

Prayer of Examen

A resource created by Teresa Geiser and shared with
Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference

The *Prayer of Examen* (also called the *Examen of Consciousness*) is an ancient prayer practice, originally developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola who formed the Jesuit order in the 16th century. It is part of a larger group of spiritual exercises that were designed to help those practicing them to disconnect from personal attachments in order to fully live God's will in one's life.

The *Prayer of Examen* asks some form of the questions, "**Where did I feel closest to God**" with appropriate thanksgiving and praise, "**Where did I feel furthest from God**" with confession and asking for forgiveness followed with a reaffirmation and recommitment of faith. It is often done at the end of the day but can easily be adapted to other time frames – weekly, monthly, yearly, etc. and used either as an individual or group activity.

Practicing the Prayer of Examen, *Teresa Geiser*

I was introduced to the Prayer of Examen during my time as a volunteer at The Hermitage with Gene and Mary Herr in 1996-97. I give thanks to God for the many ways Gene and Mary helped expand my spirituality, including learning about the examen. I adapted it to be a yearly reflection, done close to New Year's Day, and consider the various aspects of my life. I apply the examen questions to an overall review of the year and develop specific goals for each section. I'm not highly (or obsessively!) committed to the goals, but I find that by making them, they help me try and stay somewhat on track for ways I want to grow the following year.

(continued on page 2)

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The sections that I consider:

Take some time at the start of the year to reflect on the topics below in relation to the past year.. Write your reflections and goals down on paper or in a journal.

- Write a one-page brief summary of the highlights of the year (both positive and negative)
- Write a brief summary of my spiritual life
- Relationships:
 - * Marriage
 - * Family
 - * Friends
 - * Church
- Financial
- Intellectual
- Emotional
- Physical
- Work life
- Creativity/Fun
- What I'm most grateful for the past year
- What I'm least grateful for
- Goals for each of the above categories

"I've been surprised at how helpful this simple yearly reflection has been. I often find encouragement when I go back and look through previous entries as it helps me consider the larger arc of my life rather than my more immediate experiences. It helps me identify what is most life-giving and where I'm out-of-balance. It also helps me see God's hands shaping and guiding me and the blessings and gifts that come from this relationship. I hope some of you will find this helpful as well. God bless you!"

-Terri Geiser



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