

Examination of Conscience (Complied by Abbot Oscar Joseph, PhD, DST, OCCO)

As you reflect upon this self- examination, ask the Lord to grant you the virtues, contrary your vices (sins). For example if you struggle with purity ask for courage, strength, patience, discipline and charity!

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT I am the LORD your God, You shall have no other gods before me.

Have I sinned against Religion by seriously believing in New Age, Scientology, Astrology, Horoscopes, Fortune-telling, Superstition or engaging in the Occult? Did I endanger my Faith or cause scandal by associating with anti-Christian groups & associations (e.g., the Freemasons)? Have fame, fortune, money, career, pleasure, etc. replaced God as my highest priority? Have I neglected my daily prayers? Have I performed my duties towards God reluctantly or grudgingly? Did I seriously doubt in matters of Faith? Do you worship the “false gods” of status, consumerism or peer approval? Do you ignore or avoid old friends in order to be part of the popular crowd? Do you make unreasonable demands on your parents for clothes or money, or feel no responsibility to save for your college education? Do you give support to your peers when they tell racial or ethnic jokes? Do you feel indifferent toward the poor and thinking them “losers” by social standards? Do you find it hard to see the value in those who are different from you?

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.

Have I committed blasphemy by using the name of God and Jesus Christ to swear rather than to praise? Have I committed sacrilege by showing disrespect to holy objects (cross or crucifix) or contempt for religious persons (bishop, priests, deacons, pastors, women religious) or for sacred places (in Church). Have I neglected to support the Church and the poor by sharing my time, talent and treasure? Did I do my best to fulfill the vows, promises, and resolution, which I made to God? Did I break private or public vows? Do you use language that you would never speak in front of your grandmother? Is this choice prompted by the violence of the vocabulary, its low opinion of others, its insulting character?

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Did I miss going to Church on any Sunday? (Bad weather and being sick do not count) Have I shown disrespect by leaving Church early, or arriving late, not paying attention or not joining in the prayers? Did I do unnecessary work on Sunday, which could have been done the day before? Have I been stingy in my support for the Church? Do I give of my time & talent?

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

Parents: Have I set a bad example for my children by casually missing Church, neglecting prayer, or ignore my responsibility to provide a Christian education? Do I show little or no interest in my children’s faith and practice of it? Have I showed disrespect for those in authority, government or church? Have I not expressed my moral values to them?

Children: Have I been disobedient and/or disrespectful to my parents or guardians? Did I neglect to help them with household chores? Have I caused them unnecessary worry and anxiety by my attitude, behavior, moods, etc.? Did I feel hurt and react proudly when I was corrected by them? Did I quarrel with my brothers and sisters?

Do you thank your parents for what they do for you? Do you offer to help around the house or do you see yourself as a guest? If your parents are divorced, separated or widowed, do you try to understand their pain

or loneliness? Why do you try to impress others and yet have little sense of the needs of those in your family?

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT You shall not kill.

Did I consent, recommend, advise, approve, support or have an abortion? Did I actively or passively cooperate with an act of euthanasia whereby ordinary means were stopped or means taken to directly end the life of an elderly or sick person? Have I committed an act of violence or abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or verbal)? Have I endangered the lives of others by reckless driving or by driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol? Do I show contempt for my body by neglecting to take care of my own health? Have I been mean or unjust to anyone? Have I held a grudge or sought revenge against someone who wronged me? Do I point out others' faults and mistakes while ignoring my own? Do I complain more than I compliment? Am I ungrateful for what other people do for me? Do I tear people down rather than encourage them? Am I prejudiced against people because of their color, language or ethnic-religious background? Why do you feel the need to control or humiliate someone you claim to care about? Did I easily get angry or lose my temper? Am I envious or jealous of others? How many persons have I lead to sin? Did I get drunk or take prohibited drugs or misuse drugs? When someone offends me, do I desire revenge, harbor enmity, hatred, or ill-feelings? Did I ask pardon whenever I offended anyone? Did I insult or tease others?

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT You shall not commit adultery.

Do you use other persons for your own selfish pleasure? Do you lie to get sex or force others to act against their values? Do you see sex as a way to be popular or to rebel against your parents? Did I entertain indecent thoughts? Did I consent to evil desires against the virtue of purity, even though I may not have carried them out? Did I engage in or start impure conversations? Do I take care of those details of modesty and decency, which are the safeguards of purity? Did I lead others to sins of impurity or immodesty? Did I masturbate? Do I have friendships which are habitual occasions of sin? Do I degrade human love by confusing it with selfishness or pleasure? Did I engage in sexual acts with others that were sinful?

(For married people) Did I make improper use of marriage? Did I deprive my spouse of his/her marital right? Did I betray conjugal fidelity in desire or in deed? Did I use birth control after new life had been conceived (IUD, morning after pills, abortion)?

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT You shall not steal.

Do you cheat on tests or homework assignments? Do you ever shoplift or take things belonging to other students? Did I steal any object or money? Did I cause damage to an others property? Did I harm anyone by deception, fraud, or coercion in business contracts or transactions? Did I spend beyond my means? Do I give alms according to my capacity? Did I neglect to pay my debts? Did I retain things found or stolen? Did I desire to steal? Am I diligent in my work and studies or do I give in to laziness or love of comfort? Was I greedy? Do I have an excessively materialistic view of life?

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT You shall not bear false witness.

