

# The Ignatian Examen—Teen Version



A daily Examen is a prayerful method of “checking in” on how well we are living out our Christian faith on a daily basis.

Developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola more than four hundred years ago, the Examen invites us to reflect on how God has been present in our day, how we have responded to that presence, and how we might grow in holiness.

Helping your kids develop the habit of making a daily Examen gives them a powerful tool for spiritual growth. Why? Because it not only teaches kids that God is near, present in every moment of their lives, but helps them recognize the many manifestations of that presence. Moreover, it teaches kids to examine their own response to God’s presence, for better or worse, in their thoughts, feelings, and actions. And finally, it teaches them to make this examination in a spirit of gratitude.

Try the traditional form of the Examen during family prayer with older children and teens, setting aside ten to fifteen minutes to do it well. What follows is a simple outline.

Consider lighting a candle or playing quiet music to set a prayerful atmosphere. Briefly describe each step, allowing several minutes for each one.

**1. Enter God’s presence.** Take a few moments to quiet down, to recall that God has accompanied you every step of the way during the day, and to open yourself to God’s presence.

**2. Review the events of the day in a spirit of gratitude.** Move through your day, hour by hour, taking special note of its many small gifts: the warmth of a child’s hand, a cup of coffee, a flock of birds, the kindness of a stranger. Recall that God is revealed in each of these details. Think, too, about the gifts you were able to give others: an encouraging word, a smile, work well done.

**3. Pray for a “Spirit of truth.”** Prepare for the next step by asking for the “Spirit of truth” to “guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). Prepare yourself to be honest as you examine your actions during the day, knowing that the truth will free you to grow closer to God. Recall, too, God’s unconditional love for you.

**4. How were you open to God’s presence in the events of the day?** Next, examine how you responded (or didn’t) to God’s presence in the key events of the day. When were you loving? When did you miss an opportunity to love? When were you sinful? How much were you in charge of your actions, and what did you do out of simple habit? Pay attention to your emotions around these events. St. Ignatius taught that the Holy Spirit often speaks to us through our emotions, even the “negative” ones. What truth might God be leading you to through your emotions?

**5. Bring it to Jesus.** Finally, respond in prayer to the insights revealed in the previous steps. You may want to imagine this as a friendly face-to-face meeting with Jesus, one in which you offer words of sorrow, gratitude, or joy. You may want to ask for forgiveness, consolation, encouragement, the grace to overcome bad habits, and direction for how to grow closer to God. Continue to listen to Jesus as you resume your daily activities.