

The Intentional Year

Prayer of Reflection

Based on the old Ignation “Prayer of Examen”, this practice is designed to help Christians prayerfully reflect on the events of each day and sense where the Lord is leading them. Many use this tool on a daily or weekly basis, which we highly encourage. But it can also be useful for reviewing a month or season. Holly and I have found it especially powerful for reflecting on an entire year. In fact, when the Examen is used to review larger chunks of time rather than isolated moments of the day, major themes tend to emerge.



1. REST

Before you begin the Examen, sit in silence for three minutes. Slow down your breathing and welcome the Holy Spirit. Remind yourself that you are in the presence of the living God. The Holy Spirit lives in you and is working through you. He desires to have a living relationship with you.

2. REVIEW

How are you feeling physically? What emotions are you aware of? Are you feeling happy, sad, angry, anxious? Write down what you observe.

What significant things happened over the past year? Reflect on your thought processes, your conversations, your actions. This might seem like a huge task, but just write whatever comes to mind.

As you reflect on the past year, prayerfully ask God to bring things to mind. Ask him to show you where you've fallen short of his plan for your life. Ask him to make you aware of where or how you gave and received love or failed to do so. Ask, What good could I have brought to someone but chose not to?

What were some of the high points, or mountaintops, over the past year?

What were some of the low moments, or valleys?

What was an average day like? How did you feel in the morning and evening?

What issues or problems, if any, did you struggle with this year? What recurring problems, tensions, or struggles did you experience?

Where did you discover gifts of joy over the past year?

Where did you experience sorrow and grief?

Where or how did you give and receive love?

3. REJOICE

Reflect on the year month by month. What seemingly small things are you grateful for as you think about January, February, March, and so on? What are you grateful for that had a significant impact on you this year? Write down anything that comes to mind. Thank God for the gift of his presence throughout the year, for blessings, for the gift of relationships, for the ability and opportunity to give and receive love.

4. REPENT

Reflect on where you have fallen short this past year. As you do, repent and ask for forgiveness for the ways you did not cooperate with the Holy Spirit and failed to give and receive love. Know that as you do, God meets you with grace, boundless love, and restoration. Ask the Lord to show you how to distinguish his voice of grace from your own voice of self-condemnation.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

— Prayer of Confession from the Book of Common Prayer

5. REQUEST

Ask the Lord for the grace to grow and participate in the Holy Spirit's work. Where do you sense the Holy Spirit leading you to grow this year?