



# EMBRACING THE DIVINE SPARK:

NOURISHING YOUR PRAYER LIFE

*Session 5*

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## Environment / Where to Pray

- ✧ Get Rid of Distractions!
  - Sacred Space
  - In Nature
  - Alone or Down Time
- ✧ Scheduled
- ✧ Spontaneous

**Remember, prayer is for us, not God!**

Let's review

# Prayer Styles

## \* Centering Prayer

- Isolate oneself to focus solely upon being in the presence of God - a removal of oneself from current concerns and thoughts
  - Commitment
  - Place/ Focus oneself upon being in the presence of God
  - Begin with a brief prayer - Open to conversation with God
  - Image
    - Use a word or image to refocus yourself if you find yourself drifting off center
  - Silence

# Prayer Styles

## \* Contemplative Prayer

- It mimics meditative and centering prayer in that it, too, focuses upon a singularity of focus and repetition; however
- The purpose of contemplative prayer is to draw close to God and make one better able to hear God's voice by eliminating distraction and reducing anxiety.
  - In a sense, centering prayer can lead to contemplative prayer
- **Allow God to speak to us - LISTEN!**
- End with a brief prayer
- Duration - varies
  - Beginners: 1 minute
  - Advanced: 10-15 minutes
- **PRACTICE**

# Prayer Styles

## ✧ Meditation

- Mental prayer where we reflect and *consider some truth or mystery*
  - Independent
    - Preparation
    - Material to prompt you: Scripture, a writing, something of interest
    - Place
    - Atmosphere
    - Time
  - Directed
  - Taizé Prayer
    - Repetitive and Reflective Music

# Prayer Styles

## ✧ Ignatian Prayer – The Examen

### ■ The Examen consists of 4 steps

1. Act of Presence
2. A petition for Light, Wisdom, and Acceptance
3. Examination with Thanksgiving and/or Sorrow
4. A Request for Help for Tomorrow

The Examen is an abbreviated portion of *The Spiritual Exercises* created and written by Ignatius of Loyola (hence, the term "Ignatian") around 1522-24. Divided into four thematic "weeks" of variable length, *The Spiritual Exercises* are designed to be carried out over a period of 28 to 30 days. They were composed with the intention of helping participants in religious to discern the will of God in their lives, leading to a personal commitment to follow Jesus whatever the cost. The exercises was not in the form of a self-help program, but was under the direction of a spiritual director. Ignatius considered the examen, or spiritual self-review, to be the most important way to continue to live out the experience of the *Exercises* after their completion.

The Spiritual Exercises developed a method of discernment of God's will. While it is a phenomenal tool to develop one's personal relationship with God, it will not be covered in these sessions.

# Prayer Styles

## ✧ Ignatian Prayer – The Examen

- **Act of Presence** – Ask Jesus to be with you as you both look back over your day. Imagine walking with Jesus on the road to Emmaus.
  - The examen is a dialogue with Jesus
  - Only God can reveal what you need to hear
  - Remember that Jesus was with you throughout the day, even if you didn't feel that he was.
  - This time of prayer is not a “Jesus and me” time; the focus is upon being called to the truth so that we more readily serve God.

Review the days activities. At this time, do not focus upon a conversation with Jesus, ask him to reveal himself to you in the context of the day's activities. Give thanks for the things that were good; examine the things that weren't.



# Prayer Styles

## ✧ Ignatian Prayer – The Examen

■ **A Petition for Light, Wisdom, and Acceptance** – here we ask Jesus for the:

- **Gift of Light** to see what we need to see clearly.
- **The Gift of Wisdom** to understand what we see.
- **The Gift of Acceptance** so we accept what we have understood.

These petitions also serve us to keep us mindful that we are dependent upon God for everything.

At this time, we ask for wisdom, especially in the area of self-reflection and why we did what we did. Examine the days activities from the point of view that God was revealing himself to you during the day and whether you saw him or not and what were your actions/reactions. Did they bring you closer to God or separate you a bit more? Was he even consciously present to you during the day?



# Prayer Styles

## \* Ignatian Prayer – The Examen

■ **Examination with Thanksgiving and/or Sorrow** – In this step, Jesus and you reflect upon the day like watching those events drift across the sky in the clouds.

- Allow Jesus to stop and bring attention to anything that you need to know
- It may be an event that was life-giving, to which you give thanks
- It may be an event that makes you uncomfortable and you realize that your response to the gift of creation was not good. You say, “I’m sorry.”
- ❖ Reflect upon why it was not a good response

As you examine the day, ask for clarity in those things that you really need to reflect upon. Acknowledge it. Give thanks. If you need to say, “I’m sorry,” SAY IT. Why were your actions/ responses not “good?”

# Prayer Styles

## ✧ Ignatian Prayer – The Examen

■ **A Request for Help for Tomorrow** – Here we ask that we be more conscious of God’s presence in our day tomorrow and help us to choose behavior that is Christ-like.

- It is helpful to choose one desire or resolve from your examen that you wish to work on for tomorrow.
- It should be singular
- This may be the type of situation that you need to be in dialogue with Christ about so that you can view your reaction to the event with the “mind of Christ.”

Here’s the dialogue. Here you ask for Jesus’s help for the day(s) to come. End with a prayer to Him – not only acknowledging the day and your actions, and promising to do better the next day, but to ask for His help in doing so. Consider the Act of Contrition at the end.

*O my God* – We are speaking directly to God; this should cause a personal reflection upon these words and what is in our hearts.

