

The three minute prayer that can change your life

This prayer is called 'the examen'. It is a Christian mindfulness tool developed by 16th century mystic St. Ignatius of Loyola. Its objective is to bring us closer to God. It's a perfect exercise for all who believe in God and need a little help shifting focus.

The examen is a series of short reflections and questions that asks us, first, what is drawing us near God and, second, what is drawing us away from God. What fears and worries are blocking us from seeing and feeling God in our lives? Ignatius believed that it is often easy for us to overlook God in our actions and thoughts. He also believed that it was important not only to pay attention to what was going on inside the head, but even more so to pay attention to what was going on inside the heart.

This practice is not meant to shame us if we feel we haven't lived up to either our expectations or God's expectations. Instead, it's a method of realizing that our life matters and the things that we do—or don't do—can impact everyone around us.

The examen is usually performed at night before we go to sleep. It allows us to replay the day we are leaving behind, and helps us become more aware of how to live out the next day. It can take as little as three minutes to do and it often helps with insomnia. So, not only does this exercise help you draw closer to God, but it helps you get sleep as well. The prayer is broken down here into 6 easy steps.

1. Ask God to Be Revealed

Literally just ask, "God, please reveal yourself to me." If necessary, imagine you're in a dark room with a dimmer switch. In this room, it's hard to make out what's in front of us, though we know something is there. We ask God to gradually increase the light: "God, help me to see what's in the room with me. Help me to see the people and things in the world before me. Help me to see you better." Imagine the light in the room getting brighter and brighter.

2. Cultivate Gratitude

Give thanks for the day. Give thanks for the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat, the clothes we wear and the homes that provide us shelter. Give thanks for our families and friends. Try to be thankful for all the people we meet during the day, everyone from the jovial security guard to the tired waitress in desperate need of a break. Give thanks to God for that person who drove slowly earlier in the day when you were running late for a meeting. Maybe that laggard was God's way of slowing us down to protect us from being harmed in an accident.

3. Pay Attention to Your Emotions

Sometimes our heads can get in the way of our hearts. Many of us have minds that never stop jumping from one thing to another. But it's important to pay attention to our emotions, especially if we're experiencing blockages. Ignatius believed that our emotions are able to carry us closer to God when they are free-flowing, just as they can stall us when there are barriers. What is God saying to us in the feelings we have about the day, in the angry, anxious, depressed, or hopeful and happy feelings we experienced at work or at home? Ask God for help to untangle these experiences.

4. Choose Something Great That Happened Today and Pray About It

Maybe you had a great conversation with a friend. Explore what made you feel good. Was it just laughs, or did you learn something? Pray for that friend; take that experience into your heart and ponder it there. Make the experience a prayer to God.

5. Ask, Where Was God for Me Today?

Was God present in your actions? Ignatius asks us to seek God in all things, so the question becomes whether or not we see God in our work, in the less fortunate, or in the friend who is going through a divorce. If we are angry at our brother or sister, we know that we are angry at God. We are called to forgive, and if we are struggling to do so, then we can ask God for help.

6. Bless the Tomorrow

We ask God to guide us on this journey we call life. Though this might seem almost rote or silly, asking God for directions is an important part of our lives. From time to time, all of us need to stop for directions. Before you finish your prayer, ask God to point you where you need to go. Then be still. Trust that God is guiding you in everything you are doing and get some sleep.

Things I Have Learned...

