

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, December 30, 2017

“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” Those are the first two verses of Psalm 42. This maskil written for music by the Sons of Korah, presents a beautiful picture of how we as believers in the Almighty God should yearn to be near Him. Are you aware of your need to be spiritually awakened? Many of us slumber and totally miss the closeness that’s available to all who follow Christ Jesus. How can this happen? It’s quite easy as we subtly get caught up in the ways of this world. In my personal opinion, we need to have our spiritual awareness awakened each morning as we arise. We must hunger and thirst for daily renewal.

In the Gospels, Jesus speaks to this point of desiring to walk closely with God. In Matthew 5:6 He instructs us *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”* and in Luke 6:21 He states *“Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.”* I take this *being filled* and *satisfied* directive to simply mean that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit that dwells within all who truly allow Christ to be Lord of their life and we too can be satisfied and contented in knowing that we are pleasing God in our life journey. We can also experience an inner peace that transcends all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Do you desire to have such peace in your life?

In our business lives we can unfortunately get caught up in all kinds of distractions that take our focus off the intimate relationship that Jesus talks about in the Beatitudes. These words found in Matthew and Luke are so much more than words of encouragement. First of all, they may sound simple, but they are not easily reached. And without the right relationship with our Father in Heaven, they are unfortunately unattainable. Yes, we can strive to reach a degree of hungering and thirsting on our own, but without the help of the Holy Spirit our attempts will fall short of His desires for us. The good news is that it's quite possible to be effective in business and still hunger and thirst for righteousness!

Unfortunately, the term spiritual awakening these days often refers to the New Age Movement. This form of spiritual awareness is a counterfeit doctrine that has led many church goers away from the Truth found in scripture. A number of spiritual leaders over the past few decades have made an inroad into the ranks of Christianity by emphasizing a very old lie. It basically promotes Satan’s lie first promoted in Genesis 3 when he enticed Eve to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden. In verses 4 and 5 Satan slyly says *“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. ‘For God knows that when you eat of it (the fruit) your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’*

There’s a huge difference between drawing near to God and desiring to be like God. Satan himself was thrown out of Heaven along with a third of the angels who followed him for wanting to take God’s rightful place on the throne of Heaven. We are in the latter days of the Age of Grace and we are told in 1 Timothy 4:1 *“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”* We are also instructed in 1 John 4:1 *“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*

These days, many talk about drawing close to God and how we can earn our way to Heaven. Christianity is unique in that we are told that we cannot earn a place in Heaven through our works. In Romans 6:23 we are told *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* In other words, all who believe can receive this gift in their present sinful state. The New Age spiritualist camp would have you believe that there are no absolute truths. Pluralistic perspectives have many confused and trusting that no single religion can make an exclusive claim to truth.

As for me and my family, we chose to follow the One Who died for us on a cross and boldly said in John 14:6-7 to the apostle Thomas *“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on you do know him and have seen him.’”* Christ Jesus is the Truth and I trust you will seek Him daily with all you heart, mind, soul and strength.

Passages to Ponder: John 15:5-6; Romans 1:17-18; Philippians 4:6-7; James 1:16-18; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 2 John 4-6; 3 John 3-4

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John 15:5-6 New International Version (NIV)

⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

Romans 1:17-18 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁷For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

¹⁸The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

Philippians 4:6-7 New International Version (NIV)

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

James 1:16-18 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.

2 Peter 2:1-3 New International Version (NIV)

2 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. ²Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. ³In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

2 John 4-6 New International Version (NIV)

⁴It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. ⁵And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. ⁶And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

3 John 3-4 New International Version (NIV)

³It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. ⁴I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.