

EXAMEN

—

The prayer Examen is an ancient practice of the church, meant to be a review of where we have experienced God in our days and, conversely, where we might have missed God. There are as many ways to pray the Examen as there are people in the world, but below is a simple guideline to praying the Examen over 2020. This is more than reviewing the year—it is asking for God’s eyes and heart in order to see well our journey with Christ.

The psalmists are some of our best mentors in what it means to pray reflectively in this way. Here are a few scriptures that can help anchor us in the postures of the Examen:

Praise the LORD, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
Praise the LORD, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.
—PSALM 103:2-5

You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways...
Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
—PSALM 139:1-3, 7

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
—PSALM 51:10-12

Placing yourself before God with the desire to be led by the Spirit...

Begin:

Take deep breaths. Let yourself settle and relax. Release any need to perform or feeling of expectation. Know that whatever happens in this time, it is enough. Pray a simple prayer that acknowledges God's presence with you and around you.

Receive:

Ask God for the ability to move beyond your perspective of yourself and your year. Out beyond your accomplishments and your failings is a spacious place where God wants to take you. Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal what God would have you focus on, whether it is the sweep of the whole year or one or two specific experiences within it.

Ask:

If you feel led (and only if), use a few questions for guidance: In the past year, where or for what do I find myself the most thankful? An event? An experience I had? The love I received from others? Courageous action that I took? Spend some time asking for God's light to reveal *Godself* to me, and for God to reveal *myself* to me. Where have I felt deep joy (even if fleetingly)? What has been unsettling or upsetting? What has been a struggle or challenge? Where did I experience stopping and resting?

Review:

Allow the past year to play before you like a movie. Let God control the timing and scenes. What would the Spirit like to show you? Release your agendas, and notice what Christ wants you to pay attention to.

Pray:

Using the questions or images as the ground of your prayer, come to God in conversation or silence. This may be a particular event or it may be a pattern you have noticed emerging. Spend time with this before God. You may want to journal, or create, or do something else that is a natural ground for communication with God. If you chose a word for 2020, pray that to God. Does the Spirit have a word for 2020 in retrospect that may be different than the word you chose moving forward?

Imagine:

If it feels right, ask God to give you a holy imagining for 2021. Are there blessings or challenges ahead? Relationships, habits, learnings that you are being invited into or out of? Imagine what it might be like to experience those things with God, rather than on your own. Notice what Christ has to say to you about these things. Are there graces God is inviting you to ask for even now?

Share:

What prayer is God birthing in you for Artisan? What single word or image might symbolize our asking for God's eyes and heart for 2021?

Rest:

After you are done, spend some time simply resting in silence with God. Allow your heart to be held by the One who loves you most. Release all you can into God's care, and enjoy God's delight in you, the Beloved.