

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, December 23, 2017

Over our lifetimes we can certainly gain much experience that can help us walk through the daily travails of life. Often we can call upon certain similar circumstances to make future trials easier as we attempt to overcome challenging life situations. Since we've been there before, we hopefully have a pretty good idea just how we might best address each challenge without putting too much energy into determining the best course of action. We also are less likely to just give up all hope. I'm certainly glad that I no longer take on these circumstances of life on my own.

These days the Holy Spirit is there to get me through whatever challenges come my way. And I can count upon fellow followers of Christ, whom I know I can trust, to be there by my side as well. You see, they too have their personal and business experiences upon which we can draw. Of course all this needs to be bathed in prayer as we ask for guidance and protection.

Have you ever noticed how many fictional super heroes have a sidekick? Practically speaking, two can often be better than one. Let's go to the Book of Ecclesiastes to see what King Solomon has to say about going solo in our decisions.

In Ecclesiastes 4:7-8 the writer conveys *"Again I saw something meaningless under the sun: There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. 'For whom am I toiling,' he asked 'and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?' This too is meaningless – a miserable business!"*

The writer continues in verses 9 through 11, *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can we keep warm alone?"*

There's one thing for certain – in our lives we will have a number of experiences that will shape the way we address future circumstances. What I find intriguing is how we each handle those special moments in different ways. For instance, childhood experiences can cause us to be quite different in the way we raise our children, yet some of us will become the spitting image of our parent's traits and actions. It's possible to go through our whole life without ever receiving good instruction in how to live our lives. Yes, there are many "How To" books available on all kinds of subjects, but they are all built on and biased by the experiences of the authors.

I find it interesting that the bible places thirty-one chapters in the Book of Proverbs and I know many who read a complete chapter daily and have been doing so for years. This faithful habit grounds them in wise actions that are pleasing to God and useful in their daily walk. Most of the book is attributed to King Solomon and it's chocked full of pithy sayings that amply instruct the reader in virtuous behavior and how to live a godly existence. Faithful compliance will lead the student in the Lord's instruction on a path that will be pleasing to God and bring about good experiences.

There's one experience we'll never face. Our Lord faced this world in a unique way. As the perfect Son of God without sin, He experienced all that we've experienced, yet He remained sinless for our sake. On the cross, Christ Jesus became sin for us. He took on all the sin of the world so that we might be saved from our sin.

Please consider what He has accomplished for us on the cross. He did not just take away your sin. He has taken away the nature of sin from all who place their faith in Him. Once we accept that wonderful gift, we experience the Holy Spirit and a new relationship with our Father in Heaven.

I trust you will one day have this life changing experience while there's still time, since He died a vicarious death for our sake. That's how much God loves us!

Passages to Ponder: Proverbs 2:6-12; 23:22-24; 28:18-20; John 3:16-18; Colossians 2:6-8

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Proverbs 2:6-12 New International Version (NIV)

⁶For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
⁷He holds success in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
⁸for he guards the course of the just
and protects the way of his faithful ones.
⁹Then you will understand what is right and just
and fair—every good path.
¹⁰For wisdom will enter your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
¹¹Discretion will protect you,
and understanding will guard you.
¹²Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men,
from men whose words are perverse,

Proverbs 23:22-24 New International Version (NIV)

²²Listen to your father, who gave you life,
and do not despise your mother when she is old.
²³Buy the truth and do not sell it—
wisdom, instruction and insight as well.
²⁴The father of a righteous child has great joy;
a man who fathers a wise son rejoices in him.

Proverbs 28:18-20 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁸The one whose walk is blameless is kept safe,
but the one whose ways are perverse will fall into the pit.
¹⁹Those who work their land will have abundant food,
but those who chase fantasies will have their fill of poverty.
²⁰A faithful person will be richly blessed,
but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished.

John 3:16-18 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Colossians 2:6-8 New International Version (NIV)

⁶So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.
⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.