

PRAYER OF EXAMEN

Ancient Practices Series

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DiscipleshipPath.com provides an outcome-based pathway for one on one discipleship. This guided journey through the basics of the Christian faith is a mix of original and curated content created by the church for the church.

DiscipleshipPath.com was created by pastors Phil Wiseman and Megan Koch at Table Church in Des Moines, IA. You can contact them directly at hello@tablechurchdsm.org.

Table Church exists to invite people to the way of Jesus. We pursue God, create belonging, do justice, and make disciples. Find more discipleship tools at tablechurchdsm.org/resources.

Cover Photo: Jon Tyson

THE EXAMEN

The Practice of Awareness

"For it is not knowing much, but realizing and relishing things interiorly, that contents and satisfies the soul." — Ignatius of Loyola

The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius is a classic Christian text compiled from the 16th century. Ignatius created this strategic, practical journey out of his own ministry as a priest and church leader in the Jesuit order. These practices were created as a practical "pathway" to encourage priests to encounter Christ and become more like him. These exercises are an invitation to be formed and perfected by interaction with Jesus. It is only by doing something *with* Jesus that we move from knowing *about* him, to knowing Jesus *himself*.

When we know Jesus, we come to know ourselves rightly. He shows us who we really are. A disciple who truly understands who he or she is will never settle for less than the full life in Christ they are offered right now. Disciples live in alert understanding of the present Kingdom of God right here, right now. This sounds very grand, but it is indeed possible, and even *expected* for you as a follower of Jesus. This kind of life is rooted in the regular practice of becoming still, quiet, and obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus speaks, respond. When Jesus gives you a command, do it. When Jesus invites you to enjoy your life, take him up on it. You're a disciple.

The Ignatian Prayer of Examen is a five-step exercise in observation and orientation. Any form of examen prayer is essentially a pathway toward God-awareness and self-awareness. Prayers of examen are a regular "checkup" for your soul, so make a habit of this.

Traditionally, the Prayer of Examen is practiced twice daily; at midday, and in the evening, and only takes 10-20 minutes. As it is with most holy habits, the power and effectiveness of this exercise is found in simple, daily repetition. For now, begin by practicing the examine nightly, before bed. If it helps you to journal throughout the exercise, do it. Otherwise, just talk this out with God. Keep the following exercise on your phone or write it on a note for your nightstand.

THE PRACTICE:

Practice this way of prayer nightly for a week. The point is not to produce anything, but to be present with Jesus and aware of what he wants you to see. If you love the rhythm, add it at noonday, too.

TURN ON THE LIGHTS

Become aware of Jesus in the room with you. Close your eyes and see him there. Invite him to light up your day and guide you through it however he wants.

NAME WHAT'S GOOD

Practice gratitude. Consider your day. What are you immediately grateful for? Name it. Get creative. There's more than you think.

REVIEW THE DAY

Ask Jesus to step you through the main points of your day, from the moment you woke up until right now. Invite him to reveal it to you from his perspective. Pay attention, and don't skip over the parts you'd rather not revisit.

OWN IT

Did any part of that review trigger hurt, confusion, anger, or regret? Own what wasn't good. Offer it up to Jesus. Ask Jesus *why* you did what you did, or why that thing *bothered* you so much. Once you think you have an answer, pause for a minute, in case Jesus wants to show you something under the surface. Do what you need to do to hand over control, forgive others, and get forgiveness yourself. Text an apology if you need to. Don't leave it for later. And remember: not all problems can be resolved by the end of the night, but they can be surrendered. Do that now.

LOOK FORWARD

Look ahead to the next day in light of Jesus. Anticipate coming challenges or the things you're excited about. Remember that tomorrow night you'll return here again to review the day. How will you want to have lived it? Decide to live that way right now. Surrender the coming day to Jesus before it's even happened, and go to bed.