

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, January 14, 2017

Success can be exhilarating! And, it's only natural to strive for success. In my early years in corporate life, I found myself scaling the ladder of business success. And, I'm sure I stepped on others climbing that same proverbial ladder. At the time I thought nothing of it, since my focus was on the goal of reaching that top rung of the ladder. At 39 upon changing professions, I started scaling a second ladder of success in my new found insurance career. The ladder was different, but the goal was the same. I was now striving to become the top insurance agent in our Beverly Hills general office. All my focus was on achieving recognition for those long days dedicated to my new career. The more I accomplished – the more I wanted!

As an avid golfer, each winter I look forward to competing in a number of match play golf events with other team members of our Men's Club against other golf club teams in our area. Those matches can be packed full of ups and downs and successes and failures. The goal is to win our individual and team matches against our opponents. The good news about match play is that one bad hole doesn't take you out of the match. In fact two or three bad holes may have minimal impact on the outcome of the match. There are always going to be some failures on the road to success. In match play, as long as you win more holes than your opponent, you are victorious. Renowned champion golfer Bobby Jones once said, *"Golf is the closest game to the game we call life. You get bad breaks from good shots; you get good breaks from bad shots, but you have to play the ball where it lies."*

Frankly, I don't consider life a game, but we all play the game of life and hope to be successful in the end. And that's what really matters most – "How will it all end?" As we go through our individual life journey, we have daily opportunities to become acquainted with many others on their life journeys. Our natural tendency is to place our needs above the needs of others. For the most part, mankind is quite selfish. This has been the case since the very beginning when Adam and Eve first disobeyed God and took the bite from the forbidden fruit. Our Adamic nature carries on from generation to generation and there's nothing we can do to get rid of the "sin virus" that's found in us all.

There is good news though. God has given us an operations manual that not only instructs us how He wants us to live out our lives but also presents many accounts of those throughout history that succeeded in their life journeys. I personally love studying the Old Testament of the Bible and relating to those characters and how they handled adversity. One of my favorite books of the Old Testament is the book of Ecclesiastes which was apparently written by King Solomon. That along with Psalms and Proverbs can greatly assist you in the way you carry out your life choices.

There's much wisdom to be gleaned through the study of the holy scriptures. It's all there for the taking, but you need to apply what you read and trust in the One Who has set it all before us. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul instructs us *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."* Those words were spoken to the younger Timothy as Paul instructed him on his life journey as a young pastor and follower of Christ.

I'm so glad that I can call upon God's Word to prepare me for what lies ahead on my personal journey. I'm also delighted to know that God cares about us so much that He sent His only Son to die for our sin. If you haven't placed your trust in Him yet, let me share the words God breathed into the prophet Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 29:12-13 the prophet declares of God, *"Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me with all your heart."* God is waiting for you to seek Him, turn from your sin, come to Him and accept what Christ did for you on the cross. Take this step of faith and you too will finish the game of life well!

Here to serve,

Jim Langley. CLU

Passages to Ponder: Genesis 3:6-7; Psalm 118:24-26; Proverbs 2:7; Ecclesiastes 12:11-14; Mark 12:29-31; John 14:6-7

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Genesis 3:6-7 New International Version (NIV)

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Psalm 118:24-26 New International Version (NIV)

²⁴The LORD has done it this very day;
let us rejoice today and be glad.

²⁵LORD, save us!
LORD, grant us success!

²⁶Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.
From the house of the LORD we bless you.

Proverbs 2:7 New International Version (NIV)

⁷He holds success in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,

Ecclesiastes 12:11-14 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one shepherd. ¹²Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them.

Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

¹³Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the matter:

Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the duty of all mankind.

¹⁴For God will bring every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil.

Mark 12:29-31 New International Version (NIV)

²⁹“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’ ³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

John 14:6-7 New International Version (NIV)

⁶Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”