

THE MONDAY MEMO
From the desk of Dr. John Stanko
Issue 201

I'm ready to begin another 200 **Monday Memos** after our celebration last Monday. So many people wrote last week that I couldn't thank everyone personally. But I'm honored that **The Memo** is such an important part of your week. And thank you as well to those who sent financial help toward my African ministry. I depart April 19 (my birthday) for Kenya and then go on to Zimbabwe. There's still time to contribute to the trip and there's still time to schedule a PurposeQuest appointment if you live in either country. See the end of this **Memo** for details.

I just watched Tiger Woods win his fourth Master's Golf Tournament in his young career. Tiger Woods, in case you live on another planet, is the world's best golfer at this point in time. But last year was a tough year for Tiger and he didn't win as many tournaments as he had in previous years. Some said it was because he was in love (he got married last October). Others said that the competition was improving, thus contributing to Tiger's slump. And others just said that he wasn't as good as when he won earlier in his career. I'm going to share with you what I believe happened to Tiger last year and why he won today. But keep in mind, I don't play golf and I'm no expert—except on the topic of purpose and productivity!

IF IT'S NOT BROKEN, LET'S BREAK IT ANYWAY

Tiger Woods lost last year because he was committed to excellence. That sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? Tiger Woods lost more because he wanted to win more. Tiger went down to defeat so he could rise to victory. It doesn't make any sense, unless you understand what a commitment to excellence is all about. It seems that at the beginning of last year, Tiger had a falling out with his coach. Now that's amazing! Tiger Woods has a coach! But when you think of it, so do many of the most successful performers in their fields. Opera singers take lessons, boxing stars have trainers and managers, virtuoso pianists have teachers, and sports performers in all fields employ those who can make them better. So who is your coach? Who is helping you be the best you can be? But wait, I'm getting ahead of myself here.

So Tiger found a new coach. With this new coach, Tiger decided that he needed to remake his swing, and take his driving and iron play to an even higher level. His coach is low-key about it, saying in a recent interview, "I'm just a friend who helps him [Tiger] with his swing once in a while." So while the coach was helping him with his swing, Tiger lost some tournaments. He was being analyzed and criticized, but he stayed the course (pardon the pun). His pursuit of excellence caused him to break something—his swing—that was working pretty well up to that point.

I wonder how Tiger remade his swing? I would imagine that he hit a lot of golf balls while his coach watched and advised. They probably used video to analyze and then work on improvements. I'm sure that Tiger was a bit unsure of what he was doing during this whole process and it caused his game to decline. He kept his eye on the prize, so to speak, and now has won two major tournaments this year, and he's the number one player once again. And keep in mind that Tiger's coach isn't a competitive golfer. The point is that Tiger submitted his gift to someone who wasn't as good as he was. Someone who isn't as gifted or anointed as you can still help you, too.

A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

What can you learn from Tiger Woods? Besides how to play better golf, you can learn that success is seldom an accident. You can also see that Tiger Woods, along with every successful person of purpose, has built a culture of accountability that provides feedback on performance. They put their ego aside because they want to be the best they can be, so they submit to the accountability that tells them where they are and what they need to do to improve. Yet spiritual people often don't do that. They don't take lessons (they cost money), don't set goals (they aren't spiritual), don't get feedback ("I did it for the Lord"), and don't seek the advice of others ("He or she doesn't understand or isn't as spiritual as I would like them to be").

I put the circulation at the top of each **Monday Memo** because it is one means of feedback, one way I can see if what I'm doing is meeting the needs of people. I read and answer most of my feedback from my Bible studies and Memos, even if they are critical or raise questions. I have five people who advise me on business and ministry issues and I'm always trying to remember what the psalmist wrote: "Let a righteous man strike me — it is a kindness; let him rebuke me — it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it" (Psalm 141:5). I keep telling my head, "Don't be proud. Listen. Learn. Shut up and don't defend yourself." It's not easy, but I'm working on it.

