

The Monday Memo
From Jacksonville, Florida
Dr. John W. Stanko
Issue 126

I think this past week went by quickly, don't you? I had a wonderful weekend with my friends at Faith Deliverance Church in Jacksonville, Florida. Next week I will be at First Assembly in Bentonville, Arkansas. After that I will be in England to conduct two Seven Steps seminars. One church has already registered 20 people for the London event! If you would like to register, please see the information at the end of this Memo. And I am glad to announce that I will be returning to Singapore this November. You will receive more information on that trip in the weeks ahead.

I was reading Psalm 23 this week and I was impressed with one line in particular: "You anoint my head with oil" (Psalm 23:5). Normally we refer to someone in leadership, especially church leadership, or someone who is very good at what they do, as being an anointed person. Ordination ceremonies often include a time when someone actually anoints the candidate with oil. But that isn't what the psalmist wrote. The psalmist made a statement that the Lord, our Shepherd, anointed him with oil. This was a personal anointing. I wonder if that truth can be applied to your life and mine. If it can, that means that you and I are anointed people, just like the leaders we know and admire. But what does it mean to be anointed?

An anointing indicates that God's approval and blessing are on something or someone. In the movie *Chariots of Fire*, the missionary statesman Eric Liddell was preparing for the 1924 Olympics. His religious sister confronted him in the movie, concerned that his training was taking him away from his missionary activity. Liddell responded, "But God made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure." You might say that Liddell was an anointed runner. When he ran, the blessing of God was on his life.

What do you do that makes you feel His pleasure? That's a good indication of your purpose. It is where God has personally anointed your head with oil, according to Psalm 23:5. You may be an anointed cook, painter, speaker, dealmaker, singer or teacher. You may not apply your purpose to spiritual things, but that doesn't mean your purpose isn't spiritual. God has anointed you to do something, and that something is unique to you. There has never been a person like you on earth, nor will there ever be one again. When you are in your purpose, you are anointed.

I have mentioned Revelation 2:17 in several **Monday Memos**, and I feel a need to mention it again this week. This verse says: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it." Do you have an ear to hear that you have an area of anointing? Are you ready to receive from God the gift of a stone, with a name and purpose written on it that is fully understood only by you? Both Psalm 23:5 and Revelation 2:17 describe something personal that transpires between God and you. In both cases, God initiates the action and we are on the receiving end. All you have to do is accept and acknowledge that you are anointed, that you have a stone from God with your name on it.

I hope that this week you will walk in the truth that God anoints your head with oil. I pray that God will open your eyes to see the "new name" that is on your stone. And finally, I hope you can walk in the power of this personal anointing, whether it involves preaching a great message or building a wood table in your workshop. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo
From Bentonville, Arkansas
Written by Dr. John W. Stanko
Issue 127

Last year, I read a book entitled *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron. The subtitle of this book is "A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity," and it is a best seller now published in its tenth anniversary edition. The stated purpose of the book is to provide a course to discover and recover your creative self. I would recommend the book as a comprehensive tool to develop the disciplines necessary for creativity. Ms. Cameron mentions God throughout the book, but she is a bit vague about who God is.

There are many helpful tips throughout the book to help unblock and release creativity. Early in the book, the author pens a few admonitions to the reader. I think they warrant reproducing here:

Stop telling yourself, "It's too late."

Stop waiting until you make enough money to do something you'd really love.

Stop telling yourself, "It's just my ego" whenever you yearn for a more creative life.

Stop telling yourself that dreams don't matter, that they are only dreams and that you should be more sensible.

Stop fearing that your family and friends would think you crazy.

Stop telling yourself that creativity is a luxury and that you should be grateful for what you've got.

The author continues, "As you learn to recognize, nurture, and protect your inner artist, you will be able to move beyond pain and creative constriction. You will learn ways to recognize and resolve fear, remove emotional scar tissue, and strengthen your confidence. Damaging old ideas about creativity will be explored and discarded."

Do any of these statements apply to you? As you approach this week, why not examine your own attitude towards creativity. Is your definition of creativity restricted to artists and writers? Maybe your creativity lies in other areas. Do you like to work with wood or metal? Are you a sculptor, or someone who likes to work with ceramics? Or perhaps you are a seamstress, a cook or a baker? Then again, you may have a house you've always wanted to design and build, or maybe an idea for a business. Whatever your expression of creativity, what are you prepared to do about it this week? If nothing else, you may have to take steps to overcome your bias toward it and go to the kitchen or workshop and get your hands dirty.

This issue is critical if you are going to find a purposeful and productive life. You must learn to trust that which is within you, that which has come from God who is the source of all that is creative. As you do, you must then have faith to express it. Stop judging what you do before you

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do it. I trust that this week you will do something, if for no other reason than to do something creative and new. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo
From Birmingham, England
Written by Dr. John W. Stanko
Issue 128

It is wonderful to be back in England. Last Saturday, I had the first 7 Steps of a PurposeQuest seminar and this week, I will be helping those who came to clarify their purpose. Next Saturday, I will be in London to conduct the second 7 Steps of a PurposeQuest seminar.

On the plane coming over to England, it happened again. I had a “spiritual experience” at 39,000 feet. No, I didn’t get up and run around the plane or see a heavenly vision. I was, however, overcome with joy and thankfulness. I was so happy to be coming to England to do what I love to do. I was thankful to God that He has given me so many opportunities to do what I enjoy. I thought back ten years ago to when I was pastoring. There is no comparison to those days and this day. This truly is the day that the Lord has made and I will rejoice and be glad in it.

I experienced this same sense of joy and fulfillment this past summer when I was coming home from Afghanistan. I had a 14-hour layover in Dubai and got a hotel room to rest for the long trip home. I was trying to find something on Arab television that I could watch and I began to cry. It caught me unaware and I asked, “Lord, why am I crying?” There were two reasons that I could think of. The first was that my time in Afghanistan was intense. I didn’t know how intense until I came out and felt the freedom of going home.

