

The Examen: Small Group Guide

Purpose: This guide facilitates a small group discussion on the **Prayer of Examen**, helping participants move from simply living their lives to noticing where God is active within them.

Welcome & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

- **The "Burning Bush" Question:** Share a time this week when you felt like God was trying to get your attention. Was it in a big way or a small, subtle way?
 - **The GPS Moment:** Have you ever had a "recalculating" moment in your life—where you realized you were headed the wrong way and needed to turn back? How did you feel during that transition?
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Opening Discussion (15 minutes)

- The video mentions that Moses had to "turn aside" to see the burning bush. What are the "bushes" in your life—the normal, everyday things—where God might be present?
 - St. Ignatius believed the Examen was the most important prayer of the day. Does that surprise you? Why or why not?
 - Dallas Willard defines prayer as "talking to God about what we are doing together." How does looking back at your day with God fit this definition?
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Key Insights (15 minutes)

- **Gratitude vs. Guilt:** Many people think of "reviewing their day" as a list of things they did wrong. In the Examen, we start with gratitude. Why is it important to start with the "gifts" of the day before looking at our failures?
- **The "Recalculating" Heart:** Discuss the difference between *shame* (I am bad) and *repentance* (I went the wrong way). How does the GPS analogy help change your view of admitting mistakes to God?
- **Presence:** Why do we need the Holy Spirit to help us look at our day? Why isn't our own memory enough?

Practice Together (15 minutes)

- **Silent Examen Exercise:** Facilitate a 5-7 minute silent reflection using these prompts:
 1. **Be Still:** Take a deep breath and ask God to show you your day.
 2. **Thanks:** What are three things you are thankful for from the last 24 hours? (Tell God "Thank You").
 3. **Review:** Where did you feel God's presence today? Where did you feel distant from Him?
 4. **Tomorrow:** Ask God for one specific grace you need for tomorrow.
- **Debrief:** Without sharing the personal details of your prayer, what was it like to "revisit" your day with God? Did you notice anything you missed when it was actually happening?

Application and Closing (10 minutes)

- **Group Challenge:** Commit to doing the Examen before bed each night this week. Consider keeping a small notebook by your bed to jot down one "God-moment" per day.
- **Continuity:** Remember the advice from the Intro session: don't just "do prayer," meet with "God." Schedule your Examen as a meeting with a Friend.

Closing Prayer: "Lord, thank You for being present in every minute of our lives, even when we don't notice. Give us the eyes of Moses to turn aside and see You in the ordinary. Help us to recalculate when we wander, and to rest in Your grace tonight. Amen."