

The Monday Memo
from the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 21

I was teaching a Purpose Seminar two days ago in New England. As I taught, I felt God's presence as I saw the people responding to the life purpose message. But there was one thing in the back of my mind that was a particular source of joy during that entire seminar. I kept thinking of how I got the privilege of flying to Dallas to do another Purpose Seminar the next day. Two seminars in two days! I could hardly contain my excitement. What a blessing! I unveiled new notes and new program slides and I got to improve them for the next day's presentation. It doesn't get any better than this for me.

We've talked about joy in a previous *Monday Memo* (see issue 12). The joy of the Lord is our strength and when we have joy, we are empowered and enabled to do the work that is before us. That is why it is critical that you are involved in work you love as often as possible: if you aren't, then you lack the necessary strength to meet the problems and hard work that are assigned to everyone.

I was talking with my friend and associate Sue McMillin this past week. Sue owns a company, With Time to Spare, and does a great job teaching on time management and organization. After she teaches, she will go into homes or offices, depending on the setting, and help people organize their world, from desks to closets. I have worked with her in the past and believe I will again in the future. (check out Sue's website at www.withtimetospare.com)

Sue was talking about the past 20 years in her business and shared that she believed she could be doing so much more. In her mind, she isn't doing enough that pertains to what she loves: teaching and consulting. She then said something that challenged me: "John, I've read the books that say do what you love and the money and opportunities will follow. I have a great company, product and happy clients, but I haven't had that breakthrough I've been looking for." Sue has found the joy of her life; she wants to do it more often than

she is now. That got me to thinking all week about the comment Sue made. And here are some thoughts I came up with:

1. We can find our purpose but the results and expression of it are in God's hands. Jesus didn't have His breakthrough until He was 30 and then it lasted only three years. Paul wrote, "so neither he who plants or he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow" (1 Corinthians 3:7).

2. God causes us to trust Him, even when we know what our purpose is. Moses waited 40 years to deliver Israel, Joseph waited 13 years to rule Egypt and 22 years to see his brothers bow down before him, and David waited 25 years from the time Samuel anointed him to the time Israel made him king. All three knew what their purpose was; they just couldn't get the breakthrough until God gave it to them. That's why faith is one of my Gold Mine Principles. Hebrews 11:6 says that God "rewards those who diligently seek him." God defines how long our diligence must last.

3. The Apostle Paul knew his purpose from his Damascus road experience. Yet we only have to read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 or 2 Corinthians 12:22-33 to see that part of Paul's road to heaven went through a bit of hell. His purpose didn't guarantee him the results he wanted, only the joy of knowing that he was doing what he was created to do.

What I am doing through Gold Mine Development Company today is due to God's grace. I can neither explain it nor can I say I am any more holy or righteous than anyone else. I know my purpose. I have stepped out in faith (at 51 years of age) to do it as best I know how.

Someone once asked Mother Theresa how she felt about being unable to help most of the patients she cared for. They died only to have new ones take their place. She responded, "God doesn't call us to be successful; He does call us to be faithful. I will continue to be faithful." I can't guarantee your success as you pursue your purpose, but I can guarantee your joy as you do. May God grant you the joy of knowing His will and the peace to trust Him for the results.

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Issue 22

Yesterday morning I spoke at a church in Northern Virginia and had another chance to talk about purpose! This time I told the story of Dennis. Dennis attended one of my seminars in Virginia a few years ago and was not immediately won over to my purpose message. In fact, he politely but firmly opposed it as a "management fad" that was not to be found in the Bible. I was polite in my efforts to get him to be patient until I reached the end of the seminar, but he found it hard to do so. He wasn't buying what I said.

After the session, Dennis came to me and reiterated his disagreement with my conclusions. He felt that my purpose message was too subjective and open to misinterpretation. He then issued his plea: "I challenge you to find any theme of purpose in the diverse activities I have been involved with in my lifetime." Intrigued by his challenge, I accepted. As he went through his list of seemingly unrelated activities, I started to regret that I had accepted. But then I saw something that gave me hope. "It seems to me," I said, "that the common theme here is not what you've done, but why you've done it. Isn't it true that you've been called on to do all those things because they weren't quite what they could be?" I closed with the statement, "It seems to me that you were born to bring a measure of excellence to whatever the Lord wants you to do."

Dennis was not impressed and left, only to return the next day for the rest of my seminar. But this time, he shared a different story. He got up in front of the class and told how he had been reminded the night before of the literal meaning of his name "Dennis" in Greek. Dennis means "discerner of excellence" and that man came face-to-face with a very dramatic understanding of who he was and what he was born to do.

