

Examen

The Examen — also called the “examination of consciousness” — is a Christian spiritual habit that has been used for centuries.

The examen helps us develop awareness of God’s activity in our lives. By looking back over specific events of the day and examining our reactions to them, we become more in tune with God’s activity and our awareness of it. He’s always there. But do we access Him in the routine of our daily lives?

The practice of the examen involves taking time for reflection and asking questions. The answers to these questions help us to see where we’re allowing God’s presence to permeate and where we’re shutting him off. It’s like putting a microscope over the events of the day and analyzing them — not to become self-critical — but to learn where we could be accessing God’s help and strength.

Through the examen, we develop self-awareness and God-awareness as we learn how to experience more of Him.

Asking a few of the following questions at the end of the day will help you begin the process of the examen. Many people will write their responses to these questions, but this is not required for the examen to be useful.

- When did I feel connected to God today? When did I feel disconnected?
- What happened today that I’m thankful for? What am I not thankful for?
- Who did God use to show love to me today? Who didn’t show God’s love to me?
- To whom did I show God’s love to today? To whom did I not show God’s love to?
- What energized me today? What drained me?
- Where did God show up in unexpected ways? Where did I miss Him?

By regularly engaging in the examen you begin to observe patterns in yourself — for good and for bad — that God will use to get your attention and help you to grow. There are numerous ways – various sets of questions — that you can use to practice the examen. If this proves to be a helpful spiritual habit to you, consider getting a book with a collection of examen exercises.