

**The Monday Memo
from the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 106**

I am off to England this week for ten days. When I return, I will conduct three Seven Steps of a PurposeQuest seminars in rapid succession. On April 26, I will be in Providence, Rhode Island. On May 10, I will be in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and then on June 14, I will be in the Los Angeles area. Those three seminars cover the East Coast, Midwest and West Coast of the United States. I urge you to walk, fly or hitchhike, if you must, to attend one of these seminars. I promise that it will change your life (the seminar, not the hitchhiking!). If you would like to register early to get a discount or if you need more information, you can go to <http://www.purposequest.com/register.htm>.

I receive a lot of questions every week, and most of them focus on the issue of life purpose. Over the years, the questions asked most often, along with my answers, are as follows:

Q. Can my purpose change over time?

A. No. How you fulfill your purpose may change, but your purpose remains the same. I have fulfilled my purpose, which is to bring order out of chaos, in a number of different job roles. My purpose is the same; how I do it may change.

Q. Can I have more than one purpose?

A. No. You can have many gifts and talents, or different ways to express or fulfill your purpose, but your purpose is a clear, simple summary of your essence that is singular.

Q. Should or can a husband and wife have the same purpose?

A. Not necessarily. While it is possible for a couple to have the same purpose, I have found it to be rare. Even if both work in the same business, mission or ministry, each partner will have a different purpose, a different function in the same organization. Usually those purposes complement one another.

Q. What is the difference between a gift and purpose?

A. A gift is like a tool that you carry with you to help fulfill your purpose. A plumber's purpose is not to "wrench."

The wrench helps the plumber achieve his or her purpose to repair or build. Your gifts do the same for you, but they are not to be confused with your purpose.

Q. What is the difference between my ministry and my purpose?

I want to focus on this answer for the remainder of this **Monday Memo**. Too often we are tempted to separate what we do in church from what we do outside of church. We tend to think of ministry as related to church work, and purpose as something that may or may not fit into our church role. I contend that there is no difference between the two.

Two years ago in Atlanta, Georgia, I met with a man who had a twenty-five-year career in the field of human resources. Yet he was clearly a pastor. When I suggested that perhaps he was a chaplain or pastor in his company, he rejected the idea at first because he didn't have a pulpit or like public speaking. Yet he clearly had cared and "shepherded" people during his entire corporate career. By the end of our meeting, he

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began to see his purpose was indeed to care for people in a business setting. He realized that his purpose was his ministry; it just wasn't taking place within the walls of a church building. That knowledge set him free to be who God made him to be and freed him from thinking that his ministry and purpose were two different things. They were not.

Perhaps you aren't clear about your purpose because you have put God in a box. You are a prophet, but everyone knows that prophets only function in a church setting. Who said that? You bring healing and wholeness to people, but don't lay hands on anyone or do it within a church. Does that limit your purpose or usefulness to God? Are you a preacher, but your pulpit is in a school or hospital? I met a man once whose title was school principal or headmaster, but whose purpose was to pastor the children who attended his school and their parents.

As we close, read the words of Robert Greenleaf and be free to minister (which simply means to serve) in whatever setting the Lord chooses for you, whether it is in or outside the church:

The great religious prophets of the future will not necessarily be theologians, philosophers, or people of literature. They are as likely to be lawyers, doctors, businesspeople, scientists, or politicians. And they will carry out their prophetic roles while functioning at a high level of excellence in their professional field. In fact, unless significant prophecy emerges in all of these places, the vision, without which the people perish, will not be sufficiently evident.

The world society in which we are all inextricably involved is far too complex, it is in too revolutionary a mood, and it is fast becoming too literate and aware of its sources of expertise for very much of the prophetic wisdom it needs to be uttered by ministers, scholars, or writers. These will, of course, continue to serve, but more on a par with those who are more immersed in the ongoing work of the world.

Businesses, government bureaus, law firms, clinics, and scientific laboratories have not only become large, sophisticated institutions and important sources of new knowledge, but they are just as likely to harbor a philosopher, a prophet, or a saint as is the monastery or the university - Seeker and Servant: Reflections on Religious Leadership.

