

Lent: Repentance and Examen



Lent is a time of self-examination and self-denial to prepare for Easter.

It's natural to want to minimize these difficult days leading up to Resurrection Sunday, but then we would miss the whole purpose of Lent. We need to pause and sit with all the things that happened during Jesus' last 40 days on earth. And we need to pause and sit with ourselves too. We need to see what should be adopted, eradicated, improved upon, and otherwise changed to make us ready for **Easter**.

Prayer of Examen

For the remainder of this week of **Lent**, we will focus on repentance and an ancient practice introduced by St. Ignatius called Examen. Examen is exactly what it sounds like. It is an in-depth prayer that helps us to examine ourselves. In the process we may be able to better discern God's will, find God in all things, and enhance our understanding of God's creation. This discipline should be done at the end of the day so that you can analyze how your day went. Don't let the words *discipline* and *analyze* scare you. The process can be completed in as little as 10 minutes if you don't have much time. Try to do it at least two evenings this week, more often if you are able.

Here is a link that will take you to the short Prayer of Examen tutorial. It's a simple, yet effective process. If you want to, you can journal your answers to the questions, or you can complete them without pen and paper. Feel free to share any of your thoughts in the comment section below.

Pray on!

Jane

Lent Day 37, Examen

Welcome to Day 37 of our Lenten Devotional! We continue our study on spiritual housecleaning with today's post on the Prayer of Examen. This is a perfect time to explore this discipline developed by St. Ignatius. Just click below for today's post.

*When you click on the Lent Day 37 , Examen link below, you will be taken to a pdf with more information on it. The Examen exercise link on the pdf page no longer works. Please use this link (Examen Exercise) instead after you read the pdf. Thank you!

Lent Day 37, Examen

12 Ways to Live a Life of Purpose in 2012, Part 2



“That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;”
Colossians 1:10

Have you thought anymore about how you want to live a life of purpose in 2012?

In the last blog post, we discussed four ways you could do this in 2012. After having some time to mull these over and maybe try a few of the suggestions, let’s look at the next four items on the list.

5. Choose a non-fiction Christian book to read that challenges you. Before you start reading this book, pray and ask that God will change you in the process. Ask Him to show you what you need to learn from this book, and pray that you would be open to making the changes God wants you to make. Stick with it, even if it’s slow going. Actively read the book. If the book is your own copy, this means you should write in the margins, highlight sections you want to remember, and make notes in the text. The more you interact with the text, the more of it you will take in. Try to repeat this process a few times this year. If you’d like a few book suggestions, you could start

with one of these:

- I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist by Geisler and Turek
- Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis, or anything else by him
- Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy by Eric Metaxas

6. Schedule a retreat at a retreat center. Do this with a group from your church, some of your friends, or take a night or two or three by yourself at a retreat center and spend some time with God in prayer. I know you spend time in prayer at your own home, too, but there's just something different about getting away to a retreat center that you can't duplicate elsewhere. First of all, when you're away from home, you can't be distracted by all the work you think you should be doing at your house. You'll be able to use the time to completely disengage from the responsibilities of child care, cleaning the house, or doing the laundry—guilt free.

Secondly, retreat centers have resources for you to take advantage of like prayer labyrinths, chapels, libraries and even classes for you to take. Try it. You'll love it. Ask God to show you what He wants you to learn from the weekend. Be sure you write down what you are learning and where you go from here. You can use the following link to help you find a retreat center near you, searching by your state: [Retreat Finder](#). Keep in mind that not all of the sites listed are Christian, so research the listings before you make a reservation. I even found a site close to my house that does not charge a set fee—it's on a donation basis!

7. Begin a new spiritual discipline in your life. Have you ever wanted to explore fasting? Or perhaps you have an interest in journaling, or maybe the discipline of self-examen has piqued your interest. Spend some time learning about a discipline and then begin to incorporate it into your life. **Both Dallas Willard and Richard Foster have classic**

books available on the disciplines, and either book would be a good place for you to start learning.

8. Begin praying through the World Watch List of the 50 most hostile, restrictive countries in the world (to Christianity). Open Doors USA compiles this annual list. Click for the 2014 version.

I'm excited about living a life of purpose in 2012. I wonder how God will change me through this process. Have you tried any of the suggestions yet, or are you planning on doing one soon? If so, we'd love for you to leave a comment and tell us about it. We've got four more suggestions to go, and Mary is going to cover those in the next blog post.

Until then, pray on!

Jane

Prayer of Examen

As 2011 has kicked off, **I've been evaluating my life and what I want to do for this year.** I'd already been thinking about this for a few days when I was in church on January 2. My pastor Dave Rodriguez introduced a type of praying that was perfect for the mindset I was in. It's called the Prayer of Examen. Richard Foster has a chapter on this type of prayer in his book *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*.

Basically, the **Prayer of Examen** is an inward spiritual practice, where we analyze what is going on inside of ourselves. It has two components:

1. **The first is where we examine how God was working in or through us throughout our day and how we responded to Him, and**
2. **We examine our conscience to see where we need to be cleansed, purified and healed. See Psalm 26:2,3.**

An important thing to remember, however, is to do this *with* God. Prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to reveal things to you. God can help us to see the truth, but also He will do it in a loving way.



So, as I was in church, Pastor Rod suggested we all go through the Prayer of Examen in the context of looking over the past year of 2010. Here are the questions he suggested we answer.

1. **Looking over the past year, for what am I most grateful or thankful?**
2. **When or where in the past year were you cooperating most fully with God's action in your life?**
3. **When were you resisting?**
4. **Beginning today, how do you want to live your life differently?**

Take some time to prayerfully answer these questions. What do you want 2011 to look like for you?

While my church did this in the context of one year, many people pray the Prayer of Examen on a daily basis. You can ask yourself these same questions using the last 24 hours as your context. Here are some ways it may help you to do this on a

daily basis, or at least semi-regularly.

Perhaps you **take a walk** every evening; you could answer these questions as you're walking. Or maybe you like to journal, and you can **journal your answers**. Perhaps you want to **mentally run through the prayer** as you're lying in bed at night.

Whatever way you decide, incorporating the Prayer of Examen into your life may help you to grow spiritually as you invite the Lord to help you analyze your heart.

Pray on!

Jane

Resource



Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home
By Richard Foster / HarperOne

The Attentive Life With Dave Rodriguez

Join Jane as she welcomes Pastor Dave Rodriguez of Grace Community Church in Noblesville, Indiana to discuss the attentive life. In today's busy world, it is imperative that we take the time to cultivate time with God and pay attention to Him in our everyday lives. Dave recaps some highlights from his popular sermon series on the Attentive Life. For information on the entire series, go to <http://www.gracecc.org>.



Dave
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