

A prayer workshop with



Cultivating Prayer

THE EXAMEN

The Examen

What is the Examen?

The Examen, credited to St Ignatius, is simply a review of the last twenty-four hours of our day. We bring the last day before God, which means we never run out of material for prayer. Ignatius' own life experience taught him the value of reviewing his day with God's help. The value of this prayer is that it helps us pray our lives, notice gifts, and pay attention to the movement of the spirits. It increases our awareness of all the ways God is encountering us each day. The Examen helps us become more and more aware of the Spirit of the Lord in our lives (Isaiah 61:1) and the fruits of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-25: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.

We can pray it anywhere!

Because the Examen requires no prayer material other than the activities of our day and the material of our lives, we can pray the Examen at anytime and anywhere. This prayer tool goes where we go.

We can walk through the five steps of the Examen in prayer in all kinds of places. Here are a few real-life examples of how people incorporate this daily discipline of reviewing your day with God's help from my own life or from people I meet for spiritual direction:

- While taking a bath or shower
- On a run or walk
- Driving in a car
- As part of our normal daily prayer
- In bed before we fall asleep
- In the middle of a workday sitting at a desk or on a bench outside

Whenever and wherever God invites you to pause for 10 minutes to pray, I invite you to turn to the flexible prayer tool of the Examen.

Let us guide you! Pray with different versions of the Examen prayer in our free guided audio prayer library. Scan the QR code on the right or visit beckyeldredge.com/guided-audio.



Steps of the Examen:

1. **Invite the Holy Spirit** to help you see the day as God sees it.
 2. **Be thankful.** Name the gifts of your day and thank God for them.
 3. **Notice God's presence.** Where did you feel an increase of faith, hope & love?
 4. **Notice where you felt what seemed like a lack of God's presence.** Where did you feel a decrease of faith, hope & love? Why?
 5. **Look to the future.** Ask God for the grace you need in the day ahead.
- Close with an Our Father.

Consolation & Desolation

St. Ignatius of Loyola invites us to pay close attention to the movements of the spirits inside of us. He always notes that we are either moving toward or away from God. He calls the movement toward God consolation. We are consoled as we move toward God. When we are moving away from God, St. Ignatius calls this desolation. As the word denotes, we feel a sense of loneliness, emptiness, or restlessness as we move away from God.

As you work through your Examen, notice what moves you toward God and what moves you away from God. Practice noticing these movements.

Consolation:

St. Ignatius describes Consolation from *The Spiritual Exercises*:

- “I call it spiritual consolation when an interior movement is aroused in the soul, by which it is inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord... when one sheds tears that move to the love of God, whether it be sorrow for our sins, or because of sufferings of Christ our Lord, or for any other reason that is immediately directed to the praise and service of God.” (*Spiritual Exercises* #316)
- “Every increase of faith, of hope and love, and all interior joy.... interior peace and quiet.” (*Spiritual Exercises* #316)
- “The action of the good spirit is delicate, gentle, delightful. It may be compared to a drop of water penetrating a sponge.” (*Spiritual Exercises* #335)

Margaret Silf describes consolation in her text *Inner Compass*:

- directs our focus outside and beyond ourselves.
- lifts our hearts so that we can see the joys and sorrows of other people.
- bonds us more closely to our human community.
- generates new inspiration and ideas.
- restores balance and refreshes our inner vision.
- shows us where God is active in our lives and where God is leading us
- releases new energy in us.

Scriptures for Reflection on Consolation:

- *Philippians 4:4-9*: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.”

- *Galatians 5: 22-23*: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”
- *Isaiah 11: 2-3*: “The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD.”

Desolation:

St. Ignatius describes desolation in *The Spiritual Exercises*:

- “I call it spiritual desolation what is entirely the opposite of what is described in spiritual consolation...darkness of soul, turmoil of spirit, restlessness, slothfulness, tepid, sad, separated.... decrease of faith, of hope, and of love.” (*Spiritual Exercises* #317)
- “The action of the false spirit upon the soul is violent, noisy, and disturbing. It may be compared to a drop of water falling upon a stone.” (*Spiritual Exercises* #335)

Margaret Silf describes desolation in her text, *Inner Compass*:

- turns us in on ourselves.
- drives us down the spiral ever deeper into our own negative feelings.
- cuts us off from community.
- makes us want to give up on things that used to be important to us.
- takes over our whole consciousness and crowds out our distant vision.
- covers up all the parts of your life that have brought you peace, joy, hope, and love.
- drains us of energy.

