

The Monday Memo
Written from Harare, Zimbabwe
By Dr. John Stanko
Issue 161

Eight weeks down and one to go! I return to the States next week, but not before I complete a full week of work and purpose appointments here in Zimbabwe. It has been a fabulous time here, but it's time to go home. By the way, I will be making a quick trip to London this week; for an explanation of what I will be doing there, please see the end of this **Memo**.

The last few weeks we have been discussing creativity and the feedback has been overwhelming. I sense that a tremendous surge of creativity is being released around the world as God's people realize that they are indeed creative. Old ways of thinking are being cast aside and people are entering into a new phase of productivity and purpose. I hope that you are one of the people who is experiencing this creative release. But if you are not, perhaps you need to expand the way you have viewed creativity and, consequently, viewed yourself.

Adam was made by God to be creative and we are Adam's children. After God had created Adam, He then invited Adam to enter into the creative process by naming the animals: "Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field" (Genesis 2:19-20). Adam decided what the animals were to be called; it was an expression of his creative dominion in the Garden.

Too often, only musicians, songwriters, poets and writers have been identified as creative—and they are indeed creative. But those are only a few of the creative expressions that are available to Adam's children. Let's take a look at some of the creative expressions that are available to you:

1. **Child raising**—Raising a child requires tremendous creativity as you teach, train, entertain and discipline each child according to his or her personality and needs.
2. **Handwriting**—Do you have beautiful handwriting? Then stop using the computer. Use your creative, artistic flair to communicate with others in your own writing.
3. **Dress**—You may have an eye for color or fashion. Then be creative and adorn your body, God's creation, in a manner that is distinctive and uniquely you.
4. **Repairs**—It takes creativity not just to invent or design something, but to keep it in working order. Your ability to read a manual and then fix something is an expression of your creativity.
5. **Gardening**—Do you like flowers? Enjoy raising vegetables? Then plant to the glory of God and do it with your style and grace. If you don't plant the seeds, they won't grow! So join in the creative process and do what Adam and Eve did in the Garden. (Don't forget to pull the weeds, too!)
6. **Time management**—Can you organize your time and activities? That requires creativity. Can you help others organize? That requires even more creativity.
7. **Problem solving**—Do you face new problems and apply timeless wisdom and solutions? Then you are not just organized or efficient. You are creative!

I hope you get the picture. Like Adam, you are creative and God wants and needs you to express your creativity in every day life. Stop saying you aren't creative—you are! If you can think of another area of life that requires creativity that isn't listed above, write me and let's build a list together. Then I'll post it at www.purposequest.com so that others will be encouraged and

released to their unique creative expression. If you can, join me in Birmingham on July 24 for my first creative workshop. But if you don't do anything else this week, please spend some time thinking, praying about, and identifying your creativity. Perhaps then you will see yourself as creative, which is just how the Lord wants you to see yourself. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo
Written from Harare, Zimbabwe
By Dr. John Stanko
Issue 162

This is the week. I have been in Africa since April 24 and I return home this coming Wednesday. Since I've been here, I've visited six countries, spoken 56 times, conducted four PurposeQuest seminars, three leadership seminars, two business seminars, profiled more than 400 people and did 35 one-on-one PurposeQuest Assessments. I also added 1,500 names to **The Monday Memo** and 300 to the weekly Bible studies. I think I will go home and go to bed! Thank you for your prayers and support that helped make all this possible.

We've been discussing creativity these past few weeks and in that context I've been thinking about Jesus. Jesus was a creative man. We know that He was a carpenter, so He made things from wood with His hands. One second-century bishop reported that wooden yokes that Jesus made in the first century were still being used 100 years later! That tells us that Jesus wasn't only creative, He was committed to excellence—He did good work. There's also a good chance that Jesus, as the oldest son, ran a carpentry business that supported more than just Himself. His brothers could have been in business with Him and that meant He also expressed His creativity by running a business, making payroll and managing inventory, accounts and customer service. He also supported His widowed mother from the business as well.

But Jesus' creativity didn't stop there. At the age of 30, He changed careers, starting an itinerate ministry through which He continued to express tremendous creativity. He was creative in building and equipping an effective team of men and women who traveled with Him. When Jesus performed miracles, He did so with flair and distinction. One time He spit on the ground, made mud and smeared it on a blind man's eyes. Another time, Jesus put His fingers into a deaf man's ears and touched the end of the man's tongue with His spit. Jesus answered His critics with creative retorts that delighted the crowds. His insight into Scripture held people's attention for days on end and He impressed the crowd with His fresh approach to God and the Word.

But perhaps Jesus' greatest creative expression was in His teaching. When He taught, He used parables—stories from everyday life that imparted truth. Where did He get those stories? He made those stories up. They came from His creativity, perhaps the same creativity that He learned and perfected as a carpenter. Jesus used parables with lessons drawn from agriculture, business, current events, family life, and gardening. He was such a creative teacher that the people would walk for days to listen to Him for days. Mark reported: "**The large crowd listened to him with delight**" (Mark 12:37).

