

A Community Examen

Introduction

Our last two Practice gatherings have focused on community, specifically the practices of [spiritual direction](#) and [listening groups](#). Community is an essential element of following Jesus. Jesus did not invite us into a solitary journey, this road was always intended to be walked together. This week, we would love to invite you to make room to reflect on your spiritual practices of community in the presence of God.

A spiritual practice is any intentional activity that cultivates deeper communion with God's presence in our everyday lives. Spiritual practices may help us grow in awareness of God's loving presence. They may help us develop ears to better hear God's voice or help us to surrender obstacles to deeper communion with God.

Spiritual practices of community are simply disciplines that directly involve other people to cultivate deeper communion with God. A few examples of these practices might be [spiritual friendships](#), [spiritual direction](#), small groups (including practice tables and listening groups), and spiritual mentors. In this Examen, we will reflect on our spiritual practices of community in prayer. Let's hold our experiences of community in God's presence and listen for anything the Holy Spirit might reveal to us this week.

Step 1: Acknowledging God's presence

Settle into a comfortable space without distractions. Take a deep breath. Wherever you are in this moment, you are in God's loving presence. Take another deep breath. Remember that God is closer than the air you breathe.

For the next few moments, invite God to speak. Hold your hands open as a sign of your willingness to receive from God. Express your desire to listen. You may use your own words or echo the words of Samuel, "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening."

Step 2: Review your spiritual practices of community in gratitude

Now, remaining in God's loving presence, consider your spiritual practices of community. In this season, what spiritual practices of community have you experienced? How have you experienced the presence of God in relationship in this season? Consider both the community you have intentionally engaged as a spiritual practice, and the community that you did not seek intentionally but God brought to you. Name these experiences, you may even choose to write them down.

Take a moment now to thank God for these experiences. You may write a prayer of gratitude in the space below.

Step 3: Examine your spiritual practices of community with God

Consider the spiritual practices of community you identified a moment ago. Take a moment to examine your experiences of spiritual community with the following questions in mind. Listen for anything the Holy Spirit may be calling to your attention.

How have you experienced God drawing you into His life of love through practices of community?

How have spiritual practices of community fallen short, disappointed you, or failed to invite you in God's life of love?

Step 4: Respond

Is there a particular experience that stands out from your examination? Was there a strong emotion, positive or negative, that stands out? Is there one experience you feel the Holy Spirit is drawing you toward, one you are being invited to hold a little longer in God's loving presence?

Use this time to respond to God. Is there anything you want to say to God about this experience, anything you would like to ask? Speak to God, and listen for God's response.

Step 5: Looking forward

In our final movement, let's turn our attention forward. As you consider engaging spiritual practices of community in the future, what emotions arise? Do you sense an invitation from God? Close your time in prayer by holding your future practices in God's loving presence.