

The Three Stations

A readiness exercise



About this resource

This is a 30- to 40-minute tool for groups to use at the beginning of a retreat, workshop, gathering, or other group time. It's a meditative approach for participants to clear their minds and become open and ready for their time together. The process of the three stations is designed to help each individual to do what she “needs to do” to get the most out of the group experience.

Three Stations Activity Descriptions

This activity is self-selecting—the participants choose which stations to visit. Participants go the stations to “get empty.” Participants move to the stations and follow the directions on the instruction cards. Everything they need to participate should be at each station. Participants may choose to visit more than one station.

- **Water Station.** The water station allows participants to release any barriers—the mind clutter that keeps us from being fully present and may get in the way of receiving what is in store for us. If you are feeling a bit scattered or your mind is racing, this would be a good place to start.
- **Rock Station.** The rock station allows those who are full of hopes and expectations to settle their thoughts and be ready to receive what they are expecting. If you have come feeling hopeful or with expectations, it would be good to start at this station.
- **Letter Station.** The letter station allows participants to have a quiet moment to record their thoughts on paper. If you are currently discerning an issue or processing an experience and feel that things are not yet clear for you, this is the place to start.

Three Stations Instructions

Water station

What you need: Pitcher of water, a large bowl, paper, pens, a basket, and instruction cards.

Instruction Card Text: Write on the paper any barriers or issues that might keep you from being fully present today. While naming aloud these barriers, pour water into the bowl, which symbolizes the pouring out of these obstacles.

Rock station

What you need: Flat smooth small rocks, permanent markers, and instruction cards.

Instruction Card Text: Choose a rock and on it write what you hope to hear from this time together. Try to distill the hope (or message) to one or two words. If you have more than one hope, write each on a different rock. Keep your rocks with you as a reminder. Share what you wrote on your rocks with another person and covenant with that person to check in with one another. You might ask one another, “Are you listening?” or “How are you feeling about the process?” followed by words of encouragement.

Letter station

What you need: Stationery, pens, scrapbook accessories, and instruction cards.

Instruction Card Text: Write a letter or note to yourself including what brought you to this gathering/retreat and naming the issue or challenge that you are facing and about which you are discerning. Place the letter in an envelope and seal it. Address it to yourself and place it in the basket.

At the end of the gathering or meeting, a designated person (such as the facilitator) should mail the letters back to the participants. Another option is to ask each participant to pick up a letter and mail it. Or the person who wrote the letter may take it home, put it in a safe place (such as in the pages of her Bible), and then open it after a prescribed time (six weeks or three months or such). Whichever option you choose, include the instruction on the instruction card.

Conclusion

This exercise was designed to help participants empty themselves and to begin to listen for God. God is always talking to us, but we spend very little time listening. Quiet time, meditation, and journaling should be encouraged in the discernment process to help us focus our hearts and minds with the intention of listening to God.