Why is this important? First of all, I don't think that Jesus' creativity came from His divinity only. I think He expressed His creativity as a Jewish man who observed life and saw God in all of it. Secondly, if Jesus was creative, then He can help you be creative. And finally, you will only fulfill your purpose as you carry on the creative tradition that was begun by the Son of God and continued in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are not here to maintain; we are here to creatively advance the kingdom of God. You might say that our creativity is how we will fulfill the mandate given to Adam to subdue the earth and rule over it.

This week, I have an assignment for you. Take some time to read Proverbs 8. Do you see wisdom speaking there? That “wisdom” certainly sounds a lot like Jesus to me. Pray through this Proverb and then ask the Lord for creative wisdom. Ask Him to help you use the ordinary lessons of daily life, just like Jesus did, to do something extraordinary. Don’t see your creativity as an exception or something that you use from time to time. See it as a powerful source of daily inspiration that will help you fulfill your purpose and do great things. As you do, I know your life will be changed as mine has been these last few weeks. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo
Written from the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 163

I woke up the other day and was totally disoriented, not knowing where I was. That’s not the worst of it—I was at home! Besides being a bit disoriented, I’m glad to be back. I’m grateful to the Lord for His help, and grateful to so many of you who helped make my trip possible. Your giving, prayers and encouragement kept me going while I was away from home for the last 10 weeks. And now I’m digging out from a lot of mail and things to do on the home front. But before I do anything else, I want to share my thoughts in this week’s **Memo**.

Several weeks ago, we began talking about creativity. One of my most frequently heard comments from people with whom I meet is: “I’m just not that creative.” That just isn’t true! A creative God created you to be creative. Creativity is programmed into the very fabric of your being. Consider these expressions of creativity that are part of who you are:

1. I don’t want to be offensive in any way, but you were made to create other human beings. When you reach maturity and marry, in most cases you must take precautions to *limit* your creativity, your offspring.
2. Scientists tell us that every seven years you have a totally new set of cells in your body. Your cells are constantly dividing and creating new cells.
3. One of the first things I did when I returned home was to get a haircut. In most cases, your body is creating new hair, nails and whiskers on a daily basis.
4. Your body is constantly creating what it needs to carry on life. Your stomach creates gastric juices, sweat glands produce sweat and your ears create wax!
5. What happens when you go to sleep? You create dreams; you are a “dream machine.” For every eight hours you sleep, you dream almost two hours. Your mind is constantly creating symbolic sleep scenarios that help you maintain your psychological equilibrium.
6. Every day you create thoughts and ideas; you also daydream, creating potential scenarios with you in them.
7. You talk every day, stringing words and ideas together creatively.

Without even trying, you are indeed a creative being. So why aren’t you more creative? The big problem is your mind. You have been conditioned to believe that you aren’t creative, so it is possible to go through life thinking that you aren’t. And when you think you aren’t creative, you won’t produce or won’t recognize your creativity for what it is. For many years, I saw myself as “only” an administrator who got things done. Now I see myself as an administrator who creatively gets things done. That slight change of perspective has changed my life.

So if you don’t do anything else this week, reassess your attitude toward your creativity. You may not be as creative as someone else, but that doesn’t mean that you aren’t creative. Take out a

sheet of paper and begin to list all the areas in which you creatively express yourself. The list may be longer than you thought it would be. From that, begin to gradually change your mind and see that you *are* creative. When you do that, it is just a matter of time before your creativity blossoms and becomes all that God intended for it to be. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo
Written from the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 164

I'm on a plane again, but this time coming back from a three-day holiday with my daughter in Orlando, Florida. We had a great time together visiting family and friends, eating, and shopping. Today my wife returns from China, where she has been on a tour with a group of fellow teachers. We haven't seen one another since April, so I'm excited to meet her at the airport tonight.

I've had many questions about my most recent tour of Africa and what it is I do on these tours, so I thought I would take a break from our study of creativity to give you an overview of my trip. We will resume our creativity discussion next week.

Uganda – This was my first visit to Uganda and I went with a team from Pittsburgh. This team goes almost every year and they emphasize economic development (they have started a coffee farm—the finest in Uganda), malaria prevention (malaria is Uganda's leading cause of death), and improved medical services to the residents. We spent all our time in west Uganda in the city of Hoima, where I conducted leadership-training sessions for pastors and also did a business seminar one evening. I also spoke in several churches. I enjoyed my time and look forward to a return visit.

Kenya – I've been to Kenya on several occasions, but I never had a visit like this one. All I can say is that there was a purpose explosion during my time in Nairobi, the capital city. I did eight hours of media interviews (both radio and television) and spoke at the Sunday services at Nairobi Pentecostal Church. I found a hunger for purpose in Kenya that was unprecedented. I conducted my first PurposeQuest seminar there and also spoke twice at a pastors and leaders conference with 250 people present. I've continued to add names from Kenya to **The Monday Memo** list at a brisk pace. My readers in Kenya now rank third in number after Zimbabwe and the United States.

