



PRAYER PRACTICES FOR LENT

THE EXAMEN

INTRODUCTION

◆ Background

The Examen is a spiritual practice created by priest and theologian St Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century. It is a prayer of thankful reflection; a tool to walk through the recent past with God. We notice and name God's presence in joyful and difficult moments and ask God to help resolve how to live well in the future. Regular use of the practice can aid discernment. By attentiveness to moments of joy and thankfulness, or the opposite, God shows us where to direct our time and energy and what to be less involved or concerned with.

◆ Summary of the Practice

The Examen is based around three questions:

1. When have I been most grateful?

This question enables us to see where God is in the present.

Our response is thanksgiving.

2. When have I been least grateful?

This question enables us to name our fears, anxieties and the things we lament.

Our response is to ask for peace.

3. What am I hoping for?

This question enables us to look to the future in faith.

Our response is to seek God's blessing.

◆ Ways to use the Practice

This prayer can be done on your own, as well as in a group. It is a lovely way to end the day with children, simply asking them what made them happy, what made them sad and what they would like to pray for tomorrow.

Though traditionally used as a daily prayer, it is possible to use the Examen to review longer periods of time or specific topics, for instance to review the past year, while in your current job role or during a retreat. You could lead yourself through the prayer or use an app. A list of examples can be found in the resource list below.

We have also developed a Community Examen, which can be used in small groups or to start or close a PCC, Synod or other meetings. You can find an outline for the Community Examen on www.wayoflife.london.

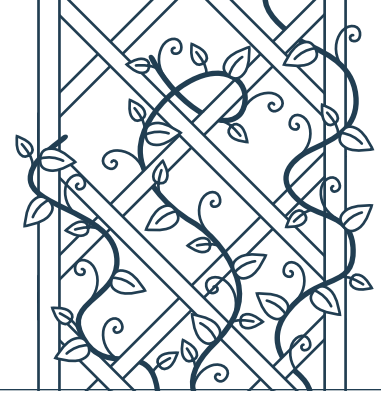
◆ Time

The Examen is a short and simple practice and all about finding God in the everyday. It is 'stretchy', as you can make it as short or as long as you like, from a few minutes up to half an hour.



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OUTLINE

1 Settle

Begin by taking some time to get comfortable. You might light a candle to be reminded of God's presence, or you might find it helpful to close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Continue breathing slowly, counting to three as you breathe 'in' and three as you breathe 'out'. Imagine breathing out any heavy or difficult feelings you might be carrying. Imagine breathing in God's deep love for you. Sit in the silence for a while.

2 Revisit

Let the day play back through your mind, no strain at all, just letting whatever will come to mind, come to mind. If this is helpful for you, place your hand on your heart.

3 Gratitude

Ask Jesus to bring to your heart the moment today for which you are *most grateful*. If you could relive one moment, which one would it be? When were you most able to give and receive love today?

Ask yourself what was said and done in the moment that made it so special. Breathe in the gratitude you feel and receive life again from that moment.

4 Turmoil

Ask Jesus to bring to your heart the moment today for which you are *least grateful*. When were you least able to give and receive love?

Ask yourself what was said and done in that moment that made it so difficult. Be with whatever you feel without trying to change or fix it in any way. You may wish to take deep breaths and let God's love fill you just as you are.

5 Hope

Give thanks for God's loving presence with you today and ask for an awareness of God's loving presence with you tomorrow. Express your hopes for tomorrow to God.

6 Rest

Spend a moment resting in the quiet; knowing God has been with you in your praying and listening, hears your prayers and is with you now.

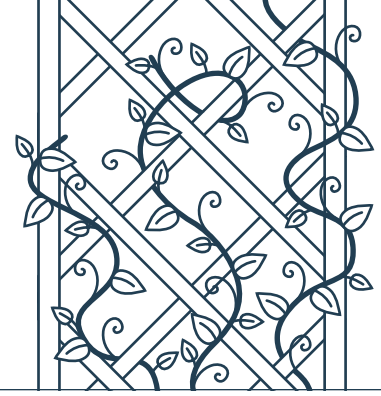
**Where it says God, you can replace this with Jesus or the Holy Spirit and vice versa.*





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GOING DEEPER

◆ Questions for Reflection

- How did you respond to the Examen practice? What was helpful? What was not so helpful?
- How might you use and develop this practice in your everyday life?
- How might this practice be used within your church community?

Note for when reflecting on these questions as a group:

The focus of this exercise is not on the content of people's prayer or what they have spoken about with God. What we are inviting you to do is reflect on the practice itself, how it is or might be useful to you and your church community and how you might practically build it into your life. If someone does share something personal about their experience of the practice, we encourage you to simply say 'thank you' and hold what was shared, possibly with a short moment of silence before moving on.

◆ Resources

Books

- *A Simple Life-Changing Prayer*, Jim Manney (Loyola Press, 2011)
- *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen: Fresh Ways to Pray from Your Day*, Mark E. Thibodeaux, (Loyola Press, 2015)
- *Sleeping With Bread: Holding What Gives You Life*, Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant, Matthew Linn, (Paulist Press, 1995)
- *The Examen Book*, Paul Mitchell, (Loyola Press, 2022) // for families and children

Online (Apps and Websites)

- *Pray As You Go* (in the Retreats and Series section), Jesuit Media Initiatives
<https://pray-as-you-go.org/series/3-examen-prayer> // includes versions for children and young people
- *Re-Imagining the Examen*, Mark E. Thibodeaux
<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/reimagining-examen-app/>
- *Examen*, Fuller Seminary
<https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/prayer-of-examen/>

Visit <http://lent2023.wayoflife.london> for accompanying videos and other prayer practice resources.