



A Prayer of Examen Guide

The philosopher Socrates said: “The unexamined life is not worth living.” *The Prayer of Examen* is a spiritual practice that helps us see how the examined life is significantly worth living.

Saint Ignatius observed that if you were to drop any prayer time from your day because of busyness or tiredness, the prayer of examen should be the last one to relinquish. The reason is: busyness, fatigue, preoccupation, or distractions can keep us from examining our life.

The Prayer of Examen encourages *gratitude, petition, discernment, forgiveness, and resolution*. The following is a guide to help you Pray the Examen:

Schedule

Ignatius suggests doing this prayer twice daily. Remember: This prayer practice is not meant to be burdensome. Ignatius advised not to spend longer than 15-minutes.

- Consider setting a timer on your phone to alert you.
- Pay attention to your natural rhythms. Are you a morning or evening person? At what point in the day will a scheduled 5 to 15-minute pause be best for you?
- There is no right or wrong time. The choice of time and duration of the prayer arises from your determined will. Making time to be with the Lord is our intentional practice.

It's okay to start slowly. Perhaps once each day is comfortable for you to begin. Remember, this prayer practice is not meant to be burdensome.

Release

- Quiet yourself. Take a minute to let go of the stress of the day.
- Calm yourself by breathing in deeply, then exhale fully.
- Enjoy this gift of silence as you relax in God's presence.
- Imagine yourself being with God.
- What does it feel like for God to hold you in His arms? If your day has been stressful, imagine Jesus speaking: “Peace be still.”
- In stillness, whisper: “Speak Lord, your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:9). Or, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.”



Request

- Ask God for the grace to see whatever He wants you to see.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your remembrance those things he desires you to recall. Ask for clarity and understanding.

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:8).

“Open my eyes, Lord” (Psalm 119:18)

- Remember: God loves to talk with us and hear from us.

Review

- With your Heavenly Father, review your day and ask Him to recognize when you were with Him or when you were moving away from God’s love.
- Resting in God’s love, notice what comes to mind.
- Was there a moment when you noticed God’s presence? Possibly in a sunrise or sunset. Perhaps in an encounter with someone?
- Was there a troubling event that aroused anger or resentment; a moment you recall when you obeyed – or disobeyed – the Lord?
- How did you feel then? What are you noticing now? *Remember, you are loved by God, even in your failures.*
- Were there moments when you experienced faith, hope, and love (*consolation*)?
- When did you experience a sense of loss or distance (*desolation*)?
- With each recollection, be grateful, thanking God for all of which you are aware.
- From all you receive, is there one or two specific things you’ve noticed that you would like bring to God? Is there something you feel God desires to address with you?

Using a journal to write down what you are noticing is a great way to enter into a dialogue with God.

Repent and Rejoice

Trusting in God’s relentless love and with a grateful heart, we rejoice because of all that God has brought to our remembrance.

- Take a moment to call to mind your sins that God has graciously allowed you to see. *Remember, you noticed this because God loves you.*
- Admit you are sincerely sorry and ask God to forgive you and be merciful to you, a sinner.
- Thank God for His mercy and forgiveness and rejoice because of God’s great love for you.

“Lord, I thank you for all that you have revealed to me; the good and bad, my successes and failures. I praise you that you are loving and kind, gentle and merciful to those who repent of their sins. Thank you for your everlasting love.”



Resolve

Now, take a moment with the Lord and make some practical, concrete, and do-able resolutions for the next period of your day.

- You may want to write these simple, practical resolutions in your journal. They can serve to remind you of your desire to be with God and be mindful of God's presence with you – throughout the day.

Return (slowly)

- With a grateful heart and joyful anticipation, slowly return to the rest of your day, knowing God is with you in all you do.