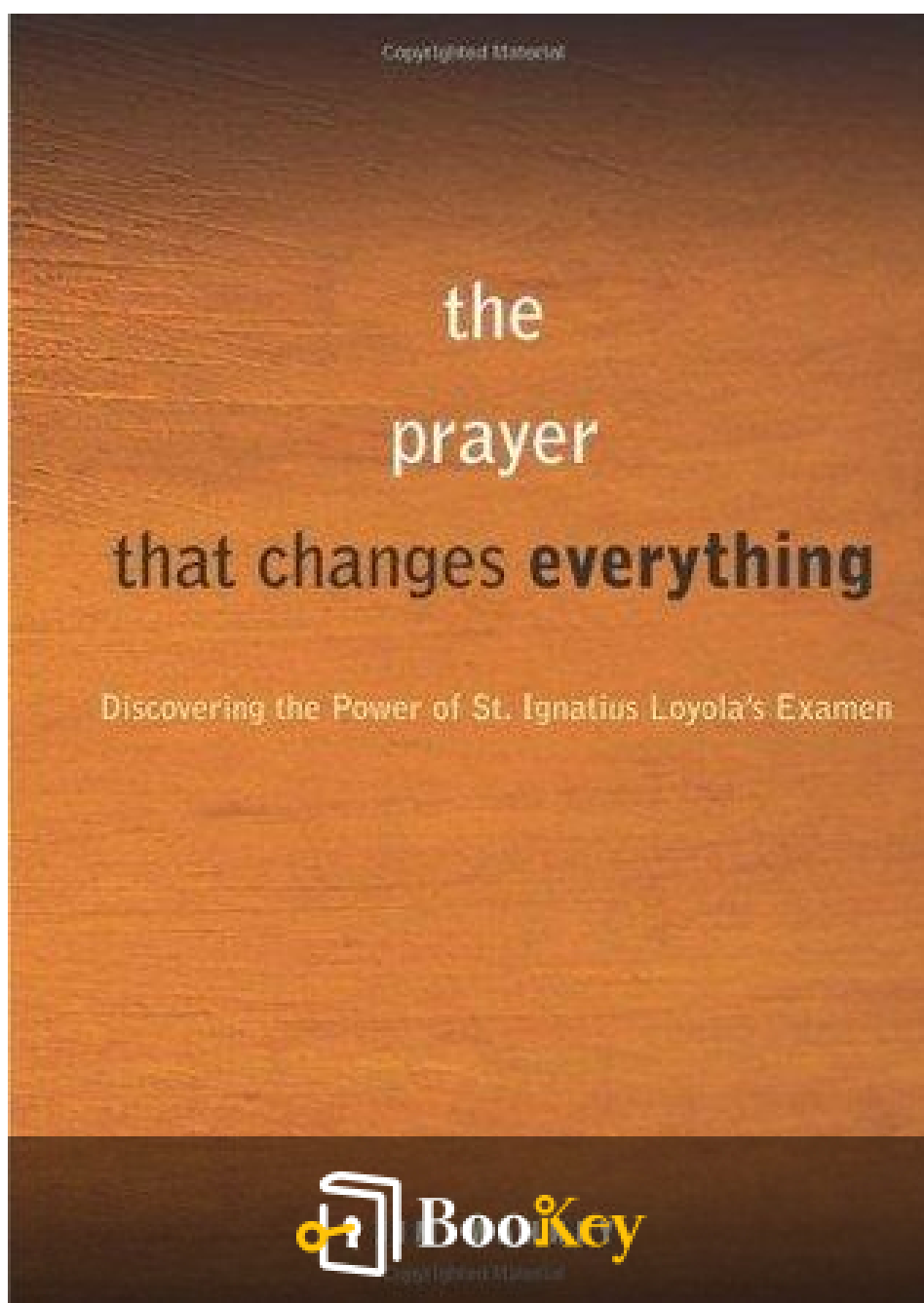


A Simple, Life-changing Prayer PDF (Limited Copy)

Jim Manney



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A Simple, Life-changing Prayer Summary

Transform Your Prayer Life with a Simple, Profound Practice.

