

The Spiritual Exercises

of St. Ignatius of Loyola



What are the Spiritual Exercises?

- [SE 1] By this name, The Spiritual Exercises means examining one's conscience, meditating, contemplating, praying vocally and mentally, and performing other spiritual actions. For as walking and running are bodily exercises, so every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all disordered tendencies, and after it is rid, to seek and find the Divine Will as to the management of one's life for the salvation of the soul, is called spiritual exercise.
- [SE 21] The structure of these exercises aims to lead a person to a true spiritual freedom. We grow into this freedom by gradually bringing an order of values into our lives so that we find that we are not swayed by any disordered love at the moment of choice or decision.
- Ignatius's Prayer asks us to use imagination to explore the depths of a gospel story. Consider our reactions and feelings to a gospel story. In a gospel story, we speak directly with God about what delights and disturbs us. Ignatius's Spirituality of action: to labor with Christ in building the Kingdom of God. Once a person responds to the call, he invites them to pray to come to know Christ more intimately, love him more ardently, and follow him more closely.



The Structure of the Exercises

Ignatius organized the Exercises into four "weeks." These are not seven-day weeks but stages on a journey to spiritual freedom and wholehearted commitment to the service of God.

First week. The First week of the Exercises is a time of reflection on our lives in light of God's boundless love for us. We seek spiritual freedom from what hinders a relationship with God. Experiencing God's deep and endless love, despite failings and shortcomings, opening our hearts to conversion, and focusing on God's deep desire for me.

Second week. The meditation and prayers of the second week teach us how to follow Christ as his disciples as we reflect on the scripture passages. During the spiritual exercises, the Holy Spirit inspires us to change our lives, do Christ's work in the world and love him more intimately.

Third week. We appreciate with Christ in his suffering and death, allowing him into one's moment of suffering and experiencing the depth of Christ's sacrificial love.

Fourth week. Understanding one's relationship to Christ and living with a resurrected spirit of hope. Contemplation on the love of God, in which one stands in awe at the works of God in every dimension of life. We walk with the risen Christ, and set out to love and serve him by bringing the graces received into the everyday world.

Prayer in the Exercises

The two primary forms of praying taught in the Exercises are meditation and contemplation. In meditation, we use our minds. We ponder the basic principles that guide our life. We pray over words and images.

Contemplation is more about feeling than thinking. Contemplation often stirs emotions and enkindles deep desires. In contemplation, we rely on our imaginations to place ourselves in a setting from the Gospels or a sense proposed by Ignatius. We pray with scripture. We do not study it.

The **discernment of spirits** underlies the Exercises. We notice the interior movements of our hearts and discern where they are leading us. Regular practice of discernment helps us make good decisions.

Directing the Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life Retreat

- Sessions are once a week and last 45 minutes to 1 hour.
- The Spiritual Exercises: [19] Annotations are generally completed in nine months to a year.

What to Look for in the Spiritual Exercises

When seeking a spiritual director to direct you in the Spiritual Exercises, consider the following:

- Does the director receive spiritual direction regularly and participate in an individual or peer group supervision experience regularly?
- Is the director trained in taking an individual through the Spiritual Exercises?

CERTIFIED IN DIRECTING THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

If you have a sense of being called to do the
Spiritual Exercises

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