

# Prayer Tool: How to Pray the Examen

## What?

The Examen is a simple, four step way of reflecting and praying through the day. This prayer tool outlines how to start praying the Examen.

## Why?

“The Examen is an immediate solution to the problem of ‘what do I pray about?’ The answer is: everything that's happened to you today. You might have the impression that your everyday life is the dreary same old, same old. It isn't. Daily life is rich and meaningful. Every encounter, every challenge, every disappointment, and every delight is a place where God can be found.” - Jim Manney

## Bible reference:

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” Colossians 3:17

## A quick introduction to the Examen

A form of centering prayer and foundational tool for spiritual formation is the Examen. The Examen is sometimes referred to as ‘examination of consciousness’ and was popularized by Ignatius of Loyola (1491 – 1556).

It has helped millions of Christians center themselves on Jesus as they come to the end of long and complicated days. This practical way of reviewing the day before you go to sleep affords us the opportunity to become aware of the ways God’s presence has been pursuing us while we’ve been awake.

It also encourages us to pay attention to the promptings of God that we may have missed, and the times we were less than Christ-like. This grants us an opportunity to receive again the grace and forgiveness of Jesus. The Examen has been practiced in different ways down through the years, but essentially involves a mix of gratitude, careful review, Godly sorrow, forgiveness, and renewing grace.

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## Do it: How to pray the Examen

Follow these four simple steps:

**1. Replay** - think over your day like a movie replaying in your head. Notice what you are noticing. What made you happy? What made you anxious? What made you angry?

**2. Rejoice** - thank God for those things which are obvious. But also thank Him for non-obvious things which we sometimes forget - random acts of kindness, being healthy, a positive song or meal. Relish and savor these moments in gratitude to God.

**3. Repent** - say sorry to God for moments that come to into your mind as you review the day e.g., getting involved in gossip, reacting with a tone that was aggressive, lacking compassion in a situation, ignoring a need, not responding to a nudge. Receive His forgiveness afresh.

**4. Reboot** – make a decision in your heart to live for Jesus tomorrow and ask for grace to see His presence more clearly.

The Examen can take five minutes or one hour. If you do it once - it will be useful - if you do it every day, it can bring transformation.

Be careful (as with any prayer tool) that it doesn't become simply another duty. Think of it as a way to dialogue with God in friendship – holding the practice in context of relationship.

## **Books on the Examen**

- The Sacred Year - Michael Yankoski
- Hearing God - Dallas Willard
- Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home – Richard Foster