

**The Monday Memo
Written from Newport Beach, California
Dr. John W. Stanko
Issue 116**

Another Seven Steps of a PurposeQuest seminar is history. I had a wonderful time here in California last Saturday. I will take a break this summer before I resume my seminar schedule in September. Be watching to see if and when I am coming to your area. In the meantime, I have been invited to do a seminar in Afghanistan. See below for information on how you can help me go.

By now I am sure you know that I have declared June 29 “Celebrate a Failure” Day the world over. On that day and the week thereafter, I am urging you to focus on the lessons you have learned from a failure (or failures) in your life. Then throw a party and share those lessons with your family, friends, business associates or church family. The objective is to see the importance of failure in our spiritual and professional growth and to be free enough to talk about it. We don’t just want to tolerate failure; we want to learn to celebrate it!

This week I was reading a book by Parker Palmer entitled *The Active Life*. In that book, Palmer wrote about the importance and role of failure. I thought I would share his words with you:

If I allow my life to be deformed by the fallen angel called “fear of failure,” I will never be fully alive. I will withhold myself from actions that might fail, or ignore evidence of failure when it happens. But if I could ride that fear all the way down, I might break out of my self-imposed isolation and become connected with many other lives, because failure and the fear of it are universal. I would learn that failure is a natural fact, a way of discerning what to try next. I would be empowered to take more risks, which means to embrace more life, and in the process I would become more connected with others. The monster called fear of failure (or ridicule, criticism, or foolishness, or any of the other fears that are so easy to regard as mortal enemies) would become a demanding but empowering guide toward relatedness.

But on *this* side of such an experience, we may wonder why we should anywhere near the monsters, let alone ride them all the way down. After all, they are monsters, and they do harbor powers of destruction as well as of creativity. Even if riding the monsters is the only way to reach safe ground, there is no guarantee that we will get there. People have fallen off before the end of the journey and have been stranded in some bad places. So why take the risk of riding the monsters in the first place?

[The reason is that] some monsters simply will not go away. They are too big to walk around, too powerful to overcome, too clever to outsmart. The only way to deal with them is to move toward them, with them, through them. We must learn to befriend some of these primitive powers that seem so much like enemies. In the process we will find them working for us, not against us, working for life, not death.

What are you afraid of? Is some past failure or the fear of a future one keeping you ineffective and paralyzed? Are you so afraid of missing God’s will for your life that you *are* missing God’s will for your life? Then perhaps this week you can take comfort in the following passage:

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along

with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:31-39).

You have two weeks to get ready for Celebrate a Failure Day when you will join with thousands of others around the world who will review what they've learned from failure. While you are doing this, you will actually be preparing for the success for which all failure prepares you. Have a great week!

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Issue 117

This is the last week to get ready for June 29. What is June 29? Why, it's "Celebrate a Failure" Day! For the last five weeks, I have urged **The Monday Memo** readers to find a way next week to talk about the lessons learned from some life failure. I made the following recommendations for ways to celebrate on June 29 and the week thereafter:

1. If you are a pastor, talk about failure and its role in the life of the believer. Make sure you are clear that it is spiritual to fail.
2. Spend some time talking with your family and especially your children about failure. You may want to focus on one particular failure in your own life and what you learned. This will free your children from the false sense that failure is to be avoided at all costs. Maybe you can have a family failure party! Make sure you laugh a lot, even at yourself.
3. If you are in a small group setting, spend some time talking about your failures, how you view failure and how your fear of failure may be affecting you now.

The last few weeks I have quoted what some authors and well-known people had to say about failure. This week I quote from Thomas Merton's book, *New Seeds of Contemplation*. I have not gone looking for any of these quotes or passages; I have encountered them during my normal weekly reading. So many have so much to say about failure, and I think it is time that you and I added our own perspective to what others are saying. Before we do that, let's look at what Merton wrote:

Perhaps we still have a basically superstitious tendency to associate failure with dishonesty and guilt—failure being interpreted as "punishment." Even if a man starts out with good intentions, if he fails we tend to think he was somehow "at fault." If he was not guilty, he was least "wrong." And "being wrong" is something we have not yet learned to face with equanimity and understanding. We either condemn it with god-like disdain or forgive it with god-like condescension. We do not manage to accept it with human compassion, humility and identification. Thus we never see the one truth that

would help us begin to solve our ethical and political problems: that we are *all* more or less wrong, that we are *all* at fault, *all* limited and obstructed by our mixed motives, our self-deception, our greed, our self-righteousness and our tendency to aggressivity and hypocrisy.

