

Prayer of Examen

INTRODUCTION

In the midst of hectic days, we can go on for days and weeks divorcing our world from God's gracious and guiding presence, and the results can be a frightening unawareness of our own hearts. We become a stranger to our own selves, and we easily become unaware of the grace that surrounds us. The Daily Examen was a form of prayer developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), founder of the Jesuit Order to help Christians become more self-aware and aware of Christ's presence in the midst of daily life. The goal of this adapted Prayer of Examen is to better understand our own self, particularly our emotional life, in the light of God's daily gracious presence through a series of daily questions.

Emotions are an important part of what it means to be created in God's image, and it may surprise you to see how emotional God is throughout the Scriptures. Yet, in our modern world we seldom have the time and discipline to think about our emotional lives. We feel emotions all the time but often they become either over- or under-expressed, and this distortion can lead us away from God's truth and grace. The gospel is at work to sanctify our emotions as much as any other part of our being, and this devotional will help you examine the emotions that are associated with the events of the day. By becoming more aware of our emotional lives, we not only know ourselves better, but we come to know how God is active and present in our daily lives.

DIRECTIONS

The Prayer of Examen was originally practiced twice a day—once at noon and at the end of the day. Most people will not be able to do this two times a day, so pray this minimally either at the start or end of the day.

02 MIN | OPENING PRAYER OF INVITATION

Becoming aware of God's presence throughout the day.

- Sit comfortably in stillness for these minutes.
- Be reminded that our God brings structure out of the chaos of our days.
- Invite the Holy Spirit who searches our hearts to guide you through this prayer.

03 MIN | REVIEWING THE PAST DAY'S EVENTS

— Remembering that each day is a gift from the Lord, review your day and write down a basic chronology of what happened today.

— Does any particular event, meeting, conversation, or place stand out to you? In the rush of our days, it is easy to overlook so much. Think about the things you ate, saw, smelled and heard. Remember that God is even in these details.

03 MIN | CONSIDERING YOUR EMOTIONS

— Our emotions are an important expression of the desires in our hearts; however, we can become unaware of our emotions given the frantic pace of our lives. When we are not aware of our emotions and the desires that underlie them, our idols can gain strength and power in our lives.

— Reflect on the day's events and list the feelings that you experienced throughout the day—fear, anxiety, boredom, happiness, resentment, elation, hope, anger, compassion, etc...

05 MIN | CHOOSE ONE FEATURE OF THE DAY AND PRAY FOR IT

— As you examine the events and emotions of the day, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to something that God wants you to pay a bit more attention to. This can be something unexpected or seemingly insignificant at first glance. It can be something positive or negative.

— Pray for this particular thing. How would God want you to pray for this? What could God be wanting you to know or learn? How could He be affirming you or leading you to change?

— Remember that the gospel is at work in this issue.

02 MIN | CLOSING PRAYER: LOOKING TOWARDS TOMORROW

— Remember that God patiently leads us each day. Today's mistakes are redeemable and today's victories do not guarantee success tomorrow. How might you be able to apply what you've learned today into tomorrow?

— How can we celebrate God and the triumph of His grace?

— What action can you take tomorrow as an expression of faith and dependence upon God's abounding grace?

— Ask that you would be more aware of God's guiding presence tomorrow.