

**The Monday Memo
From Zimbabwe
Written by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 101**

I'm back! It's been more than two weeks and I hope you missed **The Monday Memo** as much as I missed writing it. I have had a great time in Zimbabwe the last two weeks. Among many other activities I was able to conduct a Seven Steps of a PurposeQuest™ seminar last weekend and more than 300 people attended! The seminar feedback has been great and I have had many requests to do another one here as soon as possible. By the way, don't forget that the next Seven Steps Seminar is on March 14 or 15 in Allentown, Pennsylvania. You can register or learn more about this life-changing seminar at <http://www.purposequest.com/seminars.htm>.

As you would expect, I met with many people while I was in Zimbabwe to talk about purpose. Conditions are hard here right now, with fuel and food shortages leading to long lines. Normal activities seem to take forever and people are living under great stress. If that isn't enough, inflation is at 200%! Yet people here are clarifying and fulfilling their purpose, and those who do seem to be prospering.

Suffering and difficulty seem to be necessary factors in anyone's PurposeQuest. Pain adds a dimension of maturity and reality that makes us stronger and more sensitive to the needs around us. It was written of Jesus, "**He learned obedience from what he suffered**" (Hebrews 5:8). If that is how Jesus learned obedience, you can be sure that we will learn the same way.

The Bible is full of stories of purposeful people who suffered and waited. Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness before he returned to Egypt to rescue his people. After Samuel had anointed him to be the new king, David spent 25 years waiting to replace the existing one. A special story to me is that of Joseph in the Old Testament. (I would recommend that you read his story that is found in Genesis, chapters 37 through 50.) I won't go into the entire story here, but Joseph suffered greatly at the hands of family and associates in order to fulfill his purpose. Then he had to fulfill it in a foreign land under difficult circumstances. Things were so difficult that he named his second son "Ephraim," which means "God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

Sometimes the suffering is not being able to fulfill your purpose once you find it. Another key area is the opposition that often comes from people close to you. Finally, you may suffer through some failure, having started out assured of success. Whatever the source of your pain, it is part of everyone's PurposeQuest. The pain will make you grow, deal with any pride and connect you to the pain of others.

Are you in a difficult place? Then you are probably right where you need to be! This week you may want to study some historical person of purpose. What role did suffering have in their life? What role is it playing in your own life? It's hard to focus on the good when it hurts so much. But God can still make you fruitful in the midst of your own land of suffering. I pray that your pain will lead to purpose and productivity and that it won't last one day longer than it needs to last. Have a great week!

**The Monday Memo
From the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 102**

I'm coming to Allentown, Pennsylvania this weekend! You may not be excited, but I am. I am still receiving feedback from Dallas and Zimbabwe concerning the Seven Steps of a PurposeQuest seminars there, so I am eagerly anticipating all the lives that will be touched and changed next week as I continue my own PurposeQuest. I had a scholarly seminary professor who would jokingly tell us, "Sell your shoes and buy books." I want to adjust that and say, "Sell your shoes

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and come to Allentown.” You won’t be disappointed. You can go to <http://www.purposequest.com/seminars.htm> for more information. By the way, I am finding a special presence to help young people with their own purposequest, so please make sure that teens and young adults find their way to the seminar. If you need a group registration rate, please call and let me know.

I have found that this generation of youth “connect” with the purpose message in a meaningful way. In Zimbabwe, one young lady came to the Seven Steps seminar and went home to begin writing a children’s devotional. Other parents reported how their children came home and laid out their plans for their purposequest, to the surprise and delight of their parents. I use my own daughter as another example. Since she was four, Deborah could sell anything. She usually outsold all her classmates when her school had fundraising projects and as a teenager, she had a job for Sears Roebuck as a telemarketer. She won a district award from Sears for her work, even though she was only 15.

When she entered university, her mother and I were surprised that Deborah chose education as her major. But after being in school for only a few weeks, she called home and told me that she had a “vision.” As she was entering the people mover at her university, she “saw” herself getting on a plane. Deborah said she knew she was getting on that plane to go sell something to someone. She got off the people mover and transferred into the business school. Last May Deborah graduated, and today, at 23 years of age, she is a pharmaceutical representative for a growing company. They gave her a company car and generous benefits. My daughter is a young woman of purpose and she doesn’t have to suffer in the wrong job to find her way to fulfillment. She is already on her way.

Recently I talked to a group of youth in England about purpose. I showed them from the Bible how many children and young people knew their purpose early in life. Joseph knew at 17 years of age that he would rule over his father’s household, as we are told in Genesis. Samuel heard God’s call when he was a child serving with Eli. David was a teenager when Samuel anointed him king of Israel. Daniel was a youth when he entered the service of the king of Babylon. And Mary, mother of Jesus, had an angel visit her while she was a teenager and change her life forever.