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About the book

In "A Simple, Life-Changing Prayer," Jim Manney presents a transformative approach to prayer that shifts the experience from formal and often unfulfilling rituals to a personal, vibrant conversation with God. Central to his teaching is the examen, a reflective prayer technique developed by St. Ignatius Loyola, a 16th-century Spanish theologian and founder of the Jesuit order. The examen serves as a spiritual tool that encourages practitioners to cultivate a deep awareness of God's presence in their everyday lives, challenging the notion of a distant deity and highlighting a God eager to engage intimately in daily tasks.

Manney outlines five straightforward steps of the examen, which guide readers through a process of reflection and gratitude, fostering a more profound connection with the divine. By integrating these steps into their daily routine, individuals can experience a reawakening in their spiritual journey, dramatically altering how they perceive and engage with God. This timeless practice not only emphasizes the importance of self-reflection and recognition of divine influence but also provides a pathway for transformation, making the experience of prayer far more fulfilling and impactful. Additionally, recognizing the need for accessibility, the book is also available in Spanish, extending its reach to a broader audience seeking spiritual growth.

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About the author

In the chapters penned by Jim Manney, readers are introduced to a journey of spiritual awakening grounded in Ignatian spirituality, which emphasizes finding God in all things and discernment in daily life. Manney's narrative skillfully weaves together personal anecdotes, practical guidance, and profound insights, making the complex concepts of faith accessible and relatable.

The chapters unfold with an exploration of Ignatian principles, beginning with the importance of discernment—an essential practice in deciding how to act and respond to life's challenges. Ignatian spirituality teaches that every decision, whether big or small, can be a means of connecting with God. Manney illustrates this with stories of everyday encounters where individuals have found clarity and direction by applying discernment, emphasizing that spirituality isn't reserved for the extraordinary but is embedded in the fabric of ordinary life.

As the narrative progresses, Manney introduces the concept of examen—an Ignatian practice of reflecting on one's day to recognize God's presence and action. He guides readers through the steps of this practice, encouraging them to incorporate it into their daily routines. This reflection fosters a deeper awareness of oneself and the divine, enabling individuals to cultivate gratitude and recognize areas for growth.

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The chapters also delve into the transformative power of prayer, particularly focusing on Manney's own insights from "A Simple, Life-Changing Prayer." He outlines how prayer can be both a source of comfort and a means of deepening one's relationship with God. Through practical examples, he demonstrates how consistent prayer can lead to personal transformation, enhancing one's ability to navigate life's uncertainties with faith and resilience.

Furthermore, Manney addresses the challenges of maintaining spiritual practices amid modern life's busyness. He proposes strategies for integrating spiritual disciplines into daily life, urging readers to create intentional spaces for reflection and connection with God.

Overall, these chapters offer a comprehensive guide to living out Ignatian spirituality in practical ways. Manney's approachable style, paired with his insights into faith and everyday living, serves to inspire readers to embark on their own journeys of spiritual growth, encouraging them to find God in the ordinary and to cultivate a life characterized by discernment, reflection, and prayer.

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Chapter 1 Summary: 1. The Examen in a Nutshell

Summary of "The Examen in a Nutshell" and "Why Is This a Good Way to Pray?"

The Examen is a transformative daily prayer practice rooted in the tradition of self-examination, originally shaped by St. Ignatius of Loyola. Designed to help individuals recognize God's presence in their everyday lives, this reflective practice typically takes about 15 to 20 minutes and consists of five methodical steps that guide participants in a deeper understanding of their day-to-day experiences.

