

## THE MONDAY MEMO

Sent from London, England By John W. Stanko - Issue 216

\*\*\*\*\*

I'm sending out **The Memo** a little early this week, since I will be in the air tonight heading to southern Africa. I had a good but short visit here in London and now it's off to Zimbabwe for the next five weeks. Of course, I managed to squeeze in a trip to the London theater district where I took in a show last Friday night. Perhaps you need to take a break and do something you enjoy this week as well. I give you permission to do so.

I've been doing some study in the gospels, outlining all the recorded questions that Jesus asked. So far I have identified 215 questions in the four gospels, although some of them are repeated in more than one gospel. I have been looking at these questions and imagining that Jesus was asking me these questions today, which of course He is through His inspired Word. But I assume that when Jesus asks a question, He wants an answer, not because He doesn't know the answer, but because I don't know the answer. And Jesus, great teacher that He was and is, doesn't just present answers, but rather involves you and me, the seekers, in the answers that we need. So this week, I thought I would give you an assignment.

Pick one or two questions from the questions below and spend the week meditating on and answering those questions. Write down your answers and insights, but don't be in a hurry to finish. It will be interesting to look back at your thoughts at the end of the week.

### WHAT WOULD JESUS ASK?

There is a book out entitled, *What Would Jesus Eat?* And there was an entire product line that focused on the theme, *What Would Jesus Do?* Well, I thought I could launch my own movement or theme entitled, *What Would Jesus Ask?* With that in mind, let me present six of the many questions that Jesus asked in the gospel of Matthew for your consideration this week.

1. **Why are you afraid?** (Matthew 8:26) – What are you afraid of and why? Fear is a debilitating emotion. It causes you to make wrong decisions based on what may happen. Often your fears are based on past traumas and failures that you haven't resolved. Jesus asks you to identify your fears and answer why you are afraid, so that you can grow in your ability to trust Him. You may want to write down all the things of which you are afraid and come up with some reasons why. Or you may wish to focus on one fear—failure, poverty, looking foolish, your parents—and focus on that this week.
2. **What do you think?** (Matthew 18:12-13; 21:28) – I was in a church recently and heard a pastor give a message and I had this thought while he was preaching: He didn't hear this message for himself; he read it in a book somewhere. Ironically, that was confirmed later in the day while I was talking with someone close to the pastor! My point is that most people aren't sure what they think or believe. They just know and mimic what someone else knows and believes. Jesus tried to get people to formulate and articulate what they believed and what they knew about God and His work. Often we are too lazy to do their own thinking, so they assimilate someone else's. When I faced how ignorant I was

- years ago, I went back to school so I could tell people what I believed and why. Why do you believe what you do? Can you describe it? If not, then this week determine how you can fix this problem?
3. **Have you never read?** (Matthew 12:3-6; 21:16; 22:31-32) – Jesus challenged the people to read and understand the Scriptures. They were familiar with them, but they couldn't apply them to their lives in many cases. What are you reading in the Bible? What are you learning as you read? If you don't already, I urge you to begin a journal to keep track of what God is showing you from His Word. I also urge you to have a system that will enable you to read through the Bible regularly. But write down what you are learning as you read and make it a regular habit. You can begin this week.
  4. **What do you want me to do for you?** (Matthew 20:32) – When I am in a church and pray for people, I almost always ask them, "What would you like the Lord to do for you?" I am amazed at how many people struggle with this question. They can't be specific. So this week, you may want to focus on this question for yourself. What do you want God to do for you? Don't feel guilty if it's something significant and don't feel like if God blesses you that He must take someone else's blessing to do so. Meditate this week on the desires of your heart and then write them down for you to see.
  5. **Don't you believe I am able to do this?** (Matthew 9:28) – There are some things that just seem too big for God to perform. I know He can do anything, but I am so familiar with some situations and people that I don't think they will ever change. Is there anything that you aren't bringing to God in prayer because it's just too big? If so, you may need to answer this question this week and bring the truth into the light. You know in your heart God can do anything, but you aren't convinced He can (or wants to) do it for you. Maybe you want to write God a letter this week about this situation, so you can see what you are thinking.
  6. **Why did you doubt?** (Matthew 14:23) – There are many times I have doubted God's faithfulness or ability to fulfill His promises, and then He overcame my doubts and did it anyway. Then I look back and say, "Why did I doubt?", only to doubt again at the next crisis. Jesus was asking His followers here to find out why they were doubting so they could stop. With that in mind, answer this question this week for yourself. Do you doubt because your parents disappointed you? Do you doubt because God has disappointed you in the past? Are you afraid to believe for fear of looking foolish? Meditate on this question but make sure you write down your answers. And don't just write them down to complete this exercise. Write them down so you can attack them in the power of the Spirit and rid them from your life.

