

BETWEEN SESSIONS

Practicing the Examen

Consider how you might incorporate the practice of self-examination (*examen*) during this next week. Would it work for you to practice this discipline daily by going for a walk sometime in the evening? Or would it work better for you to sit quietly for a few minutes and review your day before you go to sleep? For some it works best to take a longer period of time on the weekend to review the entire week.

You may want to reread Psalm 139 as a way of reminding yourself of God's unconditionally loving presence and to help you move through the different aspects of the *examen*—noticing God's presence, seeing yourself and your life more clearly in light of God's presence, and asking God to search your heart and reveal what you need to know.

This is a practice that incorporates all of the elements of self-examination that we have explored in this session. Once you get used to the process, you can incorporate this practice as a part of your evening or bedtime ritual. It can take as little as five minutes and, if you have time, you can incorporate some journaling about what you are noticing and learning. Some people prefer to do a daily *examen* while others prefer to do it weekly.

Preparation. Spend a few moments in silence, allowing yourself to become still and aware of God's unconditional loving presence. Use a favorite Scripture, prayer, or other spiritual reading as needed in order to settle into the assurance of God's love in the present moment. Hear God say to you, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

Review the day. Identify the major events of the day, including your spiritual practices, meals, appointments, interactions with others, significant events at work, etc. Invite God to go with you in your search for evidence of his presence throughout your day and also in your search for self-knowledge. Reflect on each of the events as if they had been recorded on video; notice where God seemed to be loving you, speaking to you, guiding you, or showing you something new about himself. Allow God to show you evidence of his transforming work in your life and celebrate that evidence.

Give thanks. Thank God for each part of your day, for his presence

with you in the midst of it, for those moments when you sensed a growing freedom from sin and a greater capacity to love God and others. If there are any unresolved issues or questions pertaining to the events of the day, express these to God as well and allow yourself to experience gratitude for God's presence with you even in places that feel dark or confusing.

Confess. Using Psalm 139:23–24 as your prayer, invite God to bring to mind attitudes, actions, or moments when you fell short of exhibiting the character of Christ or the fruit of the Spirit. As God brings different areas to mind, reflect on what it was that contributed to the situation and what might enable you to respond differently in the future.

Ask forgiveness and express your willingness to take whatever concrete steps are needed to allow Christ's character to be more fully formed in you. Be assured of God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9) and his power to continue leading you into the transformation you desire. Ask God if there is anything you need to do to make things right relative to the situation you have confessed.

Seek out spiritual friendship. Share with a spiritual friend what you are discovering about yourself, your confession, and your resolve to pursue transformation in this area.

For Further Reading

As you reflect on what you have learned in this session and seek to practice the *examen*, read chapter 5 of *Sacred Rhythms*.

Reflect and Journal

Use your journal or the journal pages provided to keep track of your "God sightings" this week and also to record and reflect upon what God is showing you about yourself in light of his presence. Don't forget to ask God to show you evidence of growth and transformation and also those places where you fell short. Remember, the purpose of the *examen* is not shame and blame but rather to give you the opportunity to take responsibility for sin and bad behavior, to confess and receive God's forgiveness, and then to ask God to help you to choose differently next time.