

Grow Deeper: Self Examination

February 10, 2016

Bible Verses & Quotes

"If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." - 1 John 1:9

"Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart." - Psalm 26:2

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way." – Psalm 139:23-24

"To confess your sins to God is not to tell God anything God doesn't already know. Until you confess them, however, they are the abyss between you. When you confess them, they become the bridge." - Frederick Buechner

"Few things accelerate the peace process as much as humbly admitting our own wrongdoing and asking forgiveness." - Lee Strobel

"When we feel "searched and known" by a gracious God, we are both moved and enabled to search our own hearts honestly. Self-examination, Confession and Awareness do not call us to self-hatred or self- condemnation; they open the door of our heart to cleansing, renewal and peace." -- Marjorie Thompson, Soul Feast

"Forgiveness is always free. But that doesn't mean that confession is always easy. Sometimes it is hard. Incredibly hard. It is painful to admit our sins and entrust ourselves to God's care." - Erwin Lutzer

"Nothing will make us so charitable and tender to the faults of others, as, by self-examination, thoroughly to know our own." - Francois Fenelon

Resources

The Wounded Healer by Henri Nouwen

Sacred Rhythms: Arranging our Lives for Spiritual Transformation by Ruth Haley Barton

Soul Searching by Mindy Caliguire

Try It This Week

Participate in the ancient practice called the Daily Examen. To do so, take 10 or 15 minutes at the end of your day and pray through these five steps. Some people find it helpful to journal their responses each day.

1. Become aware of God's presence. Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

2. Review the day with gratitude. Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

3. Pay attention to the emotions and feelings you experienced today. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Anger? Compassion? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings? God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. Make note of these sins and faults. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you consider a new direction in some area of your work? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to her in some way.

4. Pick one or two strong feelings from the day and pray from them. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