There you have this week's questions. Of course, you don't have to limit this exercise to this week. You may want to take a question every week for the next six weeks. Or you may want to reach into the gospels and pull out another question not listed above. But the most important thing is that you make an effort to record your answers to these questions as the Spirit leads. As I stated earlier, these questions aren't for God's benefit—He already knows the answer. These questions are for your benefit. I hope that as you answer them you will see how the answers can set you free to be a person of purpose and productivity in the will of God. And it goes without saying that I hope you have a great week!

## THE MONDAY MEMO

### Sent from Harare, Zimbabwe By John W. Stanko - Issue 217

\*\*\*\*\*

It's great to be back in Zimbabwe, where times are tough, but the people are tougher! I'm always challenged when I come here to see how resilient the people are and how much the Lord is doing! I'm often asked if I'm afraid when I come here, and my answer is, "Absolutely not!" And the next question is, "What do you do that you go there so often?" And my standard answer is, "I go because of how much I receive, not how much I give or do." I recommend that more people come here. You will go home seeing how small your problems are, and you will be challenged to do more with less, just as the people here must do.

Last week, we considered launching a new trend or movement entitled, "What Would Jesus Ask?" We looked at six questions that Jesus asked in Matthew's gospel and considered that He is posing those questions today to you and me. (If you didn't get last week's issue, write and I will send you the questions. One reader wrote to propose that I change the name of this movement to "What Is Jesus Asking?" to make it more active, relevant and less legalistic. I liked that suggestion and will make the adjustment.)

Yesterday, I facilitated a meeting of business leaders as we discussed Marcus Buckingham's new book, *The One Thing You Need to Know*. During the video presentation, guess what Buckingham gave us? That's right—some questions! These questions weren't questions that Jesus asked, but they are valuable questions nonetheless for those who are serious PurposeQuest-ers, as I know you are. Therefore I want to pass these questions along and urge you to spend some time answering them this week.

### STRENGTHS, TRIGGERS, AND LEARNING STYLES

Buckingham is at the forefront of business leadership studies, having worked for the Gallup Company for many years. In short, he urges people everywhere to build on their strengths and not try to improve their weaknesses any more than necessary. Buckingham urges managers and employees to learn as much about themselves as possible, paying particular attention to individual strengths, triggers (things that spark enthusiasm and productivity) and learning styles (which Buckingham categorizes as analysts, doers and imitators). To help with this process, Buckingham provides five clusters of questions that managers can ask workers or workers can ask themselves. They are:

1. **What was the best day at work you've had in the last three months?** (To identify strengths) What were you doing? Why did you enjoy it so much?
2. **What was your worst day at work in the last three months?** (To identify weaknesses) What were you doing? Why did it grate on you so much?
3. **What was the best relationship with a manager you've ever had?** (To understand triggers and de-motivators) What made it work so well?
4. **What was the best praise or recognition you've ever received?** (To identify triggers) What made it so good?

5. **When in your career do you think you were learning the most?** (To clarify your learning style) Why did you learn so much? What's the best way for you learn?

At one point in our meeting, we each spent about five minutes responding to these questions for ourselves. My answers gave me added insight into how I work best, something I know is important to Jesus and the work He has given me to do. So just pretend this week that these are the questions that Jesus is asking.