And I've been sitting down with more and more people, helping them write their purpose statements and describe their values. They are people infinitely more talented and anointed than I, yet I, like Tiger's coach, have something that is helping them improve their "game,"

Will you join me this week in building a culture of accountability? Who is your coach? What can you do to make yourself more effective, even if it means being less effective in the short-run? Who gives you feedback? Where can you get a lesson or two on being a more effective parent, preacher, painter, singer, business leader or student? Let's put our egos to death (where they should be anyway) and let's join Tiger Woods, not in being world-class golfers, but in being world-class Christians. And then let's win the world, or at least our world, for the glory of God! Have a great week!

THE MONDAY MEMO

**Written from Kansas City, Missouri By Dr. John Stanko
Issue 202**

Happy birthday to me, happy birthday to me, happy birthday, dear John, happy birthday to me! All right, I admit it's tacky to sing yourself happy birthday, and my birthday isn't even until tomorrow. But I just couldn't resist. Plus I leave tomorrow for Africa, so I won't have a full day to celebrate. I'm now 55 years old and I've never felt better or had more energy. That's what purpose does to you; it renews your strength and causes your energy levels to replenish quickly. If I had all the money I needed, I would be doing what I do today, and that insures that my energy levels are high—I love what I do! Are you doing what you love? If so, how can you do more of it? If not, how can you get to that place of joy and energy?

Last week we discussed Tiger Woods and his commitment to excellence. This commitment caused Tiger to employ a coach to help make him the best golfer he could be. This coach isn't even a competitive golfer, but Tiger submits his talent to this coach for input and evaluation. Tiger spent last year improving his game, which brought him less short-run victories, but improved his game in the long-run. Today he is once again

the world's top-ranked golfer. You can learn many things from this example, and one of them is that you need help from others if you are to be as effective as you can be.

WANTED: COACHES AND MENTORS, DEAD OR ALIVE

I first wrote about our need for mentors and coaches last August. At that time, I pointed out that Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). If you *know* that you need to grow and improve, then you are free—free to draw from others who can do what you can't in order to hone your skills. If you are a writer, who is helping you be a better writer? If you are a parent, who are you drawing from that can make you the best parent possible? If you are a pastor, who are your models and how can they help you be more like them? Let me make some suggestions of how to employ this principle in your life.

First of all, don't get locked into bad thinking. You don't need a mentor or coach; you need mentors and coaches. 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 isn't a lifelong appointment. You'll change mentors regularly as the needs of your purpose and creative expression change. But now you're probably asking, "Where can I find these mentors?" I'm glad you asked. The second thing to remember is that a person doesn't have to be alive and you don't even have to know them in order for them to serve as a mentor or coach. Here are some places you can seek people who will help you in your pursuit of purpose and excellence.

1. **Bible characters. Who is your favorite Bible character? Why are they your favorite?** They're 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 take them apart, so to speak. For example, the apostle Paul is one of my favorites, so I've chosen him to be a mentor. I read books about him, meditate on what he did, and pray to the same God who helped Paul be a man of purpose who changed the world. I ask God to give me the Spirit of Paul. Now you see how the apostle Paul can be on my board of mentors.
2. **Historical figures. Who do you admire from the past?** In my case, I admire 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. Whose input do you value among your associates and relationships?** I have several 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 on their expertise in the area of editing, finance, writing, 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 people are on my board of mentors.
5. **Family. Who in your family speaks wisdom and has your best interests at heart?** I'm learning to draw more and more on my wife's wisdom and counsel. It's a funny

thing that I'm doing this more even though I'm home less. But there's no one who has been more faithful or committed to the Lord and me for the last 30 years. I'm proud and honored that my wife serves as my adviser and mentor. How about you? Are you drawing on your spouse's, parents', or even your children's wisdom where your purpose is concerned?

IT'S TIME TO CHOOSE.

