

REFLECTION | *Prayer Of Examen: Your Church History*

There's a reflection exercise we've done a few times together over the past couple of months that we're going to engage in again this morning. It's called the Prayer of Examen, and beyond being something we do in our services from time to time, this is also something you can do on your own, even daily, because Examen is most useful to us when we engage in it regularly.

It's a practice of examining your life backwards, over a given period of time, and prayerfully reflecting on two things: 1) Where you noticed a sense of God's presence, or closeness; and 2) Where you felt absent or disconnected from that sense. We do this because becoming more consciously aware of those things in reflection, helps us to become more attentive to it in our present moments as well.

This morning we're going to put a bit of a unique twist on it, and ask you to examine backwards over your entire history in the church. For some that might mean many decades, for others perhaps only a year or two. For some that might mean about 18 minutes – and that's great – that'll still work!

So you can start by taking a couple of deep breaths, that usually helps us to slow ourselves down a bit to get into a bit more contemplative mode.

You can close your eyes if it helps you to tune out distractions.

And then just quietly start to think back across your whole experience in and around the church world, however far back that takes you. Maybe your first experiences were as a child, maybe they've been very recent. What kind of moments have led you to being here in this room today? Try to keep as much of that whole journey in your mind as we reflect.

Now, ask yourself the first Examen question: Where did you most notice or feel aware of the goodness and closeness of God, in those experiences? What were any of those moments, what was happening, and what did it feel like? Take a minute with that.

Pray: God we thank you for all of these good glimpses of how close you were, and are. Would you keep helping us to spot you in our present moments as well.

And now the second Examen question: Where did you find yourself in church or faith contexts, and the goodness and presence of God felt very missing or disconnected? What were *those* moments, what was happening, and what did *that* feel like? Take another minute to reflect.

Pray: Jesus we lament those experiences, where we couldn't spot you, couldn't feel you, where you felt missing from the moments we were living. Would you help us to keep becoming more and more attentive to where you are, so that we can find you in every situation, and give more of our hearts and minds and lives to being in sync with you and not disconnected.

In your name we pray, Amen.