

Year End Inventory!



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► Introduction:

- I. When I was a youngster, my grand-mother owned a ladies' clothing store on the court square in Waverly and of course my mom worked there as well.
 - A. And as you can imagine, a bored youngster, me, spent an extended period of time at this particular location.
 - B. Usually, I roamed around town until I spent too long of a time away from mother and she came looking for me, or I simply sat and watched all the ladies coming in and out of the store and hoped that they would drag their kids with them so that I could be with them.
 - C. Yet, this time of the year was always different!
 1. Between Christmas and New Year's, my Grand-mother would start the inventory process of the store.
 2. Now, understand that this was before bar codes and scanning equipment that basically keeps a constant inventory at all times. This was when you literally counted everything in the store by hand.
 3. And because this was such a formidable task then everyone in our family participated.
 4. Since I was the youngest, my partner in helping fulfill the inventory was my mom.

a. It was my job to write down the number of items that mother would call out with the four horizontal lines and then the fifth line crossing diagonal across the other four.

b. I was a pro at counting by fives!

II. The end of the year is generally the time that most companies and businesses take inventory.

A. You can understand this helps stores and companies gain important information concerning their business.

B. They can determine what they have, what they are lacking. They can know what was really a popular item and what the people did not like. They can determine how much their inventory is worth plus how much they will have to pay in taxes. They learn what areas will need added attention in the new year.

C. It would be a foolish and risky decision to neglect such a helpful and informative introspection.

► III. And such is equally true concerning our lives as Christians.

A. We need from time to time to do a self-examination. We need to do take the time to do a spiritual inventory

B. Paul on one occasion related that necessity to examine ourselves.

II Corinthians 13:5

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.”

C. As we come to the end of 2015... and can you believe this year is almost gone... let us take the time to look within ourselves and take a spiritual inventory of our lives.

Discussion:

► I. I suggest that we first begin by taking a spiritual inventory concerning our prayer life!

A. We need to simply begin this part of our inventory by asking the penetrating question: “Per day, how many marks would be on your inventory sheet for the prayers you say?”

1. I hope that each and every one of us would an amazing amount of tallies, however sadly I am afraid that we do not take the time nor make the effort to pray to Deity as we should.
 2. We can learn a lot about our faith and spiritual condition with God simply by examining our prayer life.
- B. Some of you might have had some difficulties this year for which you offered some fervent and heart felt prayers to God.
1. Time of possibly sickness, financial problems, loss of a loved, and other difficulties are indeed certainly good times to speak to God.
 2. The best part of prayer at these times is that God desires that we come to Him in times of weaknesses, illnesses, heartaches and struggles.
- I Peter 5:7
 “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”
3. I can remember particular prayers that I have had when such was the case. I remember them because they were so intense and a time I needed God intensely.
 4. Indeed God cares for us and when we are distressed this is an excellent time to speak to our Father in Heaven. **However**, if this is the only time we talk to God then we are only using Him, not having a personal relationship with Him.
 5. If I can be so bold, if you look at your inventory sheet concerning your prayer life and you recognize that the only times you utter a prayer to God was when you were at some type of distress, then there are some serious changes that you need to make in your life.
- C. Desiring to pray to God should be an all-day event!
1. We need to develop an attitude of heart that is more than just, I should pray every day; our attitude ought to be I want to pray multiple times every day.
 2. I love talking to Randa and the kids! I love communicating to them as much as is possible. Sometimes it might be just causal conversations and other times it might be rather important and even intense dialogue, yet I still love speaking with them and look forward to do such.