I hope this week you will find new peace to be who God made you to be in the setting that is best suited for **you**. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo
From London, England
Written by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 107

Someone wrote this past week wondering why I used the first paragraph of **The Monday Memo** to promote the upcoming Seven Steps of a PurposeQuest seminars. My answer was simple. I receive many letters every week from people who faithfully read **The Monday Memo** but still need assistance in clarifying their purpose. Many people

are regularly touched by the message of purpose and productivity, but these same people often need personal help **applying** the principles of purpose to their own lives. I have also found that even those who know their purpose are still restricted by fear and their past from freely functioning in their purpose today. The Seven Steps Seminar is designed to help you apply what you read in [The Monday Memo](#).

So with that in mind, don't forget the upcoming events in Providence, Rhode Island on April 26, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on May 10 and Los Angeles, California on June 14. I hope you can make these or any of the other seminars that I will conduct this year. Seminar information and registration procedures can be found below.

For two weeks I have been thinking about a story that I first included in Issue 48 of [The Monday Memo](#). I thought I would share it again with you this week. Michael Jones, a gifted pianist, author, speaker and educator tells the story of how he went from being a consultant to a famous pianist. One day someone heard Mr. Jones playing the piano in a Toronto hotel lobby, something he did as a hobby while he traveled. The man approached him and asked Mr. Jones an important question:

The man asked, "Do you work at the hotel?" I said, "Oh, no, no, no. I'm a consultant. I'm busy trying to change the world." To my disappointment, he didn't seem at all impressed by that. Then he asked, "How many other people do this kind of consulting work that you do?" I said, "Well, probably 20 or 30, I would guess, in the Toronto area." And then he looked at me, and at that moment what I most recall about the meeting was how clear and sober his eyes appeared, from how he seemed a few minutes before. He said, "Who's going to play that music if you don't play it yourself?"

I felt that question drop in a way that I had not heard a question drop inside of me before. I realized it was a question for which I had no answer. . . Then he stood up, a little uneasy, and steadied himself by putting his hand on my shoulder, and said, "This is your gift -- don't waste it." Meanwhile I sat on the piano bench, stunned by the question and the sense that it had just changed my life. Who will play my music? I asked myself.

I want to pose the same question to you in this [Monday Memo](#)? Who will play your "music" if you don't? Who will write the book, build the business empire, take the missions trip, compose the play or fulfill your destiny if you don't? Are there others who can do what you are doing now, while something only you can do remains undone?

Michael Jones answered that question by concluding that no one would play his music if he didn't. He overcame his fear, as he tells it, of going broke, being ignored or failing and went on to sell two million copies of his piano recordings. I am not guaranteeing this measure of success, for that is in God's hands. But I can promise you the same sense of adventure and fulfillment if you let go of the familiar to embrace the unknown as you follow your dream.

I finished a book this week entitled **Working Identity** and it includes many stories of people who made career transitions just like Michael Jones. The writer of the book points out that too many people are trying to get their transitions so perfect or accomplished so quickly and completely that they don't experiment, don't take small steps to see what doors of opportunity will open to bring them closer to fulfilling their

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purpose. What can you do this week that will bring you a little closer to your joy and the fulfillment of your purpose?

I have come to the conclusion that if I don't deliver the purpose message the way I do, no one else can or will. So I have determined to spread the good news of purpose and trust that God will lead me where I need to go and provide for me along the way. This week my "music" has brought me to London, and for that I am grateful. Now isn't it time to find out where and how far your music will take you? Have a great week!

**The Monday Memo
From the desk of
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Issue 108**

I trust that you and your family had a joyous Easter celebration. I got home from England last Friday and celebrated my 53rd birthday on Saturday. This week I will get ready for the Seven Steps seminars in Providence, Rhode Island on Saturday, April 26. (Remember that today is the early registration deadline.) The next two Seven Steps seminars after Rhode Island are:

May 10 Pittsburgh, PA
June 14 Los Angeles, CA

I hope to see you at one of the upcoming seminars.

