REDEEMING THE TIME:
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR STRANGE DAYS

"Where is God in my life?"

The Discipline of Examen

This time, like all times, is a very good time, if we but know what to do with it. Emerson

My times are in your hand. David, Psalm 31:15

WHAT IS "EXAMEN?"

The word itself refers to the tongue of a balance, a way of measuring things, or a critical study. It is a devotional exercise involving reflection on and moral evaluation of one's thoughts and conduct, preferably on a regular basis. To weigh accurately.

The Examen includes thought-full prompts to follow and to adapt to your own character and spirit.

Synonyms: delve, explore, inquire, probe, research, study, ponder, consider.

Psalm 90:12

So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. *World English Bible*

To number our days aright let [us] know, And we bring the heart to wisdom. *Young's Literal Translation*

NOTICING

“The greatest thing a human soul ever does in the world is to see something and tell what it saw in a plain way.

Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see.

To see clearly is poetry, prophecy and religion, all in one.”

John Ruskin, leading art critic of the Victorian era.

WHERE IS THIS SEEN IN THE BIBLE?

Biblical examples:

"The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to his ways." Proverbs 14:8

"Give thought to your ways." Haggai 1:5-7

"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths." Proverbs 3:5-8

Jesus: After a long day of teaching, healing, and casting out demons, He awoke early and went to pray. Mark 1:35

He withdrew to the mountain to pray after the death of John, feeding the thousands, and dismissing the crowd and the disciples. Mark 6:46

What did Jesus do while the disciples were deployed? Mark 4:10-20

The disciples regularly asked Jesus for explanation or interpretation following certain teachings or incidents.

Mark 9:28: "Why could we not cast [the boy's demon] out?" Also 7:17; 10:10

EXAMEN

Desire: “To notice both God and my God-given desires through out the day.”

Definition: “The examen is a practice for discerning the voice and activity of God within the flow of the day. It is a vehicle that creates deeper awareness of God-given desires in one’s life.”

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook, Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, 52

The experience of practicing Examen is like…

Calibrating a device.

Tidying a room.

Untangling a knot.

Making a mosaic.

Focusing a camera.

Paying attention

SHARE AT A LEVEL THAT IS COMFORTABLE FOR YOU

How do you typically recognize God's presence in your life?

What do you do with what you notice about God's presence in your life?

PRACTICING THE DISCIPLINE

- Prepare: Spend a few moments in silence and stillness. Consider how much God loves you. Use a favorite passage or prayer to settle in God's presence.
- Invite: Ask God to go with you as you search for evidence of God's presence through the day (or selected time period) and search for self-awareness.
- Review the time period you selected: Identify major events, significant interactions, experiences in relationships. Reflect on each, noticing where God seemed to be loving you, speaking to you, guiding you, or showing you something new about Himself and/or about yourself.
- Give thanks: For each part of this time, for God's presence with you in all. Tell Him about unresolved issues and questions. Experience gratitude for God's nearness in the midst of your regular life.

PRACTICING THE DISCIPLINE

- Confess: Ask God to bring to mind attitudes, actions, words or moments when you fell short of exhibiting the character of Christ or fruit of the Spirit. (Psalm 139:23, 24)
- Ask forgiveness: Be assured of His forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Express willingness to take concrete steps to allow God to form the character of Christ in you.
- Seek spiritual friendship: Find someone with whom you can share what you are discovering about the Lord and your life.

Adapted from Ruth Haley Barton's *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*, "Self-Examination," 91-109)

DAILY EXAMEN, LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

- 1. Ask God for understanding. Tell God that you want to see your life through His eyes, not your own.
- 2. Give thanks. Recall God's gifts in your life. How has God been at work? For what are you grateful?
- 3. Review the day. What happened? Where was God? What did you feel? Notice high and low points. What might God be saying or doing in those things?
- 4. Face shortcomings/receive forgiveness. What did not go well? What do you need to confess? Remember God's gift of forgiveness.
- 5. Look ahead. What about tomorrow? What will you do? Who will you be with? What challenges will you face? How do you feel about the day ahead? Pray with these things.
- 6. Close by praying the Lord's Prayer.

REMEMBERING THE PRESENT DAY

Place yourself consciously in God's presence, asking for his light as you review the past few hours.

Then ponder the following questions:

- What have I to be thankful for?
- What strong moods have I experienced, and what attitudes lie beneath them?
- For what do I need to ask forgiveness?
- For what do I need God's help and guidance?

These same questions can be applied to any chosen span of time.

Discovering Our Spiritual Gifts: Practices for God's Beloved, Trevor Hudson, 44

IF YOU LIKE TO WRITE…

Written Examen:

- What was a highlight of the day?
- What was worth remembering?
- What am I grateful for?
- What do I look forward to?
- What did I feel today?
- Prayers from the day.

FRUIT OF THE DISCIPLINE OF EXAMEN

- We begin to notice things—especially the movement of God—that we might miss otherwise. We recognize the presence of God in ordinary life.
- We foster gratitude.
- We give up being the "guru," and encourage others to listen to God, not to ourselves.
- We pay attention to our minds, bodies, and emotions as means through which God is speaking to us or working in us.
- We grow in discernment and receptivity to God's voice.
- We open up to both what is difficult and delightful in our lives, relationships, occupations.
- We discover where we are most alive.
- We respond to God's invitations to pray throughout our days.
- We can reflect alone or with others on what God is saying to us through meetings, conflicts, decisions, or other events and situations. Groups can do this.

LEARNING TO LISTEN
HONING YOUR HEARING

"Perspective and direction for the future happen through listening to where and how God shows up in your day and then interacting with God in prayer. **Awareness of the Spirit's enlivening and enlightening presence puts you in touch with the kind of person God created you to be.** When you begin to recognize who God created you to be, you have the raw material for discerning God's unique call and design for your life." (*SDH*, 54)

Ear-training: Ear training or aural skills is a music theory study in which musicians learn to identify pitches, intervals, melody, chords, rhythms, solfeges, and other basic elements of music, solely by hearing.

"The sheep hear [the shepherd's] voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.. The sheep follow him, **for they know his voice**." John 10:3b, 4

SHARING: NOW WHAT?

"In the pursuit of an authentic spirituality, words count for very little, and practicing means everything. Therefore you may want to experience with the Examen immediately." Trevor Hudson

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

James 1:22ff

What will you do with what you have heard?

What is a good and doable Next Step?

Not always talking to Him or about Him,
but waiting before Him;
till the stream runs clear;
till the cream rises to the top;
till the mists part,
and the soul regains its equilibrium."
F. B. Meyer

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