There you have my board of mentors and coaches. And I mentioned above that "things" can mentor you. Let me give you some examples. I try to go to Disney World regularly. The environment there challenges me 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. I also attend live sporting events and theater to see how they move and manage crowds, how they advertise and how the players and actors perform at optimal levels under tremendous pressure. The important thing is that you are committed to grow and improve in your purpose and determined to produce quality work.

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 and pursue excellence. Commit this team to writing and formally ask any of those close to you to serve on this advisory team. And then begin soliciting feedback or evaluate yourself in key areas. I don't think anyone told Tiger Woods he had to improve; that came from within, from his value of excellence. Guard against the trap that you have "arrived" and that there's no time or need for improvement. And as I wrote last week, make sure you subscribe to the words of the psalmist in Psalm 141:5, "Let a righteous man strike me — it is a kindness; let him rebuke me — it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it." Pray this week about who will have the honor of mentoring you and start drawing on their strengths so you can pursue excellence, just like Tiger Woods. As you do, I know you will have a great week!

THE MONDAY MEMO

**Written from Nairobi, Kenya By Dr. John Stanko
Issue 203**

Greetings from Kenya! I came in early so I could go on a safari at the world-famous Masai Mara game park. It was fantastic and better than what you see on TV! But now I'm back to work here in Nairobi, and I'll be busy for the next two weeks, talking about—you guessed it—purpose! Because of my travels, I won't be able to send a **Monday Memo** next week, but will resume writing on Monday, May 9. If you really can't do without a **Memo** for one week (and if you can't, you may want to seek counseling ☺), then you can go to the archives at <http://www.purposequest.com/mmemo.htm> and read one there.

FALSE HUMILITY

A difficult thing for some people to learn is how to receive a compliment. Some are so afraid of pride that they would rather lie than appear proud. What do I mean? If someone says that you did something well, and you deny it, that's lying. If someone says you are good at doing something and you tell them that you're not, then one of four things just happened: 1) you lied to the person; 2) the person lied to you; 3) that person isn't very bright and doesn't know what they're talking about; or 4) you missed a good opportunity to receive affirmation in what you do well. You may even have missed a

compliment that contained a clue to your purpose and you missed it because you were so intent on appearing humble.

To deny that you can do something well isn't humility. It's **false** humility. True humility would respond by saying, "Thank you. I'm so glad that what I do blesses or helps you. God certainly has helped me do that, and I have tried to be the best I can be. Thank you again." I'm a good administrator. To deny that fact isn't humility, it's an insult to the God who made me an administrator. But at the same time, I've worked hard to be a good administrator. I've been in partnership with God. To better understand this, there's the story of a farmer who had a magnificent field of crops ready to harvest. The local preacher came by to pay a visit, looked at the field, and said, "My, my. Look what the Lord hath wrought!" To which the annoyed farmer replied, "Yes, and you should have seen this field when God had it all by Himself!" It wasn't just the Lord who blessed the crops; the farmer had to work to make room for God's blessing.

Why is this important? Because if you're actively engaged in diminishing your gifts, talents and purpose, you may miss opportunities to do something significant or meaningful with your purpose. This week I was reading Isaiah and was impressed with a simple scene described early in the book: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8). Now if Isaiah had employed false humility, he would have said, "Lord, I'm not a very good speaker and, You know, I'm just a poor old boy who is trying to do Your will. If you can't find anyone else, I'll go, but I'm sure You can find someone more qualified and more educated than I." Later Isaiah did tell the Lord that he was a man of unclean lips, but first, he volunteered! He stepped up and said, "Choose me." Like children being chosen for a schoolyard game, you need to overcome your fear that others will think you egotistical or proud and just say, "Choose me!"

HOW CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE?