Merton was saying that my failure to face my own humanity causes me *not* to accept the humanity of others. The basic truth is that failure is part of being human. We cannot serve God in the hopes that He will save us from our propensity to fail. If God did that, He would not have commanded us to forgive one another. He knew we would fail and He ordered us to deal with it properly. Those who take refuge in a false sense of spirituality trying to avoid human failure have already failed. Heaven and the resurrection are a fulfillment of our humanity in that we will have glorified flesh. Heaven is not an *escape* from humanity but a *perfection* of it. That is God's ultimate good for us. We must deal with our humanity now and then. There is no other way.

So I pray that you will have a good week of preparation leading up to June 29. I plan on making this an annual event. If you can't cover all your failures this year, relax! There's always next year. I for one have enough failure to cover the next ten Celebrate a Failure Days. But the problem is that I will collect even more material in the coming year! With that in mind, I will celebrate my humanity with you next week and thank God that He still loves and uses you and me, even in our human condition. Have a great week!

**The Monday Memo
Written from Orlando, Florida
By Dr. John W. Stanko
Issue 118**

I'm back! I returned from Afghanistan last Wednesday evening and it was certainly a trip I will never forget. My time there was challenging, rewarding, difficult, fearful, sleepless, intense, pressured and intense. I know I used the word "intense" twice, but for good reason. I had a 14-hour layover in Dubai on the way home, so I checked into a hotel to rest and take a shower. While I was watching television in my room and fighting some stomach cramps, I just started crying.

I cried because I was honored that the Lord would use me to work with the International Health Services Foundation team from the Philippines, Korea, Singapore, Canada and the United States. I wept because the needs of the Afghani people are so great and I was privileged to play some small part in their recovery. I also cried because, once I was away from Afghanistan, I realized just how much pressure we were all under as we conducted a business conference at Kabul University—the first ever in that nation's history.

I want to thank you for your prayer covering and encouraging email letters. I also want to thank you for your financial support. Money came in even as I was walking out the door to catch my plane. If you contributed, you will hear from me personally once I get through this week here in Orlando, Florida. (I am here to participate at the Christian Booksellers Convention and re-release my book, *A Daily Dose of Proverbs*). If you would like to contribute toward my expenses, it's not too late (see below).

I will keep this week's Memo short but I have some thoughts to share from my trip.

1. The conditions in Kabul are bad, worse than any I have ever witnessed. I did not see one house or building that didn't have some kind of bullet or rocket damage. There are no

- banks. The people seldom smile, and beggars roam the streets looking for alms and help. What can you say to a people who have suffered so much, who are now looking to pick up the pieces and rebuild their nation? I decided to talk about purpose, what else! One student commented to me on the fourth day of the conference that he was still thinking about my purpose message from the first day. I saw again that the power of purpose can and will impact the lives of anyone, anywhere.
2. I was addressing an audience made up exclusively of Muslims. I kept reiterating my assumption that if God wants us to do His will, He must reveal to us what that will is. This represents a radical paradigm shift for a Muslim, who believes that God is so distant that He cannot be known and that His will can only be discovered after the fact. I stated that I knew they were a praying people, but I urged them to pray *and* listen, telling them how God confirmed His will for me to go to Afghanistan. They were receptive.
 3. I was reminded how I have never looked for a job or ministry opportunity in my life; the jobs and assignments have always come to me unsolicited. Afghanistan was no exception. My purpose is to bring order out of chaos, and chaos always finds me; I don't go looking for it. While your purpose narrows your focus, it also introduces you to any situation in the world that needs who you are and what you can do.

I am home and more committed to the power of purpose than ever before. I want to write, speak, teach and counsel purpose wherever God provides the opportunity. I want to raise up an army of purposeful people who will experience the same joys and pains that I have as they seek to express their purpose at the point of the world's need. Thank you again for standing with me these last few weeks. As one of the team members in Afghanistan would always say, "You're the best!" She was right. Have a great week!

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I had a great time last week at the Christian Booksellers Convention in Orlando. I made some new friends, saw many long-time friends and had some new doors open for the purpose message. All in all, it was a fun week in a city that I truly enjoy. But it is great to be home. I should be home for the next couple of weeks and that's a good thing. I have a lot to catch up on and some new projects I want to start.

