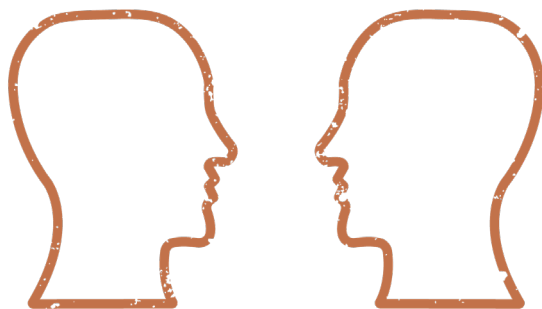


PRACTICES OF JESUS FOLLOWERS

PRAYER OF EXAMEN

“You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.”

Psalm 139: 1-2



BY KELSEY WALEGA

PRAYER OF EXAMEN

I am a task-oriented person. I love making lists, crossing things off of that list, and then adding even more things to the list so that I can later cross those things off said list. Getting things done as efficiently as possible is how I choose to operate from day to day. Because of this, it isn't second nature for me to stop what I am doing and reflect back on my day or my life. Actually I had never even considered that it was a thing I should or could do until I learned about the Prayer of Examen in one of my classes. The practice of the examen helps us know ourselves better. It can even help us see and know ourselves the same way God does. The Prayer of Examen is a simple way to reflect on your day and become aware of God's presence in your life. Dennis Linn simply writes that "the examen makes us aware of moments that at first we might easily pass by as insignificant, moments that ultimately can give direction for our lives."¹ St. Ignatius of Loyola divided up these moments in our days into two categories: consolation and desolation.² Consolation can be defined as whatever draws you close to God, fills you with life, and makes you feel that all is right in the world. Desolation is its opposite: these are things that pull you away from God, alienate you from yourself and others, and drain life from you. He expected that God would speak to us through our deepest feelings and longings through these consolations and desolations.

When we take time to reflect on our days through the prayer of examen, we increase our sensitivity to the workings of God in our lives. We are able to wake up to ourselves and what God is up to in our lives.

If we do this practice over time we are able to notice what brings us life and what drains us, what brings us closer to God and what separates us, what brings us joy and what doesn't and so much more. As you do this practice over time, you'll begin to notice patterns. You'll notice that a certain relationship or activity doesn't actually bring you life. You'll notice that certain things bring you closer to God. You'll notice little things about your days that you might not have otherwise.

This practice could be done by writing down your thoughts in a journal, taking a walk and thinking through your day, or just some last thoughts before you go to bed.

You can practice this daily in the morning or evening for anywhere from 5-20 minutes, or once a week. The questions on the next few pages are just a guide, feel free to reflect on them all or on just a few. Choose your own adventure!

What moment are you most grateful for today? What moment are you least grateful?

When did I give and receive the most love today? When did I give and receive the least love today?

What was the most life-giving part of your day? What was the most draining part of your day?

When today did I have the deepest sense of connection with God, others, and myself? When today did I feel the least connected with God, others, and myself?

Examen over the week: What was your favorite yes? A bold no, that you feel proud of? What is a moment from the last week that you don't want to forget?

DAY 1

What moments are you most grateful for today?

What moments are you least grateful?

DAY 2

When did you give and receive the most love today?

When did you give and receive the least love today?

DAY 3

What were the most life-giving parts of your day?

What were the most draining parts of your day?

DAY 4

When today did you have the deepest sense of connection with God, others, and myself?

When did you give and receive the least love today?

DAY 5

What was your favorite yes this week?

What is a bold no, that you feel proud of from this week?

DAY 6

What is a moment from the last week that you don't want to forget?

Take a look through your photostream from the last week. Why was capturing these moments important to you?

END NOTES

1. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 58.
 2. "Prayer of Examen," Ignatian Spirituality, <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/>.
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DIRECTION FOR OUR LIVES.”

- DENNIS LINN