

## The Examen Prayer

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In the mid 1500's Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish priest, noted spiritual leader and founder of the Catholic Jesuit order developed a set of exercises to help Christians connect with God's deep desire for their lives. These exercises, known as The Examen, form a foundation for the prayer of millions of Christians, from all traditions and denominations.

By praying The Examen, Christians can receive:

- Blessed spiritual newness.
- Growing daily communion with God.
- Increased ability to serve.
- The gift of a more intentional spiritual life.
- A deepened awareness of the outpouring of God's grace.

In some ways The Examen is an easy prayer to pray, as its questions simply guide us through the natural prayer steps of gratitude, petition and confession.

In many ways The Examen is among the hardest prayers to pray, as it pushes us toward deep self reflection. It's easy to ask God's mercy for others. The Examen asks God's mercy for us – and urges us to examine our own thoughts and actions to discern what has been of God and what is not of God. Through The Examen we also surrender our lives to the divine will.

Through Lent we're going to be using The Examen as part of our Sunday worship. I encourage you to consider using it as part of your daily prayer at home.

### **Additional Resources:**

The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for our Lives Today by Timothy Gallagher (Crossroads Books, 2006).

*An Ignatian Prayer Adventure* – an eight week, online Lenten/Easter retreat with Jean Heaton, author of Helping Families Recover from Addiction. Ms. Heaton draws from the Examen Prayer and the 12-Steps to help participants experience healing.

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/an-ignatian-prayer-adventure>. Registration required. Cost \$10. Note: This is a Catholic retreat but should be accessible to non-Catholics as well.

## How to Pray the Examen

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Find space and time (at least five minutes) when you will be undisturbed. Many do The Examen right before bed. A friend (who lives alone) does it over a cup of tea after she gets home from work. You can do it in the shower, while walking the dog, in early morning quiet. Some people journal it. Others do it with a prayer partner or life partner.

Here are the basic steps to the prayer.

**Transition.** I become aware of the love with which God looks upon me as I enter this time of prayer.

**Step One: Gratitude.** I note the gifts God's love has given me this day, and I give thanks to God for those gifts.

**Step Two: Petition.** I ask God for an insight and 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 of 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 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 my 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 The Examen.