- 1. Ask God for Light:** In this introductory step, individuals invite divine insight to see their day through God's perspective, preparing their minds and hearts for reflection.
- 2. Give Thanks:** Participants express gratitude for the unique experiences of the day, recognizing each moment as a gift from God. This acknowledgment fosters a positive mindset and appreciation for life's blessings.
- 3. Review the Day:** Guided by the Holy Spirit, individuals carefully reflect on their day's events. This retrospection encourages a mindful look at both the significant and mundane occurrences, reinforcing the belief that

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God is present in all aspects of daily life.

4. Face Your Shortcomings Participants confront their personal shortcomings, examining behaviors or decisions that may not align with God's will. This step encourages accountability and growth, as individuals take ownership of their actions.

5. Look Toward the Day to Come In the final step, individuals contemplate the upcoming day, anticipating where they will require God's guidance and support, thus preparing to act with intention.

Although the Examen may appear straightforward, it can evoke discomfort as one encounters challenging emotions and behaviors. Yet, its value lies in its ability to highlight spiritual significance in even the most ordinary moments—encouraging awareness that every experience is infused with divine potential.

St. Ignatius advocated for the Examen as a vital practice, emphasizing its importance even amidst the busyness of life. His adaption and promotion of this prayer method served to bridge the gap between prayer and daily existence, making it both accessible and relevant. The practice not only honors the concrete realities of life but also fosters a deeper relationship with God, cultivating an environment where individuals can grow spiritually through both joyous and tough circumstances.

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The Examen continues to spread primarily through personal testimonies, demonstrating its relevance in contemporary life. With limited formal literature on the topic, its enduring appeal lies in its ability to help individuals cultivate a continual awareness of God's presence, making prayer an integral part of daily routines. Thus, the Examen remains a powerful tool for those wishing to connect with God consistently, ensuring that spiritual reflection occurs in the richness of daily life.

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Chapter 2 Summary: 2. Why Is This a Good Way to Pray?

Why Is This a Good Way to Pray?

Introduction to the Examen

The examen is a straightforward yet profound prayer practice that invites individuals to engage with God through the lens of their daily experiences. By reflecting on the last 24 hours, participants can bridge the ordinary aspects of life with a deeper relationship with the divine, ultimately leading to greater spiritual awareness.

The Theological Answer

Theologically, the examen underscores God's active presence in our everyday lives—a concept deeply rooted in Christianity through the doctrine of the Incarnation, which asserts that God became human in the form of Jesus Christ. This belief emphasizes the significance of all aspects of life to God, encouraging individuals to recognize divine intervention even in mundane moments.

The Practical Answer

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From a practical perspective, the examen has shown effectiveness in nurturing a rich spiritual life. Developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola, a key figure in Christian spirituality, this prayer practice emerged from his own life experiences and the needs of people seeking guidance. The examen serves as a tool for discernment, enabling individuals to link personal emotions with spiritual insights as they navigate their faith journeys.

Ignatius's Journey

St. Ignatius's transformative journey began after he was wounded in battle, experiencing a tumultuous period marked by conflicting desires. During his recovery, he engaged in reflective daydreams that revealed a pattern: thoughts of serving God brought him joy and peace, whereas reflections on his old life filled him with unease. This realization led him to understand that God communicates through our emotions and experiences, shaping his subsequent spiritual practices.

Core Principles of Ignatian Spirituality

1. **Trust in Experience:** Personal experiences are legitimate avenues to discern God's will.
2. **Direct Communication:** God interacts with each person personally.

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3. Importance of Journey: Spirituality is a dynamic journey filled with diverse experiences, demonstrating God's unwavering presence throughout.

Addressing Concerns

While the examen may raise doubts regarding the reliability of memory or the risk of becoming self-focused, these challenges are manageable. Ignatius designed this practice to guide individuals in recognizing God's influence in their lives, promoting reflective consideration without veering into self-absorption.

Conclusion: Addressing Common Issues

Ultimately, the examen addresses prevalent spiritual challenges, offering a clear pathway for individuals to discover meaning and connection with God woven through their day-to-day experiences. By integrating this practice into their lives, participants can deepen their spiritual engagement and recognize the divine in the ordinary.