3. Should that not be the same with God? Folks, we ought to want to talk to our Father, our Lord, as much as possible.
4. Paul related that we ought to “pray without ceasing.” (I Thessalonians 5:17) This means that praying ought to become habitual, that we are praying so much that it simply a normal every day routine.
 - a. Should we not want to talk to God and tell him about our day and how thankful we are for the blessings in our day?
 - b. Should we not want to talk to God when we have a difficult day. Maybe things are not going has we hoped or planned?
 - c. Should we not want to talk to God when times do become intense and we do not know where else to turn?
 - d. The answer to these questions is absolutely, we ought to talk to God without ceasing!
- D. So, the first question in our inventory concerning prayer is a tough one, for all of us because no matter how much we pray, there is always room for improvement. Remember that “...the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” (James 5:16)

- II. The second category in which we need to take a spiritual inventory relates to our Bible study habits!
- A. Now, the minister in charge of the Education Department you knew this one was coming! Yet, we do need to ask ourselves how much time did we spend this year in Bible study?
 - B. I will begin with encouraging you to be part of our Bible classes on Sunday, Wednesday, and other times that are offered.
 1. A few weeks ago we honored those that teach and assist in our Bible class program and indeed they deserve our praise, because there are so many good people doing some amazing things in teaching our children and we older as well.
 2. I know that there are many of you that are hindered with health issues and other difficulties and God understands your hearts and desire to be together when his word is being studied.

3. Yet, if you just simply do not care, and any excuse is a good one for not coming to Bible class, then let me encourage you to recognize that such is an testimony of your faith.
 4. The message of God ought to be so precious to us that nothing would hold us back from the opportunity to learn from it and apply its message in our lives.
- C. Yet, let me take it a step further; it is so wonderful as a Bible teacher to see that their students have studied before coming to class.
1. So in your spiritual inventory ask yourself the question: “How much time do I study God’s word every day?”
 - a. One preacher asked this question to the congregation and then he quickly added that Sunday morning and Wednesday night Bible classes do not count!
 - b. So if the regular Bible classes do not count, then how much time did you spend studying your Bibles?
 2. Paul directed Timothy and us to diligently study God’s word so that we can be approved by God

II Timothy 2:15
 “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”
- D. Friends, we must take Bible study seriously!
1. David cherished the Word of God!
 - a. I have heard that statement over and over for many years, however just recently I was reminded that David only had the first five books of the Old Testament.
 - b. Yet, he cherished God’s Law!

Psalm 1:1-2
 “Blessed is the man
 Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
 Nor stands in the path of sinners,
 Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,

And in His law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 119:97

“Oh, how I love Your law!

It is my meditation all the day.

2. We, today, all the completed Old Testament in which we can learn of God and His nature; yet we also have the New Covenant Law, Christ’s Law for us not only to learn from but to understand and follow.
3. Are we indeed cherishing the Message that Deity has given to us and are we studying it daily?
 - a. Paul told Timothy that “all Scripture” is inspired of God and it is profitable to make us complete and able to do good works. (II Timothy 3:16-17)
 - b. We learn that the Word of God is “living and powerful” and that it can pierce through our hearts and direct our “thoughts and intents of (your) hearts.” (Hebrews 4:12)
 - c. Paul proclaimed that the “power of salvation” is found in the Gospel of Christ. (Romans 1:16)

E. What a wonderful offering of grace that Deity has given to us, His Word!

1. Are we fully respecting God’s love to us if we neglect reading and studying it every day?
2. As you make your personal spiritual inventory this morning recognize how much you are truly studying God’s Word and if you need to make some changes please do so.

► III. The third category in which we need to have a spiritual inventory relates of the spirituality of our families.

- A. Think for a moment and look within your home life, with your family; have you made spiritual matters the most important focus of your home?
- B. It is so easy to allow other matters, maybe even important matters, to interfere with the Lord and His church.

1. What really is more important to you, making that extra dollar or making sure that you are together with family during times of worship and Bible class?
 2. Examine your home, take the inventory of your life at home and truly recognize what has come first.
 3. Is it times of worship, Bible class, devotional periods, and godly service to others? Or do sports, vacation trips, social gathering, and even homework and school assignments more important?
 4. Friends, when was the last time you had a family devotional? A time in which you and just your family honored God and devoted time just to Deity?
- C. I ask these sometimes pointed questions because we must understand that our allegiance should always be **Christ first!**
1. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount related that we are to “seek first His kingdom.” (Matthew 6:33)
 2. Paul related to the Colossian church that as Christian we are to “seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” And he continues saying that our minds are to be focused on “things above, not on things on the earth.” (Colossians 3:1-2)
- D. So, what is emphasized in your family above all other things?
- If your main focus is not on spiritual matters, then I encourage you to make some changes and seek first those things which relate to Christ!

