

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, February 11, 2017

As a new believer, I was given a copy of a recently published Christian book written by Chuck Swindoll entitled *STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP*. We studied the chapters of that book in an adult couples Sunday School class and I was even called upon to lead one of the chapter discussions. That book along with good counsel from several godly men in the church helped me become well-grounded in my new found faith. The title immediately caught my eye, since I understood the importance of getting a proper grip from a sports standpoint. There are proper ways to grip most sports equipment, and I've learned this in baseball, golf, racket sports, billiards and even bowling. Arnold Palmer's dad, Deacon Palmer, taught young Arnold the proper golf grip and he swears he never changed that overlapping golf grip the rest of his life. Sportswriters and other professional golfers often commented on Palmer's unorthodox swing, but they never questioned his golf grip. Developing a proper grip is critical.

I started playing golf at nineteen and naturally used a baseball grip, which meant my hands were not working together. Upon returning from Vietnam, my local golf pro helped me experiment with different golf grips and I've been playing with an overlapping grip ever since. Upon moving to California after leaving the US Army, I experienced the "yips" (serious putting woes) and this time experimented with different putting grips to build my putting confidence. I've been using the same putting grip for a very long time with great putting success. Let's transition from sports to talking about getting a better grip on our business, family and personal lives. That's what Chuck's book deals with and the biblical principles discussed are invaluable.

Over the past thirty-plus years, I've been able to strengthen my grip in all aspects of life through seeking answers to life's tough questions in God's Word. So, let me ask the question, *"How is your grip on life?"* Does it ever seem like your grip is slipping and your life is out of control? Well, if you are honest with yourself, you may well answer "Yes" to that question. I'm not talking about your ability to give the impression that everything is going well. I'm talking about your internal feelings – not what others see or think about your appearing to have a firm grip on all aspects of life. Certainly we all have challenges in life and some days will go much more smoothly than other days. Life is mainly experienced in the valley rather than on the mountaintop. King David talks about this in the 23rd Psalm, when he declares, *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff they comfort me."* (NIV) King David could imagine Christ, the good shepherd, walking beside him through all the adversity he faced before he was King of Israel and during his reign as well. What a wonderful promise and premise for all who believe in Christ!

So where do you place your trust? In Psalm 20:7, King David declares, *"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God."* All we need to do today is replace those chariots and horses with those things where we unfortunately place our trust rather than placing our trust in our Heavenly Father. Over the years I've run across many Christians who appear to base their faith on an experience they had years ago rather than the ever present words God has so eloquently breathed into His masterpiece the Bible. Those sixty-six books woven together to tell "His Story" are the most important revelation we can experience on a daily basis as we walk through the valleys of life. Place your trust in Him and get a strong grip on your life this day forward!

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Psalm 23; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 Peter 5:8-10;

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Psalm 23 New International Version (NIV)

A psalm of David.

¹The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.

2 Timothy 2:19 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁹Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

1 Peter 5:8-10 New International Version (NIV)

⁸Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

¹⁰And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.