

THE MONDAY MEMO

**Written in West Palm Beach, Florida
Issue 191**

I had a busy week, so if you wrote me during the last seven days, I apologize for not writing back. I promise to catch up this week. What's more, instead of catching up on email today, I took a break and did something I love doing. I took my son (who is home from Hawaii) and went to see a professional basketball game here in south Florida. I had the chance to see the two of the best big men in the game, Shaquille O'Neal and Yao Ming. It was a great game but any live sporting event is great for me. It relaxes and refreshes me; when I come out, I feel like I've had a mini-vacation. How about you? Is there anything you can do this week that will refresh you? Go to a movie? Read your favorite magazine? Visit a mentor, family member or friend? I urge you to go do it!

I still have people writing and talking to me about timing and the need to wait on the Lord. If you missed our past discussions, I maintain that we can't know God's timing this side of trying. We often only realize we may have been premature **after** we try to do something. At other times, we succeed but had no prior sense that the time was right. We just stepped out and tried, and it worked. I'm convinced that at least some people are hung up on the timing issue because they're really afraid of failure, or still nursing wounds from past failures. To help you deal with and better understand failure, I've been thinking about declaring another "Celebrate a Failure Day" like the one we had in June, 2003. If you joined **The Monday Memo** family after that date, you may not know what "Celebrate a Failure Day" is, so let me explain.

LET'S CELEBRATE A FAILURE!

"Celebrate a Failure Day" was an idea that my friend Francis Tay came up with in Singapore when I visited there in 2002. . We were talking about the important role that failure can play in anyone's life and Francis suggested that we provide some means by which people can step back and reflect positively on their failures. I took that suggestion and we did that in 2003, but we are way overdue for another day. So next week, I will set the date and together we will once again reflect and meditate on the role of failure in our success. We will also investigate whether fear of failure does contribute to our fear of trying.

When you think about it, failure is a great teacher. It teaches us what **not** to do and what we can do better the next time. Failure is our friend, but very often we treat it as an enemy, something to avoid and not discuss openly. As an example, I've learned so much from doing the Seven Steps seminars and much of what I've learned is how **not** to do them. I've already made plenty of mis-steps as I seek to package and present this PurposeQuest teaching that has the power to change the way people view church, ministry and themselves. But today my seminars are better than those initial ones because of the things I did wrong.

It's my opinion that we don't fail more frequently because we have a false sense of spirituality. We often think that if the Lord is leading us, then failure isn't an option. If failure occurs, we assume that we must have "missed the Lord." I hold a different view.

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I think that failure really isn't failure; failure is a great teacher. When Paul was in Athens (see Acts 17), he preached a great message but got no results. He learned from that, went on to Corinth, and spent two years enjoying fruitful ministry. Why did Paul enjoy such success in Corinth? He did so because of what he learned in Athens. You can't separate his success from his failure. With that perspective, was his failure really a failure at all?

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID ABOUT FAILURE.

There are many outstanding quotes about failure from great leaders. Perhaps you need to be reminded this week that your failures have been painful but not fatal to this point. What's more, there's no way you can avoid more of them in the future, not if you're serious about completing your PurposeQuest. Let's look at some famous failure quotes:

Sometimes we will fail more than we succeed, but if we fail to succeed due to fear of failure, then failure becomes our success (think about that one) – unknown.

Success is going from failure to failure with great enthusiasm – Winston Churchill.

Success is simply the exertion and utilization of an entire series of failures – Dr. Bruce Ogilvie, sports psychologist.

There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure – Colin Powell.

Failure is not the worst thing in the world; the very worst thing is not to try – unknown.

There are costs and risks to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs [failure?] of comfortable inaction – John F. Kennedy.

GO TAKE A SHOWER.

There's one more quote that I like from businessman, Nolan Bushnell. He said, "Everyone who's ever taken a shower has an idea. It's the person who gets out of the shower, dries off and does something about it who makes a difference." Is it time this week to get out of your shower, dry off and get back in the game? Has failure, or the fear of it, caused you to take off your uniform, so to speak, and sit in the grandstands as a spectator? I think it's time for another "Celebrate a Failure Day." Next week, we'll set a day when we take time to **celebrate** failure—a time when we can come to grips with its power and role. More on that next week. Right now I urge you to have a great week!

THE MONDAY MEMO

**Written in New York City By Dr. John Stanko
Issue 192**

I'm in New York this weekend, and I've made lots of progress while I'm here in planning my upcoming trips. See my itinerary below for information on seminars in Dallas and Virginia, and my visit to Arkansas in early March. In addition to my seminars, I'm always available for one-on-one consultations. I also said that I would declare the date for our second "Celebrate a Failure Day." I hereby declare that day to be Sunday March 20, 2005, the week before Easter. What better time than to talk about our failures in light of the greatest story of failure and victory: the death and resurrection of Jesus. (No, I'm not saying that this was a failure; but many perceived it to be a failure at the time.)

