

Retreat based on C.A.K.E.

Leader's opening remarks:

Welcome:

Arrange in small groups:

Logistics of day:

We will be hearing some short talks and have some discussion and prayer time in your small group about what you hear.

The talks will be witness talks given by the speaker and based on experience from their own life. They won't be theological teachings. None of the speakers knew whether they would speak at this retreat until our team meeting last night. They "volunteered," to speak, because they have a story to share with you -- their struggle to walk with Christ in their environment as it applies to their topic and where they are in their own journey.

When they have finished speaking, there will be time for discussion in small groups. I ask that the discussions be very subjective.... share with the others in your group how you feel about what they said. How does it hit you in your attempt to walk with Jesus in prison? Then you will have about 10 minutes to talk and pray with your prayer partner. I know this freaks some of you out... but I asked that you do this and see what happens even if it makes you uncomfortable. This is the safest place to be inside the fence. These are the safest people to be with... I hope!

We'll give you ample opportunities for breaks, so please wait for the time that is planned into the schedule to go to the bathroom. Thanks...

The focus of today's retreat is on the fact that God has a plan for all our lives, that He cares for us - even when we may not think so or feel His presence. That God is able to do all things, and with His help we are able to walk through any trial that comes our way in life. You and I are known to God. The Bible tells us that God He knows and understands everything about us, and we should be Encouraged by that.

So, let's pray and then we will have the first talk in a series based on the acronym C.A.K.E

Talk # 1 – The “C” in C.A.K.E.

**The C in Cake reminds us that God Cares for us.
(10-15 Minutes)**

Read the scripture: Psalm 139:13, 15-16 (ESV)

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when yet there was none of them.

Read the scripture: Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare^[a] and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Read the scripture: Psalm 121 (ESV)

I lift my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? ² My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. ³ He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴ Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵ The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. ⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷ The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. ⁸ The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. Think about the scriptures I just read. God cares about you. He cares about everything that concerns you. God knew you before your born, and he knitted you together in your mother’s womb. God knows everything about you - every detail– he knows what makes you “tick” better than you do. He understands you, and he loves you just as you are, unconditionally. God is a good, good father.

And because God cares for you, he wants what is best for you. God has a plan for your each of our lives, and we each have a purpose. We need to remember that when things don’t work out the way we planned that there is a greater plan – God’s plan.

God wants you to cast all your cares upon him. He can handle it. He wants us to stop be anxious about stuff, turn all the stuff that bothers you over to him. Let him handle everything – let him take care of you.

Speaker should give an example or examples of how God has cared and taken care of them. Speaker should also give an example of how God revealed/accomplished His plans in their life.

Discussion questions:

- 1) When have you felt cared for by God?
- 2) Has there ever been a time in your life that you did not feel that you were being taken care of by God? Why or what caused you to feel that way? How did you deal with the issue?
- 3) When have you felt like there was no plan for you or your life and you were totally alone? Do you feel that way now, or have your feelings changed?

- 4) Share a situation or circumstance from your life where you can now see God working in and showing you that He does have a plan for your life, and that He is working everything out for you, and for your future.

Prayer focus: Participants should pray and ask God to show them that he cares for them, and to reveal clearly to them that he has a plan for their lives. Participants should pray and ask God to increase their willingness to seek His plan for their lives, and his help in being obedient to that plan and God's will for them.

Talk #2 – The “A” in C.A.K.E.

**The “A” reminds us that God is able...and when we rely on him we are able.
(10-15 Minutes)**

Read the scripture John 3:16 (ESV)

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

Read the scripture Philippians 4:19 (ESV)

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Read the scripture Matthew 12:15 (ESV)

Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all

God is able to do everything! The Bible tells us God is able to save us from sin, God is able to supply all our needs, and God is able to heal our diseases. There is nothing that our God can't do. God can turn things around no matter how difficult your past was or how uncertain your future is. As children of God we do not have to live in fear – we just have to believe and trust that God is able.

Read the scripture Philippians 4:13 (ESV)

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Read the scripture Ephesian 3: 20 (ESV) now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us

Read the scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV)

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

We don't have to do anything supernatural or special to have God's power working in and through us – we just have to believe it and receive it. When we believe and ask Jesus into our lives the holy spirit comes and lives within us. Jesus told his disciples I am going away, but he also told them that God was sending the Holy Spirit to live with in them, to comfort them, and to teach them. That same spirit lives within us. Apart from God we can do nothing. But we can do everything with the help of the holy spirit. The holy spirit strengthens us. Through the holy spirit God's power is at work within us.

Speaker should give an example or examples of how they have seen God power at work, talk about how about God has provided for you, God works through you, share about an area of weakness in your life that you know God has used to show his strength thru you or in you.

Discussion questions:

- 1) Do you truly believe that God that God is able to do and provide everything you need -? Why or why not?
- 2) Are there areas in your life where you feel weak? Why or why not?
- 3) How can you access God's strength in those areas of your life?

Prayer focus: Participants should pray God will show them how to use His power in their areas of weakness, and that He will help them with any unbelief they may have about his abilities to meet their needs.

Talk #3 – The “K” in Cake

The “K” in Cake reminds us that we are known to God (10-15 Minutes)

Read the scripture: Psalm 139: 1-4 & 17-18 (ESV)

O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

Read the scripture Hebrews 4:13 (ESV)

And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

God knows all things and God understands all things because he created everything. It is senseless to fool him or manipulate him. God doesn't force himself or his ideas on people. God is willing to share his knowledge with you - you just must desire and seek it. To understand God better, to know his will and his nature you must develop a relationship with him. You must spend time with God and get to know him just like you would anyone who you have a relationship with. God should not be last in your life if you want to receive his full blessings.