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Chapter 3 Summary: 3. Some Problems That the Examen Solves (at Least Partly)

Summary of Chapter 3: Some Problems That the Examen Solves (at Least Partly)

Introduction to Prayer Challenges

In this chapter, the author reflects on his personal journey with various methods of prayer, noting that while prayer can be fraught with difficulties, the examen offers solutions to several prevalent issues believers face.

Where Is God?

A common struggle among believers is the sense of God's absence, leading many to feel as if He is remote or uninvolved in their lives. The examen, a reflective prayer practice rooted in Ignatian spirituality, helps individuals to identify and experience God's presence in their daily routines, highlighting that He is with them, even during times of suffering and doubt.

What Do I Pray About?

Prayer can often become a monotonous exercise, lacking the vibrancy that spiritual connection entails. The examen encourages believers to draw from

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their everyday experiences, using reflections on their day as a means to pray more meaningfully and engage deeply with God's presence in their lives.

Combating Self-Centeredness

The author addresses the tendency toward self-reliance, referencing Pelagianism, the belief in humanity's inherent ability to achieve salvation through good works. The examen counteracts this illusion of self-sufficiency by reminding individuals of God's grace and instilling a spirit of gratitude for the divine gifts they receive.

From Negativity to Balance

Instead of focusing solely on personal failures and sins, the examen promotes a prayer practice centered on gratitude, allowing for a more balanced perspective on one's life. It invites individuals to acknowledge their shortcomings within the broader context of God's love and mercy.

Authenticity in Prayer

The chapter critiques a common tendency among believers to engage in disingenuous prayer, where one feels compelled to 'pretend' to be more virtuous or faithful than they are. The examen encourages an honest dialogue with God, where individuals can express their true feelings, struggles, and

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joys, fostering a genuine relationship.

Understanding Feelings

The examen emphasizes the importance of recognizing and processing emotions as part of prayer. By guiding individuals to explore the significance of their feelings, the examen helps them connect their emotional experiences to their spiritual growth and relationship with God.

Solving the "Christian Problem"

In a secular world, Christians often grapple with their faith identity, facing challenges in demonstrating their beliefs authentically. The author asserts that genuine Christianity focuses on inner transformation rather than mere outward appearances. The examen assists believers in recognizing and embodying God's presence in all life areas, bridging the gap between faith and public life.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the examen is portrayed as a transformative practice that reshapes the spiritual lives of individuals, enabling them to discern and appreciate God's presence in every aspect of their daily existence. This reflective approach to prayer not only deepens one's relationship with the

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divine but also enriches the overall experience of living a faithful life.

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Chapter 4: 4. Step One: Pray for Light

In the chapter titled "**Step One: Pray for Light**," the author introduces the examen—a reflective spiritual practice—by emphasizing the importance of divine enlightenment. Unlike typical practices that start with gratitude, this chapter begins with a humble plea for God's grace. The author underscores our human limitations, illustrating that even as a skilled editor, he often lacks insight regarding what is truly best for himself and others. By praying for God's perspective, individuals can relinquish their need for control, allowing the examen to unfold in a more profound and meaningful way.

The subsequent section, "**What Kind of Light Are We Praying For?**" clarifies that the light sought is understanding through the Holy Spirit. This part of the examen intertwines the divine with the human experience. It acknowledges our flawed memories while placing trust in the Holy Spirit to reveal subtle insights about God's presence in daily life. The author reassures readers that this process is not about extraordinary revelations but rather about recognizing the divine in the ordinary aspects of life.

In the third part, "**Why Do We Want Light?**" the author articulates three fundamental requests included in the examen: grace, knowledge, and liberation from sin. By emphasizing the importance of interpersonal relationships, he encourages reflection on how individuals can love and

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support others as Jesus would. A proposed prayer fosters openness to understanding friends and meeting their needs, thereby enhancing connections.

