

WORKING 'ON' MY MINISTRY IN GOD'S BUSINESS

A Yearly Audit

EDITOR'S NOTE: 2008-2011 has been an unusually challenging economic period for many C12 members. This has many of us mourning our failure to achieve **our** plans and timetables. In addition to the prolonged slump in many markets, there has been unprecedented political, social and spiritual upheaval across America. In spite of these issues, our sovereign God reigns! As His children, the right question is "How are we leading and living given the God-given circumstances?" Let's pause from the action to take a deep breath and deeply consider, before God, how we're doing in ordering our priorities and tending to His resources according to **His** plan

"When I reflect over the past year and hold what I see in you up against these measures I am thrilled and humbled. There has been so much growth and great progress. No, we aren't where we would like to be. None of us would claim that. But neither are we where we used to be, thanks be to God! If this was all there ever was to be of C12, and it all went away tomorrow, knowing you and relating with you this past year has been the high point of my life. I can truly say to you and God, "It has been a very good year!"



It has become a year-end tradition in each of our C12 groups to take a uniquely Christ-centered retrospective look at the results of our past year's activities, focusing on the eternal perspective.

Taking such an inventory is, of course, a very normal thing to do in the economic dimensions of our businesses. We're all familiar with such metrics as net income, profit margin, ROI, market share, and sales growth. We've devised numerous ways to measure our financial effectiveness and it's important that we use them well.

This segment, however, is entitled **Working 'On' my MINISTRY in God's Business** and in it we focus on an entirely different set of criteria. In many ways it's much more difficult to measure our results in the ministry or spiritual dimension of our business lives. The whole idea of using our business as a platform for ministry can sometimes seem bewildering as it's not nearly as well 'codified' as such routine business processes like filling orders and tracking financial profit or loss.

In terms of what's eternally important to our lives, the spiritual dimension is **much** more — even infinitely more — important to us. So, with apologies to none, we are now going to offer some thoughts on how we might take a year-end audit from a uniquely Kingdom-oriented perspective.

What is it that we should be looking for as we examine ourselves and our spiritual lives in relation to the ministry in our business? Is it only souls won to the Lord, or dollars given to support His work, the number of Christ-honoring events we've hosted, or the number of tracts distributed? Is it only those things that we can

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quantify? No, of course not. While we know that all these things are an important part of the fruit of our ministry which need to be quantified and recorded to help us measure progress in these areas, we also know that there's another set of criteria. It is these *personal* criteria that we'll examine today. These criteria pertain to growth, the kind of growth that will lead to fruit...much fruit! We offer these criteria as indicators of growth which we can all use to measure what kind of a year we really had in our Master's eyes. For each of the following 10 dimensions, rate your year from **1 to 10**, with **1 being Low, 5 Average and 10 High** as measured against your potential or opportunity.

You had a good year if...

Rating

1. You spent more time with The Lord. This is an easy one. Everything we are or do comes out of our relationship with God in Christ Jesus. We can never be more than our relationship with Him enables us to be. Obedience to God is the FINAL definition of success in our lives and our obedience comes out of our relationship with Him. As we grow to know Him better we are more able to hear His voice. The more clearly we hear Him, the easier it is to obey Him.

Don't be deceived. Our ministry in business or anywhere else will never grow if our relationship with God doesn't. Of course our relationship with God is not totally defined by the *amount* of time that we spend with Him. The *quality* of the time and the *result* of the time that are just as important. It's *possible* that you may not have to spend more time with God to build your relationship with Him... but not likely! Unless you're "one-in-a-million," your love for God and your devotion to Him are mirrored in the prioritized time you spend with Him. We're talking about *all* kinds of time here: daily quiet time, prayer during the day, evening meditations, and the sense that He is in you and with you in the everyday decisions you make to run the business. Wherever each of us may be in this equation, there's plenty of room to grow. How was your year?

Rating

2. Your family relationships strengthened. Were you able to spend more time — and more quality time — with your spouse and children? We need to look at these relationships right after our relationship with God. It isn't very likely that we had an improving relationship with God and a deteriorating relationship with our family. We can't really get closer to God and not be convicted to love and serve our mates and children. Did you make more time available to your spouse, as your top ministry priority, and less to your hobbies or business? Is your sacrificial love for (and service to) your family growing? If so, you've had a good year.

[Why do we start a year-end audit of our business by talking about God and family? Because we can only bring to work what we already have in Christ in our lives and homes. We are not two people. We are one person, living an integrated life before the Lord. Our ministry in business is simply an extension of our lives in Christ, not separate from it!]

