SEARCH ME O GOD
Guides for Self Examination

Taken from Search Me O God The Practice of Self-Examination, Andrew Atherstone (Grove Spirituality 87)

Prayers Before Self-examination

Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty,
you search my heart and examine my inmost thoughts.
I ask you now to help me in searching my own heart and life.
Enable me to judge myself by the standard of your Holy Word.
By your Holy Spirit show me the true state of my soul,
give me repentance for all my past sins,
heartfelt faith in Jesus Christ, the only Saviour from sin,
and deep humility before you,
for Jesus Christ's sake.
Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, who sits at the right hand of the Father,
you are exalted as Prince and Saviour,
to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.
I come to you now for these blessings.
My heart is hard and impenitent
and little concerned by my sinfulness.
Give me that broken and contrite heart which God does not despise.
By your Holy Spirit, show me myself,
and bring me back to your heavenly Father and mine.
Returning to him, may I obtain mercy
and find that he does abundantly pardon.
Amen.

Adapted from Edward Bickersteth (1786-1850)

Questions to Use During Self-examination

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (EXODUS 20:1-17)

You shall have no other gods before me
- Do I love God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength?
- Is following God my absolute top priority?
- Do I acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the only way to God?
- Am I zealous for God's glory?

You shall not make for yourself an idol
- Where do I look for comfort and pleasure?
- Would I give up everything for God (possessions, career, family, health)?
- Do I try to make God in my own image?
- Have I distorted God's good gifts into idols?
- Am I enslaved by false thinking or the world's lies about money, sex and power?

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God

- Do I always remember the privilege of knowing God's name?
- Do I have a personal, intimate relationship with God?
- Do I honour and revere God?
- Am I offended when God's name is dishonoured?
- Do I seek to give glory to God with my words and actions?

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy

- Do I thank God for the blessing of work?
- Am I obsessed by work? Does it consume my time, energy and thoughts?
- Do I set aside one full day a week to rest?
- Do I find my value in what I achieve or in who I am in Christ?
- Do I trust God to provide even if I work less?

Honour your father and your mother

- Do I put effort into family relationships?
- Do I value and respect my parents? How do I express this?
- Do I listen to my parents' wisdom or despise it?
- Do I support my parents as they grow older?
- Am I the sort of parent that my children will want to honour?

You shall not murder

- Do I highly value all human life?
- Am I ever violent or abusive?
- How do I respond when I am humiliated, insulted or treated unfairly?
- Am I grieved by my unrighteous anger? Do I ever go to sleep angry?
- Am I quick to forgive, or do I hold grudges and seek revenge?
- Do I silently condone abortion or 'assisted suicide'?

You shall not commit adultery

- Do I treat sex as a precious holy gift from God?
- If single, am I sexually abstinent? If married, am I faithful?
- Do I flirt?
- Is my thought-life pure? Do I dwell on sexual images or look at others lustfully?
- Do I resist the temptation of pornography (in films, books, magazines, the internet)?

You shall not steal

- Do I hate greed?
- Have I acquired things (however small), which rightly belong to others?
- Am I strictly honest when it comes to money (tax, loans, debts, expenses)? Am I quick to pay what I owe?
- Do I put in the hours at work?
- Do I cultivate a habit of generous giving?

You shall not give false testimony

- Do I speak only what is true, shunning exaggeration and 'spin'?
- Do I gossip? Do I flatter?
- Am I a person of my word? Do I keep my promises?
- Do I face the truth about myself, or hide behind masks and pretence?

You shall not covet

- Am I ever jealous or envious of others?
- Does God or the world shape my desires?
- Do I rejoice with thankfulness at the ways God has blessed me?
- Am I content in every situation?
- Do I practise generosity?

THE BEATITUDES (MATTHEW 5:1-12)

Am I poor in spirit?
- Do I feel my spiritual bankruptcy before God?
- Do I fight my spiritual pride?
- Am I acquainted with the depravity of my own evil heart?
- Do I receive the kingdom of heaven as an utterly undeserved gift?

Do I mourn for sin?
- Do I experience bitter sorrow at my repeated transgressions?
- Am I grieved by the world's evil?
- Do I truly appreciate the eternal consequences of sin?
- Do I rely on Christ alone for comfort?

Am I meek?
- Am I humble towards others, refusing to bully or domineer?
- Do I resist my lust for status and public recognition?
- Am I patient in the midst of difficulties?
- Do I gladly submit to God's will?

Do I hunger and thirst for righteousness?
- Do I realise my desperate lack of Christ-likeness?
- Do I have a consuming passion to be holy?
- Am I eager to be free from the power and pollution of sin?
- Do I actively promote righteousness in society?

Am I merciful?
- Am I quick to forgive or do I bear grudges?
- Do I share Christ's compassion for those in need?
- Am I actively involved in trying to relieve the miseries of others?
- Do I seek out the poor, the sick and the outcast?

Am I pure in heart?
- Am I whole-hearted in my devotion to God?
- Do I flee all temptations to impurity?
- Am I concerned for heart-righteousness rather than religious observance?
- Am I utterly sincere with no deceit or pretence?

Am I a peacemaker?
- Do I bring friends to Christ, that they might find peace with God?
- Am I quick to promote harmony, avoiding all dissensions?
- Do I actively seek to unite those who are divided?
- Do I work for reconciliation between communities, families and churches?

Am I persecuted because of righteousness?
- Is the only offence I give because of my loyalty to Christ?
- Is my lifestyle distinctive for holiness?
- Do I rejoice with gladness at persecution and slander against me?
- Am I seeking an earthly or a heavenly reward?

THE GOSPEL (ROMANS 1:16-18)
- Am I humbled before God's grace and holiness?
- Have I deeply felt my corruption and guilt before God, deserving his wrath?
- Am I grieved by my sin?
- Do I recognise the danger I am in without Christ?
- Do I recognize my inability to save myself or am I trying to earn merit with God?
- Do I know and believe that the gospel is the only way of salvation?

- Do I rely on Jesus Christ as my only Saviour?
- Have I actually turned from my sin and put my faith in Christ?
- Am I seeking righteousness as a gift from God?
- Am I truly grateful to God for saving me?
- Do I show this by a desire to be holy and please him in all things?
- Am I ever ashamed of the gospel? Do I stand up for the gospel in all situations?

LOVE (1 CORINTHIANS 13)

- Do I count love as the best and greatest gift?
- Are my life and relationships characterised by self-sacrificial love?
- Do I imitate the love of Christ?
- Am I patient and long-suffering?
- Am I kind? Do I 'go the extra mile'?
- Am I envious or do I celebrate when good things happen to others?
- Am I boastful? Am I puffed up with my own importance? Am I proud?
- Am I rude?
- Am I self-seeking? Do I demand my rights and put my own interests first?
- Am I easily angered? Do I look for the best in other people or magnify their weaknesses?
- Do I keep a record of wrongs, or am I quick to forgive?
- Do I reject evil and rejoice when truth prevails?
- Do I always protect, always trust, always hope, and always persevere?
- Am I grieved that I show so little of this love?
- Is it my constant aim to possess more of this great gift that never fails? Do I pray for it and work at it?
- Do I thank Christ for his overwhelming love for me – a love shown by his willingness to die on the cross for my sake?

EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY WISDOM (JAMES 3:13-18)

- Where am I looking for wisdom – to God or to the world's ideas?
- Do I deny the truth of God's word through my actions?
- Do I harbour bitter envy or selfish ambition?
- Am I overly concerned for my position, my dignity, my rights?
- Do I contribute to disorder, hurt or division?
- Am I humble or inclined to boast?
- Am I pure, like Jesus Christ?
- Am I peace-loving?
- Am I considerate, gracious, and tolerant?
- Am I submissive and teachable?
- Am I full of mercy and good fruit?
- Am I compassionate and quick to forgive?
- Am I impartial or double-minded?
- Am I sincere? Does my private life match my public image?
- Do I earnestly desire righteousness?
- Can God's wisdom be seen in the way I live my life?

THE CHRISTIAN GRACES (2 PETER 1:3-7)

- Am I seeking to live by God's power or in my own strength?
- Do I receive God's promises in the Bible as trustworthy and true?
- Do I treat them as very great and precious?
- Have they changed my heart?
- Have they led me to flee the corruption in the world and all evil desires?
- Have I put my faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation?
- Am I making every effort to add to my faith in all Christian graces?
- Have I added Christ-like goodness? Do I demonstrate this by my actions?
- Have I added knowledge? Do I read, think and discuss as a Christian?
- Have I added self-control? Do I restrain my natural appetites and desires?
- Have I added perseverance? Do I keep going despite difficulties and opposition?

- Have I added godliness? Do I walk closely with Christ?
- Have I added brotherly kindness? Do I show care for my fellow Christians?
- Have I added love? Do I love as Christ loves?

Confessions After Self-examination

Lord God,
I have sinned against you;
I have done evil in your sight.
I am sorry and repent, in particular of _____
Have mercy on me according to your love.
Wash away my wrongdoing and cleanse me from my sin.
Renew a right spirit within me
And restore me to the joy of your salvation,
Through Jesus Christ my Lord.
Amen

Adapted from Common Worship

O most mighty God, merciful Father,
who has compassion on all people and hates nothing you have made,
who does not desire the death of a sinner,
but rather that we should turn from our sin and be saved,
mercifully forgive my wrongdoing.
In particular I repent of _____
I am grieved and weighed down with the burden of my sins:
receive and comfort me.
Your nature is always to have mercy,
only you can forgive sins.
Spare me good Lord, who you have redeemed,
do not bring your servant into judgement.
I acknowledge my wickedness and truly repent of my sin:
turn your anger from me and come quickly to save me,
that I may live with you forever,
through Jesus Christ my Lord.
Amen

Adapted from the Book of Common Prayer