

Retreat: **“Looking Back at the Crowds”**  
**John 6:1-13 + 35**

[This retreat was held for the global IFES Scripture Engagement Team as we re-examined the context of our ministry – looking at the urgent needs and, also, at how we could form teams around us to ‘bring the Word into the world!’ Therefore, some of the questions for the retreat are related specifically to Scripture Engagement. You can either take this focus for yourself, or choose to relate these questions to your own area of ministry where you are involved.]

Times when we come together can become EXCELLENT OASES for us to refresh ourselves and get a fresh view on our ministries. A time to be RENEWED in our calling. Thus, having retreats as part of our together-time, can become a very LIFE-GIVING experience. Setting aside 2-3 hours amidst a four- or five-day gathering can be priceless.

We often MULL OVER MANY THINGS in the course of our ministry. Take this time to be quiet to listen again to the CANVAS OF YOUR MINISTRY in context. It will help you become more attuned to the urgent. We get to NAME OUR CONCERNS before the Lord and await His stirring, even as we soak in His Word. These stirrings will lead us to an invitation to LIVE OUT OUR MANDATE that God seems to be impressing upon us, for this season of our lives.

Tools for our listening will be our QUIETENED HEART, the WORD and a JOURNAL TO CAPTURE MOMENTS with the Lord. And the process is actually simple.

- Walk into this time, JUST AS WE ARE. Coming with our full cups and sitting down for our Divine appointment.
- A time of pouring out the contents of our ministry and the things bothering us. And then WAITING in silence.
- Letting the silence evolve. Hearing nature. Hearing ourselves. Hearing the Word. Hearing our God. Hearing from pictures that speak [optional]. A time of watering our hearts with LISTENING.
- At the end, recording down what STOOD OUT and what CALLED OUT to us. These are recorded, so that our forgetful hearts will keep on remembering, how God has spoken and continues to speak.

Before ending the time of retreat (especially if in community), find someone to share and pray with, as a sealing of all that has taken place in the time with God.

Annette Arulrajah, IFES Regional Secretary for East Asia

## “LOOKING BACK AT THE CROWDS...”

You can use the document “*appendixLookingbackatthecrowds*” (see extra download on Scripture engagement website) to write in as you journey through this retreat.

### a) **Easing Into The Retreat** (20 minutes)

The facilitator gives some introduction to the retreat time and invites the participants to bring their ministries before the Lord. Then gives guidelines of how to use this time. Remind participants that this is not an exercise that must be fulfilled, but rather a **conversational journey** with God. Remind them to **stay in the Presence of God**.

- As you leave the place, you can look at the Sieger Köder painting ~ *The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm*. Capture impressions in your journals (or in the appendix).  
[You can either buy these paintings online, or substitute with paintings / sculptors that might speak to the participants about God being big enough or being our Shepherd].
- Walk around unwinding, until you find a place to have conversations with God. Once there, invite Him to make you aware of His presence and quietly wait for Him.
- You may want to pray the simple prayer, “Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy”, as you breathe in and breathe out. And wait.....

### b) **Word & World** (45 minutes)

#### 1. **WORLD** (30 mins)

It would be natural to look at your world ~ your context first.

- What seems to be on your plate? What is the condition of your ‘part’ of the world? What are PRESSING NEEDS? How is the Word TOUCHING / not touching these situations?
- Leave some time for your thoughts to flow as you explore these concerns. You can write your thoughts on the empty spaces in the globe, on the sheet of paper [see appendix].
- As you think about where you come from, what 3 or 4 URGENT ISSUES / CONDITIONS / NEEDS tap upon your heart, concerning your part of the world? Write them in the boxes provided in the globe. [see appendix]
- Who are 3 PEOPLE (or groups) who need your ministry / your encouragement, in the context of Scripture Engagement (your ministry)? Write them down in the boxes provided on the globe. [see appendix]

## 2. **WORD** (15 mins)

As you ponder on the issues / conditions of your world, let the words of John 6:1-13, 35 water your heart.

- Spend some time hearing these words twice, if not thrice. What **RESONATES** with you? Jot it down in your journal or in the scroll [see appendix].

### c) **"Give Them Something To Eat"** (30 minutes)

For the next 30 minutes, soak yourself in this passage: John 6:1-13; 35.

Today, these words are spoken against the **CANVAS OF OUR SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT MINISTRY** in IFES (or your own specific ministry). We are serving in the midst of many hungers and many needs.

- Stand with these verses, and explore how each one of these makes you feel. Put yourself in the shoes of the disciples. Write down the emotions and posture you discover [see appendix].

.. verse 5a *"Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, ..."*

.. verse 5b *".....Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"*

.. verse 6 *"He asked this question only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do."*

.. verse 9 *"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"*

.. verse 11 *"Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same for the fish."*

.. verse 35 *".... I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."*

- Put yourself in **Philip's shoes**. Then put yourself in **Andrew's shoes**. What similar **feelings are arising in you** as you see the "crowds" in IFES (your ministry)?

- What is **Jesus inviting you to**, as you look at Him?

d) **My Mandate** (20 minutes)

Do this in the last 20 minutes of your reflection time.

- As the Word watered your soul and you looked at your world, ..... what is falling into place? How is the **Lord calling you to be a Scripture Engagement catalyst (a catalyst in your own ministry)**? List them down in as specific ways as you can..... [Write them down in your journal or in the last page of the appendix]
- Also, **who is the LORD wanting to be for you**, as you serve? What does He want you to see about who He has been, and who He can be for you? [Write down your stirrings ...]

e) **Easing Out Of This Time With God** (10 minutes)

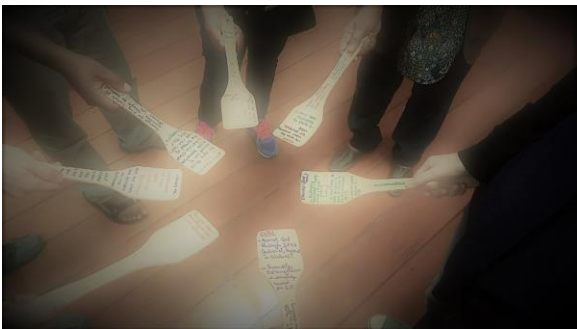
As you slowly make your way back, walk in thanksgiving for the time you just had. Stop by at the Sieger Köder painting "*All Are Welcome*" and see what impressions it leaves.

[If you do not have the painting, you could substitute with this: You can allow a song to rise up in your heart and sing it out to the Lord, in thanksgiving for the time you had.]

f) **Community Time** (45 minutes)

The facilitator will guide you in what you can share.

- It may be good to begin with how the paintings left impressions on you.
- Then share with each other what became more intentional for us, as our "calling". And share "who" the Lord wants to be for us in our ministry.



This sharing may be done in CREATIVE WAYS (to help participants be focused during the sharing). You may want to get a symbol that signifies service (I got wooden spoons). On it, get people to CAPTURE WHAT GOD IS CALLING THEM TO IN A PHRASE. And if there is space, to write in point form the mandate they have been given. This can be brought home and kept in a place where it catches one's eye regularly.

After this, each one takes turns to share the caption they have written. No explanations needed. Then, they break into pairs to do a deeper sharing.

As the facilitator draws the retreat to a close, it might be good to end with a time of leading in devotions based on John 6:1-13, 35. And in the course of it, to point out that the role of the disciples in the feeding was to be "WAITERS" for the Lord. That can be a posture we take on for our ministry and service.