### **MY BEST DAY IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS**

I identified my best day in the last three months as the day in Vancouver, Canada when I organized people onto the ship for the PurposeQuest Alaska cruise. That night, we had a meeting to greet the people and I gave a brief presentation. So my happiest day was a day when I was traveling and speaking. Now that may not come as a surprise to you, and it wasn't really to me either. Just to see and admit that, however, is liberating. I'm happiest when traveling. If you want to motivate me, help me learn or reward me, send me somewhere! It's who I am and what I do best. In the last ten days, I have been to four cities in four countries and spoken five times. During that time, I have continued to write and consult. I love it all! And the feedback tells me that other people grow from what I do.

So what about you? When are you happiest and most productive? I urge you to spend some time this week attempting to answer one or all five of these questions. With pen and paper in hand, write down what you learn and the conclusions you reach. I have done this exercise using these questions many times and I still learned something about myself this week (or was at least reminded about what I had already known). I know the same will happen for you. Have a great week!

### **THE MONDAY MEMO**

#### **Sent from Harare, Zimbabwe By John W. Stanko - Issue 218**

\*\*\*\*\*

I've had a great week in Zimbabwe and I hope you have had one too, wherever you may be. When I first began **The Monday Memo**, I wondered whether I would ever run out of material. This week I have several things I would like to write about, so I guess the answer to my question is, "Not yet!" But one day, it will be time to put **The Monday Memo** to rest. I still see it encouraging many, however; so for now, it will continue.

In last week's **Memo**, we looked at five questions posed by Marcus Buckingham in his book, *The One Thing You Need to Know*. If you didn't read those questions, you may want to review them now or write me if you didn't receive them. This week I ran across a quote from Peter Drucker, the management guru, that relates to last week's theme. And then I read a Bible verse this week that also fit into the current topic. So without further ado, let's look at those two quotes and tie them into your quest for purpose.

## **WHO ARE YOU?**

Much of what I've written over the years has been to help you know who you are, and who you're not. Many people are desperately trying to be who they aren't, and they are frustrated. You may be one of them. It seems like common sense or something simple to become more organized, more outgoing, more disciplined or less emotional. When we aren't able to affect the changes we seek, we can wear a mask (acting like the change has indeed occurred), try harder or become angry and unhappy. But my perspective on this process is that you can't be who you were never intended to be. It is much more productive and fruitful to stop trying to be who you aren't, instead exerting all your energy on being the best expression of who God made you to be in the first place. This is where Drucker's quote comes in (complete with questions you can work on this week):

The answers to the three questions. "What are my strengths? How do I perform? What are my values?" should enable the individual, and especially the knowledge worker, to decide where he or she belongs. . . . But also knowing the answer to these three questions enables people to say to an opportunity, to an offer, to an assignment: "Yes, I'll do that. But this is the way I should be doing it. This is the way it should be structured. This is the way my relationships should be. These are the kind of results you should expect from me, and in this time frame, because *this is who I am*. – Peter F. Drucker, *Management Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

When I help people apply this principle, I always run into one objection: it seems so selfish! Most people ask me, "Do I have the right to shape my world and assignments in a way that is best-suited to who I am? Isn't that self-centered?" And that is where the Bible verse comes in.

## **LEARNING TO LOVE YOURSELF**

I was reading Jesus' response to an expert in the law when He said:

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: '**Love your neighbor as yourself**.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40 emphasis added).

Now I began to wonder? Is "love of self" that Jesus mentioned related to this discussion—to building on strengths and accepting who you are? And I've come to the conclusion that it is. Your love of God, your service to and for Him, and the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. And one of those commandments is to love your neighbor out of who you are, not who you think you ought to be. So answering Drucker's questions isn't an exercise in selfishness; answering those questions is a service to God, who made you as you are. You can't love other people as you should until you learn to accept who you are and build on that knowledge.

Now that you know you are on a strong, biblical foundation, I want you to go back and answer Drucker's questions. For that matter, go back and answer Buckingham's questions from last week and Jesus' questions from the week before. Don't feel guilty or be ambivalent about defining who you are and insisting, wherever possible, that you work in a way that will enable you to function effectively—as God intended. And as you keep these questions before you, learn

*www.purposequest.com*

to love yourself and therefore serve others, I know you will clarify your purpose and have a great week at the same time!