For the next several weeks, we will take a look at the issue of purpose in the life of Nehemiah, Old Testament builder and leader. When we first see Nehemiah, he is a cupbearer for the king in a foreign land. Then we read,

Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven (Nehemiah 1:2-4).

I'm not sure if Nehemiah realized that this visitor from his homeland would hold the key to Nehemiah's purpose. You may be searching for your purpose, but it may not be clear because history hasn't made it clear. Nehemiah couldn't know his purpose until Jerusalem was in disrepair and the people in desperate straights. One day, a man appeared who gave Nehemiah a bad report about the condition of Jerusalem. This report, probably heard by many others, impacted Nehemiah more deeply than anyone else. This is similar to Winston Churchill who was a politician all his life, but didn't find his purpose until Nazi Germany threatened the world. It was then that Churchill realized that he had been born to save the western world.

Notice how Nehemiah went about seeking clarification of his purpose. He sat down and stopped what he was doing. He cried, almost always a sure sign that someone is involved in purpose-related activities. Then Nehemiah prayed and even went without eating. The issue of purpose is so powerful that it can often make you forget about food.

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Even Jesus said, "But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you know nothing about'" (John 4:32).

Then later in the story, Nehemiah went in to see his boss the king. The king noticed that Nehemiah looked glum and said,

So the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart." I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it" (Nehemiah 2:2-5).

I have written many **Monday Memos** with one objective in mind: to help you state your purpose clearly and without hesitation to anyone who would ask. The king is asking you today what it is that you want. You cannot respond, "Well, uh, I sort of would like to, you know, well, I was hoping that I could, like maybe go to the mission field." I often find that many people are so uncomfortable talking about self that they miss opportunities for doors to open because they aren't clear or they are afraid to be specific. Not so with Nehemiah. He asked God for help and then he stated his purpose clearly: "send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it."

When I sit and help someone clarify their purpose, I try to listen carefully. Two words seem to occur regularly when people talk to me about purpose. They tell me that they "just" do this or "only" do that. "Just" and "only" are often gateways to a clear purpose statement, for we often look past the obvious in search of a more glamorous or dramatic purpose.

Nehemiah prayed for clarity and help and then he told the king, his supervisor, what he wanted to do. And the king was moved to help him. This week, you need to prepare for the same thing. You may want to fast and pray. Then make every effort to be clear and direct in the description of who you are and what you were created to do. If someone who has the power to help you fulfill your purpose asks, be ready to tell them what you need without apology. May you walk in the steps of Nehemiah this week as you seek to not only identify but also fulfill your life purpose. Have a great week.

The Monday Memo
From Providence, Rhode Island
Written by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 109

Another PurposeQuest seminar has come and gone. The best thing about last Saturday was that I got to deliver the Seven Steps seminar here in Providence not just once but twice! What a joy it was to spend the whole day talking about purpose. Then that evening I also had the opportunity to see a friend function in her purpose at a public performance of the show "Annie." It just doesn't get any better than this. Don't forget about the two upcoming Seven Steps seminars:

- May 10 in Pittsburgh, PA (the early registration deadline is next Monday, May 5)
- June 14 in Los Angeles

I hope to see you at one of these two seminars.

Last week, we began looking at Nehemiah and the issues of purpose in his life. This week I want to focus on another aspect of Nehemiah and his purpose, and that is opposition. I have written about purpose and opposition before (see Monday Memo Issue 92) but I saw some things in Nehemiah's life that may help you in your own PurposeQuest. As we saw last week, Nehemiah was deeply moved by the poor conditions of his home city and, after fasting and prayer, was able to clearly declare what he wanted to do while talking to his supervisor, the king. The king gave Nehemiah a leave of absence to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls and resettle the inhabitants.

But this is where the opposition came on the scene. There were people who had a vested interest in Jerusalem *not* being rebuilt and they began to make life difficult for Nehemiah and his workers. I find it fascinating that often there is no opposition in your life until you start to do something to fulfill your purpose. Then family, friends, church members, and coworkers—the people who know us best—then tell you that you're crazy or misguided. They may even become actively involved in opposing the steps you are taking to fulfill your PurposeQuest.

