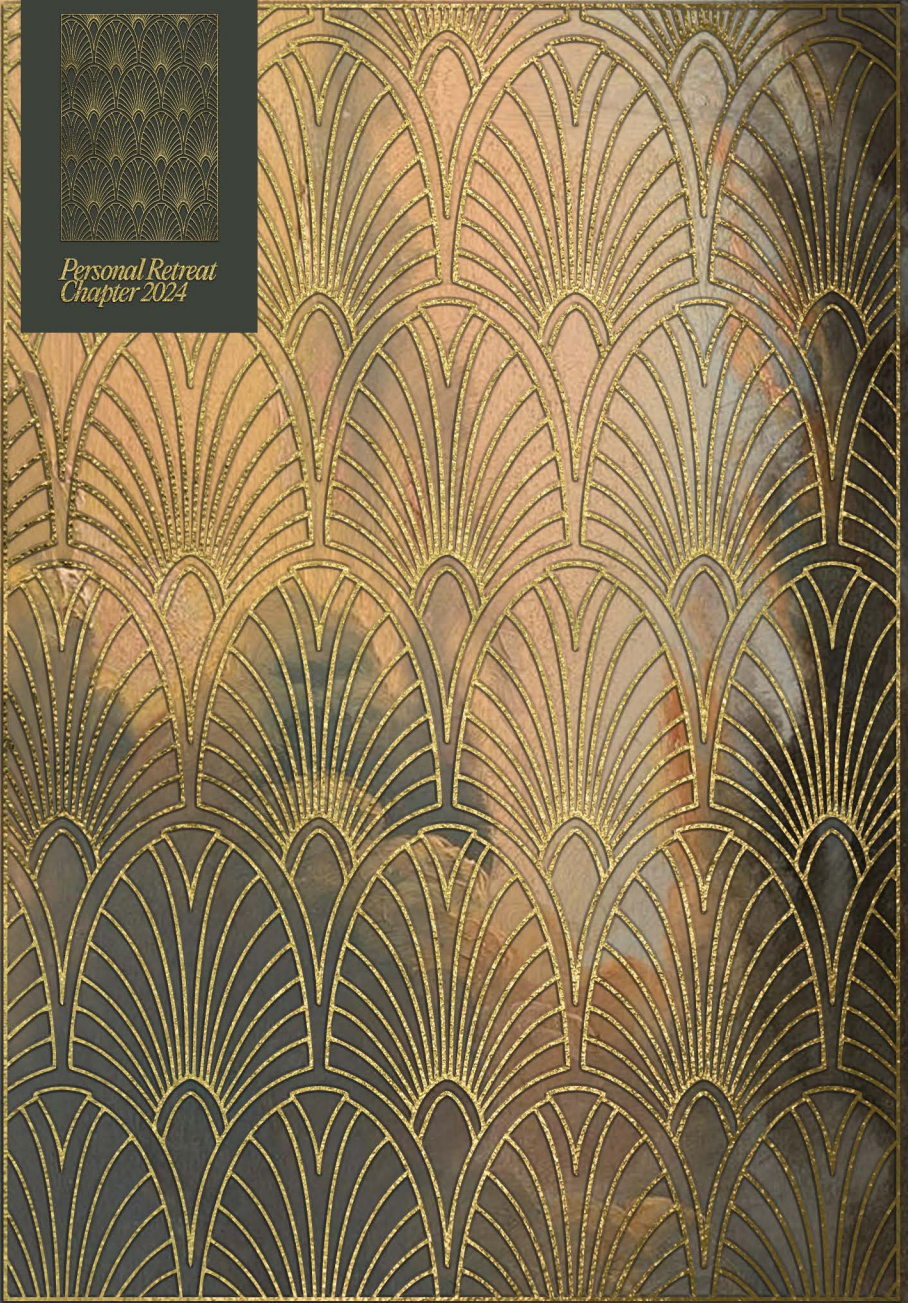
After reflecting on the above questions, write out a prayer offering your actual lived life to God, and a willingness to display faith, trust, and obedience in the present moment.

*As we move
forward
into the
new year,*

We invite you to symbolically turn the page on the past year. To do so, please turn to the next page to signify the transition from one chapter of your life *to the next.*



*Personal Retreat
Chapter 2024*



BETWEEN CHAPTERS

part two | honoring endings + new beginnings

Looking Forward

Setting our sights on 2024

The pages of our lives continually unfolding before us. Just as we turn the page of a book, we turn the page of 2023, with its joys and sorrows, its victories and defeats. We are presented with the fresh, blank page of 2024, full of opportunities and possibilities.

Life is a journey, and with each turn of the page, we encounter the unknown. We find ourselves in a place of transition, not knowing what lies ahead but trusting in the One who leads the way.

2023 might have brought its share of challenges and unexpected twists. We may have faced difficult chapters, but we have also celebrated moments of growth, love, and triumph. Now, we are given the gift of 2024, a new chapter in our story. This is an invitation to reset our intentions and realign our hearts with the divine Author of our lives.