Finally, in "**What Do I Really Want?**" readers are encouraged to seek

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Chapter 5 Summary: 5. Step Two: Give Thanks

Step Two: Give Thanks

In this chapter, the author underscores the significance of gratitude as a cornerstone of Ignatian spirituality and prayer. It opens with a poignant encounter involving a friend grappling with numerous life difficulties. Despite the friend's perception of gratitude as unrealistic amid these challenges, the author suggests that embracing gratitude offers valuable perspective and potential healing. He explains that genuine gratitude emerges from a personal connection with a generous God, making it indispensable for authentic spiritual living.

A God Who Gives

Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits and a pivotal figure in Christian spirituality, emphasizes gratitude as a vital element of his teachings. This chapter delves into the belief that God is the ultimate provider, showering humanity with gifts. Here, gratitude serves as the foundation of our relationship with God, demonstrating our reliance on His boundless generosity. Ignatius invites individuals to express thanks not merely for material possessions but for the essence of life itself and the

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divine connection that sustains us.

The Worst Thing in the World

The author introduces Ignatius's perspective on ingratitude, characterizing it as a significant moral shortcoming that can spawn numerous negative consequences. This chapter contrasts contemporary societal attitudes toward ingratitude with the values of Ignatius's era, when gratitude was cherished as an essential virtue and fostered community ties. The narrative calls upon readers to cultivate an appreciation for God's continual gifts, advocating for a mindset of gratitude as fundamental for spiritual development and growth.

Practicing Gratitude

The chapter concludes with practical guidance for integrating gratitude into prayer routines. Readers are encouraged to dedicate time deliberately to reflect on God's ceaseless generosity and the many gifts we often take for granted. Recognizing that gratitude may not come naturally to everyone, the author suggests using reflective practices, such as the examen—a method of reflection used by Ignatius to evaluate one's thoughts and actions—to nurture this important attitude. By concentrating on specific blessings, individuals can cultivate gratitude as a lasting element in their spiritual

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journeys.

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Chapter 6 Summary: 6. Step Three: Review the Day

Step Three: Review the Day

Introduction

In the midst of our hectic daily lives, the examen prayer serves as a crucial grounding practice for individuals like Pete, a devoted physician. This reflective process not only fosters a deeper connection with God but also helps individuals draw meaning from their various experiences throughout the day.

Being Real in the Examen

The examen invites participants to engage with two layers of reality: the tangible incidents of their daily lives and the profound truths that lie beneath these experiences. Bernie Owens emphasizes that God's engagement begins with "what is," urging individuals to focus on the present moment and to steer clear of distractions concerning the past or future.

Examining Thoughts and Feelings

In the framework established by Ignatius of Loyola, the third step of the

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examen requires a thoughtful review of one's daily thoughts, words, and deeds, particularly concerning emotions. George Aschenbrenner posits that a genuine understanding of our feelings is essential for truly encountering God's presence. Ignatius distinguishes between two emotional states: consolation, which invites a closer relationship with God, and desolation, which creates distance.

Reflecting on Feelings

Through the examen, individuals are encouraged to reflect on both positive and negative emotions, as these feelings can indicate God's presence in their lives. While intense emotions often mark pivotal moments, subtler feelings also warrant attention, offering insights into one's spiritual journey.

Methods for Reviewing the Day

The versatility of the examen allows for different methods that cater to personal preferences. Here are some suggested approaches:

1. Chronologically reviewing the day, paying attention to feelings and significant events.
2. Concentrating on prominent emotions or insights that emerge during reflection.
3. Utilizing specific filters, such as evaluating the use of personal gifts or the state of relationships, to gain deeper understanding of one's life and

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awareness of the divine.

Quality of Response to God

The examen acts as a reflective tool for tracking one's responses to God's invitations throughout daily life. Much like the call and response dynamic found in gospel music, individuals should ponder how they respond to God's calls, emphasizing the importance of engagement in their spiritual journey.

