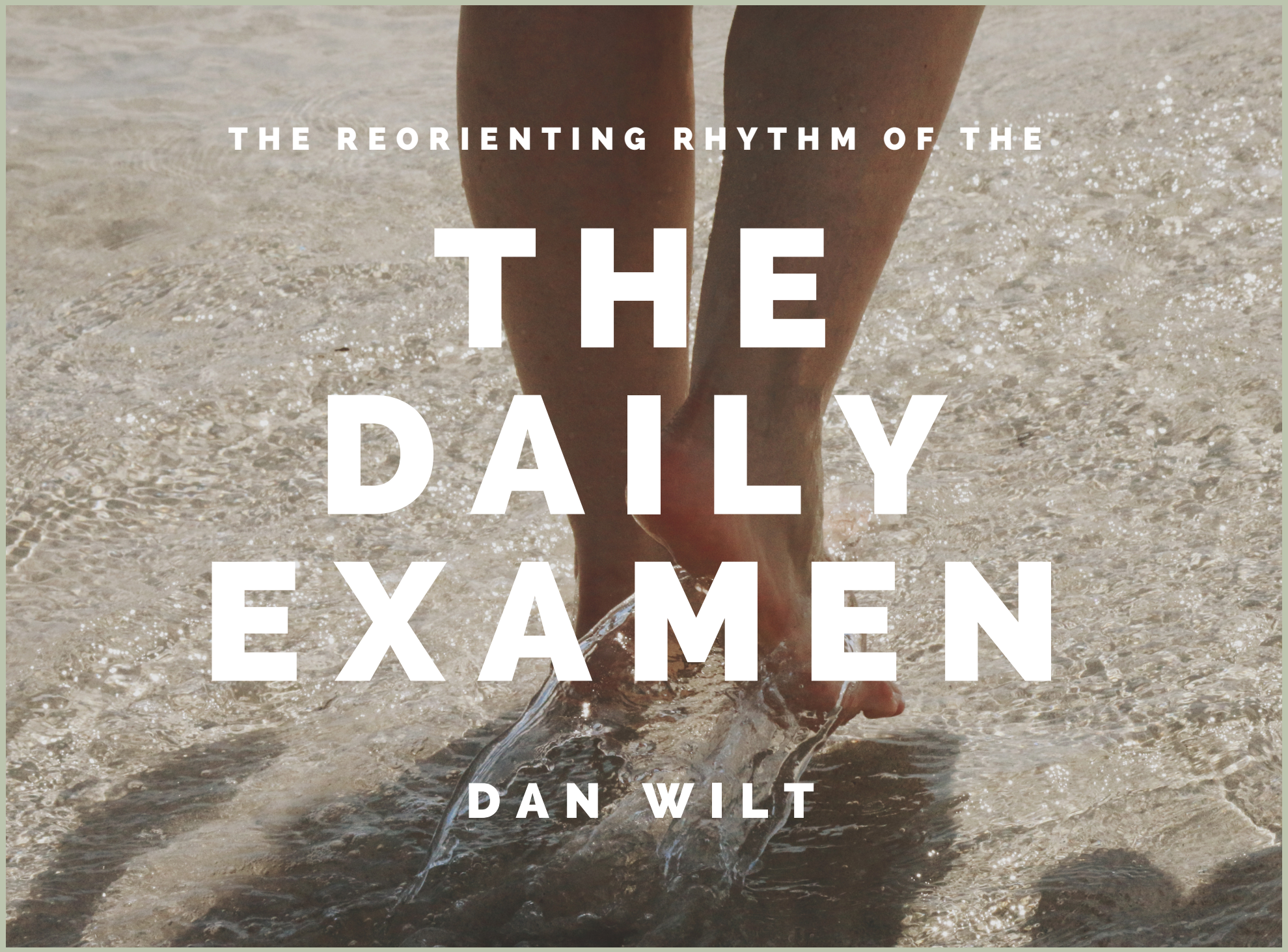

THE REORIENTING RHYTHM OF THE
THE DAILY EXAMEN
DAN WILT



A NEW HABIT

Every day, up to eight times a day, I silently perform a 1-3 minute spiritual ritual that is – quite literally – changing me.

Now in my early 50s, I have decided it is the single most vital personal habit I have formed to date.

According to my wife, I am becoming a different man.

WHAT IS IT?

Spiritually igniting, robust yet simple, the habit that is changing me is called the "Daily Examen."

The Daily Examen is a daily prayer exercise that is integral to the Spiritual Exercises created by Ignatius of Loyola – the founder of the Jesuits (the current Pope Francis is a Jesuit).

The Daily Examen is just one example of Ignatian spirituality and, in particular, the Spiritual Exercises.





DETECT & DISCERN

The Examen is…

"…A technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and discern his direction for us.

The Examen is an ancient practice in the Church that can help us see God's hand at work in our whole experience" (www.ignatianspirituality.com)."

OUR INNER FRENZY

I suffer from what I call EBN – Excessive Brain Noise.

At any given moment, a plethora of ideas, impression, intuitions, conversations, projects, tasks, and images are running through my mind.

The waters of my soul, in accord with this, are always stirring and sometimes – in a froth and a frenzy – splashing.





GOD & SELF AWARE

Quietude, awareness of the presence of God, self-awareness of my shifting emotions, attention to the influence of my strengths and weaknesses on my decisions and actions, are often out of my reach.

Over my lifetime, I have discovered and rediscovered some very helpful tools that work for my ongoing reorientation, with the Daily Office (not to be confused with the Daily Examen) leading the pack.

END DISTRACTION

However, it took the Daily Examen of Ignatius to bring me to my knees in thanks for a moment-by-moment deliverance from a main enemy of sustainable faith in our time – distraction.

Much of my work and life centers around screens – my laptop, my phone, and my apps. The level of daily distraction can cause me to miss hours and hours of reflection as emotions layer on emotions, distractions feeding small-story thoughts that pull me from Christ, slowly but surely.





PORTABLE LITURGY

The Daily Examen is my go-to remedy for that disorientation. I follow the 5-step process below that I have now memorized (this is so important), and can scale it from being a 1 minute exercise to being a 15 minute exercise.

It is a portable liturgy, a reorienting rhythm, that I do it in my bed as I drift off to sleep, wake in the morning, drive in my truck, and walk in my office in between projects and emails.

A LIFELINE

I carry it in my heart with me on airplanes, into meetings, and on walks.

It is renewing in times of rest, stabilizing in times of crisis, and focusing in times of ministry.

While I first learned the Daily Examen during my Masters studies at St. Stephen's University, it has only been in the last 3 years that I began to use it sporadically. Then, in the last 6 months, it has literally become a spiritual lifeline.





THE DAILY EXAMEN

Here is the Daily Examen, adapted from Ignatius' spiritual exercises and personally re-written in simple form.

Ignatius believed the Daily Examen was a gift from God (as do I), and wanted his Jesuits to practice it twice every day – during the noon hour and at the end of the day.

Personally, I do a 1-3 minute version of it at least 5-8 times a day. I would encourage you to memorize it, and begin to use it at least twice a day for one month to build the habit. If you can do it more, then do it.



THE EXAMEN

1. Be still.
2. Give thanks.
3. Reflect.
4. Pray.
5. Hope.



1. BE STILL

- Become present to God's presence. Use a 'Breath Prayer' if it helps you focus – breathe in deeply and silently pray, "You are here." Then breathe out praying, "And I am with You." Do this until you are focused on God and are aware of His presence within you and around you.





2. GIVE THANKS

- Review the previous few hours of the day or night. Give thanks for each detail you can recall, each gift (ex. the taste of a meal), and even difficulty ("...another opportunity to trust You").





3. REFLECT

- How do you feel, and why? Name the emotion and give it to God. If you did something Jesus' way earlier, rejoice. If you sinned, confess and plan to make amends.





4. PRAY

- Choose either a joy or a sorrow and turn your heart toward prayer. Pray with boldness – confidence in the Father to hear and respond as He desires.





5. HOPE

- Look with hope toward the next hours. Now commit the coming hours of your day or night to the Lord, with trust and hope.





THE RESULTS

There is no hocus pocus to this – many other patterns of attentiveness to God's presence and work may function quite well.

For me, however, this simple 5 step pattern is enabling me to slowly acquire a number of spiritual life elements I've desired for decades.

Here are just a few.



INTIMACY & PRESENCE

Intimacy with Christ is sweeter; all day long we are in loving conversation. The Daily Examen is deepening my greatest desire – that of intimacy with God – and satisfying it at the same time.

Days are not passing in a blur; I'm remembering the details as I'm constantly re-approaching them with gratefulness every few hours. I'm becoming more mindful and aware of what treasures God has been sending my way.



AWARENESS & EXPECTATION

I'm becoming more self-aware; my emotions are not layering one upon another until I get to the end of a day and don't understand why I'm in the mood I'm in (or my body is feeling the way it feels).

I'm looking forward to the next moment with God; I'm actually craving the reorientation moments, and I'm not waiting for moments of euphoria or achievement to make my day worth living.



TRUST & DISCERNMENT

Worry is less common for me; trust is being revisited every few hours, and I'm not forgetting how to be a real Christian.

Discernment seems higher, quicker, and more fluid; I'm aware of God's presence, and sensing Christ leading me to say this, do this, contact this **person, make this decision.**

Scattered moving from thought to task is minimized; I'm living a quieter inner life that is less frenetic.



COMPANIONSHIP & SLEEP

Companionship with Jesus feels more real and substantial; the reality of Christ's nearness and indwelling is richer and more manifest to my mind and heart.

It helps me go to sleep as my mind focuses; I often drift off while giving thanks for the details of the day (what a great way to go to sleep).

I'm not reacting as emotionally to my circumstances; as a high "feeler" (INFP on the Myers-Briggs), this is a big deal.



BRAIN CHANGE

There are many other fruits, including the probability that my brain is changing as gratefulness becomes my psychological center and the lens through which I'm seeing life.

The science of neuroplasticity tells us that our mental habits can literally change our brain's physiology – and there are signs that is happening to some degree for me.



NEW THOUGHTS

Perhaps my neural dopamine triggers and pituitary endorphin releases are quietly changing in obedience to Christ – and a new, holy habit?

What I do know is this – old "go-to" thoughts (I've battled severe depression much of my life) are slowly dissipating as new "go-to" thoughts take their place.



LEAD YOURSELF

Jesus is preparing a Church to lead and love from the place of intimacy, passion, hope, self-awareness, a renewed heart and mind, heroism, ingenuity, love, and wisdom in a rapidly evolving world.

I believe that, both personally and corporately, formative habits like the Daily Examen will help us both lead ourselves – and then lead others – into new tomorrows of God's design.

HELPFUL?

Join my email list at:

www.DanWilt.com

for more tools on life formation and self-feeding discipleship.

Blessings on your journey into Christ,

Dan




THE DAILY EXAMEN
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