Scriptures for Reflection on Desolation and the False Spirit:

- *Galatians 5: 19-21*: “Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
- *1 John 4: 1-3*: “Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can know the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God, and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus does not belong to God.”
- *1 Peter 5: 8-9*: “Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for [someone] to devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith, knowing that your fellow believers throughout the world undergo the same sufferings.”

The Examen: I'm Here. Tell Me!

This below script, written by Stephanie Clouatre Davis, can be used for your own prayer or to guide a person or group through. *Imagine that Jesus stands in front of you saying tell me, **tell me** what it is that you want to say, all the things that you feel God calling you to say.*

Presence: I'm Here.

Let go of the list of things that you have to do for the rest of the day or the things that you are holding onto from the doings of the day. Just be present to this space. Remind yourself that Jesus is here with you. Jesus is looking intimately at you and saying to you, *Tell me*. Trusting his presence here with you, ask Jesus to help you see your day as he saw it.

Gratitude: Tell Me!

Review the last twenty-four hours with Jesus. Pay attention to all that happened. Give great care and concern to every moment. Imagine Jesus looking at your day with you and inviting you to *tell me* what you are grateful for in the last twenty-four hours. Tell Jesus about the gifts of your day.

Consolation and Feelings: Tell Me!

Review your day once again with Jesus. Imagine him looking at you as you look at your day together saying, *tell me*. What are the most important emotions you have felt in the last 24 hours? Share with Jesus how you have felt this past day. Imagine Jesus asking:

Where did you feel the fruits of the spirit?

Where did you feel joy?

Where did you feel a rise in love, faith, hope, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, or gentleness?

Tell me, Jesus says, where did you feel consolation?

Desolation: Tell Me!

Review your day once again with Jesus. Imagine Jesus remaining with you and inviting you to *tell me*:

Where did you feel I was not, though I was, but where did you feel as though I was not?

Where did you feel a rise in turmoil, restlessness, maybe even darkness in the last 24 hours?

Where did you feel tempted to do what is not good?

Where did you feel as though you were moving away from me?

Tell me, Jesus says, where did you feel desolation?

Looking Ahead: Tell Me!

Imagine Jesus remaining with you looking gently at you and saying *tell me*. Share with Jesus about your upcoming day. Imagine Jesus asking you:

What is the grace you seek as you look into your next twenty-four hours? Some examples might be patience, courage, the willingness to ask for help, etc.

Tell me, the grace you seek.

Close with a simple Our Father, said deeply and intimately.

Scan the QR code at right to pray with a guided version of this
Tell Me! examen or visit beckyeldredge.com/guided-audio.



Annual Examen: Prayerfully Reviewing the Past Year

Let's use the Examen to take a look at the last year with God's help. Written by Becky Eldredge, this Examen process helps us to take time to thank God for where we've been before we step into resolutions and goals for a new season or upcoming year.

Steps of the Annual Examen:

1. Ask God to show you your year as God saw it.
 - Ask God to open your eyes, your ears, and your heart to see what God saw.
2. Thanksgiving.
 - Reflect back over the past year in thanksgiving. What are you thankful for? Ask God to show you the gifts of the year. Think about the people you shared life with, the people you encountered, your old friends, new friends, your family, your work colleagues.
 - What memories of the past year are you thankful for? The simple moments? The extra special ones? Memories at home, at work, with friends and loved ones? In nature?
 - As God brings the memories to mind, offer your prayers of thanks for the gifts of your life.
3. Presence.
 - Again, look back over your year with God's help. Ask God to show you where you felt God's presence. Where did you experience an increase of faith, of hope, and of love this year? Where did you experience the fruits of the Holy Spirit named in [Galatians 5:22-23](#) at work in your life (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control)?
 - What were you doing, what was happening, and who were you with when you experienced them?
 - Where did you have moments of insight and revelation from God about yourself? About God? About your relationships? About your call? About others? About the world?
 - Were there moments you were invited to feel as God might have felt? Moments of difficult consolation such as feeling sorrow or even holy anger at suffering or injustices you saw?
 - What key moments do you feel God inviting you to remember about the year?

4. Lack of God's Presence.

- Look back over your year again with God's help. Ask God to show you where you struggled to name God's presence. Where did you feel a decrease of faith, of hope, of love? Where did you experience the opposite of the fruits of the Spirit as named in [Galatians 5: 19-21](#) (immorality, impurity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy)?
- What were you doing, what was happening, and who were you with when you experienced this?
- Where were moments you inhibited your own growth in God due to a sinful act? Were there moments where relationships were hurt? Or actions done that hurt you? Or that hurt someone else?
- Were there any moments where suffering, loss or sorrow became overwhelming? Or you felt a sense of hopelessness, discouragement or helplessness?
- Where might you have experienced confusion or lack of clarity? Anxiety? Fear?
- Whatever God stirs to your mind, talk to God about it. Ask for forgiveness, for healing, for understanding, and for light. What are you being offered in the memories the Holy Spirit stirs to mind?

