

The Prayer of Examen

The Prayer of Examen is an ancient practice of reviewing your day in the presence of God. With an attitude of openness and humility before God, you take a mental journey through the activities of work, home, school, and interactions with others. You're searching for where God has been among the practical details of your schedule. And you're paying attention to where God may be leading you. The practice takes about 10 minutes and has five steps.

- 1. Ask God for light.** Some days are a whirlwind — a frenzied mix of emotions, tasks, and scrambling. Other days are blah; the doldrums that drag on. The first step of Examen is to ask God for clarity. We need help to see what we don't see. God is always working in every moment of our life, so we first seek his insight into our day.
- 2. Give thanks.** Take a mental stroll through your day. Notice the good gifts that God provided and respond to him with gratitude. Say "Thank you, Lord" if you had food on your plate, clothes on your back, a roof over your head, good people in your lives, a sunset, and air in your lungs. The more carefully you pay attention to the little details of God's goodness all around you, the more you are filled with thankfulness offered back to God.
- 3. Review the day.** Look at your emotions over the course of your day. What were the highs and lows? What made you anxious or caused your to blood boil? What gave a deep sense of joy or satisfaction? Ask God what he might be saying to you through these emotions. Do you sense any gentle (or strong!) nudges from the Holy Spirit leading you to reach out to someone? Is he pushing you to go out of your comfort zone in helping a neighbor? Are you being led to reconcile with a coworker who constantly gets under your skin? Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He often uses your emotions to guide you. Use this step to align your will with God's will.
- 4. Face your shortcomings.** This step is not intended for shaming or condemnation. But with the Lord, you take an honest look of the parts of your day where you fell short. Some of your greatest failure is turned into the most sacred meeting ground where you connect with the God who dearly loves you. Meet him in the moments when you turned away from him. He is always waiting for your return with open arms and a warm embrace. In this step we move into the reality of our sin, disobedience and rebellion. But as we move into reality, we are really moving closer to God — because God lives in reality! By honestly examining your shortcomings you are drawing closer to the good, good Father who gives power, strength, and wisdom to grow. Take one event from your day and turn it into a prayer to become more like Jesus.
- 5. Look toward the day to come.** Ask God to give you what's needed for tomorrow. Look to him as you look ahead. You'll find that "Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing" (Psalm 34:10b).

During small group, have people individually practice the Prayer of Examen and then share with each other their experiences.