

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, May 6, 2017

I was a teenager when Dean Martin popularized a song originally produced way back in 1934 entitled *The Object of My Affection*. After all these years I still remember the melody, but couldn't recall most of the lyrics. It's simply another love song that many back then would sing just like many of you do today. The words aren't that inspiring, but the title did get me thinking. So, what is the object of your affection?

Over the years my affections have changed immensely. It all started with a four year love affair with a horse. I'd ride my Paint Quarter Horse almost daily – quite often bareback. During that same time I gradually fell in love with the game of baseball. That affection for the game along with hard work garnered me a scholarship and a college degree. Yes, there were relationships with young ladies through my college days, but it was more infatuation than true love. After a stint in the military, my work became my passion and I even admit to being a recovering workaholic. My Dad and Grandpa instilled that strong work ethic in me and I soon realized that hard work paid rewards. Then gradually after my decision to accept Christ as my Savior and Lord, my affection radically changed to the Person of Christ.

Two unsuccessful marriages, both lasting less than five years, helped me realize that my intense love for work created a lack of balance in my life. As a single man “looking for love in all the wrong places” and reaching my fortieth birthday, I fortunately turned to Christ and gave all my love to my Father in Heaven. Since that eventful decision in 1984 I've gradually grown to love Him more and more each day. In the process, I came to realize that I must learn to love others to truly show my love for the Father. This appreciation has come from studying God's word, being around godly men and women, having a godly wife at my side and applying biblical principles in our daily walk with Christ.

Perhaps the best example of love for Christ presented in the Bible is the dramatic transformation of Paul from the religious zealot who persecuted the followers of Jesus into the man who would gladly die for the cause of Christ, yet live a dedicated life that exemplified his immense love for his Savior and Lord. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 he instructs us, *“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”* (NIV) That's what I call being focused and disciplined for all that is good and pure and honorable.

So let's get back to the question at hand. What is the object of your affection? For some, I'm sure their business/work life is their drug of choice. For others, it might well be their wealth or desire for wealth. Some of you may covet recognition and notoriety. Many young people idolize entertainers in one of many industries including sports figures. The list goes on, but any object or person other than our Father in Heaven will leave you wanting.

In Exodus 20:2-4 God spoke these words to Moses. *I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other Gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or the waters below.”* (NIV) God wants and deserves our affection.

Joshua's dialogue with the people of Israel found in Joshua 24 pretty well sums up what we all need to do. We need to put away the objects of our affection and give our full devotion to our Father in Heaven!

Passages to Ponder: Joshua 23:10-11; 24:22-24; 2 Chronicles 6:14; Psalm 136:26; Daniel 9:4; Matthew 22:37; Luke 10:27; 1John 2:5

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Joshua 23:10-11 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰One of you routs a thousand, because the LORD your God fights for you, just as he promised. ¹¹So be very careful to love the LORD your God.

Joshua 24:22-24 New International Version (NIV)

²²Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD."

"Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

²³"Now then," said Joshua, "throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

²⁴And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him."

2 Chronicles 6:14 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁴He said:

"LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.

Psalm 136:26 New International Version (NIV)

²⁶Give thanks to the God of heaven.

His love endures forever.

Daniel 9:4 New International Version (NIV)

⁴I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed:

"Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments,

Matthew 22:37 New International Version (NIV)

³⁷Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

Luke 10:27 New International Version (NIV)

²⁷He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

1 John 2:5 New International Version (NIV)

⁵But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: