

## The Monday Memo 241

What a great week I had! I left last week with Kathryn for Seattle where I attended training at The Pacific Institute (TPI). In TPI's own words, they are "an international corporation specializing in performance improvement and professional growth, change management and leadership development. The guiding principle of The Pacific Institute is that individuals, during their lifetime, have a virtually unlimited capacity for growth, change and creativity." I'm sure I'll have more to say about my training in the coming months once I finish. Then Kathryn and I "hung out" in Seattle for a few days before coming to Bentonville, where we have reunited with our friends at First Assembly of God.

Today I spoke in three services where I focused on Moses in all sessions. This morning I spoke on the topic "Moses Produces the Best Excuses." In that message, I outlined the five excuses that Moses offered in Exodus 3 and 4 as he talked with God at the burning bush. I won't go into all the excuses, but instead want to write about the first comment that Moses made prior to the excuses when the bush called out his name: "When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses! And Moses said, "**Here I am**" (Exodus 3:4 emphasis added). (You can download the PowerPoint notes from my entire message at <http://www.purposequest.com/misc.htm>). I think those few words, "Here I am," are critical to your PurposeQuest in more ways than one. Let's study why.

### **ATTENTION!**

I did a quick study of others who said "Here I am" and found that Abraham said it twice when God spoke to him to sacrifice Isaac (see Genesis 22:1, 7 and 11). Then Jacob said it in Genesis 46:2 when God spoke to him to go down to Egypt. Finally, Samuel said it when the Lord called him to a prophetic purpose (see 1 Samuel 3:4). I think another example of "Here I am" presence is found in Acts 26, where Paul recounted his Damascus Road experience for King Agrippa. Saul and his companions were knocked to the ground by God's presence, but then the Lord said to Saul: "Now get up and stand on your feet" (Acts 26:16). What's so important about these words? Why must you and I assume a "here I am posture" where purpose is concerned?

"Here I am" or "stand to your feet" signifies that you are prepared to do what God wants you to do **before** you know what it is. It speaks to the fact that you are ready, that you trust whatever God shows you to be right and good. When you are on a PurposeQuest, you can't have a "Huh?" or "What do You want?" attitude. You must have a "Here I am" attitude if you hope to clarify your purpose. You must assume a "to your feet" posture if you hope to hear anything of significance from God.

### **THANKS IN ADVANCE**

I knew someone who was struggling to find their purpose once and a pastor gave that person good advice. He said, "During your search, can you thank God for your purpose

*before* you know what it is? Can you believe that God will show it to you and say thank you in advance?" I think that advice was "Here I am" advice requiring that you take a "Stand to your feet" posture. You present yourself at attention, just like a good soldier, awaiting your orders. Then you wait to hear what they are. If God wants you to fulfill your purpose-and He does-then He must reveal what that purpose is. God cannot hold you accountable for what you don't know, for what He hasn't revealed to you.

This week, I suggest that you work on having a "Here I am" attitude with "Here I am" faith. Read the passages that are referenced above and study the PurposeQuest of Moses, Jacob and Samuel. Then prepare yourself for the God of your PurposeQuest to reveal your purpose. When and how He does that, I cannot say. But "Here I am" faith will help make it happen. Have a great week!

### The Monday Memo 242

I was at home this past week and I must say – I enjoyed it. It's been great to wake up in my own bed, make my own coffee and then wander into my office to write, study and do some work. This Monday Memo is being sent once again to a limited list, since we are still working on our technical issues. I'm sorry this has taken so long, and I have stopped promising or hoping that things will be fixed by next week. At this point, I've put it into God's hands. It will resume when he wants it to resume

I received a subscription to XM satellite radio this past Christmas. That's another reason I like working at home. I can listen to my favorite music all day without any commercials. XM radio is like cable television. You have lots of choices and at the flick of a button, you can move from classical to soft rock to a major league baseball broadcast (be still my heart; XM has 13 channels devoted to major league baseball!).

The other day a song came on and it brought back such vivid memories. This song showed up a critical time and it helped me through a tough time. It was great to listen the other day and think of how far I've come in the five years since I first heard it.

### **I HOPE YOU DANCE**

It was January, 2001 and I had just gone through a horrendous departure from the church where I had served. I was hurt, angry and wounded. Little did I know that, as bad as it was then, it would get worse as the year went on. At any rate, a friend gave me a CD of music by Lee Ann Womack and thought that it would help me to listen. I took it with me when I went to speak at a church in Florida and put it in the car as I was driving there one day. That's when I first heard the song, I Hope You Dance. That song didn't just help me, it saved my life! I played it over and over again that weekend and for months after that, hanging on each word as I felt like Lee Ann was singing directly to me in my situation.

