

Why Taking a Year-End Spiritual Inventory Will Help You Follow God More Fully

When I was in high school, I worked in the toy department of a department store. Twice a year, we prepared for an outside firm to take inventory. We worked with these teams to count every item on the shelves, and I do mean *every* item. We even included incomplete or damaged toys and games to ensure everything was counted.

Today, I apply the concept of taking inventory in other areas of life. For example, before I head out to the supermarket, I examine the pantry and the refrigerator to determine what we need. On those occasions when I forget this important step, the result is too many of some groceries and not enough of others.

What was good for the toy department and for my pantry is also good for my spiritual life. I need to take spiritual inventory on a regular basis to evaluate my condition. The end of one year and the beginning of another seems to be the right time to ask myself some pointed questions. This week I am:

Taking Stock

Proverbs 27:23 (NIV) tells us to “Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds.” In biblical times, wealth was often measured by the size of one’s flocks and herds.

Today we usually measure wealth by the size of our bank accounts. But true wealth has nothing to do with counting dollars. So I will be asking myself:

—How have I grown in my relationship with the Lord this past

year?

–Which fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) have I cultivated?

–How have my earthly relationships grown and developed?

Checking Up

Psalm 139:23 gives us a glimpse into King David's heart as he pleaded with God: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts."

It's natural to want to avoid dealing with unpleasant things. But some things must be dealt with or the consequences will be worse than the confrontation! I may not want to face the areas of my life that require changing, but I do want to be all God desires for me to be. This means asking:

–What habits from the old year am I dragging into the new year?

–What bitterness or resentment do I need to release?

–Who do I need to forgive before the new year begins?

Planning for the New Year

Proverbs 16:3 (NASB) admonishes us, "Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established."

Like many people, I live a busy life. Without plans and lists, my schedule would soon fall apart. But I also want to be sensitive to God's plans for me, because I know He has them!

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) reminds me, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." While this promise is specifically for the nation of Israel, the applicable truth for me today is that God does, indeed, lead me according to His best for my life. The question is, am I following His leading so I can experience His best for me?

In order to be available for what God desires for me, I am asking myself:

–Am I serving where *I* want to serve or where God has *called* me to serve?

–How tightly am I holding on to my own agenda and ambitions?

–How much flexibility is there in my calendar? Am I open to God's interruptions?

One year from now, I hope to do this exercise again. And it's my prayer that I will not have wasted the time God extended to me.

What questions are you asking yourself as this year ends and the new year begins? {eo}

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