

WHAT WILL YOUR NEW YEAR LOOK LIKE?

By Robert J. Tamasy

What will 2014 look like for you? Asking the question another way, how would you *desire* for it to look?

The first question is difficult, even impossible to answer since it involves so many variables: World, national and local economic factors; changes within the specific industry where you work; decisions made – or not made – that have unanticipated outcomes. On the personal level it is much the same: Unexpected influences and events; circumstances beyond your control; hopes unfulfilled.

The second question, however, is much easier to answer. We can identify plans, hopes and dreams for the coming year, some based on the past, others defined by what we would want to happen. But the reality is, important things usually do not happen on their own. We must take initiative to bring them about. One of the best ways for doing this is by setting goals.

My friend, Gary Highfield, in his book, *When 'Want To' Becomes 'Have To!'*, tells his story of overcoming great hardship to build a successful career as a businessman and entrepreneur. One of the keys to his success, Gary explains, was setting goals – and continually reminding himself about them. He offers some sound suggestions:

- Focus on where you *want* to be, not on where you are.
- Do not wait for things to change. Be the change agent.
- Goals do not care who possesses them. Goals like everyone – even you.
- Do not just think about goals. Write them down. Then, carry them everywhere you go.
- It does not matter how long it takes to get to where you want to go. But the sooner you get started, the sooner you will get there.
- Get ready – and stay ready. Then you will not have to start getting ready when your opportunity of a lifetime comes along.

In the Bible's timeless book of Proverbs we also see the wisdom of planning and setting goals:

Who is the ultimate focus of your goals? Most goals are established for ourselves, people we know, or our businesses. The Bible says even if those are good, we should set our sights even higher – for serving and pleasing God. "*Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed*" (Proverbs 16:3).

Be flexible, willing to change course if needed. One of the best things about goals is in pursuing them we get into motion. But we need willingness to change plans and shift direction if circumstances dictate. "*In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps*" (Proverbs 16:9)

Understand we can be God's instruments for doing His work. We can be diligent in formulating and articulating our goals and plans, but have you ever considered God has specific intentions for the work He has called His people to do – even in the so-called "secular workplace"? "*Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails*" (Proverbs 19:21). "*A man's steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his own way?*" (Proverbs 20:24).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What would you like 2014 to look like – for yourself, your family, your job, or your business? At this point, would you consider your hopes reasonable? Why or why not?

2. How good are you at setting goals? If you establish goals, how do you go about trying to pursue them? Do you write them down, or review them regularly?

3. Do you agree with the suggestion that we should focus on where we want to be, rather than where we are right now? Why or why not?

4. What are your thoughts about involving God in your planning and goal-setting process? Do you think God even cares about your goals? Explain your answer.

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to review some other passages that relate to this topic, consider the following verses:

Proverbs 3:5-6, 16:33, 21:30,21:31, 27:1; Matthew 6:25-34, 7:7-12