

Immersed in God's Word, following Jesus – together

They took note that they had been with Jesus. ~ Acts 4:13

Monday, Feb 19 Theme: Spiritual Discipline of Examen

Jesus' Disciples learn to have their "I"-sight checked with the Lord

*Let us examine our ways and test them, and
let us return to the LORD. Lamentations 3:30*

This week's Immersion delves into another spiritual discipline as a way to expand our prayer life and walk with God. Consider the **Examen** a tool for your spiritual belt of truth.



Developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), founder of the Jesuits, **Examen** is a spiritual discipline of prayer looking to discover the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives by reviewing your day. There are five steps, generally taking about 15 minutes to do in all, though some easily turn it into 45 minutes. It likely depends on how often you do so, how far back you look, and how detailed you get.

1. Recognize that you are in the presence of God
2. Look at your day with gratitude
3. Ask for help from the Holy Spirit
4. Review your day
5. Reconcile and resolve

Some people choose to use this at lunch and/or before bed. It can be performed every day, especially when working on specific behaviors or attitudes. Many who use it regularly do so weekly. The goal this week is to try it. By today's end, choose a one-hour slot later in the week (ideally Saturday) to perform the entire EXAMEN in one sitting. You are welcome to try this more than once. In daily devotion time, we introduce one step per day, then use all five

steps on Saturday (and Sunday). This is merely one interpretation of these steps to discern the movement of God's Spirit in your day – and great for your Lenten experience.

Before you start: As with many spiritual disciplines, if possible, find a place where you're unlikely to be disturbed, with limited external noise. Consider a candle or lowered lights for the activity. Relax and get comfortable, become aware of your breathing. Build a habit of quieting. This would be a normal routine to settle into Step 1.

Step 1. Recognize you are in the presence of God: While we are always in God's presence, prayer places us in God's presence in an especially attentive way. God knows us deeply and desires an intimate connection with us. Jesus says, "*abide in me and I will abide in you.*" As you quiet yourself, focus on God's presence with you (and His creation and any others around you as well). Keep in mind God's desire to BE with you. Then be still and know that you are with God. That's it. Let your sole focus for today's devotion be God's presence with you and His desire to be with you.



Prayer for the week: Father God, as we learn about this prayer tool called *examen*, help me see its value and learn to use it as a tool for drawing close to you, absorbing Your Word and applying to my life In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Micro-Meditation: Psalm 32:6-7

Read vs. 6-7 2x

Mark words or phrases that catch your attention.

Meditate: Talk (or write) with God about those words. Ask Him to impress things upon your heart/mind; then listen.

^{6a} Therefore let all the faithful
pray to you while you may be found;
^{6b} surely the rising
of the mighty waters
will not reach them.
^{7a} You are my hiding place;
^{7b} you will protect me from
trouble and surround me
with songs of deliverance.



Pondering Point: Let all the faithful pray... whether you see yourself as a faithful one or not, this is a call to you. It's a call to all, but the faithful will likely be the ones who heed the call to pray. Make a choice and be faithful to pray.

Tuesday, February 20: Examen, part 2: Being Grateful

*I have not stopped giving thanks for you,
remembering you in my prayers.* ~ Paul, Ephesians 1:16

Step 2 of EXAMEN. Look at your day with gratitude (today)

Your goal today is to pause and give thanks to God for gifts of the day. Special pleasures may 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 so far (or yesterday if this is first thing in the morning), give thanks to God for His presence in the big and small things of your life.

Things that I am thankful for today (or this week):



Prayer Prompt: Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.

Relational Skill #4, Creating Appreciation:

This is what we love to call packaged joy.

When we think about the good things our brain responds like we are experiencing it again. Healthy minds are full of appreciation – appreciation, creates belonging, because we can share the good stuff with other people.

~ Chris Coursey, THRIVEToday



Micro-Meditation: Psalm 32:6-7

Ps 32:6a Therefore let all the faithful pray to you
while you may be found;

Teaching or Command of God:

Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of
unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground;
for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and
showers his righteousness on you.



Hosea 10:12

THE PROMISE

Jeremiah 29:13

You will seek me and find me
when you seek me with all your heart.



Pondering Point: Let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found infers a time is coming when this will not be possible. Pray this prayer when not in a hurry: Lord, help us number our days aright (Ps. 90:12), to not be foolish about our time (Matt. 25:13), to be aware of the evil dynamic of our times (Eph. 5:15).

Wednesday, Feb 21: Examen, part 3: Holy Spirit's Help

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

~ Apostle Paul, Ephesians 1:17-19

Step 3. Ask for help from the Holy Spirit (today)

STEP 4 in the EXAMEN is the actual review of your day, but STEP 3, today's focus, is integral for an effective experience overall. Seeking help from the Holy Spirit is a valuable habit to develop throughout your prayer life with God.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you look honestly at your actions and attitudes, to understand the motivations of your heart, to see the gifts of God and how you've responded to them.

Here is how that may sound:

Holy Spirit, help me take an honest look at my actions and attitudes, to understand the motivations of my heart, to see the gifts of God today and how I responded to them.

- Ask to learn and be shaped as you reflect.

These interactive moments with the Holy Spirit are often called prayer prompts in IMMERSION. Keep in mind that STEP 3 this is not a time to dwell on your shortcomings, nor a time to get down on oneself; it is a gentle look (with God) at how you have responded to God's gifts. Consider it an opportunity to grow in understanding of yourself and your relationship with Him.



Prayer Prompt: Wednesday is normally our *Identity in Christ* day, so let's work from that mindset to finish STEP 3:

In Christ we are enlightened in the heart and given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so we may know God better.

Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and revelation to know both God and yourself better.

