

# The Great Annual Examen

Reflecting BACK on the past 12 months and anticipating the NEXT 12 months

by Stephen W. Smith <https://www.pottersinn.com/articles/ze2mmwjtj54t86slz2tcrrhfz49ty>

## Section One: General Examination of My Life

These 10 questions will help prime the pump for you to be reflective and mindful of your past year

1. What are the most important events that have happened to me or in me this past year?
2. What are the greatest breakthroughs in any category of my life this past year? (physical, emotionally, relationally, vocationally, spiritually, with other people)
3. What has been my greatest struggle in my life this past year?
4. What has been my greatest and deepest loss this past year?
5. What has been the area that has consumed my thinking, attention and focus this past year? (health, relationship, future, etc)
6. Where have I felt most vulnerable in my life? (What area of your life do you feel the most naked, susceptible, and exposed?)
7. Where I have I most experienced the presence of God this past year and why?
8. In the past 12 months, where I have experienced the greatest sense of consolation (peace, happiness, contentment, shalom, serenity, beauty, etc).

9. In the past 12 months, what area of my life has given me the most desolation (pre-occupation, distress, sadness, depression, anxiety, fear, brutality, etc)

10. What ONE word would tend to sum up this past year?

## Section Two: Five Categories of My Life

### 1. My physical health:

List five words that describe my physical condition and well-being this past year.

How many hours of sleep can I honestly say I get each night? (8 is recommended).

What choices have you given attention to regarding your health this past 12 months?

What specific goals do you want to achieve in the future 12 months? (better blood pressure, weight management, exercise, etc)

### 2. My Emotional Health

List five FEELINGS that you believe had dominated (positive or negative from your perspective) your life this past year:

What were you doing; who were you doing this with and where were you physically when you believe you were the HAPPIEST this past year:

What were you doing; who were you doing this with and where were you when you experienced the greatest feeling of SADNESS this past year:

What area of your life gives you the greatest sense of internal stress?

How do you feel about your emotional well-being this past year?

### 3. My Vocational Health

List five words which best describe your job/vocation/career?

This past year, have you lived to work or worked to live? Circle one or the other.

How are you feeling about your vocational journey:

I want to make a change this next year.

I want to continue as I am and just as I am.

I would like to use this next year to study and prepare for a vocational change.

I want to reassess and evaluate my vocational journey this next year.

I want to re-position myself in regard to my work this next year.

I believe I work \_\_\_\_\_ hours a week. Next year, I would like to work \_\_\_\_\_ hours a week. To do this, I will need to:

Is your job right now giving you a sense of contentment and satisfaction? Why or why not?

### 4. My Relational Health

List the names of people who have been life-giving to you this past year:

Give a letter grade to your over-all sense of having community—a sense of sharing life with a few other people. A-Excellent, B-Very good. C-Average D-Really lacking in friends

If your life style and work schedule and present realities conducive to having the relationships you feel you both want and need. Explain more in a few sentences.

## 5. My Spiritual Health

List five words that would describe your spiritual health: (distant, intimate, excellent, very poor, no time for God, etc)

How would you describe your prayer life this past year?

How do you feel about how you have worshipped this past year?

Describe how you are feeling about your church experience:

What feels lacking to you in terms of your relationship with God?

How has your image of God changed or matured this past year?

List five words that would characterize your image of God?

How has your relationship with God been challenged this past year?

What are the 3 most important spiritual take-a-ways from this past year that you never want to forget:

Where was your deepest spiritual struggle—the place of the greatest wrestling with God or the place of your deepest lament?

What people do you feel the most spiritually connected to in your life:

### Prayer of Gratitude:

End your time of The Annual Great Examen in a time of prayer. Express your heart in gratitude for all the specific things, events, people, and growth you've experienced or witnessed. Be specific in your thanksgiving. Consider doing a Prayer of Gratitude using an acrostic of G-R-A-T-I-T-U-D-E. With each letter of GRATITUDE, express thanks for something specific. Example: G- I am grateful for my sister G-loria.

## Prayer for the Future Year:

Spend some moments asking for God's blessing on the future 12 months.

Consider praying the beautiful prayer of Thomas Merton:

My Lord God,  
I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me.  
I cannot know for certain where it will end.  
nor do I really know myself,  
and the fact that I think I am following your will  
does not mean that I am actually doing so.  
But I believe that the desire to please you  
does in fact please you.  
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.  
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.  
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,  
though I may know nothing about it.  
Therefore will I trust you always though  
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.  
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,  
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.