- IV. And area where we need to make a spiritual inventory is our involvement in the local congregation of the Lord’s Church.
- A. Friends, we need to ask ourselves, what have I done in 2015 to help the work and service of the Lord’s church here at Washington Avenue.
1. If you are visiting with us today and not a member here at Washington Avenue, then you have blessed us with your presence. We are so thankful you are here.
 2. If you are a member of the Lord’s body, then you need to as well to ask yourself what have you do to assist and strength your local congregation?

- B. There is so much happening at Washington Avenue; from our mission work, our senior citizens, our youth programs, college activities, to our benevolence work, community awareness activities, education programs and our evangelism efforts; there is something available in which you can become involved!
1. Have you gotten on board with the work and goals set by our elders or do you just stand on the side lines and watch.
 2. Even worse are you sitting on the side lines looking for areas to complain and criticize?

- C. Paul relates that every member has a place to belong and their efforts are vital for the body as a whole. (I Corinthians 12:12-31)

I Corinthians 12:12

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.”

1. The church in Corinth was divided because many of the members believed that they and their abilities were more important than what others could do.
2. Paul relates to these individuals that everyone is important and that everyone has a responsibility to work and serve within the church.
3. He states that not everyone is a hand, a foot, or an eye, yet every individual makes up the whole body. (13-21)
4. And Paul continues teaching us the very important truth that even you believe yourself to be insignificant that indeed you are very necessary to make the body work correctly.

I Corinthians 12:22-23

“...those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty,”

5. Everyone has the responsibility to contribute to the Lord and His church!
- D. So let us take our personal inventory and examine yourself to see what you are doing within Washington Avenue.
1. Are you sitting on the sidelines or are you actively involved?

2. Are you truly striving for the same goals and efforts that the elders have laid before us.
3. The New Year is right in front of us, in a couple of weeks the elders will be speaking to us about the plans and budget for 2016. Where are you going to be involved?

► Conclusion:

- I. My brothers and sisters in Christ, when was the last time you did an inventory of your spiritual life?
 - A. When was the last time you actually paid attention to your prayer life?
 - B. When did you last examine your Bible study habits?
 - C. Have you focused lately upon the spirituality of your family to insure that God is first and above all else?
 - D. And have you noticed lately your involvement in the congregation? Do you need to be more involved?
- II. Hopefully, I have given you some things to think about and encouraged you to make some changes for the coming year!
 - A. And all of us need to recognize that there is always room for improvement!
 - B. Are you willing to make those improvements?
- III. Possibly this morning you have looked at your life and you recognize that something is greatly amiss!
 - A. Possibly you recognize that your knowledge and understanding of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God's Word is lacking and you want to know more.
 1. Then we are willing to aid and assist you.
 2. We have several folks that would be so very glad to simply open up God's Word and study Deity's Message.

- B. Maybe you have been studying God's Word and you have come to understand that God's grace is available and that your acceptance to His grace is hinged upon obedience.
1. If you need today to come to Christ in faith obeying his directives:
 - a. Confessing your allegiance to Christ.
 - b. Repenting of your sins and changing your life to follow and serve the Lord.
 - c. And then being Baptized, so that your soul will come in contact with the Lord's sacrificial blood and wash away your sins.
 2. If you need to obey today, then why not accept His grace right now!
- C. If as a child of God's you did indeed take an inventory of your spiritual life and found areas that need adjusting and possibly completely redone!
1. Then make those adjustments and fix those things that are wrong.
 2. Listen, do not allow pride or anything else get in way of you being right with the Lord, if you need to humbly repent then do so!
- D. If you desire prayers from the church we are willing to pray for you!
1. For some of you 2015 was a rough and difficult year; possibly you need prayers for 2016 to offer you God's blessing of comfort and peace.
 2. Or folks possibly 2015 was a year filled with blessing after blessing and you desire greatly to thank God for all that He has provided!
 3. We are willing, every one of us, to approach God on your behalf.
- E. Whatever you need or desire, please let us know as we stand and as we sing!