

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, February 3, 2018

Have you ever felt you were simply limping through life? Some days will be tougher than others. We all face challenges that can seem insurmountable. My insurance career has seen exceptionally good months and some very good years, yet there have been lean times as well. A lackluster economy can take a toll on anyone who sells a specific product or a service. Through experience I've learned that these tough times require true dedication to your profession as well as perseverance. In order to survive you simply must work more diligently, meet daily activity goals and not get discouraged.

Most successful businessmen have had more than one setback in life. Success has come through their tenacious ability to handle the difficult times and rebound as opportunity presents itself. All this can be accomplished without deceiving others and taking unfair advantage of your competition. Hard work and ingenuity can pay great rewards in any field of expertise. Unfortunately, many choose to let circumstances dictate their lives. We don't have to limp through life.

With my Dad's coaxing, baseball became my main focus from ages 12 to 22. As a lead-off hitter, my goal was to get on base as often as I could. I worked diligently on techniques that helped me reach base nearly half my plate appearances. Improving my understanding of the strike zone, developing good bat control and working on my bunting strategies helped me greatly. Speaking of limps, I recall playing a good portion of one baseball season with a torn hamstring which slowed me down, but it didn't hold me back from playing every game that summer. I refused to let the injury keep me down.

My approach to writing these Fourth Quarter Strategies columns has been similar in many ways. Each week, I simply allocate the necessary time to complete another article to submit for future publication. Then again, I don't do it all on my own. Fortunately I have a team to hold me accountable and I've also been coaxed by the Holy Spirit to keep on writing. I don't find the process the least bit burdensome and don't have to force the writing. In my opinion, "writer's block" comes from a lack of inspiration and dedication.

What I've discovered over the past thirty years is there is a depth of faith that can make all the difference in the world. That faith comes from facing trials and realizing that God is revealing Himself through those trials. There's one account in Genesis 32:22-32 which describes Jacob wrestling with the Angel of the Lord. Jacob's life was filled with struggles, but on this particular occasion he would not let go of the Lord and asked Him to bless him and he got his wish. The Lord touched the socket of Jacob's hip and he walked with a limp that day forward. And God did bless him and gave him a new name, Israel.

Perhaps the best example for all who follow Christ is the Apostle Paul. His tenacity in remaining strong through adversity has inspired many to follow the Cross over the past two thousand years. Paul suffered greatly for Christ to the point of his eventual death. Most of us will not have to face death for our belief, but we must persevere for His sake and the sake of those He puts in our path. Our lives are precious and God wants us to have an abundant life.

Please consider your life as precious to our Lord and limp if you must, but do hold your head high and persevere for the sake of Christ!

Passages to Ponder: Genesis 32:22-28; Proverbs 24:16; John 10:10; Romans 12:3; Hebrews 11:21; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7

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Genesis 32:22-28 New International Version (NIV)

²²That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. ²⁴So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. ²⁶Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

²⁷The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

²⁸Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel,^[a] because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

Proverbs 24:16 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again,
but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.

John 10:10 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Romans 12:3 New International Version (NIV)

³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

Hebrews 11:21 New International Version (NIV)

²¹By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

James 1:2-4 New International Version (NIV)

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

1 Peter 1:6-7 New International Version (NIV)

⁶In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.