So this week I thought I would give you the words. Maybe you already know this song. If you don't, you can hear a sample at <http://tinyurl.com/ghufe> (if you have Real Player

on your computer).

I hope you never lose your sense of wonder You get your fill to eat But always keep that hunger May you never take one single breath for granted God forbid love ever leave you empty handed I hope you still feel small When you stand by the ocean Whenever one door closes, I hope one more opens Promise me you'll give faith a fighting chance And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance I hope you dance I hope you dance I hope you never fear those mountains in the distance Never settle for the path of least resistance Living might mean taking chances But they're worth taking Lovin' might be a mistake But it's worth making Don't let some hell bent heart Leave you bitter When you come close to selling out Reconsider Give the heavens above More than just a passing glance And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance I hope you dance

### THINK ABOUT IT

When you think about it, you're already a survivor. Think of what you've been through and survived to read this Memo today. Why is that important? If you've survived before, you'll survive again, even the pain that you may encounter today. You can do it by God's grace because you've already done it. You may not have had a song to get you through it, but you got through nonetheless. So why not make a list right now of the recoveries you've made in your life up to this point? Write them down and study them.

You've made it this far in spite of those things you listed. In fact, looking at that list will help you realize the truth that Neitzsche spoke, "That which does not kill me can only make me stronger." Read the word to the song again and ask yourself if it's time to start dancing again. I hope you will come to the conclusion that it is. Have a great week!

### **The Monday Memo 243**

Here is the first official *Monday Memo* sent using this new blog format! I *almost* feel guilty not having to spend hours at my desk, cutting and pasting into 65 distribution lists as I used to do to send this out. Now I just have to write one message, press the send button, and *The Memo* is sent automatically to more than 11,000 people. Pretty cool stuff!

I will review below how to subscribe, unsubscribe or change your address. I haven't sent a Bible study out yet, but should do that in the next couple of days. But first, let's finish this *Monday Memo*.

I wrote in my [blog](#) recently that I am reading Julia Cameron's book *The Right to Write*. Cameron always stirs my creative juices, especially where writing is concerned. While I'm sure I wouldn't agree with her theology, I do agree with her that writing and creativity are spiritual experiences. Let's look at a few things she has to say.

### WHO SAID WHAT ABOUT CREATIVITY

In the chapter I was reading today, Cameron quoted the following artists concerning their creativity:

1. *"The music of this opera (**Madame Butterfly**) was dictated to me by God. I was merely instrumental in getting it on paper and communicating it to the public."* --Giacomo Puccini
2. *"Straightaway the ideas flow in upon me, directly from God."* -- Johannes Brahms
3. *"The position of the artist is humble. He is essentially a channel."* -- Piet Mondrian.
4. *"I myself do nothing. The Holy Spirit Himself accomplishes all through me."* -- William Blake

So if creativity is a spiritual expression and you are a spiritual person, why don't you create more? May I suggest three enemies that do battle with your God-given ability to create.

### THREE ENEMIES OF CREATIVITY

1. **Fear.** I've written about fear in past *Memos*. How many fears can you think of that could prevent you from being creative? I can think of fear of failure, poverty, ridicule, family, culture, authority, inadequacy, and success. Can you think of any others? If you can, add a comment on this [Memo site](#) for others to read and think about. Or feel free to [email](#) it to me.

If you are going to express your creativity, you must face and overcome the oppression of fear. It will paralyze your efforts and cause you to procrastinate, hoping for a more opportune time. Remember what Paul wrote his disciple Timothy: **"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind"** (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV). If you are afraid, what are you prepared to do about it this week?

2. **Comparison.** When you look at what you do and compare it to what others have done, it can cause you to stop being creative. In your opinion, you aren't "as good" as the other person. Stop and think about that. What is good where creativity is concerned? Is creativity a process and can your simple efforts today lead to stellar creativity tomorrow? Is it wise to compare your initial or even mature efforts to what someone else may have spent a lot of time developing?

Paul described an important principle that he used when he looked at his work: **"We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise"** (2 Corinthians 10:12-13). Why not do something creative this week and discipline yourself not to compare it what anyone else has done. Is it the best it can be right now? If it is, then I would say you have done a good job.