5. Looking ahead to the coming year.

- Gather all that God revealed to you about what you are thankful for, where you felt God's presence, and where you struggled to name God's presence.
- Share your hopes and desires for the year ahead. Invite God to reveal to you God's hopes and dreams for you.
- Are there any actions you are being invited to take?
- Ask for the graces you seek this year.

Close with an Our Father.

Pray with a guided annual examen in our free guided audio prayer library.
Scan the QR code on the right or visit beckyeldredge.com/guided-audio.



Praying the Examen as a Couple

The Examen guides many decisions in our marriage. Chris and I use the Examen to check-in and name movements in our personal lives, in our marriage, and in our family. Sometimes, this happens by us each individually praying an Examen as part of our own prayer time and then we dialogue about our responses.

Other times, we walk through the steps of the Examen together in prayer. Naming aloud:

1. What we are thankful for
2. Where we felt God's presence
3. Where we are struggling, and
4. What graces we are seeking for the future.

This Examen, written by Becky & Chris Eldredge, is designed to be prayed together as a couple. First, let the words guide you and then pause to share with each other before closing with the Our Father. You might also find that you pause between each step for conversation.

- **Presence:**
 - Invite God to show us our relationship this past week as God saw it.
 - God, please give us your eyes, ears and heart to see and understand what you saw.
- **Gratitude:** When you are ready, review this past week, asking God to show you what you are thankful for this past week.
 - Show us the gifts of our relationship this past week.
 - What are we thankful for about the other person?
 - What are the gifts of the week?
 - What moments together are we thankful for?
 - What words exchanged felt like a gift? What memories?
- **Consolation:** When you feel ready, review the past week again, this time asking God to show you the moments of consolation, where you felt near to God and to each other.
 - Where did we experience consolation in our relationship this week?
 - Where was there joy in our interactions?
 - What filled us with hope this week?
 - Were there moments that increased our capacity to love each other well?
 - What moments opened us for generosity and abundance?
 - Were there moments when we experienced forgiveness or mercy?
 - Were there moments that reminded us of our call to love each other as God loves us?
 - Talk to God about anything that arises
- **Desolation:** When you feel ready, review the past week one more time, this time asking God to show you any moments of desolation. Moments where you felt distant from God or each other.

- Were there any moments we experienced desolation in our relationship this week?
 - Moments where we turned away from each other or felt alone?
 - Were there moments that decreased our capacity to love each other or others well?
Where we lacked the ability to forgive or show mercy?
 - Any times that caused us to turn in, withdraw, or that decreased our generosity?
 - Talk to God about anything that arises
- **Future:** Let's turn now to the upcoming week. Considering what God has revealed this past week about our relationship, what are the graces we seek for the coming week?
 - Are there any areas of our relationship where we sense God inviting us to explore deeper?
 - Are there any decisions or next steps we feel invited to take?
 - What hope or prayer might we name for the week regarding our relationship?
 - **Share** with your partner what has stirred during prayer.
 - When the conversation has concluded, close by praying Our Father aloud together.

Amen.

Pray with a guided examen for couples in our free guided audio prayer library.
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Praying the Examen as a Family

The Examen is a permanent prayer tool in my own prayer toolbox, and it is one we turn to within our family also. We use this Examen format taught to me by a friend and mom a few years ago often:

1. One person names the highs and lows of his/her day.
2. After that person names the highs and lows of the day, another person in the family says a prayer for that person, thanking God for the highs and asking God to help that person with the lows.
3. Every family member gets a turn to share the highs and lows of the day, and every family member gets a turn to say a prayer for another person.
4. Close with an Our Father or other prayer.

This format invites younger children to begin to name the movements of the Examen, which as adults we would name as the discernment of Spirits. It helps young children begin to name where they experience the Holy Spirit at work in their lives, and where they experience the tug of the spirit not of God in their lives.

Praying the Examen with Young Children

Young children can pray the Examen. The important thing is to begin to have them name the movements of the Examen. It might start with simply asking kids to name three things they are thankful for today. Other times, you might invite them to name one high and one low of the day. As they get used to naming the movements of the day, you can then guide them to pray an Examen by inviting them to name:

- What are you thankful for today?
- What was a high today?
- What was a low today?
- What or who do you want to pray for today?

