

An Examen
of
Emotions



A prayer guide.

Emotion Examen

“Examen” is a spiritual discipline created by Saint Ignatius of Loyola as a way to prayerfully reflect on the day’s happenings.

You approach it as if you just arrived home, sat down with God, and shared your day with Him. In your conversation, you give thanks and praise for the highlights and seek forgiveness for your failures. Through it all, God points out His presence and draws you close to examine how the day’s events might reveal more of who you are and the heart of the matter at hand. With God beside you, you’ll see things a bit differently and perhaps experience transformation too.

The “emotion examen” focuses our conversation with God on the feelings that surrounded the day’s events.

God created us with emotions and feelings. In and of themselves, they are not sinful. Our response or reaction to the feeling is what can lead us into trouble. Look at it this way. Feelings and emotions are signposts to follow toward deeper understanding, deeper healing, and a deeper walk with God.

Set aside fifteen to twenty minutes to practice the emotion examen prayer exercise in the late afternoon or evening. Or if you choose mornings, use the exercise in connection with the day before. Establishing a physical routine to prepare our hearts and minds for prayer is helpful. Perhaps you’ll create a space for prayer that includes a place to sit, a Bible, and a candle.

Emotion Examen Prayer Guide

Begin your time of prayer in your usual way.

If you don't have a "usual way" of approaching God in prayer, consider creating a space.

Get comfortable.

Light the candle.

Take a few breaths and center your thoughts on God.

Invite God to join you in the conversation.

Imagine God sitting next to you as you tell Him about your day.

Review the day's events.

For a few minutes scan what happened in your day.

The places you went.

The people whose lives intersected with yours.

Your physical energy level.

The tasks you accomplished, and things left undone.

Give thanks.

Be thankful for His presence throughout your day.

Be thankful for the moments of peace, love, hope, or joy.

Be thankful for the challenges you faced during the day.

Be thankful for His promise to complete what He started.

Think about your day again.

Look deeper into your living and being.

Ask God to reveal to you what emotion is most important.

Remember when this emotion surfaced during the day.

What happened to make you feel this way?

How did you respond to the emotion?

Consider your response to your emotion.

Examine how you felt about the feeling you experienced.

Were you embarrassed?

Did you stuff it down before it took over?

Why?

Ask God to guide or lead you.

Let God speak to you about what the feeling is pointing to within yourself. Open yourself to His leading.

Is it connected with a wound God wants to heal?

Is God calling you to allow Him to bring about transformation?

Is He inviting you to take a nap? a rest?

Look toward tomorrow.

Consider how you will take the revelations from today's Emotion Examen with you into the next day.

Take a few minutes soaking up God's presence.

Does a story or verse from the Bible come to mind.

How is God leading you into tomorrow.

Close your time of prayer.

End your time of prayer in your usual way. Again, if you don't have one, consider creating a rhythm to leave your sacred space.

Sing a song of praise or a hymn.

Recite the Lord's prayer or a favorite blessing.

Blow out the candle.

Return as needed.