

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, October 1, 2016

My wife Janet and I will often relax in the evening to watch one of our favorite TV shows. We are easily entertained by Chip and Joanna Gaines as they demolish and totally remodel dilapidated homes in the Waco, Texas area for their clients. For those of you who have never watched the reality series *FIXER UPPER*, let me briefly explain the show's format. Chip and Joanna show home buyers three potential properties and the buyers choose which one they want the co-hosts to renovate. Obviously the buyers have to invest money in the property to make it all work. The transformation is always remarkable and recently has me thinking just how much our Heavenly Father transforms our lives from fiascos into frescoes. So let's talk about this renewing in our personal lives.

You see, whether you believe it or not we're all works in progress. We start out with a "sin nature" and as we grow we develop cracks and abnormalities that potentially can cause structural damage. Some folks look awfully good on the outside, but inside they may be patched together in a way that won't handle the certain stress of life. You may well feel that you've got your act together and there's nothing that could possibly keep you from making it in life. In my early years I felt that way. I had the world by the tail and nothing was going to get in the way of my reaching the stars. My attitude was simply to shoot for the stars and the worst thing that could possibly happen is I'd hit the moon! Perhaps you can relate and perhaps you can't.

Anyway, I'd like you to follow along with this premise of brokenness. Our natural tendency whenever we notice damage in our lives is to apply duct tape and put a little plaster over the problem. We don't want others to see our true condition. In the reality series, Chip and Joanna often uncover foundational and structural issues that were not handled properly by the previous property owners. They have no choice but to take the costly corrective actions to repair those issues since their clients are looking for a finished product that won't require headaches downstream. They want to simply move in and enjoy their home for life!

I'm here to tell you that we are all "fixer uppers" in need of the Master Carpenter to take control of our lives. His plan of salvation is an integral part of the renovation process. In Romans 12:2 we are told, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will." (NIV) After all, God is the Architect of all our lives and He knows exactly what He needs to do with each of us to bring about our true value. There is one catch. He gives us the right to refuse His help and continue to live in our present condition. Years ago I discovered that I needed His help in this difficult life and He's made the necessary costly repairs to make me perfect in His eyes. I trust you will at least consider investing in God's plan for the rest of your life.

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Nehemiah 2:18; Ecclesiastes 7:25; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 1:20-21; 1 John 5:11-13

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Nehemiah 2:18 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁸I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me.

They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.

Ecclesiastes 7:25 New International Version (NIV)

²⁵So I turned my mind to understand,

to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things
and to understand the stupidity of wickedness
and the madness of folly.

Romans 12:1-2 New International Version (NIV)

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Ephesians 2:8-10 New International Version (NIV)

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Philippians 1:20-21 New International Version (NIV)

²⁰I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

1 John 5:11-13 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.