



How Year-End Reviews Can Be a Catalyst for Spiritual Growth

By Melissa Harrison

It's that time of the year, again – time to prepare for the annual end of year review. While performance reviews have long been customary in business, they are often a dreaded task on what often feels like an endless year-end To-Do List. Whether on the giving or receiving end, year-end reviews can be a challenge. When done well, they can reinforce an employee's contributions, celebrate successes, and set a vision for future development. When executed poorly, they can fall short of these goals and evoke a range of complex emotions in both employees and managers.

Employees can often be left feeling anxious leading up to the review, uncertain about what feedback they may give or receive, and how it might impact their role. For some, the experience can lead to feelings of defensiveness or inadequacy, especially if the review focuses heavily on mistakes or areas where expectations weren't met. This backward-looking approach can lead employees to feel criticized rather than motivated, and it may even trigger the brain's natural defense mechanisms, making it harder to absorb constructive feedback.

Research shows that annual reviews alone are often inadequate in fostering true growth and morale. Studies reveal that nearly 59% of employees find these reviews ineffective, with many feeling that a once-a-year evaluation does not provide timely, actionable insights for improvement.

The Role of a Christian Manager

Whether you work in a faith-based company or not, Christian managers have the ability to foster a workplace culture that can reflect faith-based values of compassion, growth, and respect. By ensuring that feedback is empowering, these leaders can encourage employees not only to excel professionally but also to feel valued and motivated as individuals.

God's Word reminds us of the importance of our words and affirmations in Hebrews when it reminds me to "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." Hebrews 10:24

Approaching feedback with intentionality means taking time to reflect on each person's unique contributions, challenges, and growth areas. This personalized attention shows that leaders are invested in their employees' development, beyond simply meeting organizational goals. It also aligns with the biblical principle of treating others with care and respect, recognizing each person's inherent worth as a child of God.

Using encouragement as a foundation for feedback also enables employees to receive constructive input without feeling diminished. By emphasizing strengths and contributions before discussing areas for improvement, Christian leaders can build confidence and inspire a spirit of excellence, helping employees feel appreciated and motivated to grow. This is a biblical mandate in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 to "build each other up."



A focus on growth frames feedback as a forward-looking, solution-oriented conversation. By creating collaborative development goals, Christian leaders can empower employees to take meaningful steps toward improvement, emphasizing potential rather than past mistakes. This approach not only improves morale but also nurtures a culture where every individual feels empowered to contribute their best and look ahead with purpose.

When giving feedback:

- Pray for wisdom and grace to give feedback that strengthens and builds up rather than discourages.
- Pray for a heart to embrace a forward-looking approach that aligns with God's purpose for each person.
- Consider adopting a regular check-in model where feedback is continuous, keeping the focus on solutions and growth opportunities rather than past errors. This aligns with biblical encouragement to "strain toward what is ahead."

When receiving feedback:

Receiving feedback during a year-end review can be challenging, but as a follower of Christ, you have the opportunity to approach it with grace, humility, and a growth mindset. By receiving feedback with an open heart and a growth mindset, Christian employees can use the experience as a tool for both personal and spiritual growth, building resilience and strength that honors God in the workplace.

Here are some tips on how to prepare for your review and manage any stress that may arise:

- 1. Prepare with Prayer:** Start by praying for an open heart and a receptive spirit. Ask God to help you receive feedback with humility, even if it's hard to hear, and to show you areas where you can grow. Pray for a positive, constructive conversation that reflects His wisdom and grace.
- 2. Listen Attentively and Without Defensiveness:** James 1:19 encourages us to be "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry." Approach the feedback session with a mindset of active listening and listen without interrupting, even if you don't fully agree, and try to understand the feedback from your manager's perspective.
- 3. Seek to Understand, Not Just Respond:** Instead of immediately explaining or defending yourself, ask clarifying questions to understand the feedback more deeply. This shows maturity and a willingness to grow, and it can also reveal areas where you may have misinterpreted expectations or goals.
- 4. Focus on Growth, Not Perfection:** Remember that feedback is meant to help you grow, not to criticize your worth. Philippians 3:13-14 reminds us to press on toward the goal without being weighed down by past mistakes. Keep a forward-thinking perspective, viewing feedback as a tool to become more effective and capable.
- 5. Express Gratitude:** Even if the feedback is challenging, thank your reviewer for their time and insight. This reflects a humble and gracious spirit, demonstrating that you value their input and see it as part of your journey toward growth.



