

The Prayers of Examen and Confession

The unexamined life is not worth living. - Socrates

1. What do you think Socrates was getting at when he said this? Do you think he was right? Why or why not?

*...errors and false opinions contaminate life if the reasoning mind is itself flawed. That was my condition at that time. For I did not know that the soul needs to be enlightened by light from outside itself, so that it can participate in truth, because it is not itself the nature of truth.
- St. Augustine*

“Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.”
- Psalm 139:23-24

2. What do you think are the key differences between mere introspection (self-examination) and David’s prayer (The Prayer of Examen)?

[The Prayer of Examen] is not a journey into ourselves that we are undertaking but a journey through ourselves so that we can emerge from the deepest level of the self into God. - Richard Foster

Find the door of your heart; you will discover it is the door of the kingdom of God - Saint John Chrysostom

3. In light of these quotes and Psalm 139, what do you think is the point of the Prayer of Examen? If you have been on this journey with God, share how you experienced it.

“If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.”
- 1 John 1:8-9 (NLT)

4. Are you “fooling [yourself] and refusing to accept the truth” somewhere in your life? Once you do ‘wake up’ to a sin in your life, how do you react to it—do you tend to make excuses or beat yourself up?

5. How do you think God reacts to the sin in your life? Do you see God as lenient or strict?

6. According to 1 John 1:8-9, what do you think God’s motivation is behind telling us to confess our sins?

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” - James 5:16

7. Confession is often viewed as a negative, solitary pursuit; but scripture commands us to confess our sins to—and pray for—each other. How does giving and receiving confession in community breathe life into our relationships with others and with God? Why are we so afraid of it?

A great artist... must be shaken by the naked truths that will not be comforted. This divine discontent, this disequilibrium, this state of inner tension is the source of artistic energy. - Goethe

8. How does art encourage us to examine our lives, raise awareness of our own depravity, or otherwise lead us into confession and cleansing?

We simply cannot make heart repentance happen. It is not something that we cause to come about by creating a certain kind of mood with a certain kind of atmosphere and a certain kind of music. It is a gift from God, pure and simple. But it is a gift that God loves to bestow upon all who ask. - Richard Foster

Discussion Guidelines:

1. Allow everyone a chance to speak. If you are bursting with ideas and tend to share a lot – great – but occasionally pause a bit before you go, sometimes the quieter ones are just waiting for their chance and they need a little space before they go.
2. Respect the opinions of others, and refrain from giving advice.
3. Keep discussion focused on the material being studied.
4. Maintain the confidentiality of personal things shared within the group.

The Haven mission statement is:

To empower artists to influence the culture for Christ.