But the second and main reason I was crying was from the joy of being used by God. I knew that when I was in Afghanistan, I was where I needed to be at a time when I needed to be there. I had pressed through confusion, doubt and fear to make the trip and I met the Lord in special ways while I was there. I was so exhilarated to be fulfilling my purpose that my only response was to cry. I thought of the verses in Hebrews:

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12:2-3).

Don’t get me wrong. I am not comparing my short trip to what Jesus went through in His ministry. But I think I felt some of the joy He must have felt when He did what the Father wanted Him to do. I endured some difficulties for the joy set before me and that joy was tremendous.

What about you? Are you happy? Are you willing to pay the price to obtain this joy? If you are in England, I urge you to come to London next Saturday and invest some time in clarifying your purpose and setting your goals. If you aren’t in England, then pray, read, seek and cry out for the clarity of purpose. If you know your purpose, then cry out for opportunities to fulfill it. When you see those opportunities, be like the man in the parable:

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (Matthew 13:44).

I hope that this week will bring you closer to your joy and purpose fulfillment. If there is anything I can do to help you on your PurposeQuest, please let me know. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo
From London, England
Written by Dr. John W. Stanko
Issue 129

I have been thinking about a certain event from my past for the last few days and I'm not sure why it is on my mind. It happened when I was 10 years old. A friend dared me to jump into the deep end of the pool and I did. The problem was that I could not swim and I started to drown. I thought my life was over as I was going down for the third time. At the last minute, a lifeguard jumped into the pool to save me. I look back and can see God's protection on my life at that early age and only He knows what other things He has "saved" me from.

The lifeguard told me that he saw me go in and knew I was in trouble. When I asked him why he waited so long to come to my rescue, he told me something I will never forget. He said, "If I had jumped in too soon, you would still have the strength to pull me down with you, even though I am bigger than you. I had to wait until you stopped struggling." He continued, "At that point, I could even stand on the side of the pool and shove a long pole in your stomach. Because you were done struggling, you would have grabbed hold and let me drag you to safety."

During my seminar last Saturday, I quoted Psalm 138:6-8, and as I did, I once again thought about my near-death experience. The psalmist wrote:

For though the LORD is exalted, Yet He regards the lowly, but the haughty He knows from afar. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand will save me. ***The LORD will accomplish what concerns me*** (emphasis added).

If God is able to "save" me, then God is able to accomplish what concerns me. He may be waiting for me (and you) to stop struggling so He can reach into our lives with the simplest of things and lead us where He wants us to go. It occurred to me this week that if God can save me from death, He can provide, lead, deliver and do the miraculous.

The psalmist reminds you that if a business concerns you, God will accomplish it. If a ministry or finance is what you need, then God will accomplish it. If you are searching for your purpose or to fulfill it, the Lord will accomplish what concerns you. I can stop struggling and rest in this important truth. God isn't going to let me "go down." He will reach in with His right hand, but only after I've ceased from my efforts so I can cling to His.

I hope that this week you will reflect on the truth of those verses from Psalm 138 and then reflect on all the way that God has brought you. Thank God for His protection and provision. Then determine whether or not He's on the side of your pool waiting for you to stop struggling so He can jump in and pull you out. I trust that this week will be a

week of deliverance and rest for you as you cease your labors so you can enter into God's rest. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo
From the desk of
Dr. John W. Stanko
Issue 130

It is good to be back home after my trip to England. I have lots of projects to work on before I go to Dallas in two weeks. Then I am off to Hawaii and Singapore in November. If I cannot visit your city but you would like to enroll in a home study program to help clarify your purpose, then see the end of this **Memo**.

When I write about joy and purpose, I seem to get more responses than on any other topic. I get letters saying, "You can't always do things that you enjoy" or "Where's does the cross come in if one only does what one enjoys?" or "I can't have people on my staff telling me they will only do what they have joy doing!" There is an element of truth in each of those statements. But I still maintain that whenever and wherever possible, we need to engage in activities that bring us a sense of joy and fulfillment. It is only then that we can produce the results that will glorify God and meet the needs of those around us.

This week I was reading a book by John Piper entitled ***Don't Waste Your Life***. John Piper is a pastor who writes extensively on the glory of God in worship, missions and everyday life. In his book, Piper addresses the issues of joy and purpose:

God created me—and you—to live with a single, all-embracing, all-transforming passion—namely, a passion to glorify God by enjoying and displaying his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life. Enjoying and displaying are both crucial. If we try to display the excellence of God without joy in it, we will display a shell of hypocrisy and create scorn or legalism. But if we claim to enjoy his excellence and do not display it for others to see and admire, we deceive ourselves, because the mark of God-enthralled joy is to overflow and expand by extending itself into the hearts of others. The wasted life is the life without a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples.

The writer of Ecclesiastes, whom most believe to have been Solomon, declared in his search for wisdom that **all** was vanity. Yet having tried to find joy in many things, Solomon came to this conclusion in his writings:

So I conclude that, first, there is nothing better for a man than to be happy and to enjoy himself as long as he can; and second, that he should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of his labors, for these are gifts from God" (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 TLB).

Solomon repeated this conclusion four more times for emphasis. With that in mind, let me ask you: Are you enjoying your work? If not, you are missing out on the one thing that Solomon concluded God wants you to have and enjoy. If not, then John Piper would say that you are in danger of wasting your life, the means you have to bring glory to God. Jesus said, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4). I urge you this week to find aspects of your work that are more closely

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related to your purpose. If you don't know your purpose, then continue the quest. You may be closer than you think. Have a joy-filled week!