Have I told a lie in order to deceive someone? Have I told the truth with the purpose and intention of ruining someone's reputation (sin of detraction)? Have I told a lie or spread rumors, which may ruin someone's reputation (sin of calumny or slander)? Did I commit perjury by false swearing an oath on the Bible? Am I

a busybody or do I love to spread gossip and secrets about others? Do I love to hear bad news about my enemies? Can you be trusted to keep a confidence after you promise? Do you lie to protect your own ego, even if someone will be hurt?

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT You shall not desire for another's spouse.

Did I have any sex before or outside of marriage? Do I view pornographic material (magazines, videos, internet, hot-lines)? Have I gone to massage parlors or adult bookstores? Did I commit the sins of masturbation and/or artificial contraception? Have I not avoided the occasions of sin (persons or places) which would tempt me to be unfaithful to my spouse or to my own chastity? Do I encourage and entertain impure thoughts and desires? Do I tell or listen to dirty jokes? Have I committed fornication or adultery?

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT You shall not desire for another's goods.

Have I stolen any object, committed any shoplifting or cheated anyone of their money? Did I knowingly deceive someone in business or commit fraud? Have I shown disrespect or even contempt for other people's property? Have I done any acts of vandalism? Am I greedy or envious of another's goods? Do I let financial and material concerns or the desire for comfort override my duty to God, to Church, to my family or my own spiritual well-being? Are you envious of others? Do you resent their popularity or success? Do you feel you have to put others down in order to feel better about yourself? Do you resent your parents when they tell you that they cannot afford to buy the things that you feel you need to keep up with your friends?

Personal reflection:

When you read these questions, do you feel unmoved or unaware that such a question touches on your spiritual condition? Do you want to excuse yourself from responsibility for your answers? Do you find yourself thinking of ways to change your attitudes or behaviors so that your answers reflect your deepest beliefs?

If you find yourself resolving to be more loving, you are basically healthy. If you become aware of ways that you treat others as possessions or have deliberately damaged the reputation of others,

this is a moment of grace for admitting poor moral "health" and praying for the strength to seek help.

Hindrances To Answered Prayer

Prayer Portions, by Sylvia Gunter)

Prepare your heart for prayer. Desire to commune intimately with holy God, and don't allow the adversary to hinder that sweet and powerful fellowship with unconfessed sin.

1. Pride, refusing to humble oneself— 2 Chron. 7:14, Job 35:12-13, Isa. 57:15, 1 Pet. 5:5-6. Luke 18:9-14. Do you recognize who your awesome God is and who you are?
2. Selfishness — Jam. 4:3, John 3:30. He must increase. I must decrease. None of me, all of Him.
3. Unforgiveness — Mat. 6:14-15, Mark 11:25-26 Do you want God's glory more than you want to hold on to unforgiveness and bitterness in any relationship? Take care of any situation that God brings to your mind in His prompt and appropriate timing and way.
4. Unbelief — Mat. 17:20, Mark 9:23, 11 •22-24; Heb. 11:6. Unbelief blinds your eyes and stops your ears to spiritual things.
5. Disobedience to God — 1 Pet. 3:12, Psa. 145:19, Pro. 15:29. Will you obey instantly and completely, whatever the cost?
- 6 Refusing to hear God's voice or His truth — Pro. 28:9, 8:33-35; Zee. 7:13.
7. Unconfessed sin— John 9:31,1 John 1:7, 9; Isa. 1:15. The Great Physician will not cure while you conceal symptoms.
- 8 Cherished sin (confessed but not forsaken) — Psa. 66:18, Isa. 59:1-2, Pro. 28:13.
9. Marital or family discord or dishonor — 1 Pet. 3:7,1 John 4:20. Do you have wrong attitudes or broken relationships? Is there a breach in the extended family?
10. Idolatry — 1 John 5:21, Eze. 14:3, 20:31. Covetousness is idolatry. Family, money, home, career, people, or esteem of others can be idols. Is there anything which takes God's first place in your affections?
- 11 Worry and anxiety — Phi. 4:6-7, Mat. 6:26-33. Reflect on your current conflicts, problems, concerns, or frustrations. Make a "casting your cares" list (1 Pet. 5:7). List anything that is interrupting your peace. Let God examine each item with you. Either it is past and beyond your control, therefore you can do nothing to resolve it, and it is under God's grace; or it is future and cannot be handled right now, and it is under His sovereignty.
12. Not asking — Jam. 4:2.
13. Wrong motives —Jam. 4:3.
14. Not asking according to God's will — 1 John 5:14-15.
15. Doubting and double-mindedness —Jam. 1:5-8.
16. Hypocrisy—Mat. 6:5.
17. Vain repetition — Mat. 6:7.
18. Discouragement — Luke 18:1-8. Failure to persevere at God's direction.
19. Judging others —Isa. 58:9, Mat. 7:1-5.
20. Speaking wickedly of others — Pro. 8:6-8, 13; Tit. 3:2.
21. Forsaking God — 2 Chron. 15:2.
22. Provoking God — Deu. 3:26.
23. Hard-heartedness—Zee. 7:12-13.
24. Failing to help the poor — Mat. 25:31-46, Psa. 72, Isa. 58:6-10, Pro. 21:13.

As you use this checklist for getting on praying ground, think about Psalm 24:3-6 and 27:4, 8. Wait on God to reveal His presence. Receive God's forgiveness and cleansing. Prepare your heart for intercession by praising and worshiping Him from the Psalms. (Start with Psalm 103.)

Adapted from the late Dr. R. G. Lee and my former Lydia Fellowship prayer partner Jill Wiegand.