

2024 Year-End Examen

A sacred yearly practice of Lifesprings' International



Photo taken at Lifesprings women's retreat in Katchumbala, Uganda. The Lifesprings women's retreat was held on the property facing these rocks, stones of remembrance.

What is a Year-end Examen?

Examen prayer was developed in 1522 by St. Ignatius of Loyola while he was recuperating from a serious injury. Believing that God is active in all the corners of our lives, he would be still with God through the moments of his day to pay attention to the movement of the Spirit of God within his soul. Examen is a spiritual practice typically done daily, which we encourage, but in addition, our Lifesprings' community participates in an **annual** personal examen every December.

Doing a **year-end examen** will help you:

- **Prayerfully reflect on the events of the past year.** Look for God even in the smallest details of your life. Sometimes we miss those. We look for him in the grand moments, but we don't often look for him in a journey of pain or the seemingly mundane routines. For those who participated in our Monthly Examen listening groups, perhaps those reflections will prove useful to recall.
- **Be more aware of what God has been and is doing in your life in transforming your soul to be more like Christ,** which can lead to increased discernment and guidance for making choices in the year to come. Through Examen, we allow the Spirit to reveal where we might need healing, more rest, a particular spiritual discipline, increased sense of peace, increased confidence as you go through your day with God, and areas where greater trust in Him is needed.

What you'll need

- **Time/Place:** Set aside at least four to six hours between now and December 16 and complete the examen in a place where you will be undistracted by social media or other interruptions.
- **Collect your 2024 calendars, day-planners, journals, photos etc.** from the past year.
- **Print out this document or view it online to be completed** in a quiet place.
- **A journal** to record thoughts/answers to the questions posed.
- **Pens/pencils/highlighters** or whatever creative or helpful writing tools you would like to use.
- **A seeking and listening heart** to enjoy this time of reflection with God and time of discerning with the Holy Spirit opportunities for growth in 2024.

LET'S BEGIN!

1. Prepare Your Heart

A. Preparing Your Heart through Worship

Do one or more of the following as an expression of adoration to worship the Lord:

- Select a favorite worship song and praise God with your voice.
- Write a prayer/poem or draw/paint an expression of worship to God.
- Read aloud a favorite psalm or hymn of praise and worship.
- Choose Instrumental/praise music to listen, and/or dance to with worship flags.

B. Preparing Your Heart through Scripture Reflection: Scripture Imaginative Contemplation: "Come to Me, an invitation to draw near."

1. Choose one or two translations to read of Matthew 11:28-30 (See below).
2. Prayerfully read the passage out loud inviting the Holy Spirit to illuminate the sights, smells, sounds of being in the crowd near Jesus.
3. Read the passage again silently and consider the passage as playing at a movie theater and using all your senses imagine yourself present in the scene as if you were one of the listeners.
4. Read it again, allow your whole heart to be present, who and what word or phrases, invitations stand out, prayerfully experience God's word for you today thru this passage. Record your thoughts.
5. Read the passage a final time and respond in prayer.

Matthew 11:28-30 (NRSV):

“Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

OR

Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message):

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

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*"Soulful listening requires us to stop daily, purposefully observe our lives,
consider what is happening to us, name those things that are dying,
persisting, changing, fermenting, or bursting forth with new life."*

— Jean Stairs, *Listening for the Soul*

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C. Preparing Your Heart Through Scripture-based Breath Prayers

1. Choose a part of the following scripture to pray as a breath prayer. Psalm 18:2: “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” For example:

Inhale: The Lord

Exhale: is my Rock

Inhale: The Lord

Exhale: is my Shield

*“Breath as Prayer will lead you through the practice and the proven health benefits of Christian breath prayer: intentional prayers centered around Scripture that focus our minds on Christ as we calm our bodies through breathing.” —Jennifer Tucker, author of *Breath as Prayer: Calm Your Anxiety, Focus Your Mind, and Renew Your Soul**

2. Use another favorite scripture and write a breath prayer of your own.

2. Steps to Examen

A. Gratitude. The year we just lived most likely was full of joys and challenges to be experienced as a gift from God. Be grateful for it. Praise Him, our Immanuel, and **thank** Him for His unconditional love, mercy, grace and sovereignty during a year full of blessings, storms, and trials.

B. Grace. Ask the Holy Spirit for His light to look back over 2024 month by month with God's eyes, not merely your own. Ask for the grace to look at the events of the year with honesty and compassion. (You may choose to use the calendar graphic provided at the end of this document to record those 2024 events the Holy Spirit brings to light.)

