

# Try the Daily Examen

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In the Examen, we review our recent past to find God and God's blessings in life. We also look back to find moments in the day when things didn't go so well—when we were hurt by something that happened to us, or when we sinned or made a mistake. We give praise and thanksgiving for the blessed moments. We ask forgiveness and healing for the difficult and painful moments. Having reflected on this past day, we then turn to the day yet to come and ask God to show us the potential challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. We try to anticipate which moments might go one way or the other for us: toward God's plan or away from it. We ask for insight into what graces we might need to live this next day well; patience, wisdom, fortitude, self-knowledge, peace, optimism. We ask God for that grace, and we trust that he wants us to succeed in our day even more than we do. That's the basic idea behind the Ignatian Examen. St. Ignatius Loyola would say that this should be the most important moment of our day. Why? Because this moment affects every other moment.

## Specifically, How Do You Do the Examen?

Ignatius provides a simple five-step routine for our daily Examen:

### **Give thanksgiving.**

I begin by giving God thanks for all the things I'm grateful for today. I allow my mind to wander as I reflect on the ways God has blessed me on this particular day. I allow big things and small things to arise—everything from the gift of my faith, to the gift of my marriage, to the easy commute to work today.

### **Ask for the Spirit.**

Next, I want to look at the moments in my day when I did not act so well. However, before doing so, I ask God to fill me with his Spirit so that the Spirit can lead me through this difficult soul-searching. Otherwise, I'm liable to hide in denial, wallow in self-pity, or seethe in self-loathing.

### **Review and recognize failures.**

I look back at my day and ask the Lord to point out to me the moments when I have failed in big ways or small. I take a sobering look at the mistakes I've made this day.

### **Ask for forgiveness and healing.**

If I have sinned, I ask God to forgive me and set me straight again. If I have not sinned but simply made a mistake, I ask for healing of any harm that might have been done. I ask for help to get over it and move on. I also ask for wisdom to discern how I might better handle such tricky moments in the future.

### **Pray about the next day.**

I ask God to show me how tomorrow might go. I imagine the things I'll be doing, the people I'll see, and the decisions I'll be mulling over. I ask for help with any moments I foresee that might be difficult. I especially ask for help in moments when I might be tempted to fail in the way I did today.

To help me remember the five steps, I like to use a 5-Rs mnemonic:

- Relish the moments that went well and all of the gifts I have today.
- Request the Spirit to lead me through my review of the day.
- Review the day.
- Repent of any mistakes or failures.
- Resolve, in concrete ways, to live tomorrow well.