

An Adaptation of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola



He says, "Be still and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth. "
Psalm 46:10

Be Still and Know That I am God

A Ladies' Retreat of St John's Episcopal Church, Norwood Parish
March 10-12, 2017

A Five Week Adaptation of The Spiritual Exercises

The Exercises were written in the 1500's by Saint Ignatius of Loyola (born as Iñigo López de Loyola y Oñaz) to help people pray and recognize the movement of God in their lives. He founded the religious order The Society of Jesus, commonly known as the Jesuits.

The exercises involve several activities all brought together to help you hear God's Spirit and to give a fuller response to the love of God in your life. Those activities include, but aren't necessarily limited to:

- † Reading scripture
- † Praying with scripture
- † Conversational prayer with God
- † Journaling
- † Conversations with a spiritual friend

We're going to start with an easy routine that should take 10 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the evening, Monday thru Friday, a whole 20 minutes a day, plus a little time each week to meet and talk about how things are going.

We don't want to make this seem too complicated. Hopefully, the routine will grow on you and become a little more second nature as you go. The desire is that you'll have an experience less like doing homework and more like an adventure. The whole point of the exercises is to be more open to God's presence in your life. God invites you on a walk, a journey of life and faith, and the exercises are just one way to respond to that invitation.

The Reality of God's Love and Presence

- † Week One, Beginning Monday, March 13
- † Week Two, Beginning Monday, March 20

God's Call and Our Response

- † Week Three, Beginning Monday, March 27
- † Week Four, Beginning Monday, April 3

Christ's Example of Submission - Holy Week

- † Week Five, Beginning Monday, April 10

The Method

In the morning... 2 Parts!

1. The morning time is spent reading a passage of scripture and then praying with it, feeling around inside for anything that might be coming to your mind from the passage. Ignatius wrote about two ways to interact with a passage, either putting yourself in the shoes of one of the characters or just letting a word, phrase or idea from the passage kind of roll around in your heart and mind for a while. Praying with a passage is simply reading it with God, or even to God, and letting your prayer be shaped by the passage in things like vocabulary or themes.
2. After reading the passage and praying, take a moment to journal some of your responses, thoughts and ideas. There's no required amount of journaling, but it's good to capture your thoughts about the passage or prayer time. Your journaling can take the form of diary entry or be a written prayer, or both! You could even draw something or copy a section of the passage that was really meaningful to you. It's an opportunity to capture your immediate responses to the morning's time of reading and prayer.

In the evening... 2 Parts!

1. The evening activities are where you start to make these exercises practical. In the evening you will practice something called the examen, and then do a little more journaling. The examen is a reflection on your day, and then a time of prayer about the day past and the day coming. Here are some starters for reflecting on the day past...
 - † Be grateful for the day.
 - † Do I feel good about the way I spent this day, and why or why not?
 - † How can I make tomorrow even better?
 - † In what ways would I like to see God move in my life tomorrow?
 - † In what ways might I more fully give myself to God tomorrow?

Now, take the thoughts in answer to these questions and let them guide your time of prayer. Here is a great time to practice colloquy prayer which is simply a way of praying that is more conversational and far less formal. Just talk with God and listen, with your soul as much as with your ears.

2. Now, finish the day with some journaling. You may have a thought or experience from the day to record, or maybe some of your reflections during the examen would be good to put into writing for later contemplation. This is good material for shaping the time that you spend with your spiritual friend. It's also encouraging to be able to look back weeks, months and years later and be reminded of how God is moving in your life. .

