



# CREATING A CULTURE OF CALLING

## Ignatian Examen Questions

Curriculum for Faith Formation

A Project for Vibrant Faith, C3 Initiative

**Written by:** Katie Anderson Horvath - Katie Anderson Counseling

*"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."*  
Frederick Buechner

### IGNATIAN EXAMEN QUESTIONS

The Ignatian Examen is a regular, set apart time to come into God's presence and reflect on where you were most and least present to God's love in your day. For the purposes of this exercise, you can reflect on either today or yesterday. As you begin your time of reflection, choose one set of questions from the options below:

- For what moment today am I most grateful? For what moment today am I least grateful?
- When did I give and receive the most love today?  
When did I give and receive the least love today?
- What was the most life-giving part of my day? What was the most life-thwarting part of my day?
- When did I have the deepest sense of connection with God, others, and myself?  
When did I have the least sense of connection?
- Where was I aware of living out the fruit of the Spirit?  
Where was there an absence of the fruit of the Spirit?
- Where did I experience "desolation"? Where did I find "consolation"?

#### Further reflection:

*Go deeper. What is it about these moments that stands out most to you? Explore the concrete details of the situation, as well as your personal feelings, reactions, and inner experience. How might these moments be related to your sense of vocation, and what God is calling you to in the world?*

*Read the passage from The Message translation of Galatians 5:22 further down in the handout. Which of these God-given qualities most resonate with you? Where have you seen these qualities in yourself as you reflect on your day?*



The C3 Initiative is a grant-funded program of Vibrant Faith Ministries.  
Find out more about the C3 Initiative at [www.vibrantfaith.org/c3initiative-2](http://www.vibrantfaith.org/c3initiative-2)



vibrantfaith

## IGNATIAN EXAMEN INSTRUCTIONS

1. As you begin, invite the Holy Spirit into your time of reflection. Ask God to quiet your mind and open your heart to receive from him and hear his voice.
2. Choose a set of questions that you feel drawn to for the day. You may choose only one set, or multiple sets. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind specific moments in your day as you reflect on each question.
3. Try to maintain a posture of curiosity. Try to be genuinely curious about the “what” of your day, rather than the “why.” This will help you to be more fully present to yourself and to identify moments that stand out more clearly.
4. Try to refrain from making judgments about the particular moments that come to mind. Once you shift to a posture of judgment, you are switching your mind into an analytical mode. Instead, the *Examen* is meant to help us leave behind our analyzing tendencies and instead listen for the Holy Spirit’s leading as we reflect on the content of our day.
5. Be willing to hear something that you don’t necessarily expect. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit can reveal surprising and unlikely things to you! Try to put aside your preconceived notions of what moments you expect to stand out and instead embrace what actually stands out.
6. If you catch your thoughts starting to try to judge or control your experiences, gently lead them back to the present moment, without criticism or judgment. Try to be patient and gentle with yourself and your thoughts. You can do this as many times as you need to, and you can view each time as simply an opportunity to practice discipling your mind.

## PRACTICAL TIPS

It may be helpful for you to keep a journal to write down your responses to the Examen questions each day. These entries do not need to be long; at minimum, you can simply record a phrase or a sentence. However, the more you choose to reflect on and write about the moments you identified, the more helpful information you will have for your own discernment of calling. Over time, you will be able to look back and see patterns *emerge* in the kind of moments you have identified.

You do not need to do all of the different question options every day. Indeed, for most of us that is not a realistic goal. Rather, you may want to pick one set of discernment questions and stick with it for a period of time. Then, you can move on to another set of questions. Alternatively, you can rotate the questions you ask yourself more regularly, as there are some overlap in them. However, because the questions point to slightly different aspects of your experience, it may take a bit longer to identify overarching patterns.

## RELEVANT TERMS

### *Desolation:*

- Moments of spiritual deadness; the sense of being drained, disconnected or heavy.
- Feelings of discontent, unrest, or that something isn’t right.
- The inability to recognize God’s presence or involvement in your spiritual journey.
- Sense of forgetting God’s character or resisting Him; feelings of doubt, fear, insecurity, or some other uncomfortable emotion or spiritual attack.

### *Consolation:*

- Moments of feeling spiritually filled and contented.
- Feelings that go beyond peace or happiness; a sense of deeper communion with God.
- These feelings persist even with hardship, negative pressure, or external resistance from others.
- Feelings of being seen and known by God in a way that brings rest and relief.
- A sense of internal balance and clarity about the world around you.
- Feeling more able to embrace the self and others in a healthy way.



## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

- *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian wisdom for our lives today*, by Timothy M. Gallagher
- *Sleeping with Bread: Holding what gives you life*, by Dannis Linn & Sheila Fabricant Linn
- *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen: Fresh ways to pray from your day*, by Mark Thibodeaux
- *A Simple, Life-changing Prayer: Discovering the power of St. Ignatius Loyola's examen*, by Jim Manney
- *Inner Compass: An invitation to Ignatian Spirituality*, by Margaret Silf

## SCRIPTURES

*Matthew 6:30-34, The Message*

If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. **Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now**, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.

*Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV & The Message)*

The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...(ESV)

But what happens when we live God's way?

He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit *appears* in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

*(The Message)*

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Reflect on what it was like for you today to do the Examen.  
What surprised you?  
What came up for you?
2. How was it listening for the Holy Spirit's leading in your reflection time?  
What did you learn about yourself, about God?
3. How do you sense that the moments you identified might be related to your calling, if at all?
4. Where are you right now in your own discernment of your calling?  
Where do you sense God leading, if at all?

Take turns sharing for each question.

If you feel so led, you may also share some of your writing with the group!

