

EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

At year's end and at its beginning

Surveying our walk with Christ and charting a course for spiritual growth

Think of this as an exercise in taking a year-end inventory of your life and cultivating the spiritual soil for an abundant harvest in the year ahead.

Taking stock of your spiritual life

Get out your 2012 calendar, your journal, your Bible and your check register. Slowly, soberly look through them and take stock.

Bible

- Make an inventory of the books of the Bible you read through in 2012. How much of the Bible did you read? Did you start the year with a reading plan? Did you follow it? Did you finish it? If not, when do you stop and why?
- Take stock of the Bible studies you attended, participated in or did individually in 2012. What did God teach you? How did God conform you more fully to His will through the examination and apprehension of His Word in your life?
- Look through your sermon notes. What did you learn from the proclamation of the Word in the past year?

Calendar

- Count up the number of days you spent intentionally alone in Sabbath with the Lord.
- Count up the Sundays you were in worship.
- Count up the holidays you actually set aside as holy unto the Lord.
- Count up the investments of time, talent and resources you made advancing God's Kingdom purposes through mission work or Christian service.
- Count up the divine appointments you kept along the way as you walked day by day, moment by moment, with the Lord your God.

Check register

- Do an honest accounting of your financial giving to the Church and to explicitly Christian ministries.

Reflect

Read Galatians 5:22-25:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

- Do an honest fruit inspection. Where is there evidence of each fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life?
- Was the 2012 harvest of righteousness greater than 2011? 2010?
- Can you see evidence of growth in grace and production of righteousness in your life?
- Where is pruning needed that greater growth might occur in the year ahead?

Journal

- Write it all down in your journal as an accounting before the Lord for 2012. Spend time praying about the “return” God received over the past year from His investment in you.
- What verse or story from Scripture was really your life verse in 2012? Now, turning the page, consider what verse you desire to live into in 2013?

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Spiritual planning for abundance in 2013

Get a 2013 calendar, a blank journal, a new check register, your Bible and a pen with indelible ink.

Write your life verse, the verse you desire to whole-heartedly live into in 2013, on the front page of your journal and on the blank space that appears before the numbered days of each month on the calendar.

As you make plans for the year ahead, consider your plan for monthly, weekly and daily exercises in discipleship. Make a Bible reading plan. Plan for real Sabbath time. Plan for authentic worship. Plan for genuine times of retreat and holy-days (times that are set apart as holy unto the Lord). This is not vacation or recreation; this is Sabbath rest with the Lord your God. Plan for real Christian fellowship with believers who will sharpen you and hold you to account. Plan when and where you will invest yourself in Christian service and pray that the Lord will make you aware of the divine appointments He has already set.

Consider that whatever else you “do” in 2013 your real calling is a moment-by-moment, obedient, faithful walk in the Spirit that leads to a life worthy of bearing the name of Christ into the world.

Consider setting a goal for 2013 of living into and up to Ephesians 4:1-3 and II Thessalonians 1:11-12.

Expect of yourself to actively and intentionally:

- Seek to have the mind of Christ in all things
- Seek to manifest the spirit of Christ in all situations
- Seek to demonstrate the manner of Christ in every moment
- Seek to advance the Kingdom of Christ in all that you say and do – and in the way you do it

In order to do that, you’re going to need a plan.

Cultivate the mind of Christ.

- a mind set on the agenda of the Father: Luke 22:41-43
- a mind set on things that are above: Colossians 3:1-2
- a mind that cultivates a Biblical worldview: Romans 12:1-2
- vigilant attention to what’s on your mind: II Corinthians 10:5b

Cultivate the manner of Christ: become a person of prayer and humble service

- honor God; humble self; serve selflessly: Philippians 2:1-11
- make prayer your practice and discipline: Matthew 6:6, 14:23; Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 22:39-41
- pray with confidence and belief: Matthew 21:22, 7:7-11, Mark 9:28-29, 11:24, John 14:13-14, 15:7, 15:16, 16:23-24
- pray with thanksgiving and in song: Matthew 11:25, 26:30; Mark 14:26,
- pray before meals: Mark 6:41, Mark 8:7, 14:22, Luke 24:30
- pray submissively, ardently and without ceasing: Luke 22:39-46

Cultivate the spirit of Christ

- be holy: I Peter 1:13-16
- bear good fruit: Galatians 2:19-26

Hone your witness to Christ

- His name and reputation are at stake: I Peter 2:11-12
- You are a signpost, pointing to Christ: Matthew 5:16; Philipians 2:14-16
- You are Christ’s ambassador: II Corinthians 5:14-21
- You are a witness, bearing testimony on the stand: Acts 1:8; Hebrews 12:1-3

Colossians 3:17 reads:

“Whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.”

At the end of each day, take stock.

At the end of each week, take stock.

At the end of each month, take stock.

At the end of each quarter write up a report to the Lord. Give Him an accounting for the return on His investment in you.

At the end of next year, the harvest of righteousness will be abundant!