Speaker should give a brief example or examples of how God has been faithful in His love for you. How God has proven that he knows and understand you. Talk about your relationship with God and how it has developed – use specific examples.

Discussion questions:

- 1) How does God show us that he knows us?
- 2) Are there any sins you struggle with feeling forgiven for?
- 3) What do you need to believe and tell yourself so that you will accept God's forgiveness and receive His love?

Prayer focus: Participants should pray for the ability to accept God's love and forgiveness, and to accept and speak truth to themselves to God, and about God's great love for them.

Talk #4 – Be Encouraged

(10 - 15 Minutes)

Read the scriptures: Psalm 27: 1-2 & 13-14 (ESV)

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.

I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

With God on our side we have nothing to fear. God can fight any battle – no battle is too big or overwhelming for God to handle. He is ready to help you fight every battle – you just need to ask him to help you. Remember, you have heard the other speakers talk about God cares for you, God is able, God knows you, and he only wants what is best for you. That should be really encouraging to all of us.

Speaker can give an example of a victory in their life over fear, lack of faith, temptation, or sin where they sought God and as a result they were able to overcome the battle.

Discussion questions:

- 1) What keeps you from trusting God in certain areas of your life?
- 2) What obstacles do you have to overcome to trust God with everything?

Prayer focus: Participants should pray for the ability to trust God and to seek Him in every battle or situation they face in their lives. They should also ask God to encourage them that is he is always with them and pray that God will allow them to encourage others when they face difficult situations and battles sharing that God cares for them, that he is able, that he knows their every need, and that he is always with them in every situation, difficulty or battle they face.

Talk # 5 Wrap-up (Given by Retreat Leader)

Throughout this retreat we have talked about God referencing CAKE...

How many of you like to eat cake?

Why? (Let them give you some responses)

Well I want you to recap what we have talked about today, and I give you a few final thoughts about how our lives can be compared to baking a cake?

Today all our speakers talked about how God has and continues to work in each of their lives, and I want to remind you we don't have to do anything special for God to love us, or for Him to work in us and through us. All we must do is believe in Him, ask Him into our life, and then walk faithfully with Him.

God loves each of us. He wants to be in relationship with us, and He wants us to surrender every part of our life to Him.

With God on our side we have nothing to fear because when we believe and ask Jesus to come into our life and heart the Holy Spirit comes and dwells with us, He comforts us in times of need, and helps us handle difficult situations. He provides everything we need.

Apart from God we are nothing, but the Bible tells us in Philippians 4: 13 (ESV) that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

God never promised Christians that our lives would be perfect or trouble free, but He has promised He will always be with us... no matter what. In Isaiah 43:1-3 we read "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God. (ESV)

We may not always see God at work, but we need to remember is He always working. God blends the good and the bad experiences in our lives together for our good, and He does that because He cares for us, we are known to Him, and He is able. In Romans 8:28 God gives us a beautiful promise: *"God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His good purpose."*

As Christians our life may always be perfect, but in God's hands the circumstances of our lives, both good and bad are mixed and blended into a beautiful creation. It's during the bad times we see how BIG our God is. He loves each of us and He is in control; We can trust Him because He Cares for us, He is Able, we are Known to Him. Let us never forget God takes every situation and circumstance, both good and bad, mixing them all together so they create a life that is meaningful, useful, and even tasty – just like a delicious C.A.K.E.!

If you still have time after the final talk you can ask the participants to share as a group what they learned today, and how they will apply it to their lives.

Close in Prayer.

Talk # 1 – Discussion questions and prayer focus

Discussion questions:

- 1) When have you felt cared for by God?
- 2) Has there ever been a time in your life that you did not feel that you were being taken care of by God? Why or what caused you to feel that way? How did you cope?
- 3) When have you felt like there was no plan for you or your life and you were totally alone? Do you feel that way now, or have your feelings changed?
- 4) Share a situation or circumstance from your life where you can now see God working in and showing you that He does have a plan for your life, and that He is working everything out for you, and for your future.

Prayer focus: Participants should pray and ask God to show them that he cares for them, and to reveal clearly to them that he has a plan for their lives. Participants should pray and ask God to increase their willingness to seek His plan for their lives, and his help in being obedient to that plan and God's will for them.

Talk # 2 – Discussion questions and prayer focus

Discussion questions:

- 1) Do you truly believe that God that God is able to do and provide everything you need -? Why or why not?
- 2) Are there areas in your life where you feel weak? Why or why not?
- 3) How can you access God's strength in those areas of your life?

Prayer focus: Participants should pray God will show them how to use His power in their areas of weakness, and that He will help them with any unbelief they may have about his abilities to meet their needs.

Talk # 3 – Discussion questions and prayer focus

Discussion questions:

- 4) How does God show us that he knows us?
- 5) Are there any sins you struggle with feeling forgiven for?
- 6) What do you need to believe and tell yourself so that you will accept God's forgiveness and receive His love?

Prayer focus: Participants should pray for the ability to accept God's love and forgiveness, and to accept and speak truth to themselves to God, and about God's great love for them.

Talk # 4 – Discussion questions and prayer focus

Discussion questions:

- 1) What keeps you from trusting God in certain areas of your life?
- 2) What obstacles do you have to overcome to trust God with everything?

Prayer focus: Participants should pray for the ability to trust God and to seek Him in every battle or situation they face in their lives. They should also ask God to encourage them that is he is always with them and pray that God will allow them to encourage others when they face difficult situations and battles sharing that God cares for them, that he is able, that he knows their every need, and that he is always with them in every situation, difficulty or battle they face.