How can you know whether you are engaged in true or false humility? How can you tell whether it's your ego or your purpose that's leading you to volunteer, to make yourself available? To help you determine which is which, I want to close by sharing a quote from a man named Frederick Buechner:

There are all kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than society, say or the Superego, or Self-Interest. By and large, a good rule for finding out is this. The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done. If you really get a kick out of your work, you've presumably met requirement (a), but if your work is writing TV deodorant commercials, the chances are you've missed requirement (b). On the other hand, if your work is being a doctor in a leper colony, you have probably met requirement (b), but if most of the time you're bored and depressed by it, the chances are you have not only bypassed (a) but probably aren't healing your patients either. Neither hair shirt nor the soft berth will do. The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

A hair shirt was something rough and uncomfortable that people would wear under their clothing to "humble" themselves. When you think of it, that hair shirt was a form of false humility. If you're wearing a hair shirt, take it off! And also stop denying the truth. If you can do something

and the need for that something arises, then do what Isaiah did. Say, “Here am I, Lord, use me!” Determine this week to weed out false humility from your thinking and speech and then get on with partnering with God to do His will. As you do, I know you will have a great week!

THE MONDAY MEMO

Written from Nairobi, Kenya By Dr. John Stanko

Issue 204

After missing one week, **The Monday Memo** returns! I hope you missed me, but I can't say I missed you. I've been so busy over the last week that I barely had time to think of anything else. The purpose message continues to grow and prosper in Kenya, but my time here has come to an end. This Wednesday I depart for Zimbabwe, where I'm sure I will find plenty of purpose work to do. As I depart Kenya, I want to say “asante sana” to all my friends and purpose partners for a wonderful time here. I will see you in October, Lord willing.

STICK TO THE KNITTING

Recently I ran across a poem by Robert Frost entitled “Two Tramps in Mud Time,” which contains a purpose phrase that I want to discuss this week. I've highlighted the phrase in bold letters below:

But yield who will to their separation,
My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight.
Only where love and need are one,
And the work is play for mortal stakes,
Is the deed ever really done
For heaven and the future's sakes.

Frost stated that he wanted to make his “avocation”—his hobby or work he did for love and enjoyment—with his “vocation”—what he did to earn money to pay his bills. And this represents the challenge and dilemma that many people face as they walk their PurposeQuest: Is it possible to earn a living doing what I love?

Yesterday I met a Kenyan woman named Ruth who heard me speak last year. She said she remembers two questions I asked at that time: What did you enjoy doing when you were a child? And what do you do for pure enjoyment? When she heard me, she was a personal assistant and unhappy (her vocation) but she loved knitting (her avocation). So she began knitting again. First, she knit a pancho and gave it to a friend. Then she let people know that she loved to knit and the orders started to come in. Yesterday, she came to my PurposeQuest seminar and presented me with a knit scarf and hat as a token of her appreciation, because now she has started a knitting business and has left her secretarial position. She was interviewed on radio last week and so many orders came in that she was overwhelmed. But then someone called and is giving her a knitting machine this week. This is perfect example of what Frost described, for Ruth has found a way to unite her avocation and vocation as two eyes make one in sight.

“I HATE YOU, DR. STANKO”

After one of my seminars, a man came up to me with a smile on his face and jokingly said, "I hate you, Dr. Stanko. Where were you 20 years ago? It was at that time that I gave up my dream to pursue a job. And today, I'm miserable. But I have school fees and a mortgage, so I can't quit. Why couldn't I have met you back then, so you could have told me to pursue my purpose (avocation) instead of my career (vocation)?" I told this man what I tell you this week: You start your purpose journey where you are, not where you wish you were. We had to accept that this man had financial obligations, but that didn't mean he couldn't do **something** to get his dream back. If you're in a position to pursue your dream today, I urge you to do so with all your heart so you won't have the regrets that this man had. Don't pursue a job; pursue a purpose. But if you're already doing something else, then here are my simple suggestions:

1. Admit that you are unhappy; don't feel guilty.
2. Clarify your purpose or at least those things that give you joy when you do them.
3. Begin to do the things you enjoy, even if it's only for one hour every week.
4. Begin to do the things you enjoy, whether you get paid for them or not.
5. Tell other people what it is that you enjoy doing.
6. Change your thinking that it **is** possible to make a living from what you enjoy, even if you have no idea today how that can happen.