## **THE MONDAY MEMO**

### **Sent from Johannesburg, South Africa By John W. Stanko - Issue 219**

\*\*\*\*\*

Greetings from South Africa and Happy Labor Day to my friends in America! But my heart goes out to the people of the Gulf Coast back home. I lived for 14 years in Mobile, Alabama and traveled regularly to Mississippi and New Orleans. It is hard to believe that a whole section of my country has been wiped out! I am seeing scenes of places I knew so well that are no more.

But I am far from home and can only watch CNN to see the latest pictures from the hurricane. And this week I was reflecting on how I got here. I understand that I got on a plane and flew here, but that's not what I'm talking about. I'm thinking about how God worked out all the circumstances to allow my life to intersect with the lives of people here and in other places. I first taught on purpose in 1991 as an experiment, testing the workshop to see if there was interest. I have gone on to conduct that workshop more than 800 times in more than 20 countries. Then I visited Zimbabwe in 1995 for one day—or so I thought—only to have my passport stolen. I ended staying three more days, but I've been back too many times to count. What seemed like an unfortunate incident turned out to be a fortuitous one and my quick trip has turned into a love affair between a man and a country.

There are many other stories I could tell that would help you further understand “how I got here.” But there is only one other part of the story that I want to look at this week. My journey to do what I am doing today started with a dream. And getting to where you want to go will start there, too.

### **WHAT ARE MY DREAMS?**

As a child, I can remember looking up in the sky and seeing an airplane. I had studied the logos and designs of the various airlines, so I could see the plane in the sky and know what company it belonged to. One of my favorite pastimes was stamp collecting. I would get lots of foreign stamps, organize them and then study a world map to see where that country was. Ironically, my family never traveled anywhere, never took a family vacation away from home. So I dreamed of one day traveling, being on one of those planes that I saw in the sky, going to one of the places from which the stamp I was holding had come.

Many years later, I discovered that my purpose was to create order out of chaos. I “saw” myself speaking to crowds, sometimes large crowds and they were smiling and laughing. Whatever I was telling them, I knew they were enjoying it! Then I had this strong “sense” that I would be going to Africa. So I began to study the map of Africa, wondering where I would go. All the while, I was working to develop my message and improve my ability to communicate. Finally, I was sent to South Africa by my employer in 1993 and I've been coming back every since, today representing my own company.

And I'm 55 years of age now, but I still have some dreams. For instance, I would like to write a book that a lot of people read and find helpful. I can see them smiling and shaking their heads in agreement as they read. I can also see them recommending the book to their friends. I would love to organize one big conference before I die. I'm talking with 50,000 or more participants, preferably over a two- or three-day period. I would also like to be part of a creative team that produces something significant, that touches many people's lives all over the world. (For example, when I watch the movie *Titanic*, I just marvel at how well it was written and conceived. When I watch it, I pray, "Lord, I'd like to be part of a team that could create something like that for You!") I would love to lead that team, but I would do it in a low-key way, emphasizing team rather than my position. And finally, I would really enjoy having a regular media show, whether on radio or television. I would speak some, but would take calls and answer questions as best I could. I would interview people and let them shine, kind of like Larry King does. What little media I've done has been satisfying and people have told me I was good at it. Every proposal or attempt to do this on a regular basis, however, has not gone very far to date.

### **WHAT ARE YOUR DREAMS?**

So now I've told you my dreams, how about telling me yours? I think dreams are an important part of your PurposeQuest. They put you in touch with your heart, and they take you out of the rational world to a world of vision and adventure. They enable you to escape your limitations; they give you energy to do what you didn't think you could do. I've shared some of my dreams with you this week to stimulate your creativity and boldness, so that you can articulate yours. You don't have to send them to me (although you can if you like). But this week, why don't you answer the question, "What are my dreams?" Look at them and see if you can turn any of them into a goal. Study them and see if there is anything you can do this week, no matter how simple, that could prepare you to achieve one of your dreams. Get out of your everyday world for just a few minutes this week and enter the world of what could be. Who knows, in a few months or years, you may be writing to someone like I am right now, telling them about how you got to where you are. And when you do, you will tell them what I've told you today—that it all started with a dream. Have a great, dream-filled week!

