

THE NEW YEAR IS ALMOST HERE – ARE YOU READY?**By Robert J. Tamasy**

As we anticipate the beginning of a new calendar year, it is typical for many of us to want to glance back and assess the year nearly past. How was 2023 for you? Was it a time of excitement, success, and achievement; a difficult year filled with challenges and adversity, or a mixture of both?

For years it has been my custom to reflect on the passing year, noting its highs and lows, the joyous moments and the times of sadness or discouragement. I find this a helpful opportunity for smiling again over happy events and accomplishments; remembering and learning from mistakes made; and saying one last goodbye to opportunities that were lost. Even those, put in perspective, can become reasons to “Rejoice always,” as 1 Thessalonians 5:16 urges us to do.

Gazing back on days past can be useful, but dwelling on them for too long can be counterproductive. As the apostle Paul wrote, “...one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:13-14). Paul did not have amnesia over his regretful past, but determined the best way to serve the Lord was to remain forward-looking in both mind and mission.

As we prepare for the new year, either hoping for a fresh start or the continuation of things that were going well, the Bible offers wisdom on how we can best proceed:

Plan with anticipation, but not with worry. In our planning, we sometimes fret over things like, ‘What if this happens?’ or, ‘What if that does not happen?’ Such worry can lead to what some call the “paralysis of analysis.” Jesus Christ admonished His followers to trust in God’s provision rather than becoming consumed by worry. “Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?... Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” (Matthew 6:25-27).

Plan with the right priorities. The planning process often involves determining what is most important and pursuing that, with everything else in proper perspective. As we trust God to provide for all we need – people, resources, opportunities – it is important to put Him foremost in our thinking, relying on Him to guide our steps and decision-making. “But seek first [God’s] kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33). “Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed” (Proverbs 16:3).

Plan with the unexpected in mind. The problem with planning is circumstances do not always align with what we have planned. Doors of opportunities slam shut; others open unexpectedly. Trusting in the Lord’s sovereign direction helps to relieve stress. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

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Plan with the counsel of others. When we plan in a vacuum, relying only on our own ideas and insights, we can fail to see problems with our thinking or potential challenges we could confront. Trusted advisors can help us refine our ideas as well as avoid serious errors in judgment. “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed” (Proverbs 15:22)..

© 2023. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A. Stoddard.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you taken time to reflect on the year that is nearly ended? What conclusions have you made? What were the high points for you – and some of the lows? Do you tend to spend too much time looking back, especially at things you wish you had done differently?
2. When do you start planning for the next calendar year? Is your planning elaborate and extensive? Do you write down specific goals and objectives? Explain your answers.
3. What role – if any – does your relationship with God play in how you develop your plans for the future? Do you believe faith and spirituality should even play a part in the pragmatic process of planning? Why or why not?
4. Do you consider yourself a worrier, someone who feels anxious in looking toward the unknown future? If so, how do you deal with it? How would you counsel someone else who often feels fearful or apprehensive?

CHALLENGE

Involving God in the planning process can seem daunting, especially if you haven't done that before. It might be helpful to consider passages from the Bible that relate to planning, guidance, and decision-making. It is also helpful to have one or more individuals whom you trust to serve as sounding boards who will offer important feedback for plans you formulate. A Trusted Advisors group or Young Professionals who share your values could be especially useful. If you have a CBMC team in your area, it could assist you in joining such a group.

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Psalm 37:3-7; Proverbs 11:14, 16:9, 19:20; Philippians 4:6-7; Colossians 3:17,23-24

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