- 6. Reflect and Set Goals:** Take time after the review to reflect on what was said and to pray about any areas where you feel God is calling you to grow. Create actionable steps to address areas for improvement, aligning them with your personal and professional goals.

By preparing thoughtfully, focusing on personal growth, and taking proactive steps, you can transform your year-end review into an empowering moment that aligns with your aspirations and reduces stress and don't overlook the positive feedback you receive. Take encouragement from your successes, and let it build your confidence. When we acknowledge and celebrate our strengths, we can serve others more effectively and joyfully.

In Conclusion

Christian employers and managers who prioritize empowering feedback create a supportive, faith-inspired work environment that promotes both personal and professional development, benefiting the individual and the organization as a whole. Christian employees who are receiving feedback can demonstrate the character of Christ by receiving the insight with humility and as an opportunity to grow. This can not only be for your professional work, but also in your spiritual journey as you allow God to use work to refine you.

Keep in mind that leadership is a journey and feedback provides tools that can help us to encourage and empower those we work with whether they manage us, or we manage them. By leading with a spirit of love and receiving correction with grace, we can cultivate a culture that aligns with God's call to uplift and support each other.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can feedback serve as a means of "building others up"?
2. When was a time you received feedback that was genuinely beneficial and growth-oriented?
3. Why do you think traditional reviews, as mentioned in the research, may not be meeting the needs of today's workforce?
4. How does focusing only on past mistakes conflict with biblical teachings on grace and growth?
5. What are some of the dangers of looking back versus focusing on how we can improve in the future?
6. How can we, as leaders, create a culture of continuous growth rather than one defined by annual critiques?
7. What language can we use to keep feedback constructive, encouraging, and aligned with biblical values?

Additional Resources

- **Podcast Episode:** "Work, Love, Pray" – Listen to Debi Wolfe discuss the shift away from traditional reviews toward a more dynamic feedback approach. Available on our [podcast platform].
- **Reading Recommendations:** For those interested in exploring further, check out the Podcast Reading List for recommended books on leadership and growth.



Melissa Harrison is the President & Executive Director of 4word. She is a bilingual journalist with more than 20 years of experience in television and radio news. Melissa worked as a news anchor and reporter in six different television markets including WNBC in New York City and WFAA-TV in Dallas/Fort Worth. She was also a writer for ABC's *World News Tonight* and a morning news anchor for CBS Radio.



In addition to her role at 4word, Melissa is also an Executive-in-Residence at SMU where she teaches classes on Digital Media. She earned her master's in journalism from Columbia University and her bachelor's in Spanish and Communications from Baylor. She also studied with Syracuse University in Madrid, Spain. Melissa and her husband live in Dallas with their three young children.



4word is a global community of Christian women in the workplace. Our mission is to help women in the workplace reach their God-given potential with confidence.

Why 4word?

At 4word, we know you want to reach your God-given potential so you can have a Kingdom impact on your workplace and the world. To do that, you need resources for professional and spiritual growth - and a community of like-minded women to cheer you on!

The problem is your time is limited and meaningful connections are hard to find. This can leave you feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and isolated on your life's journey.

We believe you shouldn't have to navigate work, life and faith on your own because God designed you for community. You are worthy to be surrounded by loving and supportive women who "get you."

We understand you face unique challenges as a Christian woman in the workplace, which is why we create easy-access opportunities for leadership development, spiritual growth, and connections to influential women around the globe.

Our Simple Empowerment Plan:

- Connect to a community – We offer virtual and in-person Community Groups specifically designed for working women – and we also have special groups for executive women.
- Access relevant content – 4word's podcast, blog, and our Community Group Discussion Guides are specifically geared to women in the workplace to help thrive on your journey.
- Get matched with a mentor – From our pool of over 220 amazing mentors we connect you with the right fit for a transformational mentoring experience through 4word's Mentor Program

Join the Journey to empower 10 million Christian women in the workplace to change the world by 2030. Scan the QR code below to learn more.

