

Examen Prayer

How can we pray? A great way to pray is to look for God's presence in your life. More than 400 years ago St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged prayer-filled mindfulness by proposing what has been called the Daily Examen. The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and to discern his direction for us. Try this version of St. Ignatius's prayer.

1. Become aware of God's presence.

Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

2. Review the day with gratitude.

Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

3. Pay attention to your emotions.

One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through feelings?

God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short.

Make note of these sins and faults. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you consider a new direction in some area of your work? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to her in some way.

4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.

Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

5. Look toward tomorrow.

Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend. End the Daily Examen with a conversation with Jesus. Ask forgiveness for your sins. Ask for his protection and help. Ask for his wisdom about the questions you have and the problems you face. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude. Your life is a gift, adorned with gifts from God.

The five-steps that St. Ignatius practiced:

- 1. Become aware of God's presence.**
- 2. Review the day with gratitude.**
- 3. Pay attention to your emotions.**
- 4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.**
- 5. Look toward tomorrow.**

Quote

“All the things in this world are gifts of God, created for us, to be the means by which we can come to know Him better, love Him more surely, and serve Him more faithfully.”

St Ignatius of Loyola

Resources:

Read a reflection:

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/>

Watch a video:

This video features a student trying out the Examen. In the face of worrying about a test, he looks back on the past 24 hours to notice where he has been distracted and what he can do to focus:

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/into-the-examen-video/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDQgjzJINdk> (5 min)

Use an App:

Reimagining the Examen App:

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/reimagining-examen-app/>

(search the app store for other App's too)

Useful Websites:

[ignatianspirituality.com](https://www.ignatianspirituality.com) + [pathwaystogod.org/my-prayer-life/examen](https://www.pathwaystogod.org/my-prayer-life/examen)

Note: The text above is adapted from these resources and my own prayer.

~ Jane Maisey