- I've learned- that you cannot make someone love you. All you can do is be someone who can be loved. The rest is up to them.
- I've learned- that no matter how much you care, some people just don't care back.
- I've learned- that it takes years to build up trust, and only seconds to destroy it.
- I've learned- that it's not what you have in your life but who you have in your life that counts.
- I've learned- that you can get by on charm for about fifteen minutes. After that, you'd better know something.
- I've learned- that you shouldn't compare yourself to the best others can do.
- I've learned- that you can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for life.
- I've learned- that it's taking me a long time to become the person I want to be.
- I've learned- that you should always leave loved ones with loving words. It may be the last time you see them.
- I've learned- that you can keep going long after you can't.
- I've learned- that we are responsible for what we do, no matter how we feel.
- I've learned- that either you control your attitude or it controls you.
- I've learned- that regardless of how hot and steamy a relationship is at first, the passion fades and there had better be something else to take its place.
- I've learned- that heroes are the people who do what has to be done when it needs to be done, regardless of the consequences.
- I've learned- that money is a lousy way of keeping score.
- I've learned- that my best friend and I can do anything or nothing and have the best time.
- I've learned- that sometimes the people you expect to kick you when you're down will be the ones to help you when you need to get back up.
- I've learned- that sometimes when I'm angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel.
- I've learned- that true friendship continues to grow, even over the longest distance. Same goes for true love.
- I've learned- that just because someone doesn't love you the way you want them to doesn't mean they don't love you with all they have.
- I've learned- that maturity has more to do with what types of experiences you've had and what you've learned from them and less to do with how many birthdays you've celebrated.
- I've learned- that you should never tell a child their dreams are unlikely or outlandish. Few things are more humiliating, and what a tragedy it would be if they believed it.
- I've learned- that your family won't always be there for you. It may seem funny, but people you aren't related to can take care of you and love you and teach you to trust people again. Families aren't necessarily biological.
- I've learned- that no matter how good a friend is, they're going to unintentionally hurt you every once in awhile you must forgive them for that.
- I've learned- that it isn't always enough to be forgiven by others. Sometimes you must learn to forgive yourself.
- I've learned- that no matter how bad your heart is broken the world doesn't stop for your grief.
- I've learned- that our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are responsible for who we become.
- I've learned- that just because two people argue, it doesn't mean they don't love each other And just because they don't argue, it doesn't mean they do.
- I've learned- that we don't have to change friends if we understand that friends change.
- I've learned- that you shouldn't be so eager to find out a secret. It could change your life forever.
- I've learned- that two people can look at the exact same thing and see something totally different.
- I've learned- that no matter how you try to protect your children, they will eventually get hurt and you will hurt in the process.
- I've learned- that your life can be changed in a matter of hours by people who don't even know you.
- I've learned- that if you are having difficulty with substance abuse, you either learn to control the substance, or it controls you.
- I've learned- that even when you think you have no more to give, when a friend cries out to you, you will find the strength to help.
- I've learned- that credentials on the wall do not make you a decent human being.
- I've learned- that it's hard to determine where to draw the line between being nice and not hurting people's feelings and standing up for what you believe.
- I've learned- that the people you care about most in life are taken from you too soon. www.ChurchofUniversalTruth.net

Promise Yourself:

- To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.
- To talk health, happiness, and prosperity to every person you meet.
- To make all your friends feel that there is something worthwhile in them.
- To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true.
- To think only of the best, to work only for the best and to expect only the best.
- To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.
- To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future.
- To wear a cheerful expression at all times and give a smile to every living creature you meet.
- To give so much time to improving yourself that you have no time to criticize others.
- To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.
- To think well of yourself and to proclaim this fact to the world, not in loud word, but in great deeds.
- To live in faith that the whole world is on your side, so long as you are true to the best that is in you.

Your life will tend to follow along the most predominant thoughts of your mind. In order to train your mind (even if you think some of these may not be true at this time), you may also practice this by reading these affirmations every night just before you go to sleep:

I am strong

I am faithful

I am brave

I am rich in spirit

I am honest

I am beautiful

I am smart

I am energetic

I am intelligent

I am enthusiastic

I am optimistic

I am resourceful

I am confident

I am charitable

I am creative

I am considerate of others

I am successful

I am a good person

I am prosperous

I am true to myself

I am calm

I can achieve anything I want

I am healthy

Thoughts To Live By:

- I approach people and situations in a balanced way
 - I am resourceful and will achieve my goals
 - I have the ability to assert myself and lead
 - I let go of attitudes which block my progress
 - I am grateful for the abundance in my life
 - I cherish the richness and diversity of the earth
 - I am open to and accepting of change
 - I use my ability to communicate with ease
- I banish all negative judgments about my intelligence
 - I will explore new ways of understanding
- I will overcome feelings of restlessness and anxiety
 - I will learn the lessons of the past
 - I cherish the ones I love
 - I let go of worry and insecurity
 - I release the pain caused by others
 - I feel the love others have for me
 - I do not need to be the center of attention
- I use my power and confidence in a balanced way
- I am able to use my talents and gifts to help others
 - I find that my work is productive and gratifying
- I release the urge to find fault with myself and others
 - I give and receive love without conditions
 - I do not need others to make me feel complete
- I am able to communicate and work well with others
 - I am happy to be a loved and loving being
 - I let go of all resentments in my life
 - I have the ability to transform my life
 - I am open to the expansion of mind and spirit
 - I delight in the sensuality of life
 - I cherish my ability to understand
 - I will use feelings of optimism wisely
 - I express my feelings without reservation
 - I find joy and hope inside of me
- I let go of behavior which impedes my growth
- I communicate my individuality respectfully
 - I enjoy my connection with humanity
 - I have the ability to find my own genius
 - I enjoy my ability to create
 - I forgo all addictive behavior
 - I embrace my connection with the divine
 - I have the capacity to meditate easily
- I respect the beauty of my mind, body, and spirit www.ChurchofUniversalTruth.net