Conclusion: The Paradox of Life and Thought

The character of Konstantin Dmitrich Levin from Leo Tolstoy's "Anna Karenina" exemplifies the tension between inner turmoil and a meaningful existence. Levin's epiphany—that life can be both busy and enriching despite his intellectual struggles—underscores the essential role of the examen. It reveals how recognizing God's presence in our actual experiences transforms our understanding of life's paradoxes, allowing for both fulfillment and a profound spiritual connection.

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Chapter 7 Summary: 7. Step Four: Face What's Wrong

In "Step Four: Face What's Wrong," the author delves into the critical practice of self-awareness and humility by reflecting on personal experiences that reveal deeper emotional truths. The chapter opens with an airport incident where the author, grappling with the pain of a family loss, responds defensively when a janitor corrects their behavior regarding food consumption in a prohibited area. This reaction prompts the author to examine the underlying emotions driving such outbursts.

The narrative emphasizes the need to investigate the root causes of one's actions, suggesting that "faults," as articulated in the teachings of St. Ignatius, are not just trivial missteps but significant issues arising from past struggles and unresolved inner conflicts. By categorizing sins, the author posits that the core of our problems stems from these internal challenges rather than isolated misdeeds.

Drawing a poignant parallel, the author likens sin to failure, illustrating how individuals often feel they fall short of their ideals. This existential struggle, marked by a sense of not fully living up to aspirations, resonates across various life experiences—including professional settings where ethical breaches are rooted in deeper personal failures.

To aid in this self-discovery, the author introduces the concept of the

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examen, a reflective practice designed to help individuals identify their failures—personal sins, societal wrongs, or inherent character flaws. This contemplative tool encourages a deeper understanding of oneself, allowing for the recognition of misplaced responsibilities and misjudged motivations, and is framed as essential for personal growth.

However, the chapter acknowledges the apprehension many individuals feel when confronting their flaws. The author reassures readers that this process is grounded in a loving relationship with God, drawing from Ignatius's teachings that emphasize that true reflection should lead to liberation rather than excessive self-criticism. The key lies in acknowledging one's faults without becoming overwhelmed by them, creating a clearer path for spiritual progress.

As this chapter concludes, it sets the foundation for the next phase in the spiritual journey: taking action. By recognizing and understanding what's wrong, individuals are poised for meaningful transformation in their lives.

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Chapter 8: 8. Step Five: Do Something—but Not Just Anything

Step Five: Do Something—But Not Just Anything

The Decision of Ignatius

In March 1544, Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), faced a pivotal challenge concerning the order's vow of poverty. There were diverse viewpoints among Jesuit members, each holding significant implications for Ignatius as their Superior General. After deep personal reflection, he encountered doubts about his decision-making process. Ultimately, he resolved to advance with his choice, centering his intentions on what aligned with God's will despite the uncertainty surrounding him.

What Will I Do Today?

The fifth step in the Ignatian examen emphasizes the crucial question, "What will I do today?" This inquiry serves as a guiding principle, prompting individuals to commit to actions based on their prior experiences of God. By streamlining a potentially overwhelming to-do list, this step transforms future aspirations into immediate, manageable tasks, fostering a proactive approach to spiritual growth.

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Embracing Uncertainty and Influence

Recognizing the inherent chaos of daily life, individuals cannot control every circumstance. However, they can influence their choices in ways that reflect Christ's teachings. Spiritual director George Aschenbrenner highlights the concept of “hopeful resolution,” which emphasizes the importance of maintaining a heart open to God’s guidance while navigating uncertainty.

One Thing at a Time

The principle of “one thing at a time” encourages focusing on singular areas for improvement as inspired by divine prompting. This focus can vary from minor adjustments to significant transformations, depending on individual situations. Emphasis on small, consistent efforts often leads to more substantial progress than attempting to tackle numerous ambitions at once.