### **THE MONDAY MEMO**

#### **Written in Johannesburg, South Africa but Sent from the United States of America By John W. Stanko - Issue 220**

\*\*\*\*\*

It's taken me two weeks to get out this latest issue due to technical problems in Zimbabwe. So I decided to take a break from writing either the **Memo** or the Bible studies during that time, but now I am anxious to resume both. And I hope you are anxious to receive them once again! As usual, had a wonderful time in Zimbabwe and want to thank all my family and friends for making my stay so enjoyable and rewarding. I hope to be back in late November, Lord willing, and I also hope to sneak in a quick trip to Kenya in early November. For more on that, please read below.

You may be one of many who utilize my daily devotional from the book of Proverbs. It is my most popular book and the most requested item on my website. The basis for my work in Proverbs is that it is possible to read through the entire book every month,

reading just one chapter a day—chapter one on the first day of the month, chapter two on the second day and so on and so forth. In my book, I chose one verse from the daily chapter for every day of the year. Many people have told me that this has been a good way to help discipline their reading.

Last week, I was doing my daily reading from Proverbs 14 and saw five verses that I thought could help you in your PurposeQuest, or at least in your study of Proverbs. So without further ado, let's look at those five verses.

## **FIVE PURPOSE PASSAGES**

1. **Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy (Proverbs 14:10).** No one knows what you love to do but you. No one can tell you what you should enjoy or what you should do. I know how I feel when I travel and I know how I feel when I do things that drain the energy right out of my body! So I try to do those energy-draining things as little as possible. Do you get joy from painting? Then paint. Do you love flowers? Then plant or arrange. Stop fighting or trying to figure out what you love doing and why you love it; just do it!
2. **There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death (Proverbs 14:12).** I often hear people saying, "Well, *maybe* the Lord wants me to do this," or "*Perhaps* this is the way I should go." I encounter many people who are going a way that *seems* right, but there's something missing for them. Their activities aren't giving life; they are taking life away. When that happens, those same people try to rationalize why they *shouldn't* be feeling the way that they do. Face it; if your way is sucking life from your inner being, then it's time to consider changing direction.
3. **All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty (Proverbs 14:23).** I hear many talking about what they will do "one day." When I hear that, I think of a song we used to sing that says, "***This*** is the day that the Lord has made." No one ever changed the world talking about what they were going to do. They did it and people followed. Stop talking and start doing. Even if you have surrendered your purpose or dream to God and are waiting, there's still plenty you can do to prepare for the day when the Lord gives your dream back to you.
4. **A large population is a king's glory, but without subjects a prince is ruined (Proverbs 14:28).** Jesus told many parables to let us know that God expects increase. Not everyone will produce the same amount, but everyone is to generate more from diligence and hard work. Are you afraid of increase and success? Are you working to keep your world small, when God wants it to be bigger than it is today? Don't think for one minute that you will glorify God by being a ruler over nothing. Grow to your maximum capacity so you can reach your full potential in the will of God.
5. **A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones (Proverbs 14:30).** I'm at peace with who I am. I don't want to be anyone else. Envy can affect your purpose quest when you see someone you admire and think, "I want to be like that" or worse yet, "That's who God wants me to be." You can admire

*www.purposequest.com*

and emulate those who are good at what they do, but you should never try to be anyone but who God intended you to be. If you sing, for example, sing to the glory of God. If you don't, stop envying someone who can and focus on your own purpose.

### **SO NOW WHAT?**

This week, I urge you to use these verses to guide your quiet times and meditation. Or maybe you should use these verses to lead a discussion with your family, work group, or home Bible study. As you study, find other verses that are related to these five and write an article for your church website or bulletin. Or just write it in your journal. Practice describing your purpose quest for the day when you will be telling it to large crowds of listeners. But don't just study and talk; see what you can do to apply what you're learning so you can be a more purposeful person. And spread the word that **The Monday Memo** is back! And I for one am so glad to be a part of your life. Have a great week.