The turning of the page is not merely an act of time but an act of faith. We relinquish the illusion of control, acknowledging that the Author knows the plot better than we ever could. We turn the page with gratitude for the past, surrender for the present, and hope for the future.

Just as we journeyed through uncharted territory in the past, we will navigate the uncertainty of 2024. The experiences and lessons of the past twelve months will continue to shape our character, and as we trust in the wisdom of life's unfolding narrative, we can be assured that 2024 holds promises of redemption and renewal.

So, let us turn the page with a spirit of adventure, an unwavering faith, and a heart open to the narrative. As we step into the unknown of 2024, may we find comfort in the truth that the Author of our lives is ever-present, lovingly crafting each page of our story with grace and purpose.

Dreams & Desires

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

Isaiah 43:19 (NIV)

“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 1:3-6 (NIV)

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, our hearts are filled with hopes, desires, and dreams. We long for success, happiness, and fulfillment, and we're eager to set our goals and resolutions for the year to come. It's only natural to aspire to a brighter and better future, but as we do so, let us also remember the importance of surrendering our plans to God's will.

Proverbs 16:9 reminds us, "In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps." We can make all the plans we want for 2024, but it's essential to recognize that God's purpose often transcends our own. His wisdom knows what is best for us, and His timing is perfect. Therefore, expressing our hopes and desires is a beautiful act of faith, but it should be accompanied by a willingness to lay down 2024 at God's feet and let His will be done.

Surrendering to God's will doesn't mean giving up on our dreams; it means aligning our dreams with His purpose. It means trusting that even if our plans don't unfold as we envision, God's plan is greater. It's an act of humility, acknowledging that we are not in control, but God is. It's an act of faith, believing that God's plan is far more extraordinary than anything we could ever imagine.

As we welcome 2024 with open hearts, let's express our hopes, desires, and dreams, but let's also remember to pray, "Your will be done." When we do, we can face the year ahead with confidence and peace, knowing that God is in control, and His plan for us is perfect.

Take a moment to articulate your hopes, dreams, and desires for the year ahead by reflecting on the following questions:

1. How would you describe what God is awakening within your heart as you head into a new year?

2. What is the "new thing" you hope God does in your life in the year to come?

After reflecting on the above questions, write out a prayer expressing your hopes and dreams for the year to come, but declaring a willingness to lay down 2024 at His feet and let His will be done.

Who Do You Want to Become?

"And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness & holiness."

Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)

Our journey of transformation is not a one-time event but a continuous pursuit of Christ-likeness. Just as an artist meticulously sculpts a masterpiece, God shapes us to be reflections of His character.

We are created in God's image, designed to mirror Christ's heart to the world. It is a divine invitation to imitate Him in every facet of our lives. In our work, relationships, and pursuits, we are called to reveal His character. Our success, influence, and purpose should be seen through the lens of Christ's love and grace, reshaping our priorities and pursuits.

In 2024, the person God longs for us to be is one who radiates the character of Christ. This transformation begins with a deepening relationship with God, a passionate pursuit of His presence, and a commitment to living with integrity. As we keep our focus firmly fixed on Him, our heart and character will be molded into the image of Christ.

When we walk in His footsteps, we embody His example of humility, service, forgiveness, and love. Our lives become a visible example of His grace, and others will see His reflection in our words, actions, and demeanor. Declaring who we want to become in 2024 is not a promise to do better, but a new perspective that encourages us to become more like Jesus.

God is crafting us into vessels of His love and grace. As we continually seek Him, we can be confident that His transformative work will shine brightly through us, revealing the person He created us to become - a mirror reflecting the character of Christ.

Take a moment to consider how God might shape your character in the upcoming year by reflecting on the following questions:

- 1.* Earlier in the personal retreat, we spent time reflecting on who we were in 2023. How would you describe the person you believe God is leading you to become in 2024?
- 2.* What specific qualities or characteristics does that person possess? In what ways does that person reflect Christ's heart to the world?
- 3.* What activities, habits, and disciplines does that type of person participate in? How can you engage in these activities in the new year?

After reflecting on the above questions, write out a prayer for your future self to serve as a reminder of your desire to reflect Christ's heart in this way.

Trusted Others

Who are your people?

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

1 John 4:7-12 (NIV)

"Together" is not just a concept; it's a way of life that profoundly impacts us. We need each other to become the people God created us to be. It's in our togetherness that our lives are transformed, and the very life of God is exchanged among us as we give ourselves to one another. Our collective display of God's love is a powerful testimony to the world. In coming together, we bear the integrity of His image and the influence of His love.

To truly love others, we must first receive God's love for ourselves. Trusting in God's love allows us to cease demanding it from those around us. Instead of a cycle of giving and taking, our relationships become centered on what we offer and receive. Love is a force that breathes value and worth into one another, and this exchange takes place within our relationships.