Praying the Examen with Middle School Ages + Up

Middle school is a great age to introduce children to the five full steps of the Examen. Each year, the sixth-grade religion class at our children's school learn how to pray a full daily Examen. Their teacher has them journal their responses to the five steps of the Examen in order to get them accustomed to praying this way.

Praying the Examen with Teens

Teens desire a close-up personal relationship with God. The practice of St. Ignatius' daily Examen provides teens and young adults with a living, tangible, and personal experience of God. Ignatian prayer naturally calls for reflection that must be done with purpose and with patience. This Examen is written by Stephanie Clouatre Davis.

1. Pause in a setting that captivates and allows conversation (like a car, a table, or even in a setting like texting).
2. Ask your young person: What were the good things that happened today?
 - Prompt for more clarity
 - Cultivate by starting simple, and deepening after a couple months
3. Ask your young person: What were the challenging things that happened today?
 - Prompt for clarity
 - Do not fix or judge your young person's comments (save this type of instruction for another time).
4. Ask your young person: "What do you hope for in tomorrow?" "What do you need tomorrow?"
 - Maybe you can say, "I pray God will be with you in the next 24 hours"
 - Or, say, "Can we pray the 'Glory Be' together?"
 - Or, "what do you need from tomorrow?"
 - Have them name the grace that they need for tomorrow: "I need patience with my friends," "I need to be able to be calm for my test," or "I need to not judge myself according to what they said."

Pray with a guided examen for teens in our free guided audio prayer library.
Scan the QR code on the right or visit beckyeldredge.com/guided-audio.



An Examen of a Day of Personal Crisis

Maybe it is news of a diagnosis, a death, a natural disaster, a break in a relationship, etc. Think of any happening that seems to have a split time- there is a before and after. This Examen, written by Kathy Powell, invites you to look back at a 24-hour period in which a personal crisis occurred.

Take a moment to pause in prayer today. Take a deep breath. A terrible thing happened, and this prayer is to help you make sense of it. As you pause, remember that even though this moment happened, you are not alone. *You are not alone.* God is with you.

1. Presence: Ask for God's presence.

Holy Spirit, be in this broken place with me. Help me to see it all as you see it or saw it. Help me see the smaller details that are so often overshadowed when I recall this difficult day.

2. Gratitude: Look upon the day with gratitude.

Even though a hard day, name the gifts of the day. For what are you thankful? Ask God to show you the gifts of the day. Take time now to thank God.

3. Consolation: Notice God's presence.

As you review the moment, notice where you felt the presence of God. Where did you feel an increase in faith, hope, & love? Where might God have been presence in this crisis that you did not see the first time?

4. Desolation: Notice now where you felt distant from God.

Where did you feel a decrease of faith, hope, & love? What parts of this crisis are still hard? With confidence, share how you are feeling with God.

5. Grace: Ask for what you need.

As we carry on away from those 24 hours, what grace do you need right now? Jesus tells us over and over again, "Do not be afraid." With courage ask God for what you need for the day ahead.

Close with an Our Father.

Pray with a guided examen for a day of crisis in our free guided audio prayer library. Scan the QR code on the right or visit beckyeldredge.com/guided-audio.



Praying the Examen with Your Ministry Team

Annual Examen of the Past Year of Ministry

This examen, written by Becky Eldredge and used by the Ignatian Ministries team, is great for any staff, ministry team, church volunteer group, board of directors, core leaders, etc.

Let's pause as a group to:

- Thank God for the gifts of our team and ministry this past year.
- Name and celebrate the moments of consolation.
- Name and learn from moments of desolation.
- Use what God reveals to help us discern our next steps forward in our ministry.

Presence: Ask God to show you our last year of ministry as God saw it. Holy Spirit, help us have your eyes, your heart, and your ears. Open us to what we need to understand.

Gratitude: Review the past year with God, asking God to show you what are you thankful for this past year. You might reflect on in thanksgiving:

- The people you encountered through our ministry work.
- Our team
- Memories from our ministry work this past year.
- Moments to celebrate.
- Graces received in you or others.

Simply notice what the Holy Spirit brings to mind.

Consolation: Review the past year with God again, this time asking God to show you the moments of consolation ministry.

- When did you know and experience God was with us?
- What are you proud of this past year that we did or offered in our ministry?
- What moments do you know bore fruit in others?
- What moments helped draw you and/or others closer to Christ?
- What moments increased your hope or trust in God?
- Where did we feel God working through each other as a team?
- What surprised us this year?
- How do we sense God clarifying our mission?
- What noticings do you have about the community gathering with us and around us?

