

The goal of the spiritual life, as St. Ignatius of Loyola conceived it, is to “choose what better leads to God’s deepening life in me.” Ignatian spirituality teaches us to discern the footprints of God in our own experience. It teaches us how to find God in the present moment—in the relationships, challenges, frustrations, and feelings that we are experiencing today.

St. Ignatius developed the Examination of Conscience or **Examen** as a spiritual practice to help individuals become more aware of God's presence as we go about our daily lives.

He considered this kind of examination perhaps the most important single spiritual exercise we do. His experience brought him to do it daily and to urge all his friends to do the same.

The Examen is a reflective prayer, where one reviews their experiences to recognize moments of grace and areas for growth.

The Five Steps of the Examen:

1. **Gratitude** – Be grateful for God’s blessings.
2. **Ask for help of the Holy Spirit** —Ask for guidance to see the events of the day with clarity and honesty.
3. **Review of the Day** – looking for times when God has been present and times when you have left him out.
4. **Contrition and Forgiveness** – Express sorrow for sin, ask for God’s forgiving love.
5. **Resolution and Renewal** – Pray for the grace to be more available to God who loves you so much.

Why the Examen Matters

In making a choice or in coming to a decision, only one thing is really important—to seek and to find how God is calling me at this time of my life.

God is faithful in giving direction to our lives. He created us out of love, and our salvation is found in living out a return of that love.

All our choices, then, must be consistent with this given direction in our lives.

LIFE WILL GIVE YOU MORE THAN YOU CAN HANDLE

One woman who experienced much hardship wrote: “I stopped demanding that God fix the problems in my life and started to be thankful for his presence as I endured them.”

St. Ignatius believed that through this practice, people could develop:
deeper self-awareness,
strengthen their relationship with God,
grow spiritually.

It also helps us recognize patterns in our actions and emotions,
ultimately guiding us to make better choices aligned with our faith.