

FOURTH QUARTER STRATEGIES - Saturday, May 9, 2015

Before departing for Vietnam in late 1966, I was stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas as a Training Officer/Headquarters Company Commander for one of the three training battalions. When I wasn't working, all my spare time was spent improving my golf swing. Golf had become my passion upon graduating from college in 1965. In the summer of 1966, I carried a "3" handicap and actually had some success in several local 72-hole amateur tournaments. I've always loved competition and found golf to be the most challenging game I've ever played. I even toyed with the idea of a professional golf career after my commitment to Uncle Sam was completed in 1970. These days, I'm still respectable on the course, but simply enjoy the game as an outlet to get away from the distractions of life that we all face. Let me use golf as an analogy for an ongoing challenge we all face in business, personal and spiritual matters.

One of the keys in golf is to remain focused. Fear is the biggest detriment to the golfer's success on the course. It's amazing all that can go wrong as a stationary ball becomes airborne after being hit by a golf club. In fact, even a putt rolling on a green often finds a way to stay out of the hole far too often. Certainly practice is important in golf as it is in all aspects of life. But, I've found the most important factor in golf is to trust your swing and focus on positive results. Fear causes tension and keeps our muscle memory from repeating what we can more easily accomplish on the practice tee. With that said, let me take this to a spiritual discussion on fear and focus.

In 2 Timothy 1:7, Paul advises Timothy, *"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of love, power and discipline."* (NASB) That's a principle I've used in my business and life in general for years. God wants us to succeed in all our endeavors that are pleasing to Him. He is always there and we need to call upon the Holy Spirit as we face the many challenges life brings. In golf, it may be a lengthy carry over a water hazard. In business, we may face stiff competition to secure the business of a prospective client. In life, we will certainly face all kinds of adversity. We would be wise to simply, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."* (Proverbs 3:5 & 6) It's quite easy to look at the size of the waves as Peter did after he jumped out of the boat to greet Jesus and find ourselves sinking into despair. That's when we simply need to take His hand and allow Him to lift us up out of the depths of our dilemma.

In 1989, a new clothing line called *No Fear* hit the market. Extreme sports enthusiasts know it well and I imagine you've seen the slogan on shirts and caps. Well, I must admit there's nothing to fear with Jesus in our corner. And, there's nothing wrong with taking calculated risks in life. I've never participated in extreme sports and have no desire to do so. And whether you've ever picked up a golf club or not, we all will experience adversity in our lives. And we'll continue to face our share of challenges. You would be wise to call on the Lord rather than go through life flying solo. There's no need to fear when He's by your side!

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Matthew 14: 25-31; Proverbs 29:25; Exodus 6:8-13; Psalms 118:6-9.

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Matthew 14:25-31 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁵ Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear.

²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”

²⁸ And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”

²⁹ So He said, “Come.” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

³⁰ But when he saw that the wind *was* boisterous,^[a] he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!”

³¹ And immediately Jesus stretched out *His* hand and caught him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Proverbs 29:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ The fear of man brings a snare,
But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.

Exodus 6:8-13 (NKJV)

⁸ And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you *as* a heritage: I *am* the LORD.”” ⁹ So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.

¹⁰ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹¹ “Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the children of Israel go out of his land.”

¹² And Moses spoke before the LORD, saying, “The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I *am* of uncircumcised lips?”

¹³ Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them a command for the children of Israel and for Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

Psalms 118:6-9 (NKJV)

⁶ The LORD *is* on my side;
I will not fear.
What can man do to me?

⁷ The LORD is for me among those who help me;
Therefore I shall see *my desire* on those who hate me.

⁸ *It is* better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in man.

⁹ *It is* better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in princes.