Desolation: Review the past year with God one last time, this time asking God to show you the moments of desolation in our ministry.

- What moments felt confusing or unclear? How did you experience the Spirit helping us through?
- What moments welled fear? Or lack of trust?

- What moments decreased your faith, hope and love?
- What might God be saying to you or to us about our ministry, our call, our teamwork as we name these?

Future: Let's turn to our next year in shared ministry together.

- What is your hope for our ministry this coming year?
- What opportunities do you see before us?
- What do you sense the Spirit is unfolding that we need to pay attention to?
- What does our team need to move forward?
- What are our team's strengths?
- What are our areas of weakness?
- What are possible threats if we do not tend to them?
- What partnerships and relationships do we want to build in the coming year?

Examen of Your Gifts

All of who we are – with our gifts, skills, passions, and personality – is God’s gift to us! God’s presence is made known in the world when we use the raw material that God has given us to respond to a particular need. As we recognize and develop our unique talents, we become more fully and completely the person who God intends us to be. This Examen written by Beth Knobbe invites you to notice and discern our gifts with God.

1. Pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Ask God to show you the gifts that God has given to you.

2. Show gratitude.

Thank God for the gifts in your life and for the opportunities you’ve been given to live those gifts in action.

3. Pay attention throughout your day.

As you review your day, what are those things that come naturally to you? What types of activities bring ease and joy? What are those moments that bring out the best in you, even when there are challenges?

4. Listen for affirmation.

Often, we recognize our gifts because someone else points them out to us. When you hear someone say “thank you” to you, what gift is at work at that moment?

5. Put your gifts to use!

Once you begin to identify a gift, become more intentional about putting that gift to use. Gifts from God bear fruit for others. Ask God to give you opportunities to use your gifts. How might God be calling you to use your gifts?

Close with an Our Father.

Compassion Examen

Today we pause with the tool of the examen to focus on compassion. Written by Becky Eldredge.

1. God, show me my past day as you saw it.
2. Where did I experience compassion?
3. Where did I show compassion?
4. Where did I miss an opportunity to show compassion today?
5. As I look to my upcoming day, where can I show compassion?

Close with an Our Father.

*May we see others with your compassionate eyes.
May we hear them with your compassionate ears.
May we respond to them with your compassionate hands.
May we walk with them with your compassionate feet.
May we love them with your compassionate heart.
Amen.*

- Becky Eldredge

Guided Examen Script

Put quiet music on in the background. Slowly guide people through an Examen. Invite people to close their eyes and get comfortable. The entire prayer will take about 10 minutes. Written by Becky Eldredge.

Opening Prayer

Jesus, some days it is easy to see you and name your presence in our lives. Other days, life's journey makes it difficult to see or feel your presence. Give us your eyes to see our days as you do. Give us your heart to understand our days as you do. Give us our ears to notice and hear your voice. Thank you for all the ways you encounter us throughout our days.

As we begin, let's pause and remember we are always in God's presence. (Pause briefly). In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

1. Invite the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit, we ask you to show us our days as Jesus saw them. Give us your eyes, your ears, and your heart to see our day as you did. (Pause before moving to next step)

2. Be Thankful.

When you are ready, review your last 24 hours. As you look back on your day, notice all you are thankful for and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for these gifts. Maybe it was someone you encountered today? Maybe it was something you saw? read? heard? ate? (Give 1-2 minutes for people to review their day and offer thanks)

3. Notice God's Presence.

Now, let's review our day again, this time noticing where we felt God's presence? Where did you feel an increase of faith? an increase of hope? and increase of love? What were you doing when you felt this? Pick one that grabs your heart the most and speak to God about it now. What is God saying to you in this moment? (Allow 2-3 minutes for this step)

4. Notice where you felt what seemed like a lack of God's presence.

When did you struggle to name God's presence? Where did you feel a decrease of faith? of

hope? of love? What were you doing? Was is perhaps something you said or did not say? Was it something said or done to you? What it something you witnessed or heard today? Pick one that grabs your heart and speak to God about it now. What is God saying to you in this moment? *(Allow 2-3 minutes for this step)*

5. Turn to tomorrow.

Look at the upcoming 24 hours. What is coming up? As you look to your day, ask for God's help and grace for the upcoming events and encounters with people. Offer your day to God. Ask God to help you do better than you did today. *(Allow 2-3 minutes for this step)*

Close with an Our Father prayed together as a group.