



An Examen of Practices of Prayer

Introduction

Our last two Practice gatherings have focused on practices of prayer, specifically the practices of the [Examen](#) and [Listening Prayer](#). Regularly engaging spiritual practices of prayer is absolutely essential for anyone committed to following Jesus.

A spiritual practice is any intentional activity that cultivates deeper communion with God's presence in our everyday lives. Spiritual practices may help us grow in awareness of God's loving presence. They may help us develop ears to better hear God's voice or help us to surrender obstacles to deeper communion with God.

Dallas Willard wrote, "In the progress of God's redemptive work, communication advances into communion, and communion into union." As we cultivate a life of prayer we grow into deeper communion with the Lord so we might join in more fully in God's redemptive work in the world. The Examen, listening prayer, silence, breath prayer, and intercession are just a few examples of spiritual practices of prayer. In this particular Examen, we will examine our spiritual practices of scripture. Let's hold our practices in God's presence and listen for what the Holy Spirit might reveal to us this week.

Step 1: Acknowledging God's presence

Settle into a comfortable space without distractions. Take a deep breath. Wherever you are in this moment, you are in God's loving presence. Take another deep breath. Remember that God is closer than the air you breathe.

For the next few moments, invite God to speak. Hold your hands open as a sign of your willingness to receive from God. Express your desire to listen. You may use your own words or echo the words of Samuel, "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening."

Step 2: Review your spiritual practices of prayer in gratitude

Now, remaining in God's loving presence, consider the specific practices of prayer you have engaged in this season. Name these experiences, you may even choose to write them down. How have you experienced communion with God in prayer during this season?

Take a moment now to thank God for these experiences. You may write a prayer of gratitude in the space below.

Step 3: Examine your spiritual practices of prayer with God

Consider the spiritual practices of prayer you identified a moment ago. Take a moment to examine your experiences with the following questions. Listen for anything the Holy Spirit may be calling to your attention.

How have you experienced God drawing you into His life of love through prayer?

How have spiritual practices of prayer fallen short, felt dry, or failed to invite you in God's life of love?

Step 4: Respond

Is there a particular experience that stands out from your examination? Was there a strong emotion, positive or negative, that stands out? Is there one experience you feel the Holy Spirit is drawing you toward, one you are being invited to hold a little longer in God's loving presence?

Use this time to respond to God. Is there anything you want to say to God about this experience, anything you would like to ask? Speak to God, and listen for God's response.

Step 5: Looking forward

In our final movement, let's turn our attention forward. As you consider spiritual practices of prayer in the future, what emotions arise? Do you sense an invitation from God? Close your time in prayer by holding your future practices in God's loving presence.