

## The Prayer of Examen

The Prayer of Examen is a daily spiritual exercise typically credited to St. Ignatius of Loyola [1491-1556], who encouraged others with this practice to develop a deeper awareness and sensitivity to the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life. At the heart, this is about living in God's presence throughout the day.

Before you begin...

This practice is basically an exercise in remembering and conversing. We are invited through four focuses to look at experiences from the past 24 hours and talk with God, both listening to his voice and expressing ourselves in light of what He brings to mind. This practice is more of a guide than a strict prescription. If one focus feels more important one day, be free to spend most or all of your time there. Keep in mind the goal is to increase our awareness and sensitivity to God, not check off a "religious to-do item."

### 1. Presence

Begin this practice by focusing on the presence of God. God's presence is with you and His desire is to be close with you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you be attentive to God's presence. It may help to meditate on a Scripture such as, "*Be still and know that I am God*" [Psalm 46v10]. Take time; don't rush. Allow yourself to take comfort in God's presence.

Open yourself to His presence. Ask Him to show himself to you, to give you all that is needed to live gracefully and wisely with yourself, with others and with all God has made.

*"The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."* [Psalm 145v18]

*"The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. All you have made will praise you, O Lord; your saints will extol you."* [Psalm 145v9-10]

### 2. Gratitude

As you think about the past 24 hours, what causes you to be thankful? Look back over the past day, the big and small aspects of life, and recognize what reasons you have to be grateful. Focus on these experiences and encounters, helping your mind and spirit center on the goodness and generosity of God. If you journal, write down the things for which you are grateful.

*Looking back over the past 24 hours, for what are you most grateful?  
What makes you feel thankful? Using simple words, express your gratitude to God.*

*"Praise be to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens."* [Ephesians 1v3]

### 3. Review

What we don't know often controls us. Our stories begin to live us if we don't reflect on the action that is unfolding and the character that is or isn't developing. Here we can take time to look back over the past 24 hours. By intentionally reflecting on our interactions, responses, feelings and intentions, we can avoid our stories living us. We can pause to learn more about ourselves and about God's activity in our lives.

Try to be objective as you review. Don't interpret, justify, or rationalize; rather observe and remember. Allow God to remind you of the situations you have been in and the inner attitudes and feelings of your day.

When or where in the past 24 hours were you cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

What habits and life patterns do you notice from the past day?

*"Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul...Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground."* [Psalm 143v8b,10]

### 4. Response

Now that you have remembered, take time to respond before God. Take time to journal or pray, expressing your thoughts on the actions, attitudes, feelings, and interactions you've remembered as a part of this exercise. You might need to seek forgiveness, ask for direction, share a concern, express gratitude, or resolve to make changes and move forward. Allow your observations to guide your responses.

Beginning today, how do you want to live your life differently? What patterns do you want to keep living tomorrow?

*"May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."* [Hebrews 13v20-21]

*"Ever-present Father, help me to meet you in the Scriptures I read and the prayers I say; in the bread I break and the meals I share; in my investments at work and my enjoyments at play; and in the neighbors and family I welcome, love, and serve, for your sake and that your love and peace may reign now and forever. Amen."*

May God's peace be yours.

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i Material adapted from [marshill.org/teaching/sp](http://marshill.org/teaching/sp)