



## PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

*Wednesday, September 1st*

Today's prayer guide was written by Carly Brandvold, one of our Ethos Kids Pastors.

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### B R E A D

#### Psalm 78

In the aftermath of World War II, Europe saw an influx of children entering orphanages and refugee camps. Many of these children had endured unimaginable conditions in the previous years. In many cases, they had no remaining relatives or had lost contact with their family at some point earlier in the Nazi occupation.

Caregivers at these orphanages and refugee camps began to notice that the children would experience higher levels of anxiety at night. They could not get the children to fall asleep. They would spend hours every night consoling children with little success. Eventually, someone concluded that their anxiety was largely rooted in the a fear of waking up to no food, no shelter, and no caregivers.

This revelation led to the idea to give each child a loaf of bread to sleep with at night. Remarkably, children started sleeping! By holding the bread they could rest confidently knowing they had eaten today and they would eat again tomorrow.

Over the past few weeks (maybe months) we have all experienced our share of the darkness of the world. Perhaps you have encountered it firsthand, or maybe your heart has broken for those on the other side of the world. Either way, the darkness has been nearly impossible to miss. The world can be a dark and heartbreaking places. However, it is also full of God's goodness. I'm convinced one our greatest challenges is to hold these things together. How do we believe in God's faithfulness, goodness, and hope as we see the darkness around us?

Sometimes I wonder if we, like the children mentioned above, need to sleep with bread. By sleeping with bread, we hold onto what gives us hope. For us, we may not need to hold onto actual bread to believe we will eat tomorrow. But we may need to hold onto the love of God we experienced today to believe God's love will show up tomorrow. Perhaps we need to hold onto events where God has been faithful in the past to believe that God will be faithful tomorrow. Maybe we need to hold onto the times we saw the goodness of God today to believe that God will be good tomorrow.

Psalm 78 recounts the faithfulness of God towards the Israelite people from the time of Jacob to the time of David. No matter the circumstance God remained faithful. Verse 25 says, "Human beings ate the bread of angels," and I can't help but think of how the Israelites literally ate the faithfulness of God, how it physically sustained them, and they STILL struggled to believe in God's faithfulness.

So how do we sleep with bread? How do we, who are not eating the actual fresh baked bread — the faithfulness of God — believe in the faithfulness of God? How do we intentionally hold close the promises of God in a way that carries us with the confidence of God into the next day?

On the next page, you'll find some simple steps to help you do this!



Below you'll find some simple steps to practice the spiritual discipline of *examen*. Examen is a way of praying developed by Saint Ignatius in the 1500s. For centuries, faithful Jesus followers have used this way of praying to help them hold onto what gives them life.

Examen invites us to reflect on our day to make us aware of the blessings of God we have experienced. It also encourages us to invite God into the struggle of darkness in our lives.

As we become aware of spaces in our day where we experienced God's faithfulness, love, and hope we are reminded that God was present today and that God will be present tomorrow. May we all hold our bread tightly knowing God has been faithful in the past and God will be faithful in the days to come. Darkness has no hold, for God is faithful and present.

## READ

Read Psalm 78 and consider the faithfulness of God throughout Israel's story.

## PRACTICE

The disciple of examen was designed to be practiced at the end of each day. However, it can just as easily be used as a morning practice to reflect on the previous day.

- **Rejoice:** Offer thanksgiving to God.
- **Request:** Invite God to open up your mind to see your reality clearly. Ask God to open your eyes as you prayerfully reflect on how you spent your day.
- **Review Your Day:** Review the past day and look for areas of consolation and desolation. Pay special attention to spaces in your day where you noticed God. Try asking questions like these...

*What was life-giving today? What was life-taking today?*

*When did I give and receive love today? When was I not living in love today?*

*When was I living in faith, hope, and love today? When was I living in fear, despair, and condemnation today?*

- **Repent:** There is no way to review your day and not find sin in it. Ask for wisdom to see where you missed the mark and confess it to God.
- **Renew:** Make note of any changes you want to make tomorrow and renew your desire to follow Jesus. Ask for grace for the days ahead.

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If you are interested in learning more about the practice of examen, join us for our time of prayer on Wednesday, September 1st at 12pm. You can join in person at the Ethos Office or online via Zoom. Visit [ethoschurch.org/firstwed](https://ethoschurch.org/firstwed) for more details and the Zoom link.

If you would like to practice examen prayer with children, we have linked an activity sheet online at [ethoschurch.org/firstwed](https://ethoschurch.org/firstwed) that will guide your child through the prayer of examen. Feel free to add in elements from the method above or adapt as necessary to meet your child's level.

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For more resources and ideas of how to engage in this season, visit [ethoschurch.org/connect](https://ethoschurch.org/connect).