

WEEKLY REFLECTION

The Sorry Prayer (or as Richard Foster calls it, the “Prayer of Examen”) is largely lost to the church of today. It’s interesting that unlike the “folks of faith” in Scripture, the examen of God has been “lost to we who live in an age of obsessive introspection.” One would think otherwise! Scripture shows us that the fathers of faith experienced the Sorry Prayer “not as a dreadful thing[,] but as something of immeasurable strength and empowerment.” How do we reclaim that?

We can start by examining our understanding of the gospel, as it will be reflected in the way we pray. Do you pray often, or not at all? Do you find yourself reluctant to confess your own wrongdoings to Him? Would you rather run and hide? Or do you think that you are doing well, and there is nothing you require forgiveness for? In Psalm 130, the psalmist reminds us that if God “should mark iniquities”, who could stand? (v.3) But at the same time with Him there is forgiveness (v.4a), with Him there is steadfast love. (v.7a) With God there is plentiful redemption, and He will redeem us from all our iniquities. (v.7b-8)

How do we start? Foster suggests two parts to the Prayer of Examen—he encourages believers to first prayerfully reflect on our surroundings, how we have responded, and to reflect on God’s presence with us. For the second part, he invites us to undergo a thorough heart examination, carried out by God. Though it may be scary for us to lay bare our nakedness before the Lord, though it may hurt to cry out to Him for His grace and mercy as we ask Him to search our hearts and reveal any offensive ways within us (Ps. 139:23-24a), know that with confession comes healing. As you come and surrender to Him, God the Great Physician (Mk. 2:17) and the Divine Gardener (Jn. 15:1-8) will do what needs to be done.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

One of the things most emphasized in our sermon series on prayer is the importance of having a designated place (or places!) to pray.

If you had the chance to design or build your very own private place for prayer, what would it look like? What would it include? What are some essentials and non-essentials that you'd like to be present? How would they bring you closer to God?

QUESTION TWO:

The beauty of the Prayer of Examen is that it encourages us to first direct our gaze outwards, before turning back inwards. An example would be realizing how God has been urging you to be attentive to the pain and loneliness of those around you, but you were too distracted to notice. Or perhaps He was inviting you to partake in and enjoy in the beauty of creation, and you were able to bask in His love.

Take some time to be still and quiet, and dwell with the Lord. How has God been at work among you lately? How have you responded? Is there anything that you feel God trying to share with you? Is there anything He is opening your eyes toward?

QUESTION THREE:

In the second part of the Prayer of Examen, we "[invite] the Lord to search our heart to the depths." This resembles the Sorry Prayer that was practiced during service. "Far from being dreadful, this is a scrutiny of love", and "without apology and without defense we ask to see what is truly in us."

Take some time to be still and quiet, and to dwell with the Lord. Break up into smaller groups of 2 - 4 when you are ready, and share what God has put on your heart or revealed to you.

Know that as much as your group is here to keep you accountable to God, we are meant to be instruments of His grace for each other as well. Know as well that with confession comes true freedom and healing, for "when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light." (Eph. 5:13-14)