I wish all purpose quests ended so well and neatly, but they don't. Some people search and search and become discouraged in the process. Others settle for half answers, and still others for pat

answers that lack personal meaning and application. Where do you fit in?

I have written for the last three weeks on the issue of purpose, because I can't seem to get away from that emphasis and message. I hear from many of you who have found your purpose and many who are still searching.

I want to leave a few more guidelines for finding your purpose before I move on next week to a new topic. Consider these issues if you are still searching or helping someone who is.

1. Your purpose may not be found in *what* you're doing, but *why* you're doing it. That was the case with Dennis. He brought excellence to non-excellent performance and did it doing many different things. In trying to find his purpose, he was focusing on the wrong thing.

2. Your purpose may be defined by who you're not. You will often go where you are least comfortable to fulfill your purpose. My purpose is to bring order out of chaos. I love order but always find myself, at least for a while, in chaos. The very thing I'm not -- chaotic -- gives expression to the very thing I am -- ordered.

3. Your purpose may be expressed in many different ways. I bring order out of chaos, but I have done it as a writer, pastor, consultant, teacher, and administrator. I've been involved in many activities, but there has always been one common purpose and theme.

That brings me to one last point. If you've found your purpose, isn't it time you helped someone else find theirs? God needs an army of purposeful people who not only know their purpose, but are able to help others find theirs. Consider doing one of three things this week:

1. If you lead any kind of small group, whether prayer, Bible study, or support group, lead a discussion on finding your purpose. Use your back *Monday Memo* issues as a guideline or go to my website for some support material.

2. Send me your purpose story (10 sentences maximum length, please). I will compile the stories, put them on my website and allow others to access them. Who knows, your purpose may be to help others find theirs!

3. Take the time to tell someone about your purpose one-on-one.

Often our purpose is as close as the name our parents gave us, but we can't see it. God can open your eyes, however, to see what we couldn't previously see. I trust that will be your experience this week either for you or someone you're helping.

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Issue 23

I wasn't happy with last week's *Monday Memo*. What was wrong with it, you ask? The content was adequate; there were no spelling or punctuation errors. It was sent in a timely manner and everyone who wanted a copy received one. All that was in order, but I wasn't happy. I thought about it all week.

I wasn't happy because it didn't represent my best effort; I waited too late last week to get started writing *The Memo*. It never came together the way I hoped it would. I don't want to just send something out every Monday morning; I want it to be something that God uses to help you focus your week and activities. I want every *Monday Memo*, in the words of my friend Michael (see issue 19), to "sing." Last week's *Memo* hummed and whistled, but it never really sang. I sent it anyway.

Years ago I made up my mind to pursue excellence; not perfection, but excellence. I want to do the best that I can do, not the best that anyone can do. The second session of the "Life is a Gold Mine" seminar is about pursuing excellence. I don't want to just talk about it; I want to pursue it with all my strength. It's what I believe God wants from me, and it's what I want to do.

I was teaching on excellence yesterday in Bentonville, Arkansas at a church-wide retreat. While I was teaching, I was reminded of the words of Martin Luther King:

If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, "Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well."

I want the angels to read *The Monday Memo* and **The Faith Files**, if they so choose, and say, "Not bad!" I desire that my work will not be the best work there is, but the best work I can possibly produce. If it turns out to be the best there is, I will be grateful, for that is God's grace. But for it to be anything less than my personal best is unacceptable.

Paul talked about what it takes to produce excellence in his letter to the Colossians when he wrote:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (3:23-24)

God deserves my best efforts and other people do, too. I want to continually improve and not settle for "good enough." It is said that "the good is the enemy of the best." I don't want to settle for a good *Monday Memo* if I have it in my power to produce a great one.

How about you? Are you satisfied with the good, or can you do better? I'm not referring to some fantasy search for perfection, but to a sense that what you have done or are doing is the best it can be at this point in your life. Are you giving your best to your family, job, ministry, schoolwork and relationships?

Or in all honesty, do you need to work at improving a little more each day so that the work you produce or relationships you maintain can be called a masterpiece? God doesn't promote potential; He uses and promotes people who consistently produce at a high level of excellence in whatever field they are in. If God is looking for someone to promote, do you qualify?

I prayed and thought a lot about this week's *Memo* and I am sending it out not only because I must, but because it's the best I can do. If I ever start producing anything else, I trust you'll do me a favor and let me know. You don't need any more junk mail from cyberspace and I don't want to get too busy to make *The Monday Memo* an

enjoyable experience for all concerned. Have a great week and do whatever is before you with all your heart!

