



Prayer of Examen

PREPARATION:

WHAT YOU'LL NEED: A blocked-off segment of 20-25 minutes, a journal, and a pen.

WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT: *Examen* is a Latin word that refers to the weight indicator on a balance scale, conveying the idea of *an accurate assessment of the true situation*. This spiritual habit is intended to help us live up to the measure of what is most true about us: that you are a child of God, in the continual care of our Father, who still has some growing up to do! The Prayer of Examen is NOT a self-examination, but a practice of learning to see clearly ([Luke 6:39-42](#)) by exercising your Spirit imparted mind of Christ ([1 Cor. 2:1-16](#)).

If you are more familiar with this practice, skip to "MOVEMENT #3". The first two movements are designed to help those of us just learning both the heart and mechanics of this habit to understand the way and what of this habit.

If helpful, set a timer on your phone at the beginning of each movement. When the timer ends, progress to the next movement of the prayer.

And remember, WRITE WHAT COMES TO YOUR ATTENTION! Annie Dillard sums up best the importance of verbalizing in written form what we have seen God do in the week past and what he is given us to envision for the week ahead. She says,

"Seeing is of course very much a matter of verbalization. *Unless I call my attention to what passes before my eyes, I simply won't see it.*"

This practice is not about getting better at analyzing and assessing, but rather living with clear sight in the Light of life himself.

PRACTICE:

MOVEMENT #1 | Recall (2-3 minutes)

We start by calling attention to the context of our identity, where we find ourselves because of who we are in Jesus. Close your eyes, and take three deep breaths. **Let each exhale clear your mind of distractions:** good and evil, physical and mental, essential and petty.

In the clarity of this moment, read the prayer of Jesus over yourself. Listen to his words as he prays with his Father and ours on your behalf,

Father, it's time.

Display the bright splendor of your Son

So the Son in turn may show your bright splendor.

You put him in charge of everything human

So he might give real and eternal life to all in his charge.

And this is the real and eternal life:

That they know you,

The one and only true God,

And Jesus Christ, whom you sent.

I glorified you on earth

By completing down to the last detail

What you assigned me to do.

And now, Father, glorify me with your very own splendor,

The very splendor I had in your presence

Before there was a world.

I spelled out your character in detail

To the men and women you gave me.

They were yours in the first place;

Then you gave them to me,

And they have now done what you said.

They know now, beyond the shadow of doubt,

That everything you gave me is firsthand from you,

For the message you gave me, I gave them;

And they took it, and were convinced

That I came from you.

They believed that you sent me.

I pray for them.

I'm not praying for the God-rejecting world

But for those you gave me,

For **they are yours by right.**

Everything mine is yours, and yours mine,

And my life is on display in them.

For I'm no longer going to be visible in the world;

They'll continue in the world
While I return to you.

Holy Father, guard them as **they pursue this life**
That you conferred as a gift through me,
So they can be one heart and mind
As we are one heart and mind.
As long as I was with them, I guarded them
In the pursuit of the life you gave through me;
I even posted a night watch.
And not one of them got away,
Except for the rebel bent on destruction
(the exception that proved the rule of Scripture).

Now I'm returning to you.
I'm saying these things in the world's hearing
So my people can experience
My joy complete in them.
I gave them your word;
The godless world hated them because of it,
Because they didn't join the world's ways,
Just as I didn't join the world's ways.
I'm *not* asking that you take them out of the world
But that you guard them from the Evil One.
They are no more defined by the world
Then I am defined by the world.
Make them holy—consecrated, set apart—with the truth;
Your word is consecrating truth.
In the same way that you gave me a mission in the world,
I give them a mission in the world.
I'm consecrating myself for their sakes
So they'll be truth-consecrated in their mission.

I'm praying not only for them
But also for those who will believe in me
Because of them and their witness about me.
The goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind—
Just as you, Father, are in me and I in you,
So they might be one heart and mind with us.
Then the world might believe that you, in fact, sent me.
The same glory you gave me, I gave them,
So they'll be as unified and together as we are—
I in them and you in me.
Then they'll be mature in this oneness,
And give the godless world evidence
That you've sent me and loved them
In the same way you've loved me.

**Father, I want those you gave me
To be with me, right where I am,**
So they can see my glory, the splendor you gave me,
Having loved me
Long before there ever was a world.
Righteous Father, the world has never known you,
But I have known you, and these disciples know
That you sent me on this mission.
**I have made your very being known to them—
Who you are and what you do—
And continue to make it known,
So that your love for me
Might be in them
Exactly as I am in them.**

MOVEMENT #2 | Settling (1-2 minutes)

Now, as you sit in silence, recall that you are in the presence of God because of Jesus. Renew your awareness of God's love for you as your one true and perfect Father. Ask the Holy Spirit to settle your heart and mind upon the reality of your identity as a child of God reveals you to be *and* the life you are invited to live with him.