These redemptive relationships serve as a framework through which love is expressed and experienced. Trust is nurtured over time as we encourage one another to step into our identity in Christ, walk in faith, and let God's love transform us. In these connections, grace mingles with growth, challenges are met with compassion, and authenticity intersects with availability.

It's through our relationships that His love flows, healing and renewing us. In our togetherness, we become a beacon of His love to the world, sharing the life-changing power of His love through our togetherness.

Take a moment to consider your connections with others and the part you play in working toward togetherness:

1. How is the condition of your heart expressing itself in your relationships? How would you describe the current condition of your relationships?

2. Who is a trusted other you need to give permission to speak into your life? How can they support you as you take steps to become the person God created you to be?

3. Who are you (or could be) breathing value and worth into? Is there someone else you feel God calling you to connect with more deeply?

During this experience, chances are good a few people came to mind. Maybe it was an individual who has supported, cared for, and showed up for you over the past year. Perhaps God also placed someone on your heart that needs you in their corner in the same way.

We encourage you to close out this section by reaching out to them and scheduling a time in the new year to meet, whether in person, online, or over the phone, to express your appreciation for their influence and love, or to let them know that you are there for them.

Expanding Heart & Growing Concern

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)

We engage in the spiritual practices of stillness, prayer, and reflection not to shed more light on ourselves but to see ourselves in light of who Christ calls us to be and the full life He invites us to experience if we trust Him. Christ's love is abundant and never runs empty, so we are free to give it away.

When we encounter the goodness of God, and it transforms our hearts, the call to goodness isn't a command; it is a gracious invitation to belong, become, and be different. Focusing our attention on Christ always leads toward a life centered on love, service, and the good of others. Because the love Christ offers is different than all the rest, we can't help but look different.

Jesus continually elevated love as the highest call; He saw it as the posture that should define everything about us. Goodness is the fruit that comes when God's love overflows into our lives and then out into the world around us. It forms, shapes, and leads us to love those within our reach. It challenges us to live humbly, love boldly, and serve sacrificially. It urges us to use our time, talents, and resources to speak up for the voiceless, work toward healing in broken places, and carry Christ's message of reconciliation to the world through our words and actions.

Love isn't passive; it's a force that acts on the world profoundly, often disrupting the patterns that protect the status quo. Redemptive love is the expression of goodness that compels us to care, not give up hope, and leverage all that we are and have for God's Kingdom. Giving ourselves away is the most powerful way to live. Our obedience serves as an expression of our dependency.

Take a moment to consider how you can make God's love visible through your actual lived life by reflecting on the following questions:

- 1. Our hearts shrink or expand to the size of our most significant concerns. Describe your current concerns. What effect are these concerns having on your heart?*
- 2. Where has God granted you influence? Consider how your God-given gifts, talents, and resources could be used to serve others.*
- 3. What opportunities are awaiting your obedience? What could be your first step in bringing God's goodness to these places? What would it look like to make yourself available and leverage these opportunities for good?*
- 4. What would be required of you to become the kind of person for whom goodness is a way of life?*

After reflecting on the above questions, write out a prayer asking God to expand the size of your heart for the world around you.

Preparing for 2024

“Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.”

Psalm 98:1 (NIV)

For a writer, a blank page is both exciting and frightening. It offers freedom of inspiration as well as potential frustration. Even though there are endless opportunities to create, the possibility of finding yourself stuck is just as real. Today, in the first week of 2024, we find ourselves holding a journal with a bunch of blank pages and a pen. Nothing has been written so far.

What are you going to do with your pages? Will you rise to the challenge and fill it with chapters of faith, trust, and courage? Or, will you falter from the pressure and never put pen to paper?

Who will be the main character in your story? Will everything center on you – your wants, needs, and desires? Will you make much of yourself? Or will you write stories that speak of humility, encouragement, and ensuring God and others get to play the part of a hero?

How will you allow God to weave His way through the tale you are telling with the pages you’ve been given? As people read your story, will they notice His presence in your life? Will they be awakened to His greatness and worth?

Look at the pen in your hand. **A great story requires you to write. It involves stepping into the unknown and creating.** Don't let fear, complacency, anger, or worry keep you from writing your story. Get writing.

Close your retreat by writing out a prayer to God for 2024. Ask that you would sense His presence, rely on His promises, and recognize His provision. Declare your trust and dependency. Ask for courage and a willingness to step out in faith.

Maybe throughout this experience, you've begun to consider a "One Word" for the upcoming year. We'd encourage you to take the insight you've gained from this personal retreat and utilize January to engage in the process of picking a word. Visit www.portcity.church/word for more details and resources.

Thank you for joining us in this experience.
We love you, and are excited for what God
will do in and through us in 2024.

Happy New Year!

Sharing Your Experience:

We hope this guided Personal Retreat has been helpful to you! Would you take a moment to share your experience with us?

Scan the QR code to provide your thoughts and feedback or visit portcity.church/retreat-feedback.

