

THE EXAMEN

The Examen is a spiritual practice of coming into the presence of God through a few reflection questions. It is a practice that helps in discerning the voice and activity of God within your daily life. It provides a way of growing awareness of God's presence, and helps you reflect on your God-given desires.

HOW TO PRACTICE THE EXAMEN

1. PRESENCE: Become aware of God's presence.

Find a quiet moment to reflect on the past day. Open your palms and invite God to enter into the reflection with you. In the company of God, look back on the events of the day. Allow your mind and soul to be drawn to particular memories from the day. What was most life-giving? What was most life-draining? When did you have the deepest sense of connection to God, others, and yourself? When did you have the deepest sense of disconnection? Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

2. GRATITUDE: Review the day with gratitude.

Consider your day in the presence of God, and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Pay attention to the small joys. God is in those details. Savor them. Express your gratitude to God.

3. PAY ATTENTION: Pay attention to your emotions.

We can find the presence of God in the currents of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Anger? Joy? Compassion? Resentment? What is God saying to you through these things? You may have fallen short or done something you regret. Make note of those sins. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God is guiding you into a new direction? Does your worry possibly mean you could consider sharing your concerns with a trusted friend?

4. PRAY: Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.

Ask God to guide you to something from your day that is particularly important to him. It may involve a feeling - positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with a person or a vivid moment of joy. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Examine it. Dialogue with God about it. Listen for what he wants to say about it. Allow the prayer to spontaneously arise from your heart - whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

5. GRACE: Look ahead to tomorrow.

Look toward the next day, and ask God for grace for what is to come. Pay attention to the feelings you have as you think about tomorrow. Are you apprehensive? Peaceful? Excited? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Ask God for guidance and help. Pray for hope.