

Consider Your Ways in the New Year

Prayerfully Ask Yourself These 31 Questions

Once, when the people of God had become careless in their relationship with Him, the Lord rebuked them through the prophet Haggai. "*Consider your ways!*" Haggai 1:5 he declared, urging them to reflect on some of the things happening to them and to evaluate their slipshod spirituality in light of what God had told them.

Consider your ways in the New Year!

Even those most faithful to God occasionally need to pause and think about the direction of their lives. It's so easy to bump along from one busy week to another without ever stopping to ponder where we're going and where we should be going.

The beginning of a new year is an ideal time to stop, look up and get our bearings. For starters, here are 31 questions to ask prayerfully in the presence of God as you "*Consider your ways.*" Think on the entire list at one sitting, or answer one question each day for a month.

- 1.What's one thing you could do this year to increase your enjoyment of God?
- 2.What's the most humanly impossible thing you will ask God to do this year?
- 3.What's the single most important thing you could do to improve the quality of your family life this year?
- 4.In which spiritual discipline do you most want to make progress this year, and what will you do about it?
- 5.What is the single biggest time-waster in your life, and what will you do about it this year?
- 6.What is the most helpful new way you could strengthen your church?
- 7.For whose salvation will you pray most fervently this year?
- 8.What's the most important way you will, by God's grace, try to make this year different from last year?
- 9.What one thing could you do to improve your prayer life this year?
- 10.What single thing that you plan to do this year will matter most in 10 years? In eternity?
- 11.What's the most important decision you need to make this year?
- 12.What area of your life most needs simplifying, and what's one way you could simplify in that area?
- 13.What's the most important need you feel burdened to meet this year?
- 14.What habit would you most like to establish this year?
- 15.Who do you most want to encourage this year?
- 16.What is your most important financial goal this year, and what is the most important step you can take toward achieving it?

17. What's the single most important thing you could do to improve the quality of your work life this year?

18. What's one new way you could be a blessing to your pastor (or to another who ministers to you) this year?

19. What's one thing you could do this year to enrich the spiritual legacy you will leave to your children and grandchildren?

20. What book, in addition to the Bible, do you most want to read this year?

21. What one thing do you most regret about last year, and what will you do about it this year?

22. What single blessing from God do you want to seek most earnestly this year?

23. In what area of your life do you most need growth, and what will you do about it this year?

24. What's the most important trip you want to take this year?

25. What skill do you most want to learn or improve this year?

26. To what need or ministry will you try to give an unprecedented amount this year?

27. What's the single most important thing you could do to improve the quality of your commute this year?

28. What one biblical doctrine do you most want to understand better this year, and what will you do about it?

29. If those who know you best gave you one piece of advice, what would they say? Would they be right? What will you do about it?

30. What's the most important new item you want to buy this year?

31. In what area of your life do you most need change, and what will you do about it this year?

The value of many of these questions is not in their profundity, but in the simple fact that they bring an issue or commitment into focus. For example, just by articulating which person you most want to encourage this year, you will be more likely to remember to encourage that person than if you hadn't considered the question.

If you've found these questions helpful, you might want to put them someplace - in a day planner, PDA, calendar, bulletin board, etc. - where you can review them more frequently than once a year.

So let's evaluate our lives, make plans and goals, and live this new year with biblical diligence, remembering that, "*The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage*" Proverbs 21:5.

But in all things let's also remember our dependence on our King who said, "*Apart from Me you can do nothing*" John 15:5. (Donald S. Whitney is associate professor of biblical spirituality and senior associate dean of the School of Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.)