What does this have to do with you? If you have children or work with young people, talk to them about purpose and see how they respond. See if they don’t readily “connect” with what you’re saying. If you aren’t numbered among the youth anymore, there is still hope. Jesus urged us all to be *like* children as we seek to enter His kingdom. This week, try to reconnect with your youthful ability to dream, to think about what you want to do when you grow up. Don’t talk yourself out of it, but act like a child and live in that dream this week. Then when you “wake up” from your dream, see what steps you can take to make that dream a reality.

My sister-in-law sent me a list of the current best sellers on the Publishers Weekly book list. Of the ten best-selling titles, five of them have to do with the topic of purpose. Purpose is a hot topic, but I’ve known that for the 12 years that I have spent developing the purpose message and quest. Yet the main challenge in the purposequest is not convincing anyone of its truth. The problem is in applying the principles to the lives of individuals so that they may clarify and fulfill their specific purpose. Most authors are writing, “You have a purpose, you have a purpose.” When asked in return, “What is my purpose?”, most respond, “You have a purpose.” They can’t really say anything more specific or personal than that. My goal is to raise up an army of purposeful people who not only know their purpose but can also help others find their purpose. If you haven’t already, I invite you to enlist in this purpose army, whether you are young or young at heart. Have a great week!

**The Monday Memo
From Allentown, Pennsylvania
Edited by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 103**

Last year I invited guest writers to submit their ideas for a Monday Memo and this week, I am sending you the first Memo that I did not write. The author, Diana Scimone, is my book editor and sister-in-law. I have watched the story that she describes unfold over the years and I can commend her to you as a woman of purpose and productivity. I know you will be encouraged in your own purposequest as you read about hers.

Two weeks ago, *Parade* magazine featured a cover article about Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel laureate from Burma who has been under house arrest on-and-off for years in Burma for her pro-democracy stance. She recently won the US\$1 million AI Neuharth Free Spirit of the Year Award, given annually to “the person in the news who has stirred our hearts by demonstrating the human capacity to dream, dare and do.”

In the article, Aung San Suu Kyi said she has asked people all over Burma why they want democracy, and she shared many of their responses—but the first one she lists is the most startling: “They want to be able to live their lives without the oppressive sense that their destiny is not theirs to shape.” When I read those words, I wondered why those of us who live in “free” countries don’t take more advantage of the opportunity to shape our own destinies—especially those of us who are Christians, who know all the Bible verses promising that the Lord has a purpose and plan for our lives?

In my work as a journalist the past two decades, I’ve traveled to many repressive countries and seen people who would kill (and often do) for that kind of freedom. Those are the non-Christians, of course! I’ve also had the humbling experience of meeting countless Christians from Sudan, China, Iran, and elsewhere whose future—according to the law of their land—is not theirs to determine. Yet they know the Lord has a destiny and purpose for their lives even in the midst of repression, and they regularly pursue finding and fulfilling it.

Fifteen years ago, the Lord gave me a specific purpose. He said, “I’ve called some people to take My word into countries, but I’ve called you to take it out, and report on it.” When I hear exciting stories of what God is doing in other countries, or stories of intense repression and persecution, I cannot *not* share them! I have to tell them, and the Lord has consistently given me avenues to do that. As I do, I’m challenged myself by the joy and endurance of these Christians in the midst of hardships and heartache. And I’m challenged that if they can find and pursue their purpose in such circumstances, how much more should I, living in a free country?

Last week John wrote in The Monday Memo:

“If you aren’t numbered among the youth anymore, there is still hope. Jesus urged us all to be like children as we seek to enter His kingdom. This week, try to reconnect with your youthful ability to dream, to think about what you want to do when you grow up. Don’t talk yourself out of it, but act like a child and live in that dream this week. Then when you ‘wake up’ from your dream, see what steps you can take to make that dream a reality.”

Two years ago, I turned 50—and I think I’m recapturing my youth. Where I used to write articles for magazines and news services about persecuted Christians, I am now writing...children’s books! It seems like a totally incongruous leap, but the Lord has woven together everything I’ve done in the past, and is bringing it to this new endeavor.

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The book series, called *Adventures With PawPaw*, is about a little dog who travels to a different country in each book. The goal is to introduce young children to other countries and cultures. Part of the proceeds from each book will support children's charities in those countries. I've started a non-profit foundation, PawPaw's Pals, to administrate that portion of my vision.

I first had the idea for these books back in 1990, and it's been a long road to see the dream become a reality. Many times I wanted to give up, convinced it could never happen—but the Lord (often through John!) wouldn't let it die. He continually challenged me to pursue my dream.

I'd never written any fiction, much less children's books. I had to learn how to do that and then attempt to "sell" my manuscripts to publishers. I now own the world's largest collection of rejection letters from publishers around the globe. When no one would publish the books, I decided to form my own publishing company, Peapod Publishing, Inc., to publish the books myself. I then had to find an illustrator, a printer and designer, not to mention the money to pay for it all.

But God has been faithful—and the first three books in the series should roll off the presses by June. (You can see them at <http://www.adventureswithpawpaw.com>.) In this entire process, God has never shown me the full picture at any one moment. Instead He has called me to go through the open door in front of me, and trust Him that there would be another open one after that. Corrie ten Boom once said, "If all things are possible with God, then all things are possible to him who believes in Him." I can only say "Amen!"