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Rating

3. You spent more time listening and relating to your key team members on a one-to-one basis. Increasingly, you did this with an ear tuned to God and His purposes and eyes searching for ways to minister to stakeholder needs. You had a good year if you care more for your lost employees, seeing the horrible prospect of their eternity in hell more painfully. You had a good year if you frequently prayed for their salvation, and an even better year if you actually did something more to impact them for eternity.

Rating

4. You saw the people that you deal with - suppliers, customers, employees, and others - more as objects of your personal ministry than as objects to be exploited for your personal gain. If you increasingly see yourself as an entrusted servant to them, rather than master over them — even a little bit more — you had a good year.

Rating

5. You are even slightly less acquisitive than you were a year ago. The urge to acquire things is of the flesh, not the Spirit. The vain thought that simply possessing more stuff will bring any real benefit to our lives is immature and foolish. Any honest Christian knows that there's no joy or peace in things. The more stuff we have, the more we must tend to and use. Materialism is a curse; a cancer of the spirit. If you've extricated yourself, even a little, from its grasp, and are more able to steward your gifts with an open hand before the Lord, you've had a good year. You might measure this as a percentage of what you gave from what you were given. Were you more of a "cheerful giver" of your "first fruits" this year?

Rating

6. You are measurably more thankful for what you have and content with your present lot in life. Spiritual maturity brings with it a contentment that comes from the awareness of what God has done for us by grace. What do we have that we deserve? And, given that we have as much as we all do, being among the most materially wealthy people in the history of the world, how can we not be thankful? Why do we need more? If God were to say to you, "*What you have is the best it will ever be,*" what would you say to Him? Could you say, "Thank You, Father...I already have more than I deserve or need," and really mean it? If you can, with a truly grateful heart, you've had a good year.

Rating

7. You have more peace in your heart. This is especially true if the peace is not related to circumstances, since circumstances always change. If our peace is dependent on them, it comes and goes with the changes. Spiritual maturity, and the peace that comes with it, is dependent on abiding in our God who never changes. Do you more clearly see God's hand in your circumstances (i.e., "...give thanks in all circumstances" [1Th 5:18], "Consider it pure joy..." [Ja 1:2], "...in *all* things God works..." [Ro 8:28]). If so, you've had a good year.

Rating

8. You learned more about your profession and are able to apply greater technical expertise in your field. If you believe that (a) your business is a gift from God, (b) as steward you're to run it for Him with excellence, and (c) you've mustered the time and will to learn and apply better ways to do so, you had a good year.

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_____ Rating

9. You took better care of your body. Did you get the exercise you need? Was your diet better than last year? Are you giving the time to the maintenance of your body that you know you should? The way we care for our body is one measure of our self-control and a visible part of our witness. Mastery of self is a key to spiritual growth. If your temple is in better shape than it was a year ago, allowing for the wear and tear of time, you had a good year.

_____ Rating

10. More eternal fruit has been produced through and around you, due to your effort and influence while abiding in Christ. Eternal fruit is defined as "lives turned toward God." It means simply this: your obedience to God in what you say, do, and are, influences others to move towards God in their thoughts and actions, yielding eternal fruit. This doesn't only involve conversions and discipleship. It includes anything that brings a heightened and more favorable awareness of God and His ways to others. A Godly life lived in a Godly way produces eternal fruit. Everywhere Jesus went eternal fruit was produced. This is true in all areas of our lives, not just in business, but we're talking primarily about the workplace here.

Are more people more favorably aware that you are an Ambassador for Christ in and around your business? Have more needy people been helped because God has entrusted the business to your care? Do they know that they've been helped because you love God and are doing so in His name? Are more Christians being influenced to grow in their faith because your business has brought you, reflecting Christ, into their lives? Have you grown as a humble, but firm servant leader and found ways to lead effectively according to timeless Scriptural core principles? If you can see that more eternal fruit has been produced in, around, and through your business, you've had a GREAT year.

_____ **TOTAL FOR YEAR** (Total your ratings for all 10 dimensions)

_____ **Average rating for year** (Divide your total by 10)

_____ **Average rating for prior year**

Many of you are thinking, "How can I really measure these things?" Some aren't easily quantifiable, at least not in an exact numerical way. However, if you're unsure, and really want to, you **can** know your measure. Begin to ask God to reveal to you the truth in each of these areas. He will show you as you pray and study His Word. Sometimes He will answer through people who know you well, such as your spouse, close friends, or perhaps your peer C12 Group members.

Keep this segment and your ratings. Next year we'll look at them again in comparison with our new ratings. Our ratings will probably never be all we'd like them to be. Our real goal is to grow - not legalistically drive toward a particular numerical score. Our lives in Christ are designed to grow in fruit and grace, as one mature to be more like Christ. We start where we are and go forward from there, pressing on in Christ.

What areas have surfaced as those you'd like to address by perhaps repenting, reordering priorities, and diligently pursuing SMART goals in the coming year?