

## Prayer Practice Guide #4:

### Examen

*Spiritual disciplines are not ways to eradicate all our desires but ways to order them so that they can serve one another and together serve God.*

From Bread for the Journey by Henri J.M. Nouwen

Do you ever feel as if you are stressed to the breaking point or stretched so thin that you might “pop”? I don’t think God saves us so that we can just sit back and rest while everyone else does the work. But neither does God ask us to carry the weight of the world or work as if we are going to save the world ourselves. There is a humility and simplicity in a right balance of work and rest. But that balance is difficult to find and to maintain. This week’s prayer practice is an ancient one with very contemporary applications. Examen is the practice of holding our schedules and experiences up for God to examine, and trying to see ourselves and our schedules as God sees us and it. One of my favorite hymns, *O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee*,” has in it a verse that reads, “Teach me thy patience, still with thee in closer, dearer company, in work that keeps faith sweet and strong, in trust that triumphs over wrong.” Wouldn’t it be something if we could balance our lives in such a way that they nurtured a sweet and strong faith? Well, that is the goal (and I am probably the least qualified person to write this blog!)

So, the actual directions for an *Examen* practice are found on the FLPC Blog Post for this week. When your Prayer Practice Triplet meets, bring your calendar and see what happens? What have you got to lose except some stress?

READ THE BLOG POST [www.flpc.org/blog](http://www.flpc.org/blog)

#### DISCUSSION

- How did it go last week?
- In the last week, share with your group about a time when you:
  - Felt most stressed?
  - Felt most relaxed?
  - Felt God’s presence?
  - Felt farthest from God?
- Do the parts and progression of the *Examen* process explained in the Blog Post make sense? In your group, make sure that everyone feels comfortable with what they are being asked to do and the focus of the meditation time.

## PRAYER PRACTICE

Try it! Allow at least 10 minutes for the members of your group to practice *Examen*. This means that you will be sitting in silence with each other as you each lift your schedule to God in prayer. You may consider only reviewing the last two or three days in your group practice if time is short. Have someone set their alarm or timer so you don't have to keep checking the clock. When the timer goes off, take about 5 minutes to share your experiences (all experiences are welcome and authentic and a part of the learning).

## HOMEWORK

Since you memorized Philippians 4:6 last week, this week add verse 7. In addition, try taking 15-20 minutes two or three times this week to pray over your calendar using the *Examen* practice. Come prepared to share what God revealed to you next week.