

Examen was developed by St. Ignatius Loyola who was a practical kind of person which is reflected in this daily method of prayer he recommended to his brothers. They prayed it numerous times per day as part of their daily rhythm of life.

It is a prayer where we try to find the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day. There are five simple steps to the *Examen*, which should take about 15 minutes to complete. Many people make the *Examen* once around lunchtime and again before going to bed. This prayer can be made anywhere—on the beach, in a car, at home, in the library.

Before you start try to be in a place where you are least likely to be disturbed, and where there is the least amount of external noise. Perhaps you light a candle or change the lighting when you pray to symbolize the start of this activity. Then sit comfortably and still yourself. Relax; be aware of your breathing, your body and how you are feeling.

1. Recall you are in the presence of God

We are always in God's presence, but in prayer we place ourselves in God's presence in an especially attentive way. God knows you intimately. He loves you in the deepest way possible and desires for an intimate connection with you. In John 15 Jesus says 'abide in me and I will abide in you' — his invitation is to make our HOME in him. As you still yourself be aware that God is present with you, in the creation of your surroundings, your body, in those around you. Remind yourself of his presence with you and desire to BE with you. Be still and know he is God and that you are with him.

2. Look at your day with gratitude

After a few moments, begin to give thanks to God for the gifts of today. Special pleasures will spring to mind: a good night's sleep, the smell of the morning coffee, the laugh of a child, a good meal or lesson learned. As you move in gratitude through the details of your day give thanks to God for his presence in the big and the small things of your life.

3. Ask help from the Holy Spirit

Before the next step of reviewing your day, ask that God's Spirit might help you to look at your actions and attitudes. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to understand the motivation of your heart, to see the gifts of God and how you've responded to them. Ask that you'd learn and be shaped as you reflect. Remember, this is not a time to dwell on your shortcomings rather; it is a gentle look with the Lord at how you have responded to God's gifts. It is an opportunity for growth of self and relationship with God.

4. Review your day

This is the longest of the steps. Here you review your entire day, watching it like a movie that replays in your mind. Be sure to notice the details, the context of what happened and how you acted. As you look through the day, notice especially your motives and feelings. This is not psychoanalysis; rather it is a time for you to discern your daily motives, actions and reactions. Don't try to fix everything in this stage, just examine how conscious you have been of God's presence and actions in your life.

As you review you may wish to ask yourself some of the following questions.

- When did I fail today? (Why?)
- When did I give love today?
- Where did I receive love today?
- What Habits and life patterns do I notice in my day?
- In what ways did I notice God in my day?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? Least sense of belonging?
- When was I most free? Least free?
- When was I most creative? Least creative?

- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

As you review your day allow your thoughts to wander through the situations you've been in and allow God to speak, challenge, encourage and teach you.

5. Reconcile and resolve

The final step is our heart-to-heart talk with Jesus.

Here you talk with Jesus about your day. You share your thoughts on your actions, attitudes, feelings and interactions. Perhaps in this time you may feel led to seek forgiveness, ask for direction, share a concern, express gratitude etc. There may be an area you've felt challenged on or some action you feel you need to take out of this time. Resolve with Jesus to move forward in action where appropriate.

You might like to finish your time with the Lords Prayer.