Thank you, Diana, for sharing this with us. And may the God of Diana and PawPaw be with you this week as you seek to make your dream a reality. Have a great week!

**The Monday Memo
From the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 104**

I am sitting at home on my couch nursing a cold. It is nice to be home as I prepare for a busy month in April. I will be in England at the Women of Purpose Conference in April. Then I will conduct my next Seven Steps of a PurposeQuest seminars in Providence, Rhode Island on April 26 and Pittsburgh on May 10. If you would like information about attending either seminar, please write me (if you haven't already) with the city name in the subject box and I will keep you posted on all developments.

I received a lot of mail this past week from people who were deeply discouraged. They were distressed about finances, the state of the church, not knowing their purpose, and past failures. This trend was so noticeable that I am urging everyone who has a purpose or gift of encouragement to make a concerted effort this week to encourage as many other people as possible. Don't assume just because someone looks or sounds upbeat that they are. Speak some kind words, write an encouraging note, buy a small gift or do whatever else you can do to encourage those around you. Maybe you can send this **Monday Memo** to someone who may need a boost.

If you are discouraged and ready to give up, I did some research that will hopefully encourage you. R. H. Macy failed seven times before his famous department store in New York was a success. English novelist John Creasey got 753 rejection slips before he published 564 books. American baseball legend Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times but he also hit 714 home runs. But there's more.

Pope John XXIII became pope at the age of 76. Golda Meir became prime minister of Israel at 71, but William Pitt II was 24 when he became prime minister of Great Britain. George Bernard Shaw had a play produced when he was 84 and Mozart was just seven when his first composition was published. American founding father Benjamin Franklin was a newspaper columnist when he was 16, but then helped frame the United States Constitution when he was 81.

What am I trying to say? I'm saying don't give up. No matter how young or old, no matter how many times you've failed, regardless of what obstacles you face, don't stop pursuing your dream. You don't know how close you may be to a breakthrough, no matter how disheartened you may be today.

Before David became king of Israel, he went through several decades of tough times when it appeared that he would not survive, let alone become king. What did David do? We are told: "David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God" (1 Sam 30:6). It is critical that you do something this week to strengthen yourself or someone else in the Lord this week. If no one comes forward to help you this week, go looking for them. But whatever you do, don't spend another day languishing in the abyss of despair. Have a great week

**The Monday Memo
From San Antonio, Texas
Written by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 105**

This past week I was studying how Jesus used parables in his teaching ministry. Parables are stories with a moral or lesson, and there are 41 parables that are recorded in the first three gospels. I was especially intrigued in my studies by the story found in Matthew 25:14-30: You may want to read the entire story, for I will include only the last few verses in this **Monday Memo**:

"Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'" (Matthew 25:24-30).

Here are a few things to keep in mind. First, the talents referred to here were monetary units and not gifts or abilities. Second, the three men in the parable received decreasing amounts of money. Third, the master expected each of them to bring unspecified increase to what they were given. The first two did just that; the third man did not.

When the day of accounting came, the third man who did not manage to obtain any increase told the master why. He said that he was angry and afraid. Perhaps he was upset the other two men got more money to work with than he did. The servant saw the master as a tyrant, expecting increase for which the master himself did not labor. The servant took and hid the money and gave it back undiminished, unharmed, but without any increase. Upon hearing how difficult he was to work with, the master became angry and ordered the one talent to be taken away from the servant and given to the servant who had earned the largest increase.

This is the story of many people with whom I work. They are afraid of failure and would rather do nothing than the wrong thing. They “play” it safe and hope to not lose rather than to win. I quote Simon Kistemaker from his book entitled *The Parables*:

The servant entrusted with the one talent kept the deposit safely in a hidden place. He feared to put it to use, for he knew that his master would demand the talent from him upon his return. Fear, therefore, completely overshadowed love, trust, and faith. Fear is the opposite of confidence.

The Christian who puts faith to work will reap immense dividends. He is not concerned about himself and his own interests, for whatever he owns belongs to the Lord and whatever he does he does for the Lord. No follower of Jesus can ever say that he lacks the gifts to be of service simply because he is not a Paul, Luther, Calvin, or Knox. The parable teaches that every servant has received gifts, “each according to his ability.” Jesus knows the capability of every Christian, and he expects an increase.

As with many other parables, specific details cannot and should not be stressed and applied. Rather, the central message of faithfulness is important. The parable of the talents teaches that every believer has been endowed with gifts differing according to ability, and that these gifts must be put to use in God’s service. In the kingdom of God everyone is expected to employ fully the gifts he has received. In God’s kingdom there simply is no room for drones—only for worker bees.

Which of the servants are you? Are you working in faith to bring increase to your world through your purpose and dreams, or are you afraid and hesitant? I trust that this week you will work to bring the faithful increase that is your right and duty as a follower of Jesus. Have a great week.