

# The Prayer of Examen: A Space for Gratitude

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## *A Morning of Listening*

### **Getting Started**

Thank you for joining us for this morning of listening. Our desire is to create a space for God to speak to us through the Scripture and by his Spirit. If you have never done anything like this before, don't panic. Settle into this time of quiet and meditation. The information here will serve as a guide for your time.

This time is meant for just you and God. Please go to a quiet space by yourself as you take time to listen to Him.

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As we move into this holiday season, time begins to feel like it's speeding up. Meals to cook, parties to attend, gifts to buy, presents to wrap, bills to pay . . . Oh and while you're at it, make sure to feel thankful and full of cheer. It can feel overwhelming – wonderful but overwhelming!

We approach Thanksgiving with every intention of being thankful but we often get side-tracked in the frenzy of the season. Today we will walk through St. Ignatius' Prayer of Examen. In this prayer we recognize the presence of God in every area of our lives. When we experience the presence of God, we cannot help but be grateful.

### **About the Prayer of Examen**

The Prayer of Examen is a daily spiritual exercise typically credited to St. Ignatius of Loyola (1492-1556). Ignatius encouraged fellow followers of Christ to engage in the practice for developing a deeper level of spiritual sensitivity and for recognizing and receiving the assistance of the Holy Spirit. At the heart of the practice is the desire to become increasingly aware of God's presence and the Holy Spirit's movement throughout your day.

### **Practicing the Prayer of Examen**

This Prayer of Examen is primarily an exercise in remembering. One is invited, through four practices: (presence, gratitude, review, and response), to concentrate on experiences and encounters from the past 24 hours. The beauty of the practice is its simplicity; it is more a guide than a prescription. If some portion feels especially important on a given day, feel the freedom to spend all or most of your time there. The purpose is to increase awareness and sensitivity, not to finish or accomplish a task.

#### **1. Presence**

Begin this practice by recognizing the presence of God. Remind yourself of God's presence and His desire to be with you. Consider praying for the Holy Spirit to help you be attentive to God's presence.

It's important to begin your awareness of his presence in a calm and reflective state. Don't rush past this portion. Take the necessary time to wait and find comfort in God's presence. If you need to, list the circumstances in your life that are keeping you from peace today. As you write them down, release them to God.

What's on your mind today?

**Prayers:**

*Gracious God, in these moments please remind me of your presence and generosity. Give me the wisdom and courage to live graciously with myself, others, and the world you have wonderfully made. For the sake of Jesus, who is the Author and the Finisher of our faith. Amen.*

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.*

**The Serenity Prayer**

**Scriptures:**

“The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.”

**Psalm 145:18**

“But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.”

**Psalm 73:28**

“The Word (Jesus) became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

**John 1:14**

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

**John 10:14-15**

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

**John 14:16-18**

**Write a prayer reflecting on what God's presence means to you today:**

"...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

**1 Thessalonians 5:18**

"Praise be to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens."

**Ephesians 1:3**

**As you think about the past 24 hours, what causes you to be thankful?**

Look back over the past day, the big and small aspects of life, and recognize what reasons you have to be grateful. Focus on these experiences and encounters, helping your mind and spirit to focus on the goodness and generosity of God. Find encouragement and reminders of God's goodness throughout the past 24 hours, and be thankful.

**Take a moment and capture your thanks in writing, expressing words of gratitude, and giving testimony to God's generosity and faithfulness. Use this space to record your prayer of gratitude!**

Busy lives rob us of the opportunity to learn from the past and to see how yesterday might inform today. "Where did the time go?!" we ask ourselves, often struggling to remember what we did just a week ago. Again, we can benefit from taking time to look back over the past 24 hours.

By intentionally reviewing our interactions, responses, feelings and intentions, we can avoid letting days speed by. We can pause to learn more about ourselves and about God's activity in our lives. Try to look back objectively as you review. This is not the time to interpret, justify, or rationalize. Simply observe and remember. Allow your mind to wander to the situations you've been in and to notice details. The questions in this exercise should help you bring specific experiences to mind.

**When or where in the past 24 hours were you cooperating most fully with God's action in your life?**

**When were you resisting God's Action?**

**How have you experienced the love and grace of Christ in the past 24-hours?**

What have you learned about God and His ways through ordinary circumstances and His Word?

What habits and life patterns do you notice from the past day that you want to continue or discontinue?

“Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul . . . Teach me to do your will, for you are my God;  
may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.”

**Psalm 143: 8, 10**

#### **4. Response**

Take time to write and pray, expressing your thoughts on the experiences, actions, attitudes, feelings, and interactions you've remembered as a part of this exercise. You might need to seek forgiveness, ask for direction, share a concern, express gratitude, or resolve to make changes and move forward. Allow your observations to guide your responses.

**Beginning today, how do you want to live your life differently? What patterns do you want to keep living tomorrow?**

What from the past 24-hours causes you to worship?

How can you live in greater commitment to Jesus Christ today?

*Ever-present Father, help me to meet you in the Scriptures I read and the prayers I say; in the bread I break and the meals I share; in my investments at work and my enjoyments at play; and in the neighbors and family I welcome, love, and serve, for your sake and that your love and peace may reign now and forever.  
Amen.*

I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

**Ephesians 3:16-18**