

## Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, March 10, 2018

One of my favorite breakfast meeting places in Santa Barbara is located on Lower State Street near the 101 Freeway. DAWN PATROL is best known for its “Build a Hash” breakfast selections. My selection usually starts with sweet potatoes, salmon, spinach, diced tomatoes, corn, pepper jack cheese, topped off with two eggs over medium and smothered in Hollandaise sauce. A year ago, I didn’t know such choices even existed for breakfast!

Frankly, I like having all those choices to build my breakfast with ingredients that match my taste buds. For me this has been quite a happening. While eating there with several friends the other day, we were discussing how this “Build a Hash” phenomena is nothing new at all. Apparently mankind has always been concocting and creating things to match their likings.

We’ve been endowed by our Heavenly Father with His gift of creating and designing to make this world a bit better and a more functional place to live. It seems we’re always attempting to build a better proverbial mousetrap. I mentioned to my friends that this creative approach to building our own special breakfast meal reminded me of the numerous attempts found in the Old Testament where tribes would often create their own gods. In fact, even the Israelites fell for this trap in the Sinai Desert. What is it that makes man want to create his own version of God?

Apparently most people aren’t happy with having an unseen Father in Heaven. They also seem to dislike Him bringing down rules that they would rather not follow. So, there appears to be a natural tendency to want to create our own god who we can follow as we wish without cramping our lifestyles.

After all, if we create a god to worship that we’ve designed to our liking, we can easily go on living as we want without fearing any retribution from our man made mirage. We simply need to imagine this image of what we want to believe is real even though it’s our own little creation. Many children create imaginary friends to help them cope with difficult life issues and I guess we can easily fall into a similar facade.

In Psalm 115:1-8, the Psalmist reminds us of God’s glory and man’s frailty – *“Not to us O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness. Why do the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’ Our God is in Heaven; he does whatever pleases him. But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes but they cannot see; they have ears but cannot hear, noses but they cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot feel, feet but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.”* What a sad state of affairs.

Frankly, I want to serve a God Who is significant. I want to serve a God Whom I can trust. I want to serve a God Who is real. Imaginary gods are useless and serve no real purpose at all. Why would you want to serve a false idol? Yet that’s exactly what many people do.

In the final chapter of Joshua, this great leader of the Israelites near the end of his life instructed his people in verse 14 *“Now fear the Lord and serve him with all your faithfulness. Throw away the gods of your forefathers worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.”* He meant to physically throw away those graven images many continued to worship in secret!

In Joshua 24:15 he continues *“But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”* The choice remains folks. Whom will you serve?

For me and my family, we choose to serve the Lord!

Passages to Ponder: Isaiah 46:4-9; Jeremiah 16:10-13; Hosea 11:1-4; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-6

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**Isaiah 46:4-9** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>4</sup>Even to your old age and gray hairs  
I am he, I am he who will sustain you.  
I have made you and I will carry you;  
I will sustain you and I will rescue you.  
<sup>5</sup>“With whom will you compare me or count me equal?  
To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?  
<sup>6</sup>Some pour out gold from their bags  
and weigh out silver on the scales;  
they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god,  
and they bow down and worship it.  
<sup>7</sup>They lift it to their shoulders and carry it;  
they set it up in its place, and there it stands.  
From that spot it cannot move.  
Even though someone cries out to it, it cannot answer;  
it cannot save them from their troubles.  
<sup>8</sup>“Remember this, keep it in mind,  
take it to heart, you rebels.  
<sup>9</sup>Remember the former things, those of long ago;  
I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is none like me.

**Jeremiah 16:10-13** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>10</sup>“When you tell these people all this and they ask you, ‘Why has the LORD decreed such a great disaster against us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the LORD our God?’ <sup>11</sup>then say to them, ‘It is because your ancestors forsook me,’ declares the LORD, ‘and followed other gods and served and worshiped them. They forsook me and did not keep my law. <sup>12</sup>But you have behaved more wickedly than your ancestors. See how all of you are following the stubbornness of your evil hearts instead of obeying me. <sup>13</sup>So I will throw you out of this land into a land neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.’

**Hosea 11:1-4** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>11</sup>“When Israel was a child, I loved him,  
and out of Egypt I called my son.  
<sup>2</sup>But the more they were called,  
the more they went away from me.  
They sacrificed to the Baals  
and they burned incense to images.  
<sup>3</sup>It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,  
taking them by the arms;  
but they did not realize  
it was I who healed them.  
<sup>4</sup>I led them with cords of human kindness,  
with ties of love.  
To them I was like one who lifts  
a little child to the cheek,  
and I bent down to feed them.

**Galatians 5:19-21** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>19</sup>The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup>idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup>and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**Colossians 3:5-6** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>5</sup>Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup>Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.