

December 2024 BELIEVES Session:

Standing Firm in the Beginnings, Breaking the Silence to Bring Things in the Light, and Working on Weak Points

2024: How do we continuously invite God into

and find real joy – even if it’s messy?

“Growing closer to God by letting Him grow in us, and gaining courage and understanding one step after another”

Discerning God’s voice may not always be clear. Many people have spoken of the impact of Father Gallagher’s book, “The Discernment of Spirits,” in discerning God’s voice to make decisions.

Standing Firm in the Beginnings, Breaking the Silence to Bring Things in the Light, and Working on Weak Points

Resisting the enemy’s temptations at their beginning – when it’s easiest. Talking about your spiritual lows and struggles when you encounter them; and recognizing and working on our vulnerabilities to continuously improve our ability to discern, ultimately leading to spiritual growth.

- *What does the session theme for today mean to you?*
- *What would you want to talk with others about to understand related to the session theme?*



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TIPS

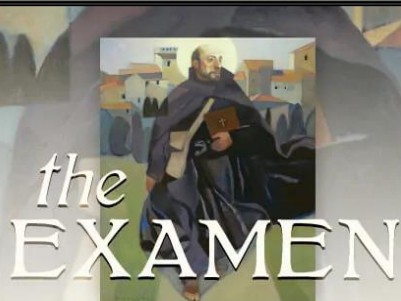
Tips for Making Decisions with God

“Little things can become big things”

- Taking action can just be the “next best move” (15% steps, not a 100% step)

Examine decisions before acting

- Is it just for me? (it shouldn't be)
- Have I gone to God with this?
- “God, what is Your will?”
- Have I begun to get some clarity around a “why” for my decision?



The *Examen* is a method of reviewing your day in the presence of God. It's actually an attitude more than a method, a time set aside for thankful reflection on where God is in your everyday life. It has five steps, which most people take more or less in order, and it usually takes 15 to 20 minutes per day. Here it is in a nutshell:

- 1 Ask God for light.
I want to look at my day with God's eyes, not merely my own.
- 2 Give thanks.
The day I have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it.
- 3 Review the day.
I carefully look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit.
- 4 Face your shortcomings.
I face up to what is wrong—in my life and in me.
- 5 Look toward the day to come.
I ask where I need God in the day to come.

The Examen and Other Ignatian Spiritual Discernment Resources
<https://www.jesuits.org/spirituality/>

THE PROCESS

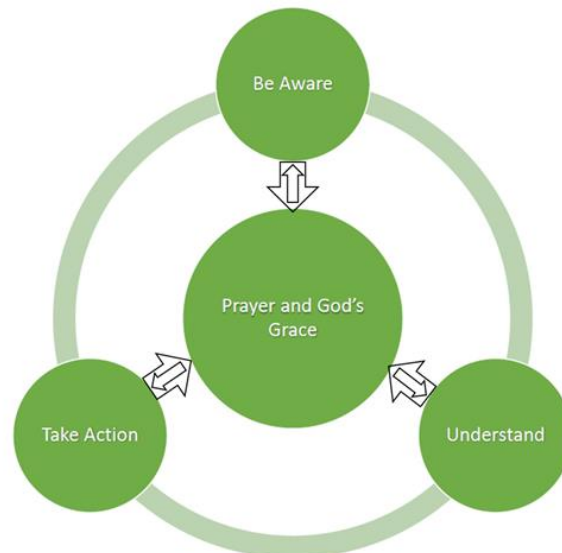
Key Things to Bear in Mind Throughout

- Simply paying attention to God is a first step to discerning His voice, and being in relationship with Him to listen and communicate freely
- Having the humility to know the situation you're in, being honest with God (and then with others), and having the courage to ask God – including on what to accept/reject, are key
- Willingness to acknowledge the messiness – and own our part in it – is a difference between a “God is first” view and a “worldly/man” view
- Growth Mindset with God is depth with Him

Overall, a persevering practice of spiritual awareness, understanding and action in daily living, with prayer and God's grace, is what leads to a growing life of discernment.

“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

-- John 4:23-24



BE AWARE: Seek to notice what is happening in our inner spiritual experience, what is spiritually stirring in our hearts and thoughts. Requires us to become spiritually aware of what is happening within us where God is at work and speaks to us, versus what is without (i.e. external—all the myriad plans, activities, concerns, etc. that we're exposed to daily.)

UNDERSTAND: Reflect on the stirrings we have now noticed, allowing us to recognize what in them is of God and what is not. In other words, what brings us closer to God and strengthens our life of faith, hope, and love; and what takes us in the other direction.

TAKE ACTION (ACCEPT/REJECT): To accept and live according to what we have discerned and recognized as of God, and to reject and move away from what we have recognized as not of God.

Conversation Starter Questions to Ponder – Personally and Professionally:

“What would you fill in the blank with to ask someone?”

- Have you ever wondered about _____?
- Have you ever thought about inviting God into _____?
- Have you ever wanted to talk to others about _____?