How should you prepare for "Celebrate a Failure Day"? I want you to think, about and then share with someone, the role that failure has played in your life. You can be as specific as you wish, but sometime during the week of March 20, preach, talk to your family or share in some small group setting about failure. I'll help prepare you for that time as we take the next few weeks to look at the issue of failure and why we should celebrate its importance. I've already heard from some of you, but please send me your questions, or favorite quotes and stories about failure in the coming weeks.

I GOT LOST.

It's always good to be in New York City. My wife and I went into Manhattan last night for some Chinese food and got lost on the way. But that's how I've learned my way around the city—by studying a map, getting in a car and getting lost. And that fits with our current theme, which is the importance of failure in fulfilling purpose and being productive. While I "failed" to get to Chinatown using the most direct way, I learned things that will help me navigate the City on future trips. So did I fail last night because I got lost? Or was it a part of my future success? You be the judge.

This morning I was catching up on some devotional reading and I came across the January 31 entry in Oswald Chambers' classic devotional, *My Utmost for His Highest*. This is what Chambers wrote:

Paul did not say that he separated himself, but "when it pleased God, who separated me . . ." (Galatians 1:5). Paul was not overly interested in his own character. And as long as our eyes are focused on our own personal holiness, we will never even get close to the full reality of redemption. Christian workers fail because they place their desire for their own holiness above their desire to know God. "Don't ask me to be confronted with the strong reality of redemption on behalf of the filth of human life surrounding me today; what I want is anything God can do for me to make me more desirable in my own eyes." To talk that way is a sign that the reality of the gospel of God has not begun to touch me. There is no reckless abandon to God in that. God cannot deliver me while my interest is merely in my own character. Paul was not conscious of himself. He was recklessly abandoned, totally surrendered, and separated by God for one purpose—to proclaim the gospel of God (see Romans 9:3).

These are strong words, but I thought they fit into our discussion of failure. Failure makes me self-conscious, but purpose makes me God-conscious. When I function in purpose, I'm not concerned so much about how I look or how others perceive me. I'm consumed by ways to do what God created me to do. If we follow this line of thought, then I suppose someone "recklessly abandoned, totally surrendered and totally

separated by God for one purpose” isn’t even aware of failure because they aren’t aware of themselves. They are focused on God and God alone.

I GOT FOUND.

When I got lost last night, I was upset with myself. After all, I have an image to maintain of one who always knows where he is going. And there I was, unprepared and getting lost. I was concerned about my image but there was no one in the car but my wife and I. So I really wanted to look good to myself and I was doing just what Chambers described: I wanted God to make me more desirable in my own eyes. Instead God equipped me to create order out of chaos more effectively the next time I come to New York. That’s just a simple example of the role that failure has always played in my life and work.

So here I am back in my hotel, safe and sound and none the worse for wear. I already pulled out a map to see where I went wrong. I called my wife over and we learned a lot as we read about the five boroughs in New York (since we passed through most of them last night). I already retraced my steps last night to see the route I should have taken. I’m confident that the next time I drive into Manhattan to Chinatown, I will be ready. And what got me ready? Last night’s failure got me ready. As you prepare for March 20, I want you to do the same thing I just did. Focus on a failure, see what it taught you and then plan how you will do better because that failure came into your life. And don’t let any wrong turns or missteps keep you from having a great week!

THE MONDAY MEMO

**Written from Dallas, Texas By Dr. John Stanko
Issue 193**

It’s great to be back in Dallas. I had a wonderful time with my friends at Heartland Church yesterday and I’ll be here all week working on a variety of purpose projects. Next Saturday I’ll be hosting a Seven Steps of a PurposeQuest seminar here in the Metroplex area. I invite my friends and fellow purpose-questers to come out for a lively session that is sure to stimulate your thinking where purpose is concerned. See the end of **The Memo** for information on how to register or set up a personal purpose assessment this week.

I’m happy that so many of you have responded to the idea of observing “Celebrate a Failure Day” on March 20 and in the week following. How should you prepare for “Celebrate a Failure Day”? I want you to think, about and then share with someone, the role that failure has played in your life. You can be as specific as you wish, but sometime during the week of March 20, preach, talk to your family or share in some small group setting about failure. I’ll help prepare you for that time as we take the next few weeks to look at the issue of failure and why we should celebrate its importance. I’ve already heard from some of you, but please send me your questions, or favorite quotes and stories about failure in the coming weeks.

A COLOSSAL FAILURE

Yesterday in church I talked about Samson, someone whom I wrote about last year (see **Memo 176**). Samson was a failure in many respects, yet he is mentioned in Hebrews

11:32 as a man of faith. And in his failure, he became a success. I know that Samson is an extreme example and I'm not endorsing or excusing anything that Samson did. But God still used Samson after his failures and his latter victories were greater than any of his former ones. I wrote last week that our goal is to be God-conscious. By that I meant that we must be consumed in the purpose that God has assigned. When you are, then failure isn't important; learning how to fulfill your purpose is. Samson was a colossal failure by any standard—except God's. And God's standard is the only one that counts. But Samson also became a colossal success and only his success is mentioned in Hebrews 11 and not his failures.

Last year two men sent me quotes about failure that I have used and reflected on all year. I share them with you again this year as we prepare for our next "Celebrate a Failure" Day:

"Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up"-Thomas Edison, 1847-1931, American Inventor, Entrepreneur, Founder of General Electric Corporation. We know, of course, that Edison failed hundreds of times trying to identify the proper substance for his electric light filament before he was successful.

"I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed" - Michael Jordan, basketball player.

Can you see the truth in those two quotes? If so, then what changes will you make in how you approach failure? How can you become more active so that failure (or the fear of it) doesn't slow you down?

MY OWN COLOSSAL FAILURE

Perhaps my greatest failure was a business that I attempted to launch in 1981. It was a painful experience that forced me to work a second job to pay off the debt when the business failed. But when trying to make sense out of that blunder, I discovered my life purpose. Ten years later, I began to teach about purpose, drawing heavily on that failed business venture as I taught. Since then, I've shared the story of that business failure more than 800 times with thousands of people. My business failure didn't keep me from success; it was my gateway to success. I can celebrate that failure because I know it was my tutor that led me to a unique understanding of purpose.

What about you? Do you have a failure that you need to reexamine to discover its value? Or have you never failed because you are afraid to fail, thus forfeiting the valuable lessons that only failure can teach?

Let's end this **Memo** with one more quote from Mr. Edison: "Failure is not the worst thing in the world, the very worst is not to try." Did you try something that didn't quite work out? Don't hide it in the basement of your mind. Bring it out into the open and on March 20 celebrate your failure as the great learning tool that it is. Then build on what you learned from that failure and try again. You'll be glad you did. And while you're at it, have a great week!

THE MONDAY MEMO

**From the desk of Dr. John Stanko
Issue 194**

I got home from Dallas today where I especially enjoyed conducting a Seven Steps of a PurposeQuest seminar last Saturday for the first time in a few months. I've conducted 800 purpose sessions to date, and the material is still as fresh and relevant as ever. Next week I'll be in Hampton, Virginia teaching another Seven Steps seminar and this one's free! To find out how to register, see the end of this **Memo**.

We've been discussing failure the last few weeks and the need to not just endure or tolerate failure, but to celebrate it! I'm trying to instill in every reader that there's no perfection this side of heaven, and that failure is a necessary albeit painful part of success, purpose and productivity. To help focus on this topic, I've declared that the week of March 20 will be the second annual "Celebrate a Failure Day." Here are some ideas I have for that Sunday and the following week:

1. If you are a pastor, talk about failure and its role in the life of the believer. Make sure you are discuss the fact that even the most spiritual people fail sometimes.
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 and grandchildren from the sense that failure is to be avoided at all costs. Maybe you can have a family failure party! Make sure you laugh a lot, especially at yourself.
3. If you are in a small group church setting, spend some time talking about your failures, how you view failure and how the fear of failure may be affecting your life now.
4. If you are in a business setting, why not spend some time in your staff meeting or over lunch talking about the role that failure has played in making your business stronger and more effective.
5. Maybe you need to simply spend some time alone, journaling your thoughts where failure and especially some of your personal failures are concerned.

YOU WANT FAILURES? I'VE GOT SOME FOR YOU.

I've found that failure causes me to be more open to new ways and other people. I remember one failure in particular when I worked for Integrity Music's ministry division, Worship International. We were in charge of organizing worship events and conferences and had a conference planned in Dallas, Texas. It turned out to be one of the worst events I had ever planned, let alone attended! The post office lost 50,000 of our promotional brochures that we had mailed. During the event, the audio system failed, the projector used to show the words blew a bulb (and there was no replacement), the church ran out of copier toner, and we lost a lot of money. I was devastated. I was so embarrassed that I didn't want to get up and take the offering; I just wanted to get on a plane and go home.

We had three months until our next conference and our team sat down and reviewed everything that we were doing. We also instituted a new format that we unveiled three months later in San Diego. That new format, coupled with the other changes that came

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out of our review, launched us into 18 months of excellent and profitable conferences. But most of that success came from that Dallas conference which was a total disaster.

