



The Flexible Prayer Tool: Ways to Pray the Examen

Table of Contents

Page 1 Daily Examen: The Basic Prayer
Page 2 Annual Examen: Praying Over The Year
Page 3 Praying the Examen as a Couple
Page 5 Praying the Examen as a Family
Page 6 Praying the Examen with Teens

Daily Examen

The Examen is simply a review of the last twenty four hours of our day. We bring the last day before God, which means we never run out of material for prayer.

Steps of Examen:

1. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you see your day as God sees it.
2. Be thankful. Name the gifts of your day, and thank God for them.
3. Notice God's presence. Where did you feel an increase of faith, hope and love?
4. Notice where you felt what seemed like a lack of God's presence. Where did you feel a decrease of faith, hope and love? Why?
5. Look to the future. Ask God for the grace you need in the day ahead. Close with an Our Father.

Annual Examen

Use the Annual Examen to take a look back over the last year with God's help.

1. **Ask God to show you your year as God saw it.** Ask God to open your eyes, your ears, and your hearts to see what God saw.
2. **Thanksgiving:** Reflect back over the past year in thanksgiving. I find it helpful to think about each month. What are you thankful for? Ask God to show you the gifts of the year. Think about the people you share life with, the people you encountered, your old friends, new friends, your family, your work colleagues. What memories of the year are you thankful for? The simple moments? The extra special ones? Memories at home, at work, with friends and loved ones? In nature? In your Church community?
As God brings the memories to mind, offer your prayers of thanks for the gifts of your life.
3. **Presence:** Again, look back over your year with God's help. Ask God to show you where you felt God's presence. Where did you experience an increase of faith, of hope, and of love this year? Where did you experience the fruits of the Holy Spirit named in [Galatians 5:22-23](#) at work in your life (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control)? What were you doing, what was happening, and who were you with when you experienced them? Where were there moments of insight and revelation from God about yourself? About God? About your relationships? About your call? About who you are? What key moments do you feel God inviting you to remember about the year?
4. **Lack of God's Presence:** Look back over your year again with God's help. Ask God to show you where you struggled to name God's presence. Where did you feel a decrease of faith, of hope, of love? Where did you experience the opposite of the fruits of the Spirit as named in [Galatians 5:19-21](#) (immorality, impurity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy) What were you doing, what was happening, and who were you with when experienced this? Where were moments you inhibited your own growth in God due to a sinful act? Where the moments where relationships were hurt? Or actions done that hurt you? Where might you have experienced confusion or lack of clarity?
Whatever God stirs to your mind, talk to God about it. Ask for forgiveness, for healing, and for light.
5. **Looking ahead to the New Year.** Gather all that God revealed to you about what you are thankful for, where you felt God's presence, and where you struggled to name God's presence. Share your hopes and desires for the year ahead. Invite God to reveal to you God's hopes and dreams for you. Ask for the graces you seek this year.

Close with an Our Father.

Praying the Examen as a Couple

The Examen guides many decisions in our marriage. Chris and I use the Examen to check-in and name movements in our personal lives, in our marriage, and in our family. Sometimes, this happens by us each individually praying an Examen as part of our own prayer time and then we dialogue about our responses.

Other times, we walk through the steps of the Examen together in prayer. Naming aloud:

1. What we are thankful for
2. Where we felt God's presence
3. Where we are struggling, and
4. What graces we are seeking for the future.

Charis Ministries' Married Couple Examen:

1. Invite the Holy Spirit into your prayer time to help you see the day as God sees it.

Ask for help in seeing how God was present to you and your spouse throughout the course of the day.

2. Think about the things you have experienced over the past few hours, or the entire day. What stands out as something you are especially grateful for? Be specific.

Something your spouse said to you?

Time together as husband and wife

Time together as family

A good conversation

These are all gifts from God; tell God thanks for these gifts.

Take a minute or two and share with your spouse what you are grateful for.

3. Ask yourself where God seemed to be especially present to you.

Pay attention to your feelings.

Where did you experience or witness love today by being loved by your spouse? By loving your spouse? By loving or being loved by your children?

Did you experience forgiveness today?

Did you experience encouragement today?

Take a minute or two and share with your spouse where God has been present to you.

4. Ask yourself where God seemed to be hidden or even absent.

Why do you think that was the case?

Think about a time when you saw a need for love and didn't respond as you feel you should have. Or about a pattern of behavior that seemed to distance you from your spouse and God.

God is a God of forgiveness. Ask for forgiveness for anything that your conscience brings to your attention.

Ask God to help you become the person you were created to be.

Take a minute or two and share with your spouse where God seemed to be hidden from you.

5. Finally, think about what you are hopeful for, what are you looking forward to, or what you are not looking forward to today.

What are the things you and your spouse need to bring to prayer? Is there something in your relationship? Is there a decision that needs to be made? Is there a transition you are facing? Do your children need your prayers?

Offer those things to God. Ask God to bless those upcoming events.

God will accompany you throughout the rest of the day.

Take a minute or two and share with your spouse what you are looking toward today.

Close together with an Our Father.

Praying the Examen as a Family

The Examen is a permanent prayer tool in my own prayer toolbox, and it is one we turn to within our family also. We use this Examen format taught to me by a friend and mom a few years ago often:

1. One person names the highs and lows of his/her day.
2. After that person names the highs and lows of the day, another person in the family says a prayer for that person, thanking God for the highs and asking God to help that person with the lows.
3. Every family member gets a turn to share the highs and lows of the day, and every family member gets a turn to say a prayer for another person.
4. Close with an Our Father or other prayer.

This format invites younger children to begin to name the movements of the Examen, which as adults we would name as the discernment of Spirits. It helps young children begin to name where they experience the Holy Spirit at work in their lives, and where they experiences the tug of the spirit not of God in their lives.

Praying the Examen with Young Children:

Young children can pray the Examen. The important thing is to begin to have them name the movements of the Examen. It might start with simply asking kids to name three things they are thankful for today. Other times, you might invite them to name one high and one low of the day. As they get used to naming the movements of the day, you can then guide them to pray an Examen by inviting them to name:

- What are you thankful for today?
- What was a high today?
- What was a low today?
- What or who do you want to pray for today?

Praying the Examen with Middle School Age Children and Up:

Middle school is a great age to introduce children to the five full steps of the Examen. This past year, my son's sixth grade religion class learned how to pray a full daily Examen. Their teacher had them journal their responses to the five steps of the Examen in order to get them accustomed to praying this way.

Praying the Examen with Teens

Teens desire a close-up personal relationship with God. The practice of St. Ignatius' daily Examen provides teens and young adults with a living, tangible, and personal experience of God. Ignatian prayer naturally calls for reflection that must be done with purpose and with patience.

The Examen with Teens by Stephanie Clouatre Davis:

1. Pause in a setting that captivates and allows conversation (like a car, a table, or even in a setting like texting).
2. Ask your young person: What were the good things that happened today?
 - Prompt for more clarity
 - Cultivate by starting simple, and deepening after a couple months
3. Ask your young person: What were the challenging things that happened today?
 - Prompt for clarity
 - Do not fix or judge your young person's comments (save this type of instruction for another time).
4. Ask your young person: "What do you hope for in tomorrow?" "What do you need tomorrow?"
 - Maybe you can say, "I pray God will be with you in the next 24 hours"
 - Or, say, "Can we pray the 'Glory Be' together?"
 - Or, "what do you need from tomorrow?"
 - Have them name the grace that they need for tomorrow: "I need patience with my friends," "I need to be able to be calm for my test," or "I need to not judge myself according to what they said."