*I am heartily sorry for having offended you.* – This indicates the depth of our sorrow and is a profound expression of our deepest selves.

*I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell.* – Sin is not an insignificant faux pas, but is a grave matter that separates us from God with grave consequences.

*But most of all because they offend you, who are all good, and deserving of all my love.* – Sin goes beyond the fear of punishment, but attacks the very love of God, which is above all loves. It hearkens to the commandment to love God with your whole heart, your whole mind, and your whole soul – your very being.

*I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.* – In addition to making a firm resolve to amend our sinful nature, this recognizes that we need divine help – the grace from God – to avoid sin.

## Prayer Styles

### ✦ **Brother Lawrence, or God Among the Pots and Pans**

*All things are possible to him who **believes**, they are less difficult to him who **hopes**, they are easier to him who **loves**, and still more easy to him who practices and perseveres in these three virtues.*

*We must study ever to regard God and His Glory in all that we do, and say, and undertake.*

*Without submission of heart and spirit to the will of God, devotion and perfection cannot subsist.*

**In essence, we see God and are with God even in the smallest or most humble tasks that we undertake.**

Brother Lawrence was born ca. 1614 as Nicholas Hermann in Lorraine, France. He was of humble beginnings and not well educated. After being a footman and a soldier, he entered the Carmelites as a Lay Brother and took the name of Lawrence. The gift of prayer that he leaves is one of simplicity and of total commitment to God.

# Prayer Styles

## ✠ Brother Lawrence, or God Among the Pots and Pans

- Practice the Presence of God
  - Find joy in His divine companionship
    - ✦ Holding with Him at all times and at every moment humble and loving conversation without set rule or stated method.
    - ✦ All our actions should be little acts of communion with our God.
    - ✦ The must come naturally, from the purity and simplicity of the heart.
  - We must do all things thoughtfully and soberly, without impetuosity, which denotes an undisciplined mind. We must go about our labors quietly, calmly, and lovingly, entreating God to prosper the work of our hands.

In other words, be open to His presence at all times, especially in “ordinary” or humble tasks. It doesn’t have to be a momentous occasion or dire need.

## Prayer Styles

### ✠ Brother Lawrence, or God Among the Pots and Pans

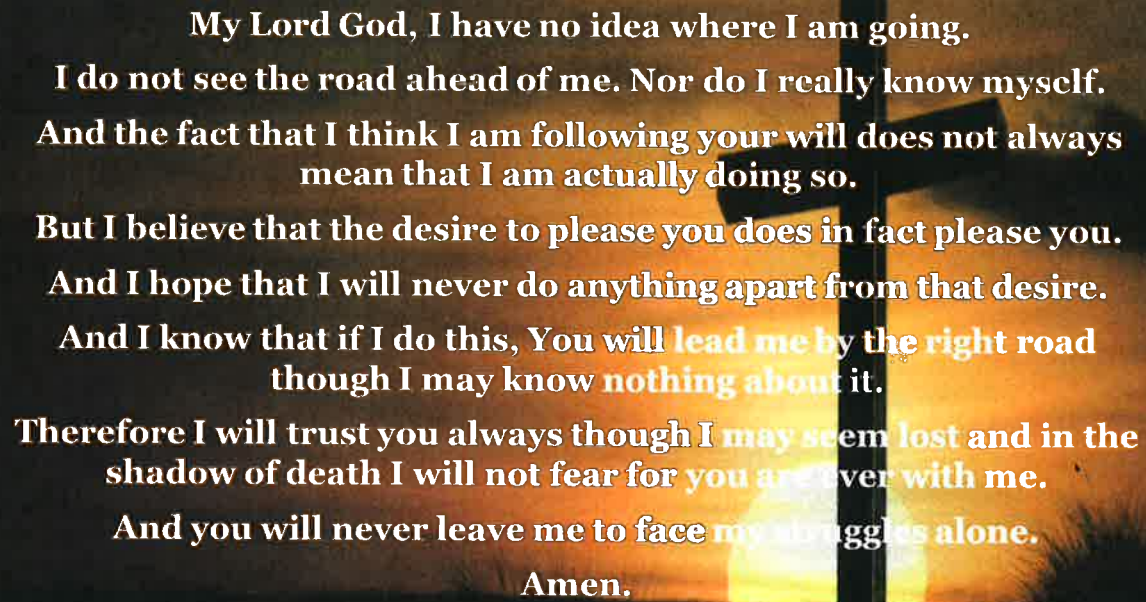
#### ■ Practice the Presence of God

- Throughout the day, regardless of what we are doing, take a moment as often as we can **to worship God** in the depth of our being, **to taste Him** though it be in passing, **to touch Him** as it were by stealth.

**God is present not only in the miracles that present themselves to us or in our tribulations, but in the mundane aspects of our existence. It is in acknowledging and embracing all of these moments that we truly get to know Him.**

In other words, in the most mundane of activities, take a moment just to think of God and His wonders. How can you not give Him thanks? Recount my story of spontaneous singing of "O God, come to my assistance..."





**My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me. Nor do I really know myself.  
And the fact that I think I am following your will does not always  
mean that I am actually doing so.  
But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.  
And I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.  
And I know that if I do this, You will lead me by the right road  
though I may know nothing about it.  
Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem lost and in the  
shadow of death I will not fear for you are ever with me.  
And you will never leave me to face my struggles alone.  
Amen.**

Thomas Merton