

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU GET STARTED

SINS OF LAZINESS

You may think to yourself “I don’t have to worry about this one because I am a hard-working person.” You may be hard working in certain areas [career, school, exercise], but there is still more.

- *Did I put my full effort into my relationship with God today? Quiet time? Agpeya prayer? Bible reading?*
- *Was I conscientious in my relationship with my spouse? Children? Parents?*
- *Was I faithful in my service to God and the Church today?*
- *Did I use my time wisely today? Was I faithful with the time God gave me?*

SINS OF GLUTTONY

We all know the classic definition of gluttony – eating too much. But gluttony can be much more. Gluttony is taking something and making it destructive by overdoing it.

- *What did I overdo today? (work, food, sleep, family, TV, telephone, computer, appearance)?*
- *What can I do to correct this problem?*

SINS OF GREED

Greed is a subtle sin. Very few people ever confess this sin, although many suffer from it. Greed isn’t just the desire for money. Greed is wanting more than we need. It can be material possessions, popularity, love or many others. Greed is anytime we become obsessed with achieving something.

- *What did I greatly desire today? (Do I desire this more than God?)*
- *What made me very happy or very sad today? (this could indicate an area of greed)*

SINS OF LUST

Lust is a natural, sexual desire that is being used or fulfilled improperly. Lust is easy to hide, which causes us to think that it is “no big deal.” We must realize that sins of lust can have life-long consequences. Lust can be defined as receiving sexual gratification from any source outside of my spouse in marriage (not just actions, but thoughts as well).

- *Did I keep my eyes/thoughts pure today?*
- *Did I seek to gain gratification today from any source outside of my spouse? A conversation or a movie or anything?*
- *Did I put myself into a position of temptation today that I*

know is wrong?

- *Did I do anything today to bring dishonor to my body, which is the temple of God?*

SINS OF ENVY

Envy is feeling inadequate or that you have been treated unfairly. Maybe you feel God has blessed someone more than you, or you feel that you deserve something that someone else has. Envy is a lack of appreciation for what God has given you. The key to overcoming envy is to be content in your relationship with God and to be focused on seeking His Kingdom.

- *Did I compare myself (or my situation) with anyone else today?*
- *Was I appreciative of all that God gave me and did for me today?*
- *Did I feel sorry for myself at any time today?*
- *Does someone else’s success lead me to bitterness/resentment?*

SINS OF ANGER

Anger is much more than just losing my temper and yelling. The Bible describes anger as a sin of mental attitude. Anger is a sin which promotes sins against other people, such as gossip, self-righteous judging, complaining, etc.

- *Did I lose my temper with anyone today? Yelling? Cursing?*
- *Did I think and/or say anything negative about another person today?*
- *Is there anyone that I am unwilling to forgive? Any grudges I am holding on to?*

SINS OF PRIDE

Pride is the deadliest sin of all. It caused the fall of Adam and Eve and caused Lucifer to be kicked out of heaven. Pride blinds us to our true spiritual condition and causes us to think more highly of ourselves than we should. When I am proud, ‘myself’ becomes more important than anyone else. Pride makes us want to appear to be something in the eyes of others.

- *Who did I care most about pleasing today? God or another person?*
- *Did I ask for God’s help throughout the day or did I do things on my own?*
- *Do I feel like I am always right and have to argue until I prove it?*
- *How do I respond to criticism from others?*
- *Did I regularly express my need for God throughout the day?*

DAILY SELF-EXAMINATION

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WHAT IS SELF-EXAMINATION?

Many times, we live our Christian lives thinking that we are doing fine spiritually. We try our best not to commit the “major” sins and we are quick to judge those sins in others. However, we rarely take the time to really examine ourselves and search deep within. We may be scared to do so because we don’t know what we will find, but a life without regular self-examination can never be a life “in Christ.”

It is impossible to be growing into the image of our Lord Jesus Christ unless we are regularly examining ourselves and repenting of our sins. Sin is part of our human nature and just because we don’t see it, doesn’t mean that it’s not there. Too often, the reason we don’t see it is because we really aren’t looking that hard.

