

An Outline of the Examen

One way to define sin is as the behaviors we engage in when we believe our circumstances are more real than God is. The ancient practice of the examen can create a habit of returning to the reality of Christ's relentless love for us while we reflect on our own reactions to life.

In our busy, judgmental world, we apt to completely forget what we've done since breakfast, or obsess over what can't seem to do right. Into this chaotic struggle, the examen invites us to pause. As Adele Calhoun writes, "The examen is a practice for discerning the voice and activity of God within the flow of the day. It is a vehicle that creates deeper awareness of God-given desires in one's life."¹

The steps below are one rhythm for the examen. Notice that this honest look back at our activity and attention begins and ends with awareness of God's love.

Transition: I become aware of the love with which God looks upon me as I begin the examen.

I. Gratitude: I note the gifts that God's love has given me this day, and I give thanks to God for them.

II. Petition: I ask God for insight and strength that will make this examen a work of grace, fruitful beyond my human capacity alone.

III. Review: With God, I review my day. I look for the stirrings in my heart and the thoughts that God has given me this day. I look also for those that have not been of God. I review my choices in response to both.

IV. Forgiveness: I ask for God's forgiveness for my sins this day.

V. Renewal: I look to the following day and, with God, plan how to live it in accord with God's loving desire for my life.

Transition: Aware of God's presence with me, I prayerfully conclude the examen.

¹ *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, InterVarsity Press 2005, pg 52