Ruth's story highlights a truth that I've shared with many people: God wants you to fulfill your purpose more than you do. That's why He created you and why you're still here. You aren't alone in your PurposeQuest, for God is with you. If you will do what you can do, which is outlined in the six steps above, then God will do what He can do. When that happens, an important truth will be your companion as you walk out your PurposeQuest: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Have a great week!

THE MONDAY MEMO

Written from Harare, Zimbabwe By Dr. John Stanko

Issue 205

Greetings once again from Harare, Zimbabwe! It's great to be back here and this trip is even more special because my wife, Kathryn, is here with me. We decided that we were apart too much last year, so we are making a concerted effort to be together as often as possible in 2005. Everyone here in Zimbabwe is relieved to meet Kathryn, for most thought I didn't really have a wife. And Kathryn says that our neighbors don't really believe that I exist! But we both exist and are enjoying our 31st year of wedded bliss, but only because I have been gone for what feels like 16 of those 31 years!

I think it's time for another purpose profile, and this time I will focus on the life of Daniel. I will be talking about Daniel during my time in Zimbabwe and writing about him will help me focus my thoughts for the different speaking sessions I will have while I am here. By the way, if you would like to view my speaking schedule while I am here in Zimbabwe, please see the end of this Memo.

MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED

In most American high schools, graduating seniors elect one of their classmates whom they deem most likely to succeed in the future. Daniel didn't go to high school, but if he had, he would have been elected. How do I know this? Let's consider the kind of young people that King Nebuchadnezzar was looking for to serve in his kingdom: "Young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace" (Daniel 1:4). Since Daniel was chosen, we know that he qualified based on the listed criteria—smart and good-looking. Daniel had a bright future in his homeland of Judah, but God had other plans. Before he knew it, this young teenager was whisked off to Babylon, selected for royal duty and given a three-year crash course in Babylonian culture.

What was involved in this crash course? Daniel was sent to language school. Then he was given a new name – Belshazzar—which contained the name of one of the main Babylonian gods, Bel. He was then placed under the care of the chief of the eunuchs. Now I ask you: Why would Daniel be under this man unless they had made Daniel a eunuch himself? Can you imagine? Here was this bright young man, with his whole future ahead of him. Suddenly he's living in a foreign land, called by the name of a foreign god, learning a strange culture, and facing a future that didn't include a wife and family!

Yet Daniel distinguished himself throughout his Babylonian career. He was a man of skill and efficiency and also penned a book in the Bible that carries his name. What enabled this man to be so successful?

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT.

Daniel was a man of purpose, but he was also a man of values. When he first arrived in Babylon to become a royal official, he was also assigned royal rations that he was to eat. But Daniel refused: "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way" (Daniel 1:8). If I am a teenager, having gone through all that Daniel had been through, the last thing I would have been concerned with was eating the local food. But Daniel knew the dietary laws of a Jew, and he determined to maintain a kosher diet even in Babylon. As a young man, Daniel knew what was important to him and he was determined to follow those values no matter what.

The most impressive thing to me is that Daniel had such well-defined values at an early age. The second most impressive thing is that he was committed to follow them, even in a foreign land after his life had been turned upside down. Have you defined your values? If so, do you think you could follow them if you went through what Daniel went through? I'm not sure that I could.

So your assignment this week is to do some work to define your values. If they worked for Daniel, they will work for you. I have an article outlining how to do this at <http://www.purposequest.com/articles.htm>. It is entitled "How to Develop Your Governing Values." (If you can't download it, see below.) Can you spend 60 minutes this week giving thought and expression to what is important to you? I certainly hope you can, for values are a critical part of your PurposeQuest. As you work on yours, I will also review mine this week to see if they need adjusted and, more importantly, to see if I'm living them! If I can help you, let me know. Otherwise have a great week! I know I will.