WHAT AM I SEARCHING FOR?

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23-24

Too often, we end up treating symptoms, instead of the real problem. We deal with the surface sins, the obvious ones that have plagued us for years, but the root of the problem could lie much deeper. If we don’t treat the real cause of our problems, those same symptoms will keep coming back over and over again.

How do we get to the bottom of the problem? The root cause? **DAILY SELF-EXAMINATION.** The root cause of bondage in our lives is sin. Sin separates us from God and is a barrier to joy and peace. Sin keeps us from hearing God’s voice and is the main obstacle to answered prayers. It is our sinful nature that allows Satan to maintain his strongholds in our lives.

The first step in breaking these strongholds is to identify our sin. The Holy Spirit will show us where we’ve fallen short as we ask Him to search our hearts. With His help, we need to search for the sins that are the root causes of our struggles. Where are you in your life right now? What things have taken control of your life? Do you need help? We hope this guide will help you take a spiritual inventory of your life and see what areas need work.

HOW SHOULD I EXAMINE MYSELF?

1. Set a specific time for self-examination

The best time of day is in the evening, after you have finished all the activities of your day, but before you are too tired. It is a good time to reflect back on the day’s events and evaluate what went wrong.

2. Begin with prayer

It is essential that we seek God’s guidance in this process. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your sins to you and guide you to the root of the problem. Unless the Holy Spirit reveals our sins and sinfulness to us, we will not see them. In prayer, we ask God to show us what He finds displeasing in us, what He wants us to repent of. If we are only concerned with how we are disappointed in ourselves, self-examination will turn into nothing more than an exercise in self-improvement.

The evening prayers of the Agpeya [either 11th or 12th hour] are a great way to begin, as both prayers focus on the theme of repentance.

3. Examine my day

This entails taking time to reflect on the day gone by and examining my thoughts, words and deeds. A helpful approach is to think through various categories of sin and see where we stand in regard to them. Look into every corner of your life, look for every weakness and sin. Remember, sin is much more than big things like stealing, killing and adultery. Sin literally means “missing the mark.” The mark is Christ-likeness. Therefore, any deed, word or thought that is away from Christ is sin. Too often, we compare ourselves to others; the true measuring stick however is Christ, Himself.

In the back of this guide, you will find some questions to help direct you in this process, but the key is to be specific and concrete. Avoid general statements like “I have been dishonest today” or “I was lazy.” The more detailed you can be, the better. For example, “I lied to my boss and told him I was sick because I wanted to go home early.” Self-examination involves taking responsibility for what we have done and not making any excuses.

4. Write it down

It is essential that you write down the results of your examination daily. If nothing is written down, nothing will be learned. Don’t rely on your memory; instead write down each area of sin that God reveals to you. In addition, you should also make specific notes as to how you will deal with each area [steps that can be taken to avoid them, how you will make restitution for your sin, etc]. This will then become a good resource for you to bring to your next scheduled confession and will allow your father of confession to track your progress and growth.

5. Repent of my sins

The goal is not just to identify my sins, but to repent of them and change my life. This can only happen with God’s help. Tell God that you have sinned against Him and approach Him with a contrite heart, asking for forgiveness. Spend time in prayer and ask God to remove the roots of sin that are within us. Make sure to repent of each sin specifically.

6. Reflect on God’s goodness and mercy

The devil would love to make you think that God will not accept you back or that you are too bad to return to Him. That is not true. Self-examination must be made in context of God’s grace. St. Paul teaches us that there are two kinds of sorrow: godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. *“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:9).* Let us then remember God’s goodness and not allow the devil to cast us into guilt and depression.

Finally, let us remember that the goal of the self-examination is **transformation**; that I would be transformed into the image and likeness of Christ. The goal is not to stop sinning, the goal is to discover my sins and repent of them so that I may grow more and more into the image of Christ.

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,” 2 Corinthians 3:18