

The Monday Memo
From London, England
Written by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 166

I taught my first creativity seminar this past Saturday, and I was pleased with the results. I just feel enabled to release people's creativity right now and I hope you are experiencing this as you have read the last few **Monday Memos**. The feedback from everyone at the seminar was the same—they began to realize that they were more creative than they thought before they came.

As I was researching creativity this week, I came across some relevant quotes that I wanted to pass on to you this week. (If you have any quotes that are your favorites, please pass them along, to be included at www.purposequest.com.) At any rate, here are the quotes for you to consider:

"A great deal of talent is lost to the world for want of a little courage. Every day sends to their graves obscure men whose timidity prevented them from making a first effort." — Sydney Smith

"Everyone has talent. What is rare is the courage to follow talent to the dark place where it leads"—Erica Jong, American author

"Not what I have, but what I do is my kingdom." — Thomas Carlyle, Scottish essayist and historian

"A man is the sum of his actions, of what he has done, of what he can do, nothing else."—Andre Malraux, French novelist and archaeologist

"You can either take action, or you can hang back and hope for a miracle. Miracles are great, but they are so unpredictable."— Peter Drucker, Austrian-American management consultant and educator

"Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world."— American business writer and speaker, Joel Barker

As you can tell, each quote spoke to the issue of doing something with your creativity or talent. That is why I ended my seminar with something that I want to recommend that you also do this week. Take a sheet of paper and write yourself a letter. I want you to make a creative covenant or contract with yourself. That's right, I want you to write yourself a letter. In this letter, I want you to outline your creative commitments to yourself for the next four months. What will you write and how much? Will you resume or begin music or drawing lessons? Will you start your business? How many paintings will you finish in the next 16 weeks? Be as specific as you can.

When you've finished your letter, put it in an envelope, address it to yourself, put a stamp on it and give it to a friend, associate or family member (preferably one who is organized!). Ask them to mail this letter to you around November 30, 2004. Then evaluate how well you kept your creative covenant with yourself. (If you would like, you can email me your letter and I will send it to you in November.) But whatever you do, don't let another day go by without doing something to express your creativity. By doing this, you will foster a creative cycle that will build your confidence and express your creativity. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo
From Vancouver, Canada
Written by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 167

I know it's not Monday, but I'm heading out on a cruise today (Saturday) and I don't know if I'll have computer access on Monday or not. Rather than be a day late, I thought I would be a day early and send **The Memo** to you today. (By the way, the cruise is a working cruise—sort of. ☺) Also, from now on we will post every issue of **The Monday Memo** as it is written. In case you don't receive your issue for whatever reason, you can go to <http://www.purposequest.com/mmemo.htm> and read it when it is convenient for you. I hope this new service is helpful to you.

I was ready to move off the creativity topic this week, but I have one more thing I'd like to say. I've had tremendous response to the creativity issues and next week I should have our list of creativity quotes ready to post. But one thing impressed me from many of the quotes readers sent in, and that is how many of those quotes had to do with vision. I asked for creativity quotes and I received vision quotes. So I have spent some this week thinking about the connection between vision and creativity.

In my seminars, I've offered the following definition for a goal: a vision of how it is before it is. I think that could also double as the definition for creativity. When you are creative and start a business, you first "see" that business or have a vision of what it could be. Even though the shape of the business may vary from your original vision, it was the vision that got you started and moved you to action. When you begin to write a book, you have some mental picture of what the book will contain and look like. When I write, I often close my eyes and picture me signing the finished product and giving it to smiling people. That vision sustains me during the writing process.

Many people have told me that they aren't creative and it occurred to me that many have *also* said that they aren't visionaries. Yet these are the same people who "see" their children grown and productive, who see their ministry impacting nations or have a vision for some other creative expression. Why is this important? Because you must accept that you are a person of vision if you are going to embrace your creativity. Everyone has some vision for something; therefore everyone can and must be creative.

I mentioned that my definition for a goal could double as my definition for creativity: a vision of how it is before it is. So with that in mind, let me ask you. What goals have you set to make your vision a reality and to release your creativity? Are you putting some demand on your creativity to make it a reality? It's amazing to me that my discussion of creativity has led me right back to one of my favorite topics, and that is goal-setting. But goal-setting isn't some boring administrative process, but rather a creative act in itself. That's right—we will add goal-setting to our list of creative expressions.