Becoming like Jesus is learning to answer the question, “**Who am I**” appropriately and accurately. We need to settle into the truth that we are fundamentally God's children—and all the responsibilities that come with that status—and others are fundamentally sisters and brothers—and all the responsibilities that come with that kinship. When we see ourselves as God sees us, all the relations of everyday life, our good identities, giftings, histories, etc., find their accurate weight, their good measure. Thus we can be our true selves and live an authentic, eternal life.

To help us in our endeavor to become like Jesus, we put into this habit known as the Prayer of Examen. Richard Foster explains that “(The Prayer of Examine) has two basic aspects, like two sides of a door. The first is an *examen of consciousness* through which we discover how God has been present to us throughout the day and how we have responded to his loving presence.”

MOVEMENT #3 | Examen of Consciousness (5-10 minutes)

Start by quieting your heart. Take three deep breaths imagining that with each breath, your body, mind, and soul are being filled with the fullness of God, His Spirit filling up your lungs.

Now, **process the day's high points**. Allow the Holy Spirit to help you review your day from beginning to end, identifying God's presence and provision throughout.

Take note, especially of those encounters and experiences where you were most **aware** of God's nearness, most **responsive** to the Spirit's leading, most **like Jesus** in your actions and attitudes, and your soul was most **at peace**. You may ask questions like:

- For what/who am I most grateful today?
- In what circumstances was I aware of God's nearness?
- In what actions and conversations was I responsive to the Spirit's leading?
- Where was I most like Jesus in my actions and attitudes when relating to God (as Father), others (as brothers & sisters), and myself (as God's child)?
- What action, mindset, or rhythm should I try to repeat with intention tomorrow?
- What patterns (or habits) helped me become more like Jesus in how I related to God and others?

MOVEMENT #4 (5-10 minutes) | Examen of Conscience

There is a basic assumption in our faith that we never fully live up to who we are meant to be. We are "always arriving," as on pastor notes. And yet, Jesus said to his beloved apprentices and friends, "Already you are clean (apart of life with God) because of the words that I have spoken to you." (John 15:3)

So, we learn to pray the Examen with the psalmist, not with trepidation but with great expectation, to the God who birthed us and will mature us,

"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me, and know my anxious thoughts! See if there is any hurting ways within me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"
(Psalm 139:23-24)

Which leads to, "The second aspect is an **examen of conscience** in which we uncover those areas that need cleansing, purifying and healing."

Once again, quiet your heart. Take three deep breaths imagining that with each breath, your body, mind, and soul are being filled with the fullness of God, His Spirit filling up your lungs.

Now **process your day's low points**. Ask the Spirit to search your heart and bring to your memory those moments in the day when you were **least aware** or even **ignoring** God's presence, **least responsive** or out-right **rejecting** the Spirit's leading, **least like Jesus** in your actions and attitudes, and those encounters and experiences when your soul was **anxious** or **unsettled**. You may ask questions like:

- What/who am I frustrated with, or what drained me?
- In what circumstances did I miss God's nearness in the moment?
- When or with whom was I dismissive to the Spirit's leading?

- Where was I least like Jesus in my actions and attitudes when relating to God (as Father), others (as brothers & sisters), and myself (as God's child)?
- What action, mindset, or rhythm should I try to keep from repeating tomorrow?
- What patterns (or habits) kept me from becoming more like Jesus in how I related to God and others?

MOVEMENT #5 (3-5 minutes) | Looking Forward to Tomorrow

Paul reminds us that

"...while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly...[for] God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

(Romans 5:6,8)

Remembering the grace and truth of Jesus in which we live, we can look forward to tomorrow and prayerfully ask the Father for his work to become complete in us. So we enter our final movement of the Prayer of Examen.

This is where you get to use the journal! Reflecting on your conversation with the Father thus far and what the Spirit has revealed, right down your reflections on the following questions:

- Is there anything, or a relationship with anyone, where I need to take a step toward restoration tomorrow or this week?
- Is there anything God is asking me to (1) start doing, (2) stop doing, (3) start believing or thinking, (4) stop believing or thinking, (5) to commit to, (6) or to stop committing to?

End your time praying as Jesus taught us to pray as his sisters and brothers and fellow heirs.

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the Evil One.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen.”

(Matthew 6:9-13)