



# CREATING A CULTURE OF CALLING

## Ways to Use Ignatian Examen: A Tool for Discerning Calling

**Written by Instructor:** Katie Anderson Horvath  
**Email:** marykaitlinanderson@gmail.com

### WAYS TO USE THIS CURRICULUM:

*\*\*Please note that the following are only suggested lengths of time. Faith formation leaders who are leading the Examen workshops in these various formats can adjust them at their discretion according to their best judgment, the total time allotted, and the particular needs of participants.*

#### MINI-RETREAT:

Faith formation leaders can use this curriculum for a 3-hour Mini-Retreat for their congregation. Option to invite outside participants. Use the following format:

- o Arrival and social time – 15 minutes
- o Use full Teaching Script – 45 minutes
- o Ignatian Examen Practice – 45 minutes
- o Large Group Reflection – 15 minutes
- o Small Group Reflection – 30 minutes
- o Large Group Reflection – 15 minutes
- o Departure and social time – 15 minutes

*\*\*Option for faith formation leaders to provide snacks and drinks. This is recommended.*

*Option also to provide breakfast and/or lunch, which would lengthen time at the beginning and/or the end of the mini-retreat.*

#### FOLLOW-UP SUNDAY SCHOOL SESSION:

After the Mini-Retreat, faith formation leaders can offer a series of follow-up times of the Ignatian Examen Practice on Sundays either before or after church services. Recommended at least five consecutive Sundays. Faith formation leaders will have handouts available for participants. Use the following format:

- o Opening Prayer
- o Summary of the Ignatian Examen – 10 minutes
- o Ignatian Examen Practice – 25 minutes
- o Large Group Reflection – 15 minutes
- o Closing Prayer

*\*\*Please note: faith formation leaders should **use the script on the following page** to summarize Examen in Follow-up Sunday School Sessions*



## EXAMEN SUNDAY SCHOOL SCRIPT

- Today we will be exploring a spiritual discipline called the Ignatian Examen.
- The Ignatian Examen is a tool for helping us find direction for our lives – both on the micro level of everyday situations, as well as on the macro level of our ultimate calling and vocation.
- In the sixteenth century, St. Ignatius of Loyola founded what are known as the “Spiritual Exercises” – a set of meditations, prayers, and other exercises designed to help with spiritual discernment. The Examen is part of this.
- Ignatius wanted people around him to be able to detect the movement of God in their lives. He believed that God moves uniquely in each soul, and our ability to discern God’s direction for our lives comes from our awareness of this movement.
- The tricky thing is that this movement can be subtle – it is the “still, small voice” that we can easily miss if we aren’t trying to be intentionally conscious of it.
- On a basic level, the Examen is a way for us to slow down from our duties and busyness so that we can notice where God actually shows up in our day. This means noticing how God’s internal movement is present in all of the external comings and goings of our days.
- The Examen helps us to listen more deeply to what our lives are already telling us. It helps us recognize what brings us new life, and what leads to death. Once we have this information, we can use it as we interact with God in prayer. So, the Examen can become a crucial tool for discernment in our relationships, our professions, and other areas of our lives.
- The Examen helps us to be more aware of moments that we at first might dismiss as insignificant. Yet if we identify and reflect on them, they can actually give us clues to our calling, and ultimately direction for our lives.
- The Examen questions help you identify where and when you feel most alive, most refreshed, most grateful, and most aware of and present to the Spirit’s movement. These are all clues to your calling in the world.
- As you do this, the question becomes: how can I move towards those places that are most life-giving for me, and move away from those that are life-thwarting?
- (There are some exceptions – sometimes our desolations can point us to difficult emotions that we may be avoiding. In this case, it is up to us to learn how to discern that, with the help of the Spirit.)
- Both the high and the low points we identify are an invitation to prayer and self-awareness. They give us perspective and direction for the future. This happens through listening to where and how God shows up our day, and then interacting with God through prayer
- When you are more in touch with the Spirit’s movement in your life through the Examen, you are then more in touch with the person God made you to be.
- As you begin to recognize the person God made you to be, you have the raw material for discerning God’s unique call and design for your life.
- Over time, you will be able to recognize patterns. You will notice that certain situations, tasks, or interactions tend to fill you with gratitude, life, love and connection, and others have the opposite effect. These patterns are the blueprints for how God made you.
- Once you can better understand how God made you – the things that draw you and the things that drain you - you will have more insight into where God is calling you.
- While all of us have “bad” days where life and work feel hard, if we are doing the work we are called to do than our overarching sentiment will be one of consolation and deep satisfaction. A sense of gratitude, life, love, and connection will ultimately outweigh any bumps in the road we may experience along the way.



## EXAMEN SUNDAY SCHOOL SCRIPT CONTINUED...

- When you are doing the Ignatian Examen, you can choose from the following six sets of questions:
  1. For what moment today am I most grateful?  
For what moment today am I least grateful?
  2. When did I give and receive the most love today?  
When did I give and receive the least love today?
  3. What was the most life-giving part of my day?  
What was the most life-thwarting part of my day?
  4. When did I have the deepest sense of connection with God, others, and myself?  
When did I have the least sense of connection?
  5. Where was I aware of living out the fruit of the Spirit?  
Where was there an absence of the fruit of the Spirit?
  6. Where did I experience “desolation”? Where did I find “consolation”?

\*\*Faith formation leaders can ask the following questions for group reflection:

- **Week 1:** Reflect on the experience of practicing the Examen.  
What surprised you? What came up in you?
- **Week 2:** How was it listening for God’s voice using the Examen?  
What, if anything, did you sense God saying?
- **Week 3:** What have you been learning about yourself through practicing the Examen?
- **Week 4:** Where are you right now in your own discernment of your calling?  
How do you sense that the moments you identified while practicing the Examen might be related to your calling, if at all?
- **Week 5:** What has it been like to practice the Examen in a Sunday school setting?  
What has it been like to share with and hear from others in the church?