Micro-Meditation: Psalm 32:6-7

Ps 32:6b surely the rising of the mighty waters
will not reach them.

Teaching or Command of God:

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam and the mountains
quake with their surging. There is a river whose
streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.



Psalm 46:1-4

THE PROMISE

Isaiah 43:2

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When You walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.



Pondering Point: The rising waters will not reach them.

This reminds me of Jesus' comment closing his Sermon on the Mount in Matt 7:25: The rain came and the water rose, but the house on the rock stood firm. Is your spiritual house firm?

Thursday, Feb 22: Examen, part 4: Review Your Day

STEP 4. Review your day (with the help of the Holy Spirit)

Having introduced STEPS 1-3 (acknowledge God's presence, share grateful moments, ask for the Spirit's help), today's focus is the review of your day (or week). If you can, replay it like a movie in your mind. Notice details and contexts of what happened and how you acted – particularly your motives and feelings. Try not to psychoanalyze or fix anything; simply note motives, actions and reactions. Writing down is not necessary but can be a bonus in the effort. *Abbreviated STEP 3: Holy Spirit, help me as I review my day...*

The following questions can be helpful in your review

- 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?
- When did I have the 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, allow your thoughts to wander through situations you've been in and allow God to speak about them, to challenge, encourage and/or teach you through them. This page is mostly blank to allow you to write relating to this experience.

Notes from reviewing my day:

Looking Ahead: Tomorrow is the heart-to-heart talk with Jesus.

Micro-Meditation: Psalm 32:6-7

Ps 32:7a You are my hiding place;

Teaching or Command of God:

He hides me in his shelter when there is trouble.

He keeps me hidden in his tent.

He sets me high on a rock.



Psalm 27:5

THE PROMISE

Colossians 3:3-4

You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Christ is your life.

When he appears, then you, too, will appear with him in glory



Pondering Point: The Psalmist says to God: You are my hiding place; love it! How is God serving as a hiding place for you spiritually? Emotionally? Intellectually?

Friday, Feb 23: Examen, part 5: Reconcile and Resolve

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

~ Jesus, Revelation 3:18-20

Step 5. Reconcile and resolve (with Jesus)

By this point in the EXAMEN process, you will have just finished the review. The final step is a heart-to-heart talk with Jesus. STEP 5 may look daunting, but is actually freeing, satisfying, and brings hope to the heart. In this time, you share thoughts regarding your actions, attitudes, feelings, and interactions. You may be led to seek forgiveness, ask for direction, share a concern, express gratitude, etc. Take notes if desired (next page). There may be action being called for. Resolve with Jesus to move forward in action where appropriate. Finish with the Lord's Prayer or something similar.

Observations from my heart-to-heart with Jesus:



Prayer Prompt: Thank Jesus for Your talk and thank the Holy Spirit for His help along the way. Ask the Father for strength to accept and do whatever arose through the conversation, and if you didn't already, finish out with the Lord's Prayer.

Micro-Meditation: Psalm 32:6-7

Ps 32:7b You will protect me from trouble and surround me
with songs of deliverance.

Teaching or Command of God:

I'm not asking you to take them out of the world
but to protect them from the evil one.

(Jesus praying for his disciples in the Upper Room) John 17:15



THE PROMISE

2 Thessalonians 3:3

But the Lord is faithful
and will strengthen you and
protect you against the evil one.



Pondering Point: Music is a beautiful medium for communicating messages. For the Psalmist, music is a vehicle of praise for God's awesome deliverance. What content do you like depicted in your spiritual hymns and songs?

Micro-Group Connections: A Disciple's Lifestyle



Micro-Group Moment (MGM):

Considering the life of Jesus as a case for participating in Micro-Groups:



Let's visit the MG relationship Jesus had with the family of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (Luke 10, John 11). He could be found at their house on multiple occasions and spent substantial time there. Lazarus is even described as Jesus' beloved. They were like a second family to Him. You might recall that Martha asked Jesus to compel Mary help her with preparations, leading to the well-known comment,

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Micro-group life is not always pretty. How does this next teaching from Jesus in Matthew 18:19-20 sound as you read about it in the context of a MG of Jesus followers?

"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Final thoughts: This section acknowledges that MGs (any group) can be built around God and yet be unhealthy. Personal offenses or festering issues can pull groups away from a God-centered focus. So can whining, personal agendas, or gossip. Matthew 18 offers a recipe for returning such groups to powerful, Christ-centered gatherings. Let's finish today by praying for God's insight over the place of MGs in your life.



Prayer for the day: Heavenly Father, open our souls to the possibilities of participating in spiritual micro-groups. Let us see in Jesus the benefits of micro-group life and see You replicate that in our worlds. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Saturday, February 24: Scripture's Story for the Week

Jesus Offers Rest to the Weary Matthew 11:25-30



Jesus knows

Let's not needlessly end up with an inadequate vision of God or of ourselves: As the prophet Jeremiah encouraged, *Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD* (Lam. 3:30). Again, consider the **Examen** as another tool for your spiritual belt of truth.

Here are the 5 steps to the **Examen**, this week's spiritual discipline of prayer (generally taking about 15 minutes to do). Look back in the week to review each area along the way.

1. Recognize that you are in the presence of God
2. Look at your day with gratitude
3. Ask for help from the Holy Spirit
4. Review your day
5. Reconcile and resolve (record observations on paper)

Observations from my heart-to-heart with Jesus:

Sunday, Feb 25: Call to worship God, to gather together

Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie! You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.

Psalm 40:4-5

Worship Quote: Forms and rituals do not produce worship, nor does the disuse of forms and rituals. We can use all the right techniques and methods, we can have the best possible liturgy, but we have not worshipped the Lord until Spirit touches spirit.

~ Richard Foster