

People of A Practice

Week 1



Recall something at which you significantly improved through practice. Describe the experience of practicing: how long it took, how often, etc.

Identify a person (living or dead, well-known or not) that you admire as a spiritual model, mentor or hero. What strengths of character or spiritual qualities do you notice in her/him? List the qualities you most admire. What do you think s/he had to do regularly to develop this quality?

What thoughts or feelings arise when you hear the word "practice"? What about "discipline"? How are they different? How are they the same? How do they apply to your spiritual life?

What quality or characteristic do you most yearn for in your spiritual life? What action/s might you need to practice in order for it to increase and grow?

"Spiritual practices are actions within our power that help us narrow the gap."
Brian McLaren

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The Examen is a prayerful reflection on events in order to detect God's presence and discern God's leading. The examen was developed by Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) as a spiritual practice to help notice God at work in the whole of our experiences. Designed and encouraged for daily use, there are now many adaptations of the examen following five basic steps:

1. **Become aware of God's presence.** Recall you are in the presence of God and pray for illumination. The goal is not simply remembering, but to experience a grace-filled understanding of God's leading.
2. **Review with gratitude.** Begin with gratitude. Walk through each hour or moment noticing its gifts: life, people, work, relationships, food, challenges, etc. Thank God for each small or large gift you recall.
3. **Pay attention to your emotions.** Our feelings — positive and negative, painful or pleasing — are signs pointing toward something worth noticing. Simply pay attention to the whole range of any and all feelings as they surface.
4. **Choose one feature and pray from it.** Choose the event or the remembered feeling that most caught your attention. Express the prayer that spontaneously arises as you attend to it: praise, help, thanks, grief, remorse, healing...whatever.
5. **Look toward tomorrow.** Turn your attention to the immediate future. What surfaces as you anticipate upcoming events, tasks, appointments, etc.? Whatever feelings or thoughts arise, turn them into prayer.

Allow about 15 minutes to complete the examen. It is often ended by praying the Lord's Prayer.

See more at ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen



Some good books on a wide variety of spiritual practices:

The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life by Tony Jones (Zondervan, 2005)

Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices by Brian McLaren (Thomas Nelson, 2008)

Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life by Marjorie J. Thompson (Westminster John Knox, 2005)

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