Things to remember:

- ✓ Make a special time and place for your prayers. The space you chose should help you focus and relax, and it should limit distractions. Pick a time when you're not overly sleepy, busy with other things or tired.
- ✓ Only you need ever read your journal. It's not something your spiritual friend will read. You'll read it and help shape the conversation.
- ✓ Try to choose a good translation of the Bible. It should be one that you can be comfortable with and use through the whole eight weeks.
- ✓ Choose a journal to meet your needs. It can be either a separate book or pages added to this notebook, but try to stick with one all the way through this experience with the exercises so the form a complete picture of your journey.
- ✓ There really isn't a right and wrong way to do any of this. God moves in us in similar ways and in different ways. The important thing is to *do*. Keep going.
- ✓ You'll be prompted with a prayer emphasis for each week. Start with that prayer and try to make it a heartfelt request.
- ✓ Ignatius taught that life has movements of both consolation and of desolation, that is to say, we often go through events or times that create a feeling of comfort within us, or a feeling of discomfort. When journaling or practicing the examen, think about whether the day's scripture gave you comfort or discomfort, or use those terms in thinking about the way your day went. Ignatius says that comfort is not always good, and discomfort is not always bad... just recognize the difference and use the movements to shape your prayer and time with God.
- ✓ Your spiritual friend is there to ask questions, listen and give some feedback or pointers. Your friend is not a master, instructor or drill sergeant.



And, here are a few words that Ignatius wrote for you before you get started...

"The most important qualities in the person who enters into these exercises are openness, generosity and courage. As [participants] our one hope and desire is that God will place us with his Son so that in all ways we seek only to respond to that love which first created us and now wraps us round with total care and concern." (SpEx 5)

God Loves Me

Week One

Beginning Monday, March 13

Each day this week we look at a piece of scripture which points us toward the unending, burning, consuming, and very real love of God for us. Sometimes that love is directly spoken, as in statements like “I love you.” Sometimes that love is seen in action and in metaphorical images of a caring God who is involved in our lives. If any one passage really speaks to you, don’t be afraid to repeat it throughout the week. There’s no requirement to have read all these passages.

As a starting place, begin each morning’s time with this hopeful prayer:

“God, please help me feel your nearness and your love for me throughout the whole day. In Christ I pray, amen.”

Remember, after reading the passages, prayerfully reflect on the words and the characters involved.

† How does the passage make you feel?

† What theme or idea seems to speak to you most clearly?

† Do you feel a response to God in your heart from the reading?

† Are there words, a phrase, or a single word that really grabs you?

After reflection and prayer on the passage, try to capture something in your journal.

Monday: Isaiah 43:1-7 “Do not fear... you are mine.”

Tuesday: Romans 8:37-39 “For I am convinced...”

Wednesday: Psalm 117 “For great is his love toward us...”

Thursday: Matthew 6:25-34 Living life in an awareness of God’s love.

Friday: Choose any passage from above, or take a few minutes to review your journaling from the previous days this week. What are some special things from the week that stand out to you? How has the week felt to you?

Starters to help with the evening examen (just beginning places):

† Be grateful for the day.

† Do I feel good about the way I spent this day, and why or why not?

† How can I make tomorrow even better?

† In what ways would I like to see God move in my life tomorrow?

† In what ways might I more fully give myself to God tomorrow?

God is Near

Week Two

Beginning Monday, March 20

One of the hardest things about prayer is getting over the idea that there's a wrong way to do it or a special, magical way that it must be done for God to hear. Prayer is opening up a line of communication with God. God is near. God cares about what is happening in your heart and your life. God wants to be a part of your life. God has spoken to us in many ways, through prophets and scriptures and Jesus Christ, and quiet movements in our own souls. Prayer is just part of our response to all that God is saying and doing.

As a starting place, begin each morning's time with this hopeful prayer:

"God, thank you so much for caring about my life and for listening to me. Help me recognize the ways that you are present in my life, today. In Christ I pray, amen."

Remember, after reading the passages, prayerfully reflect on the words and the characters involved.

- † How does the passage make you feel?
- † What theme or idea seems to speak to you most clearly?
- † Do you feel a response to God in your heart from the reading?
- † Are there words, a phrase, or a single word that really grabs you?

After reflection and prayer on the passage, try to capture something in your journal.

