



## FUEL sermon series – Week 3 Spiritual Practice

### Prayer of Examen with the Spirit

Through the story of Scripture, we see pictures of moments where the people of God were empowered by his Spirit. We long to be people of God who are also empowered by his Spirit, noticing God's presence with us in everyday, ordinary life. We desire to partner with God as we move through our days, inviting the strength of the Spirit to work in and through us instead of our own flesh.

How can we grow in our ability to live empowered by the Spirit? The *Prayer of Examen* serves as a great starting point. This simple prayer was introduced by Ignatius of Loyola long ago, and is to be a very short, fifteen-minute prayer that can be prayed at any time throughout the day that is most convenient. Mark E. Thibodeaux gives an overview of this prayer in his book, *Reimagining the Examen*.

*In the Examen, we review our recent past to find God and God's blessings in daily life. We also look back to find moments in the day when things didn't go so well—when we were hurt by something that happened to us, or when we sinned or made a mistake. We give praise and thanksgiving for the blessed moments. We ask forgiveness and healing for the difficult and painful moments. Having reflected on this past day, we then turn to the day yet to come and ask God to show us the potential challenges and opportunities for tomorrow. We try to anticipate which moments might go one way or the other for us: toward God's plan or away from it. We ask for insight into what graces we might need to live this next day well: patience, wisdom, fortitude, self-knowledge, peace,*



*optimism. We ask God for that grace, and we trust that he wants us to succeed in our day even more than we do.*

### **The Practice of the Prayer of Examen:**

Set aside fifteen minutes each day to reflect with God, allowing the Spirit to lead. Look back over the previous 24-hour period and look ahead to the following 24-hour period as well.

Find a quiet place that is free from distractions. Pray through the following prompts alone or with someone. You can journal your prayers or simply pray your responses to the prompts below.

1. Quiet your mind and notice your breathing. Ask God to make his presence known to you at this moment. Sense God's presence around you and within you as best you can. Take a moment to slow down. Linger in the quiet for a moment before moving on.
2. Ask God to reveal all the good gifts and graces he has given to you on this day. Pay attention to both the bigger ones (your life, safety, love) to the smaller ones (a good night of sleep, an affirming phone call from a friend, a task complete, a compliment someone gave you). For each gift that comes to mind, express your gratitude to God, giving thanks and praise to him.
3. Ask the Lord to fill you with his Spirit. Invite the Spirit to help you to honestly look at the reality of your life. Ask God to be the leader and initiator of this prayer time, rather than letting you make it a shame-filled collection of things





you don't like about yourself. Invite the Lord to "search you and know you," as David wrote in Psalm 139.

4. Going hour by hour, review your day. In your imagination, relive each significant moment of your day. Linger at the important moments and pass quickly through the less relevant ones.
5. As you review your day, continue thanking God for all the good gifts that you find in it. Notice specifically where you were empowered by the Holy Spirit. Where did you live from the strength of the Spirit? Thank God for those moments.
6. Now, pause at any of the difficult moments of the day—when you had a bad thought, said something you shouldn't have said, or did something inappropriate. Pay attention to any missed opportunities, such as when you could have acted in a more Christ-like manner but didn't. Notice where you did not partner with the Spirit throughout your day. When you find moments in which you were not fully the person you're called to be, stop and ask forgiveness from God. Sense his healing mercy wash over you, making you clean and whole.
7. With what you've discovered in your prayer time, ask God to show you, concretely, how he wants you to respond or what he wants you to do tomorrow. Even more importantly, ask God to show you the kind of person he is calling you to be tomorrow. Walk through any moments of your day, inviting the Spirit to empower you. Invite the Lord to lead with his love through the day to come.



8. As you close out this time, pray through The Lord's Prayer or take a couple of moments of silence with the Lord, releasing the day to him.