Now that you are more in touch with your creativity, are you ready to set some goals? When will you finish your book? How many songs will you write this month? When will your business double in size? If you need help to set some goals, please go to <http://www.purposequest.com/goals.htm> and <http://www.purposequest.com/papers.htm> where you will find some articles on goals. If you can't download them, write me with the word "goals" in the subject box and I will send you what I have. If nothing else, spend some time meditating

on the connection between vision, creativity and goal-setting this week and see what you come up with. There's really no wrong way to set a goal and get started. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo
From Ontario, California
Written by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 168

I'm in California after a great week of cruising Alaska. I had such a good time that I decided to sponsor my own cruise next year. That's right, next summer I will host a PurposeQuest cruise to Alaska! Those who come will have a great time as we study the Bible, meet together and have fun in one of the most beautiful places in the world. What a great investment in your PurposeQuest! And of course, we'll eat until we can't eat anymore—then go the midnight buffet. If you would like to receive regular updates on the cruise so you can attend, send me an email with the word "cruise" in the subject box, and I'll keep you posted on the dates, cost, and registration information. It's north to Alaska for PurposeQuest.

We've been discussing creativity for the last few months and I was ready to move on to a new topic this week. I'll stop making that commitment because I just don't think we have exhausted all that needs to be said about creativity. In addition, I'm getting so much feedback that I know the creativity issue is an important one in your life. So I want to revisit an old theme and relate it to our creativity.

Years ago when I lived in the southern United States, I played a lot of softball. Softball is a game similar to American baseball but the ball is bigger and the pitcher throws it more slowly and underhand. I wasn't a good player, nor was my team very successful. But there was one team that was very good and they beat us most of the time year after year. They didn't look as sharp as we did because we got new uniforms almost every year. We practiced weekly yet we never saw them on the practice field. They just knew how to win.

One night we met with some of their players to interview them and see if we could gain the secret of their success. We asked many questions, but then our coach asked their best hitter, "When you're at bat, do you have an offensive philosophy? Do you try to hit it over the fence or do you try to advance the runners one base at a time?" The man looked at our coach with a surprised look, and then answered, "We don't have any philosophy. We just hit it hard and wish it well."

As you seek to express your creativity, this may be a good strategy to follow. This week you may just need to "hit it hard and wish it well." In softball, sometimes you can do everything just right and not get to first base. Other times you can do things wrong, but the ball falls in the right spot and you can win the game. Maybe you're waiting for perfection before you try something, or you're frustrated that you have done everything correctly, but things haven't work out. This week you need to overcome your hesitancy or discouragement and go to bat one more time.

"Hit is hard and wish it well" is a principle found in the Bible. The writer of Ecclesiastes wrote thousands of years ago: "If clouds are full of water, they pour rain upon the earth. Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there will it lie. Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap. As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle,

for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well” (Ecclesiastes 11:3-6).

I don't know if the cruise to Alaska will be a success or whether anyone will want to come. But I decided to “hit it hard and wish it well.” Do you have any creative ideas that you need to act on? The time to analyze is over; the time to act has come. This week step to the plate and take your turn. Paint the picture, apply for the degree, or plan the vacation. Don't fret about uncertain results over which you have no control. Do what you can do this week and trust that it will work out for the good. If you do, I know you will have a great week!

The Monday Memo
From Honolulu, Hawaii
Written by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 169

Aloha! I've been in Hawaii all week and what a great time I've had. First, I celebrated my son's birthday with him last Tuesday (he lives here and turned 27). Then I attended the Willow Creek Association Leadership Conference here at a satellite location, and the conference was excellent. But the best part of the week was my purpose work as I taught, counseled and encouraged old and new friends to be all that God wants them to be. I love what I am doing and I want to equip you to do what you love to do.

We have been discussing creativity the last few months. One question I regularly hear is, “I have all these ideas, but I don't know how to go forward. How can I do what I dream?” We have looked at fear, perfectionism and comparison as major obstacles to your creativity. But once you've faced those issues, you still may be stifled as you attempt to express your creativity. So now I am recommending that you establish a board of mentors, similar to a corporate board of directors, that will help you be creative.

Jesus said, “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). If you *know* that you are creative but have trouble expressing it, then you are free—free to team with others who can do what you can't in order to complement your weakness. The answer is not to try and be who you're not, for if you could be everything, you wouldn't need anyone else. The answer is to identify those people and even things—yes, things—that mentor you and help you produce. How can you do this?

First of all, don't get locked into bad thinking. You don't need a mentor; you need mentors. I heard one man say that we need to hear from many preachers and speakers because “Man's soul is too big to be fed by one person.” The same is true for mentors. You need more than one. What's more, mentoring is not a lifelong appointment. You will change mentors regularly as the needs of your creative expression change. But now you are asking, “Where can I find these mentors?” I'm glad you asked. Consider the following options:

1. **Bible characters.** Who is your favorite Bible character? Why are they your favorite? They are your favorite because they have something that you need. Go back and study that person's life. Don't just read about that person, but dissect them, so to speak. Paul is my favorite. He is my mentor. I read books about him, meditate about what he did and pray to the same God who helped Paul be creative. I ask God to give me the Spirit of Paul. So the apostle Paul is on my board of mentors.
2. **Historical characters.** Who do you admire from the past? I love John and Charles Wesley. I've studied their lives and how they founded Methodism. I've visited their

- home and cathedral in London. I've also worked with Methodists to see how the Wesley's work continues today, 200 years after they have died. The Wesleys are on my board of mentors.
3. **Current leaders.** Who speaks to you today? Please don't limit yourself to the church world as you consider this question. There are two men who speak to me. One is Peter Drucker, the 96-year-old father of modern management studies. I read and re-read all his books and attend his annual leadership conference. I subscribe to his magazine. The other is Robert Greenleaf, the originator of the servant-leadership message. Greenleaf died in 1991, but I financially support his foundation and read everything that his foundation produces on servant-leadership. Drucker and Greenleaf are on my board of mentors.
 4. **Associates.** I have five people who I meet with regularly who help me with my business and ministry. When I say we meet regularly, it may be once a year. We may email from time to time. But I draw from their expertise in the area of editing, finance, marketing and business development. And I have two pastors, one in the United States and one in Zimbabwe, who speak to my spiritual needs. These seven people are on my board of mentors.
 5. **Family.** I am learning to draw more and more on my wife's wisdom and counsel. It is a funny thing that I am doing this more even though I am home less. But there is no one who has been more faithful or committed to the Lord and me for the last 30 years. I am proud and honored that my wife serves as my adviser and mentor.

There you have my board of mentors. And I mentioned above that "things" can mentor you. I try to go to Disney World regularly. That whole world challenges me to do more as I study what they do and how they do it. I have two conferences I go to annually, and those conferences inspire and equip me. So are you ready to identify your board of mentors? Use the categories I have listed and build a team to help you be more creative. Stop trying to be everything (which can be a subtle form of pride) and be who you are, relying on others to supply what's missing, what God left out on purpose. Pray this week about who will have the honor of mentoring you and start drawing on their strengths to be more creative. As you do, I know you will have a great week!

The Monday Memo
From the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 170

This **Monday Memo** comes to you from home, but I won't be here long. I am off to England, Zimbabwe on September 1 and Kenya on October 1. I look forward to seeing my friends and purpose partners in those countries, and to making new friends on this trip. But that makes this week a busy one as I prepare to leave again. So let's get on with this week's **Memo**. (And see below to *hear* some updates from me.)

As you are probably aware, we have been discussing creativity for the last several months. We have tried to identify the creative expressions of life and that list is available to you at <http://www.purposequest.com/misc.htm>. The point of the list is that all of life is a creative expression; the list is there to help you see yourself as creative when you haven't considered yourself to be. But this week I want to add two more activities to our list of creative expressions.

The first activity added to the list this week is making excuses. I was reflecting this week on all the excuses I have heard as to why people aren't engaging their purpose or being more

productive. Some of them include: “I’m praying about it;” “I’m waiting on the Lord;” “My children are too small;” “My children are in college;” “I don’t have the education;” “You have the time to do that—I don’t;” “I don’t have the money;” “I’m too old;” and “I’m too young.” Perhaps you can add your creative excuse to this list. To help you come up with an excuse, just hear me asking you the question: “Why aren’t you doing what’s in your heart?” See what you can come up with.

All right, I offer making excuses as a creative expression in jest—sort of. But the next activity is much more serious and that activity is sin. That’s right, sin. Think about how creative man has been in the expression and perfection of sin. Cain, who killed his brother Abel in Genesis, had to creatively come up with the act of murder and then creatively figure out how to dispose of the body. And that was only the beginning. Think of the many examples from history of men and women who used their creative powers for evil. In the last century, Hitler and Stalin alone were responsible for the deaths of multiple millions because they used their creative powers to torture, maim and destroy.

Why do I make this point? Because we must face the power that we have for evil and for good. If two madmen could creatively plot to kill millions of people, then we also have the power to creatively plot to bless millions. You have the potential through your personal creative expressions to bless a multitude with God’s help. You don’t know how God will use your creativity until you express it, until you overcome your fear, tendency to compare your work to that of others, and perfectionism. It’s that simple. You could write a song that changes way the world sings, start a business that changes the way the world shops or write a book that changes the way the world thinks. And you can do these things to leave the world a better place than you left it, all because you had the moral courage to face your power to create and did something with it.

I depart this week for foreign countries to express my creativity. I will speak, consult, counsel, and plan. All those are things that are part of my personal creative inventory. Have you done your own inventory? If you have, then what can you do this week to express your creativity? Don’t just spend time condemning those who use their creativity for selfish or destructive reasons. And don’t waste your creativity on making excuses. This week, step out and do something creative that will touch others for good. In the process, your confidence will grow and you will enter in to a positive cycle of creativity, for often one creative act leads to another and another. Have a great week!