- Monday:** Psalm 116:1-9 "...for he heard my voice."
- Tuesday:** Isaiah 55:1-7 Calling, Seeking, Finding, Nearness
- Wednesday:** Acts 17:24-28 "For in him we live and move and have our being."
- Thursday:** 1 John 4:7-21 "...if we love on another, God lives in us..."
- Friday:** Let's start back in yesterday's passage, at vs. 16, "**God is love.**"
How does that simple statement make you think about God? What does it tell you about the way God thinks about you? Has anything else from the week stood out as especially important or meaningful?

Starters to help with the evening examen (just beginning places):

- † Be grateful for the day.
- † Do I feel good about the way I spent this day, and why or why not?
- † How can I make tomorrow even better?
- † In what ways would I like to see God move in my life tomorrow?
- † In what ways might I more fully give myself to God tomorrow?

God is Calling

Week Three

Beginning Monday, April 3

We are each called by God. We are called into relationship with God and called into life as God's people, sent to be light in darkness, salt in blandness, peacemakers and good neighbors. This week is all about listening to God's call.

As a starting place, begin each morning's time with this hopeful prayer:

"God, please speak to me loud and clear. In Christ I pray, amen."

Remember, after reading the passages, prayerfully reflect on the words and the characters involved.

† How does the passage make you feel?

† What theme or idea seems to speak to you most clearly?

† Do you feel a response to God in your heart from the reading?

† Are there words, a phrase, or a single word that really grabs you?

After reflection and prayer on the passage, try to capture something in your journal.

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| Monday: | 1 Kings 19:11-13 | How have I tended to hear God? In big ways, or more quiet, subtle ways? |
| Tuesday: | Jeremiah 4:1-10 | Can God know me and call me in such a way? |
| Wednesday: | 1 Peter 4:8-11 | What gifts has God given me to share with others? |
| Thursday: | Luke 5:1-11 | What might Christ be calling me to leave? |
| Friday: | Choose any passage or reflection from above, or take a few minutes to review your journaling from the previous days this week. What are some special things from the week that stand out to you? How has the week felt to you? | |

Starters to help with the evening examen (just beginning places):

† Be grateful for the day.

† Do I feel good about the way I spent this day, and why or why not?

† How can I make tomorrow even better?

† In what ways would I like to see God move in my life tomorrow?

† In what ways might I more fully give myself to God tomorrow?

We Respond

Week Four

Beginning Monday, March 27

God has made us human beings of dignity and deep individual worth. We are people of freedom and individual will, but what will we do with that freedom and will? God is moving in this world, and calls us to join in with what we might call “divine purpose.” That sounds heavy, but it just means that God invites us to become a special people who take the responsibility to share all the goodness that’s been shared with us.

As a starting place, begin each morning’s time with this hopeful prayer:

“God, please help me know you and your will better this week, so I can answer your call with joy and gratefulness. In Christ I pray, amen.”

Remember, after reading the passages, prayerfully reflect on the words and the characters involved.

- † How does the passage make you feel?
- † What theme or idea seems to speak to you most clearly?
- † Do you feel a response to God in your heart from the reading?
- † Are there words, a phrase, or a single word that really grabs you?

After reflection and prayer on the passage, try to capture something in your journal.

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| Monday: | Ephesians 2:4-10 “For we are God’s handiwork...” |
| Tuesday: | Luke 1:26-38 What kind of courage did it take for Mary to agree to this angelic announcement? She says, “ Let it be... ” |
| Wednesday: | Luke 9:23-25 The choice is daily. |
| Thursday: | Mark 8:34-38 What might following Jesus cost me? |
| Friday: | Choose any passage from above, or take a few minutes to review your journaling from the previous days this week. What are some special things from the week that stand out to you? How has the week felt to you? |

Starters to help with the evening examen (just beginning places):

- † Be grateful for the day.
- † Do I feel good about the way I spent this day, and why or why not?
- † How can I make tomorrow even better?
- † In what ways would I like to see God move in my life tomorrow?
- † In what ways might I more fully give myself to God tomorrow?