Zimbabwe – When I was leaving Zambia to go back to Zimbabwe, I caught myself telling someone, "I'm going home." That says something about my relationship with the people there. I did a little bit of everything that I do while I was in Zimbabwe. I spoke at a conference, at Sunday services, and at a ladies' meeting; consulted with and advised local churches and businesses; met with people to conduct one-on-one PurposeQuest Assessments; taught at two business forums; held one PurposeQuest seminar; and coached many leaders and pastors on how to be more effective leaders. I also spoke on creativity for the first time in Zimbabwe; I believe that this theme will occupy my mind and attention for some time to come.

Zambia – I've been to Zambia on four occasions and this was my second visit to the city of Kitwe. I did quite a few DISC personality profiles in Kitwe (79 to be exact) and introduced this valuable resource to the pastors and business leaders in that area. We also had discussions about opening a Leadership Development Center there that could tend to the ongoing need for leadership training and development in that region and beyond.

South Africa and London, England – I went to these countries to help others, pure and simple. I didn't speak but I did serve in practical ways. I think it is important that every leader stay in touch with how to serve others in practical ways. So in London and Johannesburg I carried suitcases and played chauffeur. I was there to do whatever was necessary and to encourage the people with whom I came in contact.

I'm still trying to "get my mind around" the trip. It was so diverse and I did so much that it's hard to summarize what the results were. But I can say this. This trip took me to another level of trust. I had to trust the Lord for my travel schedule, to connect with and relate to all the different people and cultures, for my health and energy, for something to say and for finances. And beyond trust, I saw what I already knew: everyone in every place wants to talk about purpose. Last summer it was my trip to Afghanistan that impacted me so deeply; this year it was 10 weeks in Africa.

What about you? Are you growing in trust? Do you know your purpose and are you expressing it more regularly, impacting more people? I hope so. I don't know what lies ahead for me, but I want to keep growing and producing. This week, why not make some plans of how you can grow, plans that will require new levels of faith and productivity? And don't forget to find some way this week to embrace and express your creativity, the theme to which we will return next week. In the meantime, have a great week!

The Monday Memo
From Ontario, California
Written by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 165

I had such a busy day yesterday here in California that this Memo is coming out a day later than usual. Sorry for the inconvenience. I fly out later today for Dallas and then it is on to England this coming Wednesday. I look forward to seeing all my British friends at the creativity seminar next Saturday in Birmingham.

After a break last week, it's time to pick up our creativity theme once again. But let's review the major points we have made so far before we go on:

1. **You are a creative person.** Whether you think you are or not, you were created by a creative God the Creator to be creative. Creativity is built into the essence of your being.
2. **Your creativity has enemies.** We looked at how fear, perfectionism and comparison of your creativity to that of others as being the main hindrances to your creative expression.
3. **There are many expressions of creativity.** We began to build a list of creative expressions, which included raising children, how you dress, repairs, gardening, time management and problem solving. A list of other possible expressions can be found at <http://www.purposequest.com/misc.htm>.
4. **Jesus was a creative person.** Jesus was a carpenter, so He knew how to work with His hands. Then He used parables to creatively express the truths He came to proclaim. Since Jesus is creative, He can help you with yours.

And now let's add one more point to the list and that is that **creativity is hard work.** Thomas Edison, the famous inventor and creator, once said, "Genius is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration." This is such an important point because many people are sitting around, waiting for

a lightning bolt of inspiration to hit them before they begin to express their creativity. And since such a lightning bolt seldom comes, they don't create, or at least don't think that what they are doing qualifies as creativity.

I was reading the creation story in Genesis and came across this verse: “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work” (Genesis 2:2). Why did God have to rest? He had to rest following His six-day *work* of creation. People ask me all the time, “How do you write your books?” My answer is always the same: “One page at a time, one day at a time.” I begin almost every day by sitting down at my computer to write my daily Bible study devotional that I send out every week. I do this whether I feel creative or have any ideas. I begin to write and the creativity flows. But it doesn't just fall down from heaven; I must work at it—*work* at being creative.

Could it be that we aren't more creative because we're lazy? All right, I should be more specific. Are *you* not as creative as you could be because you are lazy? Is your lack of creativity due to a lack of discipline that doesn't allow you to sit down and write, or go to your workshop or pick up your paintbrush? Are you waiting for inspiration when you should be producing perspiration?

I was also thinking about the word *recreation* this week. Look at that word: re-creation. When you work at creativity, you need rest and re-creation. Why? So you can resume your creative expressions. If God rested from His creative work, then you and I will need to do the same. But we recreate not just to have fun, but to replenish what is lost in the creation process so we can start all over again. Recreation isn't a right; it is something you have to earn as you create. Recreation that is separated from the work of creation is selfish idleness and a waste of time.

So what are you prepared to do this week with your creativity? I hope you have decided to work at it. Stop putting off until tomorrow the work that must be done today. Get to work. As you do, plan for some rest and recreation. I trust that this week you will need to plan some re-creation as you work to express your God-given creativity. Have a great week!