



## Spiritual Practice: Praying the Examen

Materials needed: Journal

If you are using this guide for a group gathering your preparation may include the following - It may be helpful to have a printed copy for each of your group member so they can follow along with each step. Some prefer to have an electronic copy as well.

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### What is the Examen

The Examen is an ancient practice in the church that is designed to help us see the way God is engaging with us, his children, throughout our days. It is a practice that allows us to see God's presence in our lives. The Examen is a method to help us review our day in the presence of God. There are five steps that lead us in reflection and connection with God. Today we invite all of you to participate in the five steps of the Examen. Our hope is that it leads you into greater freedom and acceptance in your faith journey.

The Examen can be a daily practice. We encourage you, that if this practice resonates with you, you take 15-20 minutes each day to participate in the five steps of reflection. Resources to learn more about the Examen and how to make it a part of your daily life are listed below.

You can begin your time by reading the centering prayer below.

Centering Prayer - Gracious God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of Life, have mercy on us. Reveal yourself in all things, to all things, and through all things. Help us trust that our deepest desires are your delight. In the name of the Father who is for us, the Son who is with us, and the Spirit who unites us in the never-ending dance of love. Amen.

#### 1) Presence - Ask God for light

In this first step we ask God to help us see our day with His eyes, to ask for His perspective and insight. In asking, we hope to not rest on our own understanding, reflections, and judgments of ourselves or others, but to ask God to help us see ourselves and others the way he sees us.

Read aloud the below prayer and then take a few moments of silence to reflect, pray and journal if desired. Make observations about your day. What is the Spirit helping you see?

Come Holy Spirit. Give us eyes to see ourselves and others the way you do. As we reflect on this day, be our guide, our counselor, our advocate, and our defender. Help us to see you and celebrate your work in our lives and in the world. Open our hearts to you and help us to be more aware of your presence.

## 2) Gratitude - Give Thanks

In this step we take time to give thanks for the day we have been given. We take a moment to recognize that each day is a gift, and even if the day was difficult, we pause and ask the Lord to help us see his gifts in the midst of hard circumstances. After reading the prayer below, take time to name what you are grateful for, ask God to help cultivate gratitude in you, regardless of your circumstances.

Read aloud the below prayer and then take a few moments of silence to reflect, pray and journal if desired. Name what you are grateful for. Ask for help from the Lord if you are struggling to give thanks. Listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus, we give you our thanks. It is truly the only gift we can give to you. The deepest form of gratitude we can offer is our own joy. We give you thanks, and in doing so, we recognize your work in us, in others, and in our world. We don't offer our thanks to win your favor. That isn't necessary. You are the gift. You are the joy of our desiring. You are enough. We give thanks.

## 3) Reflection - Review the day

We now have the opportunity to look back on our day, guided by the Holy Spirit. This is a time of sober reflection. Be honest before the Lord about what is surfacing in you. God is concerned with what has happened in your life, he cares, and has important things to offer us in even the most mundane moments. Try not to ignore or explain away feelings, interactions, or experience that come up. Sit with them and explore what God might be inviting you to explore.

Read aloud the below prayer and then take a few moments of silence to reflect, pray and journal if desired. What do you find yourself thinking about, reflecting on from your day. What emotions? Who was involved? Why do you feel the Lord brought this to your mind? What are you hearing and seeing?

Lord Jesus, as we remember our day, we ask that you give us eyes to see our days the way you have. May we be sensitive to your Spirit, willing and anxious to walk down the paths of reflection and discovery that you desire for us. Protect us from our own judgements and criticism. Help us to see ourselves as your beloved children. Help us to reflect not only on our movements, but on your movements in our days. Holy Spirit, guide us to truth and help us see with clarity. When did we cave into our fears, anxieties, addictions and displaced desires? When were we most ourselves? As these truths surface, let us rest in your unfailing love and acceptance. Amen.

## 4) Resolve - Face your shortcomings

At this point we own our actions, words, and thoughts that don't align with God's heart. We accept responsibility and confess. As we ask God to search our hearts and to know us, we accept the offensive ways in us that he shines his light on. We do all of this rooted and grounded in the truth that we are fully known and fully loved, that we are forgiven.

Read aloud the below prayer and then take a few moments of silence to reflect, pray and journal if desired. What is anything needs to be forgiven. Name the grace that you long for. Be specific!

My God, you have searched me and you know me, you know the best of me and the worst. You see all of me and you love me. You know the ways I've acted apart from you in this day. I bring these things before you and ask for your grace, your forgiveness, your redemption. I receive your mercy and extend it to others. God we ask for your grace: to do and to will your good pleasure in our lives and in the world that you love so deeply. May it be so...

#### 5) Look toward tomorrow

Finally, we look towards tomorrow and ask for God's guidance, wisdom, and presence as we move forward. We ask where we need God in the day to come. In this step we consider God's invitation in how we are to grow and practice what we have learned from this day. In this step we pursue how to act wisely, to pursue how God would want us to live in the day to come.

Read aloud the below prayer and then take a few moments of silence to reflect, pray and journal if desired. What do you feel invited to?

Lord, thank you for your Word, and for the Words you've spoken to us today. May we rest in your grace, acceptance, and love as we move into tomorrow. Holy Spirit remind of us your Word in the day to come. Help us live from your truth, your love and your grace. May your truth and your invitation be cultivated in us as we say yes to you. Jesus, you are our treasure, help us live from this reality. Amen.

#### Resources

1) A Simple Life-Changing Prayer: Discovering the Power of St. Ignatius Loyola's Examen by Jim Manney

2) [gravitycenter.com](http://gravitycenter.com)

(Adapted from Jim Manney, A Simple Life-Changing Prayer: Discovering the Power of St. Ignatius Loyola's Examen.)