

Since COVID began, I've been talking about a verse or two (or three or four or...) in light of our current situation. But this week, I thought I'd change it up a little. This week, I want to give us some tools to use for quieting ourselves and sitting with God. Many of these tools may be familiar to some of us, but they are all good tools to use again and again, and if they are new, I pray that they assist you in your efforts to sit quietly with God and listen.

Today, I want to take us for a moment through a simple activity called the Daily Examin (no, not a typo). "The unexamined life is not worth living," Socrates famously said at his trial, and there is some deep truth in it. To live life without stopping to reflect on it causes us to miss its significance and often God's presence. But it takes time, effort, and truth to work through the Examin each day, and it truly needs to be a daily activity for us.

Created by St. Ignatius Loyola, this ancient practice has been used by Christians for centuries to recognize God's presence in the last day and anticipate it in the day to come. While it can be used in the morning as you face a new day, it is most effective as you wind down for bed. It takes as long as you want it to, but typically about 15 – 20 minutes. So, grab a journal and pen, get to a quiet place, and read on...

Sit in a comfortable place for prayer and contemplation. It should be free of interruptions and distractions – God is worth the time and focus even more than the other meetings in your day.

Step 1: Quiet yourself and be aware of God's presence.

As I walk through my neighborhood, I watch my feet. It keeps me from tripping on roots, uneven pavement, and other obstacles. But it also keeps me from noticing the sky, and birds, and the beauty of a treetop. It takes focus and intention to look around and truly see the world around me. This is very much like our spiritual lives. It takes focus and intention for us to look up from our busy schedules, our phones, and our inner monologues and watch for God at work around us. Taking time at the end of the day to be aware of God's presence helps us to "look up" the next day as we walk.

Step 2: Review the day with gratitude.

With God by your side, think back through your day, event by event, and thank God for every moment. Even the difficult, boring, or scary moments can be used by God for good.

Step 3: Pay attention to your emotions.

As you look at each moment of your day, look at how you feel as you review. Is this a happy moment in your day? Does anxiety rise in you? Do you get angry? Which moment from your day holds the most energy for you?

Step 4: Chose one moment of the day and pray from it.

Notice, this is not "pray about it" or "pray for it". This is "pray from it". Let your prayers go where they may, but let them flow out of this moment. Did you see a beautiful flower as you walked? Pray from it. Did you get yelled at by your boss for something you didn't do? Pray from it.

Step 5: Look toward tomorrow.

When we know that we will be examining our day, we tend to pay more attention as we walk through each day. This is why it is so important to not just do this once but regularly. It will develop in you an attitude of noticing, of seeing God's presence, and of prayer.

Take some time without the tv, your phone, or a book and explore the Examin. Try it for a few weeks and see if it doesn't change the way you view the world, your life, and God's presence in it.