

# The Prayer of Examen

*A simple guide to praying with your day*

## What is the Examen?

The Prayer of Examen is a simple, gentle practice of looking back over your day with God. It was developed by St Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century and has helped millions of people notice where God has been present in their ordinary lives - not just in church or in 'spiritual' moments, but in the texture of everyday experience.

You don't need any special training or equipment. You just need a quiet few minutes and a willingness to reflect honestly.

*"He is before all things, and in him all things hold together"*

*Colossians 1:17*

## Why pray this way?

Life moves fast. We often rush from one thing to the next without pausing to notice what's really going on inside us - or where God might be at work. The Examen creates a gentle rhythm of awareness.

Over time, people who pray the Examen regularly often find that they:

- become more aware of God's presence throughout the day, not just in dedicated prayer times
- grow in self-knowledge and emotional honesty
- develop a more grateful and attentive outlook on life
- feel less spiritually isolated, even in difficult seasons

It's particularly helpful if you feel your prayer life has become dry or disconnected, because it anchors prayer in real life rather than abstract ideas.

*prayer changes things... and us*

## How to pray the Examen

Set aside 10–20 minutes, ideally at the end of the day. Sit quietly. Take a few slow breaths. You're not trying to achieve anything - just to be present with God as you look back.

There are five movements, but don't worry about following them rigidly. Let them flow naturally.

### 1: Give Thanks

Begin by acknowledging that you are in God's presence. Ask for the Holy Spirit's help to see your day clearly. Then take a moment simply to be grateful. What is one thing - however small - that you're grateful for today? Let this anchor you in God's goodness before you look at anything else.

### 2: Review Your Day

Gently replay your day in your mind, as if you're watching a film. Don't analyse or judge - just observe. Let the scenes come to you: waking up, conversations, meals, work, moments alone. Notice the feelings that arise as you remember.

### 3: Notice What Moved You

As you reviewed your day, what stood out? Pay attention to two things:

- **Consolations** - moments of warmth, joy, energy, connection, or a sense of God's nearness. These might be obvious (a beautiful piece of music, a kind word) or subtle (a quiet moment of peace).
- **Desolations** - moments of anxiety, irritability, emptiness, or distance from God. These aren't failures; they're invitations to pay closer attention.

Ask yourself: Where did I feel most alive? Most drained? Where did I sense God? Where did I lose sight of him?

## Step 4: Respond Honestly

Choose one moment from your review - perhaps something that troubled you, a choice you made, or a person you interacted with - and bring it to God in conversation. Be honest. You might want to:

- apologise for something
- ask for help or understanding
- express something you're finding hard to process
- simply sit with a feeling and ask God what he wants you to notice

This isn't about self-criticism. It's about honesty and openness with a God who already knows and loves you fully.

## Step 5: Look Forward

As you close, turn your attention to tomorrow. What's coming? Where might you need God's help or grace? Offer the day ahead to him - not with anxiety, but with trust. You might say a simple prayer, or just rest in a moment of quiet surrender.

### Practical tips

- Start small. Even 5 minutes is worth doing. Depth comes with practice, not with length.
- There's no wrong way to do it. If your mind wanders, gently return. If you fall asleep, that's okay too.
- Try journalling alongside the Examen. Writing down what you notice can deepen awareness over time.
- Do it consistently - the same time each day helps it become a natural habit.
- The Examen works well as a shared practice too. Some couples or small groups do a brief version together.
- If a particular moment keeps coming up over several days, pay attention - God may be trying to show you something.

## A closing thought

*"We all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."*

2 Corinthians 3:18

Transformation rarely happens in dramatic moments. More often it unfolds quietly, in the small, ordinary hours of the day - in noticing, in returning, in trusting. The Examen is an invitation to see your life as the place where God is at work, and to meet him there.

Transforming Lives | Prayer Changes things... and Us  
St Hilary's Conference  
25 March 2026

*prayer changes things... and us*