

IT IS ESSENTIAL TO "EXCEL STILL MORE"

When people visit our farm, many would ask permission to take pictures including our competitors and I would always oblige. Then one day, a friend asked me, "Why do you allow this?" I told him I didn't mind since we also had just copied the technology we use from books, sometimes from youtube and from other farms we have visited. So bakit ko naman ito ipagdadamot sa kanila? But then I added, "Besides, next year baka iba na ang magiging itsura ng farm namin, because by then we would have improved on whatever we are doing this year."

As the year comes to an end, most of you will reflect on the things you have learned this 2016. Many of you will thank God for the blessings you have received. However in our farm, we do things a bit differently. We would instead ask, "What should we be improving for the coming year?" We would then assess ourselves and look for ways to make the farm better. We would look for wastes to eliminate, processes to simplify, attitudes to correct, etc. We do this in response to 1 Thessalonians 4:10–11 (NASB), "We urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands!"

To "excel still more" means, if you are good today, you should strive to be better tomorrow and then be even better the day after. It is similar to the concept of "kaizen," the Japanese term for continuous improvement. I used to think it was the Japanese who invented the concept until I realized it is actually a biblical idea.

While it is good to ponder on the things we have learned, I believe it is more important to improve on what we are already doing. We should continue to look internally and strive to be a little better each year and I believe this is what it means to "mind your own business." The book, "How Toyota Became No. 1?" explains that this was what they did to become one of the biggest car companies in the world. Toyota did not look at their competitors to benchmark their capabilities, instead they would continually look internally to improve what they already have. By doing this, they became much better than all the rest.

The year 2017 is just around the corner. If you want to excel still more, you may want to identify the areas where you want to improve, e.g. to be a more loving husband? to be a more submissive wife? to be a more obedient child? to be a more compassionate boss? to be more excellent at work? Even if you are already good at these things, there will always be room to improve. But above all these, may we all be continually pleasing to the Lord by becoming more and more faithful to Him.