

# The (Un)Common Good Study Guide Week 2

## Spiritual Practice: Prayer of Examen

*This week's chapters challenge us to recognize Jesus in the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized—and to respond with justice and mercy. The Prayer of Examen, a reflective practice from Ignatian spirituality, helps us become more aware of where we encountered Christ in our daily lives and how we responded.*

Take a deep breath in... and out. Invite the Spirit to guide your reflection.

Reflect on your week. Ask yourself:

Where did I see someone in need —physically, emotionally, or spiritually?

How did I respond? Did I offer compassion, avoid, or simply not notice?

If I missed an opportunity, what could I do differently next week?

Listen for God. As you reflect, imagine Jesus saying, “Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me.” What feelings or insights arise?

Commit to Action. Ask God to open your eyes to opportunities to serve this week—whether through advocacy, generosity, or simply seeing others with Jesus’ love.

Close with Gratitude. Thank God for the moments of awareness and grace in your day.

## Scriptures

### **Matthew 25:34-40 NRSVUE**

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’

### **Doctrine & Covenants 163:3c & 4a**

3c. There are subtle, yet powerful, influences in the world, some even claiming to represent Christ, that seek to divide people and nations to accomplish their destructive aims. That which seeks to harden one human heart against another by constructing walls of fear and prejudice is

not of God. Be especially alert to these influences, lest they divide you or divert you from the mission to which you are called.

4 a. God, the Eternal Creator, weeps for the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering. Such conditions are not God's will. Open your ears to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers in all nations who desperately seek a future of hope for their children. Do not turn away from them. For in their welfare resides your welfare.

## Summary

Chapters 4 and 5 of *The (Un)Common Good* explore Jesus' call to care for the vulnerable and redefine our understanding of neighbors in a globalized world.

### **Chapter 4: Lord, Help Us to Treat You Well**

Jim Wallis reflects on Matthew 25, where Jesus identifies with "the least of these"—the hungry, the sick, the imprisoned. This passage was a turning point in Wallis's faith, shifting his focus to the poor and marginalized. He challenges the world's logic, where power and wealth dictate influence, and calls for a reversal—where our treatment of the most vulnerable defines our faithfulness. Wallis highlights faith communities' role in shaping policies that protect those in need and argues that budgets and economic systems should be measured by how they impact the poor.

### **Chapter 5: The Good Samaritan Goes Global**

The parable of the Good Samaritan expands beyond individual acts of kindness to systemic justice. Wallis critiques how society prioritizes wealth and convenience over compassion, highlighting modern injustices within global supply chains. He calls for a shift from mere charity to active transformation, urging us to recognize our responsibility in global economic systems and to advocate for fair treatment of workers, immigrants, and those in need.

Together, these chapters challenge us to see Jesus in the suffering and to act with justice and mercy—not just personally, but structurally, for the common good.

## Discussion Questions

1. Would anyone like to share if they engaged in one of the "Practicing the Common Good" activities from last week and their thoughts about it?
2. Where do you see division being created in today's world, even in the name of Christ? How can we, as disciples, resist these forces and instead work for unity, justice, and peace? In what ways can we bridge divides in our own communities?
3. The parable of the Good Samaritan challenges cultural and societal divisions. Wallis argues we need to expand our definition of "neighbor" beyond borders, race, or nationality. Who are the modern-day "neighbors" we struggle to see?
4. How does the idea that "in their welfare resides your welfare" challenge us to rethink our role in addressing social justice issues?

5. Wallis says that many churches focus on charity (feeding the hungry, helping the poor) but neglect systemic justice (challenging policies and structures that keep people poor). What is the difference between charity and justice?
6. Chapter 5 discusses how our economic choices impact others, especially workers, farmers, and the poor. Have you ever considered where your food, clothing, or electronics come from? What ethical choices could you make this week to align your spending with your values? How can we, in our daily lives, act in ways that prioritize the well-being of others, especially the marginalized?

## Practicing the (Un)Common Good: 5 Actions for the Week

Choose one of the following to do this week

**Reflect & Journal** – Choose one of the discussion questions from this week and write down your response. How is God challenging you? What personal shifts might be needed to align more fully with Jesus' mission for justice, peace, and the common good?

**Practice The Prayer of Examen** – St. Ignatius invites us to find God in all things. That means we have to pay careful attention to how the Spirit is moving in each moment of our daily lives. We have to take a magnifying glass to the seemingly ordinary, seeking to encounter the Divine.

- [The Ignatian Examen - Jesuits.org](https://www.jesuits.org/)
- [Prayer of Examen](#): Renewal by Exploring Peace Meditations

**See and Serve Jesus** - Identify a local food pantry, shelter, or aid organization and make a small donation—whether it's money, food, or time.

**Go Beyond Charity** - Learn about the root causes of a social issue such as hunger or poverty in your community. Read a book, watch a documentary, attend a lecture, listen to a podcast, etc. Who is most impacted? What policies or systems contribute to this issue? (Example: [The Roots of Poverty in America](#) - Throughline Podcast)

**Make an Ethical Choice in Your Daily Life** - Think about your purchasing habits: Can you choose fair-trade coffee, locally sourced food, or sustainable clothing this week? Research one company you buy from—are their products made ethically? If not, find an alternative or commit to making a more ethical choice when possible.

## Closing Poem

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By Bell Hooks, [When Angels Speak of Love](#)

let me be  
a witness to love  
stand on the outside

and see tenderness  
unbidden  
kind words  
and a lover's sweet touch  
let me be  
a witness to love  
see each sacrifice surrendered  
how patient and joined  
such open heart  
let me see and then believe

## Other Resources

- [American Rhetoric: Martin Luther King, Jr. - I've Been to the Mountaintop \(April 3 1968\)](#)
- [Stories with Intent](#) by Klyne Snodgrass
- [In the Heart of the World](#) by Mother Theresa