C. Review 2024. (You may want to include any participation with Lifesprings!). Look back over your calendar and journals to note: 1) times of consolation—when you felt close to God, 2) times of desolation—when you felt far from God and 3) anything else God brings to your mind. Record your thoughts. For personal reflection, answer the following questions:

- Looking back over the year, where did I sense God using my gifts and strengths most? Where did I hold them back? What changes, if any, did I notice in the use of my spiritual gifts and talents in ministry this year?
- Considering my roles in ministry, what value did my participation add to the lives of others? Where did I give love?
- What shortcomings did I discover about myself that I need to surrender to God? Where did I withhold love?
- (If you have developed a rule of life, R.O.L.) In what ways did my R.O.L. guide me in my day by day, week by week, month by month living? How did maintaining my R.O.L. in 2024 help me serve in my role in ministry, and/or in Lifesprings? What obstacles did I face when attempting to maintain my Rhythm of Life in 2024?

D. Pray. Offer the few most prominent highlights up to God. What might God be communicating to you about these highlights?

- A time to forgive?
- A time to mend relationships?
- A time to make that commitment?
- A time to be courageous?
- A time to learn something new?
- A time to discard a false view of God?

Bathe in the grace and love God is showing you—in gratitude for the consolation, seeking love, unburdening and freedom in God.

E. Hope for the future: looking towards 2025

- What notable events might be occurring?
- What is setting?
- What is rising?
- What are you passionate about?
- What do you want from God?
- What kind of wisdom do you need?
- Where do you need more love?
- Where would you like to give more love?
- What do you sense God may be inviting you to be or to do, to say yes or no to in the coming year with regard to ministry opportunities, perhaps with Lifesprings?

3. Review Your Personal Rhythm of Life

A. If you HAVE developed a personal Rhythm of Life: Prayerfully consider how God might be inviting you to update your rule of life for 2025. What additions or changes would you desire to make?

B. If you HAVE NOT developed a personal Rhythm of Life: Reflect on what spiritual disciplines and practices most helped you experience God in body, mind, spirit and emotions.

4. Close Your Examen with a Time of Thanksgiving and Prayer

Thank God for this soul care time together through examen:

*Thank you for showing me Thank you for reminding me....
Thank you for encouraging me... Thank you for leading me...*

Pray the Lord's Prayer

*"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."*

Here is another prayer you may wish to use in closing your time of examen:

LITANY OF LET LOVE

*Father, good and ever-faithful.
Jesus, Savior ever-merciful.
Holy Spirit, well-spring of true life and love.*

*I give You permission.
Reign in my heart, mind, soul, and life.
Let Your Love come into my past, present and future. Let Your Love unfold in me.
That I Let Love reveal who I am,
God, in Whose Image I've been made, Father me.
That I Let Love define me,
God, in Whose Likeness I've been formed, shape me.
That I Let Love with courage and hope,
God, to Whose glory I've been called, be my strength.
That I Let Love forgive me,
Save me Lord Jesus.
That I Let Love love me to the depths of my being,
Save me Lord Jesus.
That I Let Love heal and glorify my wounds,
Save me Lord Jesus.
That I Let Love free me from sin,
Save me Lord Jesus.
That I Let Love liberate me from all my fears,
Save me Lord Jesus.
That I Let Love reconcile me to wholeness and peace,
Save me Lord Jesus.
That I Let Love awaken me,
Come Holy Spirit.
That I Let Love lead me in every moment,
Come Holy Spirit.
That I Let Love challenge me to live in and for love,
Come Holy Spirit.
That I Let Love grow my mind, heart, and soul,
Come Holy Spirit.
That I Let Love draw me to live in the truth,
Come Holy Spirit.
That I Let Love transform me into the life of Christ,
Come Holy Spirit.
That I Let Love fill me to overflowing,
Come Holy Spirit.
That I Let Love captivate my heart,
Come Holy Spirit.
That I Let Love live in me,
Come Holy Spirit.
That I Let Love inspire me,
Come Holy Spirit.
That I Let Love cherish me,*

*Father, hold me in Your Heart.
That I Let Love receive me,
Jesus, keep me in your wounds.
That I Let Love be my rock and security,
Spirit, keep me in your peace.
That I Let Love ask from me,
Let Your will be done Father.
That I Let Love in,
Let Your Will be done Father.
That I Let Love live in me,
Let Your Will be done Father.
That I Let Love go,
Let Your Will be done Father.
That I Let Love give,
Let Your Will be done Father.
That I Let Love speak,
Let Your will be done Father.
That I Let Love call my name,
Let Your will be done Father.
That I Let Love bring me somewhere new,
Blessed Trinity, reign over my life.
That I Let Love be the adventure,
Blessed Trinity, reign over my life.
That I Let Love write the score,
Blessed Trinity, reign over my life.
That I Let Love win the victory,
Blessed Trinity, reign over my life.
That I Let Love be the answer,
Blessed Trinity, reign over my life.*

(Written by Sr. Mariae Agnus Dei, SV)

Examen Calendar

January Reflections	February Reflections
March Reflections	April Reflections

May Reflections	June Reflections
July Reflections	August Reflections

September Reflections	October Reflections
November Reflections	December Reflections