The Importance of Deeds

A core Jesuit teaching advocates for demonstrating love through actions rather than mere words. While verbal expressions of love hold value, Ignatius warned against the danger of complacency within prayer if it does not transition into tangible acts of service and love for others. This teaching fosters a culture of active engagement in relationships.

Relational Contexts

God's love extends beyond the individual, encompassing one's relationships

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with others. During the examen, individuals may reflect on their personal connections and discern where improvements or reconnections are needed. This reflection prompts them to reach out to people they may have drifted apart from, fostering a community rooted in God's love.

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Chapter 9 Summary: 9. The Real-Time Examen

In these chapters, the focus shifts from traditional religious practices to a more dynamic engagement with spirituality, embodied in practices like the Real-Time Examen.

The Real-Time Examen introduces the idea that one's awareness of God's presence should extend beyond scheduled prayer times. Father Urban advocates for learning from living saints—individuals who embody their faith in everyday contexts—emphasizing that the essence of spirituality lies in integrating faith into daily life. The author illustrates this concept through a dinner conversation among friends, discussing how to maintain a continual awareness of God as one navigates daily activities.

In **A Contemplative in Action**, the narrative continues with reflections on Ignatius of Loyola, who skillfully combined contemplation with action. This chapter parallels the author's friend, Dave, who exemplifies this integration by seeking God's presence during a hectic meeting. The overarching theme is the pursuit of "finding God in all things," encouraging readers to recognize divine influence not only in formal settings but throughout everyday experiences.

The following chapter, **The Examen Is Not an End in Itself**, further delves into the purpose of the examen—enhancing awareness of God to foster

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active engagement with life. The author highlights Ignatius's "First Principle and Foundation," which asserts that humans are fundamentally created to serve God. By practicing indifference to material attachments, individuals can make choices that align more closely with their spiritual goals.

In **Surprise Me**, the narrative addresses common frustrations associated with prayer and the examen, offering reassurance that struggles are a natural part of spiritual growth. Readers are encouraged to remain open to unexpected insights during their examen practice, as God often reveals Himself in unforeseen ways. The concluding thoughts invite contemplation on how one might surprise God within the context of their daily lives, emphasizing the intrinsic freedom that accompanies an authentic spiritual journey.

Now It's Your Turn encourages readers to apply these insights in their own lives, inviting them to engage with these spiritual practices actively and personally, and to explore their unique relationship with the divine.

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Chapter 10 Summary: Now It's Your Turn

In the chapter "Now It's Your Turn," readers are invited to move beyond theory and actively practice the examen prayer, a method rooted in the spiritual teachings of Saint Ignatius Loyola. Rather than adhering to rigid rules, the author champions personal choice in prayer, emphasizing that individuals should adopt methods that resonate with them personally. This approach aligns with Ignatius's own teachings, which prioritized the practical application of spiritual practices to enrich one's prayer life.

The chapter outlines the steps of the examen, a reflective prayer process designed to foster a deeper connection with God. These steps are as follows:

1. **Pray for Light:** Begin by seeking God's grace, asking for insight and clarity as you prepare to reflect on your day.
2. **Give Thanks:** Approach the reflection with gratitude, taking a moment to recognize the day's blessings and gifts as divine offerings.
3. **Review the Day:** Guided by the Holy Spirit, look back on the events of the day, intentionally searching for God's presence in daily experiences.
4. **Look at What's Wrong:** Here, the focus shifts to acknowledging personal shortcomings and failures, coupled with a sincere desire for forgiveness and the recognition of areas needing growth.
5. **Resolve What to Do:** Conclude by contemplating how to invite God's influence into the activities of the coming day, setting intentions aligned

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with spiritual growth.

The author encourages incorporating the examen into daily life in a flexible manner. Rather than confining it to specific times or places, reflection can occur spontaneously throughout the day, allowing individuals to engage with their spirituality in a way that feels organic and meaningful. This adaptability promotes a continuous dialogue with God, fostering a richer prayer experience that aligns with personal circumstances and insights.

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