

Taking Inventory

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Some states and some locations within states collect inventory tax. At year's end a store or other business might deliberately deplete its inventory to avoid some of the tax burden. Taking inventory can also help a business see where it has done well and what areas need improvement.

I recommend taking a different kind of inventory. No government entity will tax these things, but we can take a candid look at progress on which we can build as well as weak areas we can strengthen.

God has our complete inventory every day; He knows us better than we know ourselves! King David marveled that God knew his very thoughts: *"You understand my thought afar off"* (Psalm 139:2). Not only that, but God knew David's every word: *"For there is not a word on my tongue but, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether"* (139:4). Taking inventory of our thoughts and words will indicate the condition of our heart, for *"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"* (Matthew 12:34), and *"out of the heart proceed evil thoughts"* (15:19).

David also knew the ever-present, all-powerful God was worthy of his worship. *"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made"* (Psalm 139:14). What do you find when you inventory your worship habits?

David valued God's word: *"How precious also are your thoughts to me, O God!"* (139:17). How valuable is the Bible to you? Does its value show in your reading and study?

Finally, David pleaded, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart . . . and see if there is any wicked way in me"* (139:23-24). We wish our inventory of sin would find none. Realistically, though, let's ask: Are they the same sins we found a year ago? Five years ago? Ten? Are we striving against sin, or marking time, or just floating along with the current?

It's time to take inventory!

Rewiring Our Hearts And Minds

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding." – Proverbs 3:5

In the depths of life's challenges, our minds often reach for something familiar to find comfort. Repeating God's promises to ourselves can be a powerful anchor, helping us to navigate our fears and uncertainties. The Bible speaks of trusting God wholeheartedly, but this isn't just a spiritual exercise—it can also transform our brain function, rewiring our minds toward peace and resilience. Neuroscience reveals that repetition strengthens neural pathways, which means that when we meditate on God's words, they become embedded in our memories, providing strength and comfort when we need it most.

Imagine facing a storm of uncertainty and, rather than feeling lost, experiencing the peace that God's words provide as they rise naturally within us. When Proverbs encourages us not to lean on our own understanding, it suggests that God's perspective is more reliable than our fears and anxieties. By repeating verses that resonate with us—such as "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10)—we train our brains to access these thoughts more readily, especially in times of distress.

Reflect today on the power of scripture to shape our responses. With each verse we meditate on, God's truth becomes a tool in our spiritual and mental toolkit, reminding us of His unchanging faithfulness and love.

--Robert Kargbo (Middleton, WI)

Unchanged Tactics

Satan didn't tempt Eve to murder, steal, or even tell a lie. He tempted her to doubt the word of God. Just know his tactics haven't changed.

Yosemite Sam

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it" (1 Corinthians 9:24).

I grew up watching my favorite character, Yosemite Sam. I loved his never quit, never say 'uncle' spirit. No matter the odds, no matter how many times he tasted defeat, he never quit. I learned a lot from that fictional Looney Tunes character. But there is a real-life character that has more Yosemite Sam in him than Yosemite Sam does. His name is Jesus.

No matter the obstacles, Jesus always overcame. He never lost faith. Jesus went hungry and yet He said, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work"* (John 4:34). Jesus faced discouragement and frustration, but He kept on. He faced rejection and being homeless saying foxes have their dens, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His Head (Matthew 8:20). But He kept going.

Even from His own followers He faced disbelief. He healed the sick, walked on water, fed thousands from a few loaves of bread, yet had to say to them, *"Oh ye of little faith."*

Jesus faced trials not one of us could ever face and only asked them to pray with Him in the garden, yet they fell asleep. He kept going. He told His disciples they would stumble and run from Him, and they denied it. Yet they did run. He kept on.

He was mocked, scourged, beaten, spit on, yet hanging on the cross in agony, He pleaded with His Father, *"Forgive them, they don't know what they're doing"!* He kept on.

Jesus was the ultimate Yosemite Sam. While Yosemite Sam was motivated by greed and pride, Jesus was motivated by a love so deep, so wide, so high that even before He created the heavens and the earth, He knew He would have to die, only rise from the dead to save those who sinned against Him. I think we could all use a little more of the "Yosemite Sam" that Jesus had in Him. Never give up!

--Steven Prine (San Leandro, CA)