Christ is the Example

Week Five

Beginning Monday, April 10

The Passion of Jesus changed everything. The Creator entered the created, came near and fully participated in our humanity, even unto death. He knowingly and willingly carried the weight of our humanity to the cross so we could freely enter into relationship with the Father. This week you are especially invited to “enter into” the passages and try to see, feel, hear and be a part of the story! This is a week to use your imagination!

As a starting place, begin each morning’s time with this hopeful prayer:

“God, please help me to know Jesus more intimately, to love him more intensely, and to follow him more closely. In Christ I pray, amen.”

* This part is a little different this week! Prayerfully reflect on the story and the characters while trying to put yourself in the situation.

† Who’s involved in the action, and what are they doing?

† How are people responding to God?

† How would you feel being present and a part of this story?

† What do you notice about Jesus’ “last minute” lessons?

† Are there words, a phrase, or a single word that really grabs you?

After reflection and prayer on the passage, try to capture something in your journal.

Monday: Matthew 21:10-15 “Who is this?”...

Tuesday: Mark 11:20-26 Faith to move mountains

Wednesday: Matthew 22:36-40 The greatest command

Thursday: Mark 14:35-36 In the Garden of Gethsemane

Friday: Matthew 27:27-31 or any of the passages from Matthew 27. Sit with one of these a while. They are heavy, but make Sunday’s resurrection that much more triumphant.

Starters to help with the evening examen (just beginning places):

† Be grateful for the day.

† Do I feel good about the way I spent this day, and why or why not?

† How can I make tomorrow even better?

† In what ways would I like to see God move in my life tomorrow?

† In what ways might I more fully give myself to God tomorrow?

The End?

Of course not!

Hopefully this five week exercise has helped you see a few things more clearly, things like God's great love for you, God's presence in your life, and just how amazing our Jesus really is.

We hope you've also seen that prayer is totally accessible. God is listening. And sometimes, God is speaking. This exercise offered a lot of structure, but it's not really necessary. Prayer simply needs you and God... **and voila!**

Finally, this has been a chance to see the power of journaling and praying on a daily basis. Taking time and devoting effort to your prayers will always pay sweet returns! So, now you have a started a journal, can you keep up with it and use it more?

We'll see you in church Easter Sunday!

Here are some parting words from Saint Ignatius as he tries to sum up his view of life, especially the life of a follower of Christ...



“The Goal of our life is to live with God forever. God, who loves us, gave us life. Our own response of love allows God's life to flow into us without limit.

All the things in this world are gifts from God, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily. As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God insofar as they help us to develop as loving persons. But if any of these gifts become the center of our lives, they displace God and so hinder our growth toward our goal.

In everyday life, then, we must hold ourselves in balance before all of these created gifts insofar as we have a choice and are not bound by some obligation. We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a deeper response to our life in God.”

Continue Your Journey

Here are some resources to help you and some of the tools used in the creation these exercises and the presentation:

Wikipedia – Ignatius of Loyola

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignatius_of_Loyola

Wikipedia – The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual_Exercises_of_Ignatius_of_Loyola

The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything

by James Martin, SJ

ISBN 978-0-06-143226-2

Moment by Moment – A Retreat in Everyday Life

by Carol Ann Smith, SHCJ & Eugene f. Merz, SJ

ISBN 0-87793-945-4

The Archive – (search for The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola)
for a PDF of a translation of St. Ignatius' original work.)

<https://archive.org/details/a588350800loyouoft>

www.ignatianspirituality.com

The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in Daily Life

by Kevin O'Brien, SJ

ISBN 978-0829435771

An Ignatian Prayer Adventure – a great online adaptation of the exercises

<http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/an-ignatian-prayer-adventure>

A copy of these exercises will be available for download at www.toddthomas.net



With special thanks to Todd Thomas, who wrote most of this adaptation in 2009 .