This week I have been thinking about Jesus. Jesus was a man of purpose. I know that He was because He said "No" to so many things. The crowds tried to make Him a king, a politician, a celebrity and a rabbi. He refused every role that they tried to force on Him because He knew what His purpose was. Jesus was able to say "No" because He knew what His "Yes" was.

To see Jesus' purpose, I like His own words in Luke's account. After his encounter with Zacchaeus the tax collector, Jesus said: "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:9-10). Jesus never had to go looking for the "lost." For the most part, the lost came looking for Him. One question I always ask people looking for purpose is, "What situations have come looking for you in your life so far?" You may have to search for your purpose, but you never have to search for ways to fulfill it. The opportunities almost always come to you.

Later in John's gospel account, Jesus made another interesting statement about purpose while praying to the Father: "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to

do” (John 17:4). I hear a lot of talk about God’s glory, but Jesus understood glory as a result of obedience. The Father assigned the purpose and Jesus fulfilled it. Jesus knew what work He was given to do. When He did it, He brought glory to God. If that is how Jesus brought God glory, you and I will do the same. Do you know the work that you are assigned to do?

The purpose message relies on one key assumption: If God wants you to do His will, He *must* show you what that will is. Your work or purpose is your life “yes,” but until you find that “yes,” you may be tempted to say “yes” to things to which you should say “no.” To follow Jesus is to be a person of purpose, a person capable of staying focused by saying “no” to good and worthy things that will only serve as distractions from your main work.

Maybe you are facing a major decision this week about something that wants your time and attention. Is it related to your purpose? If it isn’t, then maybe it’s time to say “no.” Are you involved in something, some good thing, which is keeping you from the best thing you could do? If so, is it time to quit so you can have time to do your “work?” Is your desire to bring God glory? Then you must be about your Father’s business, the work that is uniquely assigned to you. I pray that this week you will follow Jesus and become a person of purpose, a person with the courage and faith to say “no.” As you do, I also pray that your “yes” will be more clear than ever before and that this week will see you become focused and productive. Have a great week!

**The Monday Memo
From the desk of
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Issue 120**

I am home for the second week in a row, a record for this year. But I am catching up on a lot of projects and the time with my wife has been great. I am starting to plan my fall seminars and the first ones will be in England. I am planning one for Birmingham on September 20 and London on September 27. If you are interested, go to the end of **The Memo** for more information.

I am asked one question all the time, and some of you **Monday Memo** readers have asked it as well: “There are so many things I *want* to do and feel like I *need* to do - how can I find the time to do them?” You cannot find time; you already have all the time there is. Often you must stop doing something else before you can do the things you need or would like to do. I have found that a key is to clarify your values and then allow your goals and daily tasks to flow out of your values system. Let me give you an example.

One of my ten values is that “I am a learner.” I don’t want to stop learning or I will stop growing as a leader and person. Since learning is a value, I set a goal this year to read or listen to 80 books. On my prioritized daily task list you will find reading as a scheduled activity *every day*. Today is almost the end of July, and I have a list of 43 books that I have read or listened to since the beginning of the year; I am right on schedule.

How do I find time to read? Learning is a value, I have a specific goal, and that goal translates into daily action. It is not something I have to labor to do, although reading that much does require some hard work. But it is also fun and something I genuinely look forward to every day.

If you have attended one of my seminars, you have probably heard me talk about values and how to identify them for yourself. Have you done that? If not, then I would suggest the following for this week:

www.purposequest.com

1. Go to <http://www.purposequest.com/articles.htm> and download the article entitled “How to Define Your Governing Values” or write me with the word “values” in the subject box and I will send you a copy. The attachment I send will be an actual chapter from my book, ***So Many Leaders, So Little Leadership***. If you already have that book, refer to chapter two. If you want to purchase a copy (audio or paper), you can do so at <http://www.purposequest.com/books.htm>.
2. Set aside one or two hours this week and write on your to-do list for that particular day “work on values.” Get up early one morning, don’t watch television one evening, but find two hours one day this week. Commit to do it and keep the commitment. (If you already have your values defined, is it time to review what you have?)
3. Once you have identified your values, you can then begin to set goals and daily activities around things that you value, things that govern your life by their place of prominence in your heart.

There is no shortcut to being productive and self-disciplined. But if you are serious about answering the question, “How do I find time to do important things?”, then you must be serious about writing out your values. If it will help you, send me or a friend an email of your commitment to have your values written by next Monday, and then do it. Have a great week!