

## Examen for Stewardship Storytelling

### About the Examen

One way to pray is to look for God’s providence and generosity in the “sacred text” that is your own life. About 500 years ago St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged prayer-filled mindfulness by proposing what has been called the Examen (often prayed daily but can be a review of any time in your history). The Examen is a practice of prayerful reflection on our experience in order to detect God’s presence and to discern its direction. Try this version to enhance your money awareness and story—



1. Become aware of God’s presence, and choose gratefulness.
2. Review the time period or experience, noticing both the positive and negative.
3. Pay attention to your emotions: where do a lot of feelings come up?
4. Choose one aspect of the experience and pray from it. What might be the lesson?
5. Ask God what you might do with this renewed awareness.

### Telling Your Story for Yourself and Others (Public Narrative)

1. What happened? Choose some aspect of your experience to describe, using first person affective (feeling) terms whenever appropriate.
2. What challenged you? What choice did you make? Did something new happen as a result? (The narrative arc).
3. When appropriate, consider how your choice connects with others or the outcome enhances the common good.
4. Invite others to join you in your choice, or contributes to the common good.

### **(Very Abbreviated) Example**

I remember my first conversation about tithing, an unfamiliar concept for me, as I had grown up unchurched. It was unnerving. I was trying to figure out what I was supposed to do as a new Christian, and tithing seemed to be part of the conversation, but I couldn't figure out how to make it happen, from a household budget perspective. And it seemed so countercultural (even in my then Presbyterian church). My pastor, who knew the spiritual journey I was on, looked at me with great compassion (see Mark 10:17-22) and said "a tithe is not enough."

She wasn't asking for a bigger pledge, she was acknowledging my own deep calling to respond more fully to God's love. That started my journey to proportional giving, which is now more than a tithe. It's still not enough... but along the way I learned that it's impossible to give "enough" to God. There is plenty of joy in giving a bit more every year, though!

Join me in stretching yourself to give "not enough," and discover the joy in giving more than you thought you could.

*Did you hear about (1) an experience with some feelings attached to it? Was there a (2) challenge and a choice (especially one that (3) others could connect with)? An outcome that changed things for the better? (4) An invitation to others to contribute to the common good?*

### **The Ignatian Examen**

One way to pray is to look for God's presence in the "sacred text" that is your own life. More than 400 years ago St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged prayer-filled mindfulness by proposing what has been called the Daily Examen. The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and to discern his direction for us. Try this version of St. Ignatius's prayer—

**1. Become aware of God's presence.** \*\*\**Listen for your name.* Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

**2. Review the day with gratitude.** Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive

from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

**3. Pay attention to your emotions.** One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings? God will most likely show you some moments you regret. Look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you consider a new direction in some area of your work? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to her in some way.

**4. Choose one aspect of the day and pray from it.** Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

**5. Look toward tomorrow.** Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask God for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend. End the Daily Examen with a conversation with Jesus. Ask for forgiveness. Ask for protection and help. Ask for wisdom about the questions you have and the problems you face. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude. Your life itself is a gift, and it is adorned with daily gifts from God. End the Daily Examen with the Lord's Prayer.

*Adapted from <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/how-can-i-pray/>  
Also try <http://www.pray-as-you-go.org/>  
(Scripture-based daily prayer for your MP3 player)*

With thanks to the Rev. Julia McCray Goldsmith, Priest-in-charge, Trinity Cathedral, San Jose, California.