

The Examen

The examen is a simple form of contemplative prayer that comes out of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola who lived in 1491-1556. He was a Spanish knight from the Basque family who underwent a spiritual conversion after being wounded in battle. He devoted himself to God, became a priest & founder of the Jesuits. For a time he lived in a cave and prayed seven hours a day. The Spiritual Exercises that were formed there so impacted his own life that he wanted to teach them to everyone.

The Examen is a way to look at our deepest feelings and desires. Ignatius called these feelings our **consolations**: what connects us with God, others and ourselves – and **desolations**: what disconnects us. He believed that God speaks to us through our consolations and desolations.

God is active in our lives and this is a way to learn to pay attention to God's activity in our lives and hear what he has to say to us about what we recently experienced.

Step One: Consolations

01 Ask God to bring to your awareness the moment today for which you are most grateful, which gave you strength, in which you felt the most energized and alive. Go back in your mind to the moment you woke up and then fast-forward through your day. If more than one consolation comes to mind, choose one to focus on.

02 After you locate this moment, step back into it and let yourself relive the joy of that event. (Remember, at the end of each day of creation, God reminded himself that "It was good.") Thank God for the consolation you experienced. Give yourself a few moments to enjoy it again, stepping back into the life-giving experience.

03 Ask God to show you what it was about the event that gave you life. What was said and done that made that moment so life-giving? Sit still and wait for him to respond. Journal your insights or your dialogue with God. If he doesn't say anything at this time, simply rest in his love for you.

Step Two: Desolations

01 Ask God to bring to your awareness the moment today for which you are least grateful, where you experienced sadness, shame, failure or anger, where you felt life and energy being drained from you. If more than one desolation comes to mind, choose one to focus on.

02 After you locate this moment, step back into it and relive the feelings without trying to change or fix it in any way. Let yourself revisit your pain. It is important to be honest about painful emotions.

03 Ask God what it was about the event that made you so angry, sad, helpless, shameful, etc. Listen to what he has to say. Journal your insights and conversation with God. Ask God to comfort you and fill you with his love, and sit in silence for a few moments.

Step Three: Thankfulness

Give thanks for whatever you have experienced during the day. Thank God for being present with you in your consolations and desolations.

(This version is taken from "Prayer as a Place" by Charles Bello)

Examen Prayer is "rummaging backwards through your day."

It's taking time to ask "What's happened to me?" "What's led me closer to the Lord?" "What's distracted me or what's pulled me away from the Lord?" - Fr. Michael Sparough

1. Invite the Lord's Presence

Quiet yourself, give thanks for the day, and invite Holy Spirit to speak.

2. Ask for Perspective

Ask the Lord for grace to see how He is working in your life.

3. Review the Day

Carefully look back on the day. Recall the events and details, conversations and feelings.

4. Reflect on the Day

Ask the questions, "What has led me closer to the Lord?" and "What has distracted me or pulled me away from the Lord?"

5. Look Forward to Tomorrow

Ask the question, "Where do I need God's grace in the day to