

The Prayer of Examen

The Prayer of Examen (i.e., of examination) is a way of assessing one's life before God on a regular basis. This prayer was first developed by Ignatius of Loyola in *The Spiritual Exercises*.

Ignatius took for granted that God is always present and at work. The spiritual challenge, according to him, is to recognise how God is working and to respond in gratitude and openness. The purpose of this prayer is to help us to process each day before God. To pay attention at our lives and ask:

Where is God in this situation? How is God leading me? What is God saying to me?

How was God there for me in that experience?

What at the moment is leading me to God and others in love? What is leading me away?

What is really going on in my life these days?

The whole point of this self-examination is to become more God centred by observing the moments when we are and are not God centred. We become aware of where we have responded in obedience to God and also where we have resisted and turned away.

At the end of each day, prayerfully reflect on the internal and external events and experiences of your life using any of the following sets of questions:

*For what moment today am I most grateful?
For what moment today am I least grateful?*

*What was today's high point?
What was today's low point?*

*What was it today that was most life giving?
What was it today that was most life draining?*

*When did I sense connection with God?
When did I sense a disconnect with God?*

*When did I give and receive the most love today?
When did I give and receive the least love today?*

*When was I happiest today?
When was I saddest?*

Pay attention to your days: We often find that most of our days go by unnoticed. This prayer is one way to help prevent our daily lives from going by unexamined.

“In the end, the prayer of examen is about noticing: noticing the good gifts God gives us, noticing the presence of God in our lives, and noticing the ways we fail God. When we notice, we become more conscious. When we become more conscious, we grow.” (Richard Peace, *Meditative Prayer*, 57)

An Outline of the Prayer of Examen (Timothy M. Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer*, 25)

Transition: I become aware of the love with which God looks upon me as I begin this examen.

Step One: **Gratitude.**

I note the gifts that God’s love has given me this day, and I give thanks to God for them.

Step Two: **Petition.**

I ask God for an insight and a strength that will make this examen a work of grace, fruitful beyond my human capacity alone.

Step Three: **Review.**

With my God, I review the day. I look for the stirrings in my heart and the thoughts that God has given me this day. I look also for those that have not been of God. I review my choices in response to both, and **do so** throughout the day in general.

Step Four: **Forgiveness.**

I ask for the healing touch of the forgiving God who, with love and respect for me, removes heart’s burdens.

Step Five: **Renewal.**

I look to the following day and, with God, plan concretely how to live it in accord with God’s loving desire for my life.

Transition: Aware of God’s presence with me, I prayerfully conclude this examen.