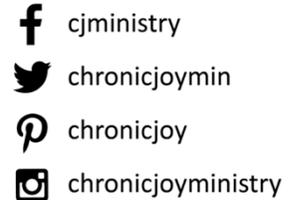


CHRONIC JOY
chronic illness ministry



Prayer of Examen



More than 400 years ago, the ancient prayer of Examen helped the Franciscan Monks intentionally seek the Presence of God. It was a retuning to or a refocusing on God in order to reflect on their days and discover God's Presence with them.

The prayer of Examen brings us into a deeper awareness of God's Presence (consciousness), revealing to us where we need forgiveness (conscience). At its heart, Examen is simply sharing our day with Jesus and seeking His direction in prayer.

Let's begin with the words of **Lamentations 3:19-26**.

I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.
I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.
Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:
Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed,
for His compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him."
The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him,
to the one who seeks him;
it is good to wait quietly
for the salvation of the Lord.



1. Read this passage several times. What do you notice?
2. How does the prophet Jeremiah begin in lines 1-4?
3. What is his state of mind?
4. What is Jeremiah wrestling with?
5. Next read **Lamentations 3:1a** and fill in the blanks:

I am the _____ who has seen _____...

Jeremiah goes on to say, "He has driven me away ... made me walk in darkness ... turned his hand against me ... made my skin and flesh grow old ... besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship ... made me dwell in darkness ... walled me in ... weighed me down ... he shuts out my prayer ... He has barred my way ... he dragged me away ... mangled me ... left me without help ... made me the target for his arrows ... pierced my heart ... filled me with bitter herbs and sated me with gall ... broken my teeth ... trampled me in the dust ... My splendor is gone ..."

While Lamentations is a funeral song for the city of Jerusalem, these phrases might speak to the afflictions of chronic illness in marriages as well. The Israelites were experiencing brutal captivity by a powerful army, but God was still present with them. Compassionate. Faithful. And at work.

That is where the prayer of Examen begins.



6. Read **Jeremiah 29:12-14** below:

“Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

In times of desperation, it may seem as though God has forgotten us, but He has not. He may instead be preparing us for a brand new beginning.

Have you experienced this kind of rebirth? New growth rising from deep hurt? Hope in the midst pain?

7. Read **John 6:44** and fill in the blanks:

_____ can come to _____ unless the
_____ who _____ me _____ him, and
_____ will _____ him up at the _____ day.

God is continually drawing us to Himself in and through Jesus, inviting us into a deeper relationship, a more intimate awareness of His presence and His voice in the everyday moments of our lives.

How could Examen change your relationship with your spouse? Use the Journal Pages at the end of this chapter to explore your response.

8. Now it's time to practice the prayer of Examen. Set aside 10-15 minutes in a quiet, comfortable place. Relax. Take a few deep, calming breaths and come before God in prayer.

RECALL: In the past 24 hours:

④ Who or what are you most thankful for?

④ Who or what are you least thankful for?

④ When did you show God's love to others?

④ When did others show God's love to you?



- ④ What caused anger or frustration?
- ④ Where did you feel joy?
- ④ What scared you or caused you pain?
- ④ When were you at peace?
- ④ What caused you stress?
- ④ What made you sad?

- ④ When did you sense God's Presence?
- ④ When did God feel absent?
- ④ When did you move toward God?
- ④ When did you move away from God?
- ④ How did God speak to you?
- ④ When did He seem silent?

9. RESPOND

- ④ Is there something specific God is speaking to you today?
- ④ Is there a moment God is inviting you into more fully?
- ④ Where do you sense a deeper awareness of His presence in His Word, His creation, His people?
- ④ What do you need to lay down, surrender, or release?

10. LOOK FORWARD

- ④ What does your next 24 hours look like?
- ④ Will you face something unsettling or stressful?
- ④ Is there something that might cause you anxiety or fear? Where are you procrastinating?
- ④ Is there something you can't wait to experience?
- ④ What do you feel God saying to you?

Entering into Examen can feel vulnerable, but writing what you hear God speak in the stillness of your heart can become both life giving and faith building.

Start small. You don't have to show these words to anyone. They are just between you and God.

11. How does the prayer of Examen apply to marriage?



12. Read **Philippians 3:12-14** and fill in the blanks:

_____ that I have _____ all this, or have
already been made _____, but I _____ to
_____ of that for which _____
_____ took hold of _____.

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But _____
_____ I do: _____ what is _____ and
_____ toward that is _____, I _____
_____ toward the _____ to win the prize for which
_____ has _____ me _____ in Christ Jesus.

The prayer of Examen:

- ⊗ Cultivates an environment of love
- ⊗ Reminds us to be humble and kind
- ⊗ To be respectful
- ⊗ To listen from the heart
- ⊗ To be speak the truth in love
- ⊗ To be part of a growing community
- ⊗ To think the best about our spouse

Because those are the things we each long for ourselves.

Dear Lord,

we come to You at this moment right here and now to ask you to show us how to be present in each moment of every day and how to invite You into those moments. We know in our hearts our desire and deep need for You, yet we get so easily distracted by our own pain, worry, doubts and the fear. Show us how, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to invite You in at all times, as we seek to do Your will and thank you the many blessings in our lives.

Amen.