## SUNDAY SCHOOL SESSION:

Faith formation leaders can offer a condensed Examen workshop on a Sunday either before or after church services. Use the following format:

- Use full Teaching Script – 45 minutes
- Ignatian Examen Practice – 20 minutes
- Large Group Discussion – 10 minutes
- Closing Prayer

*\*\*Please note: Faith formation leaders can use questions from either the Small Group Reflection or the Large Group Reflection.*

## SMALL GROUP MEETING:

After doing a Mini-Retreat, faith formation leaders can offer a series of follow-up meetings for the Examen in church small groups. Recommended five meetings. Faith formation leaders will make handouts available to small group leaders to distribute to group members that they will bring with them to each meeting. Use the following format:

- Social Time
- Opening Prayer
- Summary of the Ignatian Examen – 10 minutes
- Ignatian Examen Practice – 25 minutes
- Group Reflection and Sharing – 15 minutes
- Closing Prayer



## SMALL GROUP MEETING CONTINUED...

*\*\*Please note that faith formation leaders can also offer the Examen in a small group format without having done the mini-retreat. In that case, small group leaders will use the full 45 minute teaching script for the Examen in the first meeting rather than the summary.*

*\*\*Please note that small group leaders only need to give the summary or full teaching of the Examen during the first small group meeting. If giving a summary, they can use the following script:*

## SMALL GROUP MEETING SCRIPT

- Today we will be exploring a spiritual discipline called the Ignatian Examen.
- The Ignatian Examen is a tool for helping us find direction for our lives – both on the micro level of everyday situations, as well as on the macro level of our ultimate calling and vocation.
- In the sixteenth century, St. Ignatius of Loyola founded what are known as the “Spiritual Exercises” – a set of meditations, prayers, and other exercises designed to help with spiritual discernment. The Examen is part of this.
- Ignatius wanted people around him to be able to detect the movement of God in their lives. He believed that God moves uniquely in each soul, and our ability to discern God’s direction for our lives comes from our awareness of this movement.
- The tricky thing is that this movement can be subtle – it is the “still, small voice” that we can easily miss if we aren’t trying to be intentionally conscious of it.
- On a basic level, the Examen is a way for us to slow down from our duties and busyness so that we can notice where God actually shows up in our day. This means noticing how God’s internal movement is present in all of the external comings and goings of our days.
- The Examen helps us to listen more deeply to what our lives are already telling us. It helps us recognize what brings us new life, and what leads to death. Once we have this information, we can use it as we interact with God in prayer. So, the Examen can become a crucial tool for discernment in our relationships, our professions, and other areas of our lives.
- The Examen helps us to be more aware of moments that we at first might dismiss as insignificant. Yet if we identify and reflect on them, they can actually give us clues to our calling, and ultimately direction for our lives.
- The Examen questions help you identify where and when you feel most alive, most refreshed, most grateful, and most aware of and present to the Spirit’s movement. These are all clues to your calling in the world.
- As you do this, the question becomes: how can I move towards those places that are most life-giving for me, and move away from those that are life-thwarting?(There are some exceptions – sometimes our desolations can point us to difficult emotions that we may be avoiding. In this case, it is up to us to learn how to discern that, with the help of the Spirit.)
- Both the high and the low points we identify are an invitation to prayer and self-awareness. They give us perspective and direction for the future. This happens through listening to where and how God shows up our day, and then interacting with God through prayer
- When you are more in touch with the Spirit’s movement in your life through the Examen, you are then more in touch with the person God made you to be.
- As you begin to recognize the person God made you to be, you have the raw material for discerning God’s unique call and design for your life.
- Over time, you will be able to recognize patterns. You will notice that certain situations, tasks, or interactions tend to fill you with gratitude, life, love and connection, and others have the opposite effect. These patterns are the blueprints for how God made you.
- Once you can better understand how God made you – the things that draw you and the things that drain you - you will have more insight into where God is calling you.
- While all of us have “bad” days where life and work feel hard, if we are doing the work we are called to do than our overarching sentiment will be one of consolation and deep satisfaction. A sense of gratitude, life, love, and connection will ultimately outweigh any bumps in the road we may experience along the way.



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

## SMALL GROUP MEETING SCRIPT CONTINUED...

- When you are doing the Ignatian Examen, you can choose from the following six sets of questions:
  1. For what moment today am I most grateful?  
For what moment today am I least grateful?
  2. When did I give and receive the most love today?  
When did I give and receive the least love today?
  3. What was the most life-giving part of my day?  
What was the most life-thwarting part of my day?
  4. When did I have the deepest sense of connection with God, others, and myself?  
When did I have the least sense of connection?
  5. Where was I aware of living out the fruit of the Spirit?  
Where was there an absence of the fruit of the Spirit?
  6. Where did I experience “desolation”? Where did I find “consolation”?

\*\*Small Group leaders can ask the following questions for group reflection:

- **Week 1:** Reflect on the experience of practicing the Examen.  
What surprised you? What came up in you?
- **Week 2:** How was it listening for God’s voice using the Examen?  
What, if anything, did you sense God saying?
- **Week 3:** What have you been learning about yourself through practicing the Examen?
- **Week 4:** Where are you right now in your own discernment of your calling?  
How do you sense that the moments you identified while practicing the Examen might be related to your calling, if at all?
- **Week 5:** What has it been like to practice the Examen in a Sunday school setting?  
What has it been like to share with and hear from others in the church?