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Issue 24

Traffic was lined up as far as I could see, but I didn't care. I was inching along just outside the Lincoln Tunnels two nights ago as I made my way into New York City. I come to this area often, and each time I do, I try to see a Broadway show or take in a sports event. When I do that, I find myself energized and refreshed from what is usually a hectic business and ministry schedule.

Now you may ask, "Why would you do that when you're already busy? Why add more to your schedule?" The only answer I can give is because a "break" like that works for me. There are times when I plan to do nothing, but coming to New York City is not one of those times. The question I would ask as you begin your week is, "What works for you?"

I have found that I have to work at scheduling rest and leisure. If I'm not careful, the rigors and demands of what I do deplete my creativity and energy. I've got to make an effort to replenish what I lose. I would imagine that the same is true for you.

What energizes you? Is it gardening, painting, reading, window shopping, going for a walk with your spouse or friend? Is it watching an old movie or going to the beach for an hour or a whole day? It doesn't have to make sense to anyone but you. First, you must know what refreshes you and then you must make that a priority; you must work it into your schedule. My wife and I are planning a four-day getaway soon. We are looking forward to this much-needed break and have had to work hard to get this and keep this in our schedules. We've also made plans to spend our Christmas holiday with my wife's family. Yes, we've made plans four months in advance to take a holiday break. When December comes, we'll be glad we did.

As you start another week, look at your calendar and schedule something this week that you know you will enjoy. Put an "x" on your calendar whatever day you plan to do it. That way, when someone

asks you to do something during that time, you can honestly say that you have other plans.

Then go beyond this week. Look at the rest of the year and "x" out one day every week as your day off, or one night a week for that college class you've been wanting to take at the local school. If you don't do this now, you know that time will go by much more quickly than you anticipated and you'll be buried in the activities that take more than they give.

This week I am suggesting that you work to rest. Don't let these days get away from you, but take some time to have some fun or get some rest. After all, even God rested from His work on the seventh day. If God needed a break in a manner of speaking, so do you.

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Issue 25

I was in Cuba last year with a team of people from Canada, South Africa and the United States. We were there to conduct a series of meetings for a network of churches. I found economic conditions to be worse than I thought, but spiritual conditions to be much better. The churches were prospering for the most part in a very difficult environment.

While we were coming home, a man came up to me in the airport in Santiago and asked, "Aren't you John Stanko?" I was shocked to say the least, for I didn't expect anyone to recognize me in Cuba. It turned out that he was there visiting family and had attended one of my seminars a few years before in Los Angeles. It truly is a small world. He said he still remembered what I taught during that time.

I want to impact the world. I no longer apologize for that or feel that I am operating in pride or conceit. I enjoy autographing my books and being recognized where I go every now and then. The growth of *The Monday Memo* mailing list has been an exciting exercise in faith. **The Faith Files** are forcing me to write a commentary on the Bible that I have talked about for years; the reports coming to me are that God is using them to touch many lives. Your feedback from both those writing projects is a highlight of my week. I've stopped fighting who I am and what I was born to do. I want to do it with all the creativity and personality that God has given me.

In John 7, Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." There is a stream coming out from my life and also from yours. I have a theory about these streams. While the streams come from our faith in God, they take on a flavor that is personal, that tastes just like you and me. Let me give you an example.

When the writers wrote the gospels, they were writing the word of God. Yet they used their own vocabulary, phrases and unique insight to do so. The "water" that flowed from their pen was God's, yet it tasted just like them. The water that comes from my life is due to God's grace, but it sure tastes like me.

So what impact has this had on my life? I've stopped fighting my love of sports, love of travel, sense of humor and aggressive nature. I'm taking seriously many interests that I've had for some time. For years I've enjoyed seeing live stage productions and now I want to pursue a hobby of researching the history of the American theater in New York City. I've already purchased some books. I don't want to be selfish or self-centered in pursuing these interests, but I do want to be who God made me to be.

The apostle Paul wrote:

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10 NAS),

and

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20, NIV).

I am not excusing my shortcomings; I have plenty of those. I am trying, however, to use all that I am to communicate the love of God to the world. I don't know how the two verses above fit together. I am who I am, but the life I now live is no longer me living it.

The world is waiting for you, not to be something you're not, but to be the best, fullest expression of who God made you to be. Are you fighting who God created you to be? I know you're not perfect; no one is. Yet God seems comfortable using people in their imperfections. Will you let Him use you this week? What can you do this week to express who you are, who God made you to be? Maybe you can stop resisting and simply celebrate who you are this week

and let your streams refresh someone else. Stop trying to make your streams so pure that they no longer taste like you. That never was God's intention and it shouldn't be yours. Let the waters flow this week and be yourself. If you taste good enough to God, you should taste good enough for yourself.