Then there was the time I neglected to secure my passport in Zimbabwe, leaving it in a locked car in my briefcase on my way to the airport. When I returned to the car, my briefcase was gone and I was “stuck” in Zimbabwe. But I’ve returned to Zimbabwe 20 times since that incident, which seemed so painful and unnecessary at the time. I may have lost a briefcase, but I gained new family and friends, and a place of rich ministry where the purpose message has blossomed and prospered.

SO HOW DO YOU DEFINE A FAILURE?

So were those two instances really failures? Yes, I failed to insure that we had proper backups for what we were trying to do in Dallas. And yes, I was certainly careless with my passport in Zimbabwe. But were they really failures, or just God using painful experiences to teach me and lead me to be more effective and productive? We who are spiritual can sometimes think that we are exempt from failure, or that failure only indicates sloppiness or doing something wrong or out of the will of God. I see it differently. The Apostle Paul wrote: “For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears (1 Corinthians 13:9-10). Because we know in part, we operate today in faith with partial knowledge and when that happens, things can and do go wrong. When they do, we can do nothing else but retreat in faith to an old familiar, verse: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28-29).

Perhaps this week you need to forgive yourself (or someone else) for what you perceive to be a failure or mistake. Maybe you need to give yourself permission to fail while trying to do something that’s in your heart to do. Whatever you do this week, I trust you’ll do something to prepare for the “Celebrate a Failure Day” on March 20. Have a great week!

THE MONDAY MEMO

Written from Hampton, Virginia
Issue 195

I’m in my hotel room, having finished a great day of ministry and visiting with friends. I head home later today and tomorrow I’m off to Arkansas. People ask me all the time if I get tired of the travel. I can honestly say that I don’t. In fact, I find it exhilarating. I also find that travel helps me finish projects and get more work done. As I’m getting ready to leave home, I have my prioritized task list in front of me at all times, and I must stay on track to get things done before I leave. When I travel, I then have a chance to read and study; so far this year, I’ve read or listened to 12 books and read numerous other articles and magazines. I urge you to find what energizes you and then do it; you will find your productivity increase, which will in turn increase your confidence and ability to tackle new projects.

But I must confess—this week I’ve been fighting discouragement. Notice I said I’ve been **fighting** discouragement, not that I **am** discouraged. I’ve had to work hard all

week to stay on top of my world and affirm the things that I know to be true. And I want to share some of that process with you, because I know from the mail I get that you fight discouragement too.

DOWN BUT NOT OUT

When I deal with discouragement, I always think of David and the story of one of his failures in 1 Samuel 30:

When David and his men came to Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. David's two wives had been captured — Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God (1 Samuel 30:3-6).

How did David find this strength? The Bible tells us where he found it but it doesn't tell us how he found it. Did he go off alone? Probably. Did he pray? Probably. Did David he review God's past faithfulness to him? Probably. But we can only surmise what David did, but the important thing was that he did it and encouraged himself or found strength in the Lord his God.

So what have I done this week? I have repeatedly made faith confessions and affirmations. I have chosen to say things I know to be true, finding strength in my God as I spoke. As I share my affirmations with you, I hope that you will develop your own and use them to maintain your sanity in the midst of insane circumstances. Here are my affirmations.

1. The purpose message is a powerful tool that helps people, churches and businesses find peace, joy and prosperity.
2. I'm a best-selling author who has something to say; my books and articles are eagerly read by people who find them helpful and useful.
3. I'm a speaker who is relevant and entertaining.
4. I coach and mentor leaders all over the world so that they can be effective and successful.
5. I don't teach yesterday's methods; I'm aware of current leadership trends and skills that make me a wise and knowledgeable consultant.
6. My work provides for my needs and the needs of my family so that we have enough to meet our obligations with some left over.
7. I do all this by the grace of God, who empowers and strengthens me to accomplish His will as I cooperate with His purpose for me.

Is this what David did in 1 Samuel 30? I have no idea. But this is what John Stanko did and is doing in February, 2005. I'm closing my eyes and repeating the things that I know regardless of what I see or feel. I'm picturing my ideal world, not because I can create it in by the power of my own will but because I believe that this is **my** reality in the power and will of God. By doing this, I'm finding strength in the Lord my God.

DON'T JUST SIT THERE; ENCOURAGE YOURSELF!

So I'll keep it short this week. Take out a sheet of paper and write down your own affirmations. Please don't say "I will" or "I hope to" or "Maybe I can." Affirm what you know to be true; list the promises of God that are important to you by saying "I am," "I do," "I have," or "I can." Don't be wishy-washy or use hopeful language. Use strong, forceful language that will uplift and encourage you. If no one is around to encourage you, then encourage yourself. But if you're going to encourage yourself, then do a good job of it. Work as hard encouraging yourself as you would if your spouse, child or best friends were discouraged. Do what David did, or if you need a more recent example, do what I am doing. If you do, I know that you will have a great week. Now get to work.