



PRAYER OF EXAMEN

Noticing God in All of Life

Throughout the centuries, prayerful individuals have discovered profound guidance for their journeys through the transformative practice of the Examen (Colossians 1:9 and Philippians 1:9-10). The Examen offers a gentle yet powerful way of attuning ourselves to the ever-present grace of God in our daily lives. It is a practice that attends to what we might otherwise miss in the press of duties and busyness as well as in the mundane. Its gentle questions nudge us to become attentive to the subtle movements of God within and around us. They lead us to listen deeply to the whispers of our souls, becoming aware of how God's presence is revealed in the ebb and flow of our existence. Within these questions, we are encouraged to pay attention to our interior landscape - the thoughts, sensations, and emotions that shape our experience.

By engaging with these questions with compassionate curiosity, we create space to acknowledge and honor the full spectrum of our human experience - from moments of profound joy to those of deep sorrow. Our restless nights, uneasy stomachs, strained interactions, and even our physical discomforts are tenderly held within the loving embrace of God's grace, inviting us to explore their deeper significance.

The Examen can open us to both the difficult and beautiful in our lives, relationships, and professions. It is also a useful way of reflecting alone or with others on what God is saying to us through a meeting, a class, a meal, a service project, a relationship, or a conflict.

Examen Questions Include:

- For what moment today am I most grateful? For what moment today am I least grateful?
- When did I give and receive the most love today? When did I give and receive the least love today?
- What was the most life-giving part of my day? What was the most life-draining part of my day?
- When today did I feel the deepest sense of connection with God, others, and myself? And when today did I feel the least sense of connection?

The Examen is a wonderful tool for discerning the places you feel most alive, most grateful, most present to the fruit of the Spirit, as well as the times and places where you do not. For those who navigate the shadows of melancholy, the Examen becomes a trusted ally, illuminating the overlooked pockets of grace. The Examen invites attention to both low and high points, recognizing both of these as an invitation to prayer.

Conversely, for those naturally inclined towards optimism, the Examen offers a sacred mirror reflecting back the complexities of life with honesty and gentleness. It encourages us to acknowledge the shadows and name the struggles, forging a pathway toward deeper authenticity and vulnerability. In this sacred dance of introspection,

the Examen embraces both the peaks and valleys of our journey, recognizing each as a sacred invitation to communion with God.

Perspective and direction for the future happen through listening to where and how God is intricately woven throughout our days, in prayer. Awareness of the Spirit's enlivening and enlightening presence puts us in touch with the essence of our true selves, the unique reflection of God's divine image within us. When we begin to recognize who God is within us, it is in the sacred unveiling that we discover the blueprint of our purpose, the roadmap to living out God's design for our lives with authenticity and purpose.

Practice the Examen

1. **Sit quietly and relax.** Light a candle if you'd like and become still in the presence of Christ.
 - a. God, I am deeply thankful for Your constant presence in my life, for Your unwavering love that surrounds me at all times. And in this moment, I am especially grateful for Your comforting presence beside me.
 - b. God, I humbly ask that Your Holy Spirit to be with me. May Your Spirit illuminate my thoughts and fill my heart with warmth, guiding me to recognize the moments we've shared throughout this day."

[Pause]

2. **Take a moment to reflect on the past 24 hours and search for a moment of comfort or peace.** Allow yourself to review your day with God. Gently invite the Holy Spirit to bring to your awareness the moment from today that fills you with the most gratitude. You might find it helpful to consider one of these questions:
 - a. For what moment today am I most grateful? Where have I felt Your care, and love, seen Your face, heard Your voice today?
 - b. What experience of today brought me the most joy?
 - c. When today did I feel the most content, the most authentic to who I am?
 - d. When did I feel God's presence most fully today?

[Pause]

3. **Reflect once more on the past day and identify a moment when you felt deeply challenged or drained.** Consider creating a list of emotional descriptors, such as accepted, anxious, apathetic, confused, defeated, disgusted, ecstatic, enraged, paranoid, weepy, or undecided. Then, as you engage with the Examen questions, allow these words to assist you in expressing what depletes your energy and what revitalizes you. Let this awareness guide your decision-making process. You may find it helpful to explore one of these questions:
 - a. What moment today am I least grateful for?
 - b. What experience of the day left me feeling drained and weary?
 - c. When today did I feel the most discontented, uneasy, and farthest from my true self?
 - d. When did I sense a lack of God's presence in my life today?

[Pause]

4. **Spend a moment in prayer, expressing gratitude to God for moments of comfort and seeking help with the challenges** (God, I am grateful for the moments today where we've shared presence):
 - a. What do you believe God wants to communicate with you about what surfaced during your time today?
 - b. What would you like to express to God regarding it?
 - c. What other practices or routines, if needed, help you stay connected to God during times of comfort, difficulty, hope, waiting, or uncertainty?
 - d. If you feel it's appropriate right now, in what ways do you feel led to extend comfort to others in your community and beyond after reflecting on your time today?

The God-Given Fruit of Prayer of Examen:

1. Keeping company with Jesus throughout all the highs and lows of the day.
2. Acknowledging God's presence in your daily experiences.
3. Cultivating deeper discernment and receptivity to God's compassionate voice.
4. Liberating oneself from "acting the guru" and instead guiding others toward listening to God's wisdom, not personal opinions.
5. Fostering gratitude, both big and small.
6. Being aware of your growing edges.
7. Being aware of God-given desires.
8. Being aware of invitations to prayer that God graciously extends to you throughout each day.

May God bless you on your journey of practicing The Examen.