Nehemiah's enemies used three tactics to keep him from his purpose: intimidation, confrontation and criticism. The criticism fell into three categories:

1. **He was rebellious.** -- "But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. 'What is this you are doing?' they asked. 'Are you rebelling against the king?'" (Nehemiah 2:19). Often your efforts to fulfill your purpose are seen as going against someone else's plans for you. They will accuse you of trying to do your "own thing" and portray you as independent or loner.
2. **The job was too big for him to do.** -- "When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, 'What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble-- burned as they are?'" (Nehemiah 4:1-2). Sometimes people get angry for no reason as you travel the road of your PurposeQuest. They try to tell you that what you want to do is impossible, that no one if anyone has ever done what you want to do.
3. **He was incapable of performing with the excellence required to succeed.** -- "Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, 'What they are building-- if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!'" (Nehemiah 4:3). Some people will tell you that you're not that good or talented. You don't have what it takes to make it in music, theater, business, ministry, the missions field or any other field of endeavor that you pursue.

Nehemiah learned to deal with his critics and you will need to learn that too if you are to succeed in fulfilling your purpose. A verse that has encouraged me is one that I included in my most recent Galatians Bible study. Paul wrote: "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of

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God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10). Your purpose is the will of God for your life. You don’t need anyone’s permission to do God’s will; but in doing God’s will, you will encounter opposition and criticism. You must learn to deal with it and move on, for anyone who has done great things in God has had to do the same.

I trust that you will work for the praise of God this week and not let your opposition hinder you, not even the opposition from within. There are times when there is an internal critic that accuses you of the same three things that are outlined above. I urge you this week to move beyond external and internal criticism to take purposeful action in your life. As you do, have a great week!

**The Monday Memo
From Baltimore, Maryland
Written by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 110**

I had a great weekend here in Baltimore making new friends and talking about purpose. The exciting thing is that I have the privilege of doing this again next weekend in my hometown. Don’t forget about the Seven Steps of a PurposeQuest seminar next Saturday, May 10, in Pittsburgh. Today is the early registration deadline (see below for more information).

This week I have been reading a great book entitled ***Paul: The Traveler and Roman Citizen*** by William Ramsey. I love to read anything about the Apostle Paul because he was such a man of purpose. Far from perfect, Paul was difficult to work with and had little patience for underachievers. Next to Jesus, however, no one played a greater role in the development of the early church than Paul. He was able to do that not because he was smart (although he was) or aggressive (although he was), but because he was a man of purpose. When he went to the Gentiles, God went with him and the results were spectacular.

I was reading about Paul’s first missionary journey to Cyprus and the Galatian region in Acts 13. When Paul confronted a magician who was trying to hinder his work, Luke (the writer of Acts) stated, “Then Saul, who was also called Paul . . .” (Acts 13:9). What a simple but powerful statement! It was 14 years since Saul had his dramatic encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road and now he stepped forward on the mission field and said, “My name is no longer Saul but Paul.” It took Paul 14 years to realize who he was and what he was created to do, and when he did, he changed his name to Paul.

Think about it. Saul was a Roman citizen from the cross-cultural city of Tarsus. He knew four languages. Saul understood the Roman/Greek world of his day, and he was in some ways more comfortable in the Gentile world than he was in Jerusalem. Saul had legal rights as a Roman citizen, rights that Jesus did not have when he faced his crucifixion. Saul was a Roman! In Cyprus, Saul stepped forward into his purpose and from that point, he was known and is still known today as Paul. What a difference a one-letter change made in world history!

That is the power of purpose. Nothing changed in Saul’s life except how he saw himself. The only thing that changed was his mind. But that was enough to have him boldly step forward and in essence say, “This is who I am. This is what I was created to do and be.”

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From that point, his travels, his letters and his legacy have impacted the world for 2,000 years.

Who are you? What is your “name?” Are you ready to step forward and acknowledge who you are and what your past has shaped and prepared you to be today? Are you prepared to stop identifying with what others call you and make a statement of purpose for yourself? This could be the week when you have your debut out of the shadows of who you have been into the light of who God wants you to be. The world is waiting for the real you to emerge. As you do, I hope you have a great week!