

The Ignatian Examen

The Ignatian Examen is a way of praying that has been practiced for centuries. Ignatius, one of the early church patriarchs, proposed the Examen as a way of reflecting on one's day and growing closer to God. This variation is modified for families as an activity that can be done in the car or at dinnertime. Instead of being done individually in silence, it is done out loud.

Designed for Ages 5+

Materials: None

Time Investment: 5–15 minutes

How To

1. Each family member takes turns answering the following three questions:

What are a few memorable things that happened today?

When was the time when you saw or felt close to God today, or saw God at work today?

When was the time when you felt farthest from God today, or felt that you missed an opportunity to share God's love?

2. Questions are handled one at a time. As each family member shares, the other family members listen without comment or interruption.

Notes

- If a child responds with a shrug or, "I don't know," try a gentle prompt. "Anything that might have happened at school, or band practice?"
- If, after prompting, a child still says, "No," participation in the family Examen time should not be forced. Families might choose to require that all members stay present at the table and listen respectfully, but those who do not wish to share aloud can be encouraged to think about their answers in silence.
- This exercise differs from other family discussions or reflection times in that it is not a "back and forth" type of conversation. Family members do not offer commentary or follow-up questions. Follow up can happen away from the table, if necessary.

Variations

- Alternate who shares on which days.
- Some families may enjoy doing this practice every day, others might pick a specific day of the week to it, or to include it as a part of the sacred meal (described in this chapter).
- Allow family members to hear the questions one at a time and reflect on their own answers silently, or in a journal, rather than sharing them with the rest of the family.