

Ignatian Examen

The Daily Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and discern his direction for us. The Examen is an ancient practice in the Church that can help us see God's hand at work in our whole experience. This technique was developed by St Ignatius Loyola .

This simple, 5-step guide can take only 10 minutes, yet produces rich intimacy with God. To set the stage for this holy time, I recommend getting into a quiet space, free from distractions to connect with God. Turn off your mobile phone. Grab some paper, a pencil and maybe a bible and take a minute to still your body, heart, and mind as you enter the Examen.

The 5 steps are as follows:

1. Recall you are in the presence of God
2. Look at your day with gratitude
3. Ask for help from the Holy Spirit
4. Review your day
5. Reconcile and resolve

1. Recall you are in the presence of God.

"The Lord your God is with you wherever you go" Joshua 1.9

The first step of the Examen reminds us that God has never left us; we just forget God is there. Stop for a few minutes and remember God's presence around you, in your circumstances, and acknowledge the Holy Spirit's work within you. Before you move on, write down any thoughts, feelings, or observations as you reconnect to God's presence.

2. Look at your day with gratitude.

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 118: 24

Most of the time it's easier to remember what is not going right, what we don't have, who is not "for" us, and how we have let God down. This step in the review is a reminder to pull our eyes off *what is not* to remember *who is*. You can spend as long as necessary on this step.

The point of this step is to shift the focus off yourself as the centre of the universe and redirect your heart toward the God of the Universe.

3. Ask for help from the Holy Spirit.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts."
Psalm 139:23

While this step may only take a minute, it is critical for us to intentionally invite the Holy Spirit to guide this time. Too often our own voices and vices guide our thoughts and decisions. This vital step orients our spirit toward the Spirit of light and truth. It acknowledges our dependence on God to instruct, guide, correct, and speak to us.

4. Review your day.

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?” 2 Corinthians 13:5

This is the portion of the review that will take the most time.

Approach this step like you are watching a movie of your day. Scene by scene, hour by hour reflect on the truth and reality of your day. Remember the sights, sounds, smells, conversations, internal thoughts, and intimate feelings of the moments from your day. The Examen offers questions to discern your actions and awareness of God throughout your day.

- What were the highs—what was most life-giving?
- What were the lows—what was most life-depleting?
- When did I fail?
- When did I love?
- Do I observe any habits or life patterns?
- When did I see evidence of God’s presence?

Remember to review your day by listening to the whispers of truth and love from the Spirit.

5. Reconcile and resolve.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Matthew 5:9

This final step brings closure to the Examen through focusing on the future. It points us to course correction, righting wrongs, and a fresh start. It points us back to the abundant life Jesus came to offer. And this step reminds us that God’s love for us will never run out; it brings us back into right relationship with Him.

Take some time to consider where you might need to reconcile with God or another person and resolve to make it right as quickly as possible.

St. Ignatius always ended the Examen with the Lord’s Prayer.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.