3. **Perfectionism.** We discussed this in [Monday Memo 154](#) when I described the little old man that lives inside you, waiting to criticize and disqualify what you create because it isn't good enough. I know of only One who is perfect, and He is God. While you should strive for excellence and your best performance, you can never expect it to be perfect.

The pursuit of perfection is unrealistic and will hinder you from doing something great just because it isn't perfect. I can't find a verse that talks about perfectionism, but I can find one that speaks to excellence: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23). Perhaps the distinction between perfection and excellence will help you do something this week that you haven't done just because it isn't the best that anyone can do.

## THE WAY FORWARD THIS WEEK

I close by again asking the question I raised earlier: If you are a spiritual person and creativity is spiritual, why don't you create more often? I hope I have helped you identify some of the obstacles and I further hope that you will enter into a season of creativity that begins now as you finish this *Monday Memo*.

### **The Monday Memo 244**

Last week's Monday Memo was a success! I like the feel of this new service, which enables me to send this to you by simply posting each Memo to a blog site. You can now access the Memo at that site if you don't receive it for some reason. You can also manage your own subscription--changing your address, adding friends and unsubscribing. It's so much easier for me and now I should have no problem sending the Memo or the Bible studies from Africa (where I will be from May 2-June 25). And don't forget that you can now post your comments at the end of each Memo by going to the site where they are posted.

This week I want to pass along something that really helped me recently. I was at a seminar and the speaker said, "We don't know how to hold onto our successes. We let go of them too quickly." I didn't know what he meant, but then he had us do two simple exercises to bring the point home. Now I want to share what I learned with you.

### **MAKE A LIST**

The seminar leader had us take out an index card and list the ten greatest successes we had ever experienced. He didn't care if we had to go back to high school or earlier; he just wanted us to list and look at some things we had accomplished. My list "poured" out of me and, when I was finished, I read it over and over and over again. I now carry it with me.

I found that the speaker was correct: I don't think about those things enough, especially when things aren't going well. My mind then went to David when he faced Goliath. It dawned on me that David used this very principle to help him defeat the giant. How did he do this? Let's read it together:

"Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them" (1 Samuel 17:36).

How did David prepare for his battle? He drew upon the memory of his past successes. Those successes of yesterday gave him courage and faith for today. If David used that technique, why not you and me? But wait, there's more.

### **MAKE ANOTHER LIST**

After I made my list of successes, the leader directed us to make another list. This time he wanted us to list all our recoveries that had occurred or were in the works--all those things that happened that were tragic or painful. As I made that list, I was once again amazed. I was struck by how many things I had worked through with God's help, and I was still here, still productive, still functioning.

I now carry both these index cards with me and look at them on a regular basis. They encourage me and serve to remind me that God has been with me, is with me and will continue to be with me no matter what. Those two lists remind me that I am strong in Him and I can face today and tomorrow with resolve, determination and courage. In this instance, I can simply remember the truth found in Romans 8:28:

"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him."

### **A BOX OF MINTS**

In a sense, you can say that I am treating these lists like a box of mints. I can't live on this list, just like I can't live off a box of mints. But I can choose something from that list from time to time and let it refresh me, just like a mint. I can turn it over, so to speak, in my mind and recapture the feeling of that success or recovery.

So how about you? Are you ready to do the same. Take out two index cards, or just a plain sheet of paper if you like. Make two lists: one of your successes, the other of your recoveries. How do those lists make you feel? I hope they give you hope, joy and peace. Now don't put those lists away; put them somewhere where you can see them every day this week. Enjoy a "success mint" when you need it this week or perhaps you will take a "recovery lozenge" and let it do its job. As you do this, know that I will be doing the same, remembering that I can face tomorrow because of God's faithfulness yesterday, today and forever. Have a great week!

### **The Monday Memo 245**

You've probably heard this story from me before. I was sitting in the radio studio with my headsets on, ready to be interviewed to promote the Center for Urban Biblical Ministry, where I am a board member and professor. I had gone over the questions with the show host and we were ready to go. The red light came on, indicating that we were on the air and the host looked at me and asked a question that wasn't mentioned in our briefing. "Dr. Stanko," he asked, "how would you define success based on your purpose teaching?"

I was stunned and knew I had to come up with an answer quickly. After I answered, his telephone lights erupted, and my 20-minute interview turned into 60 minutes. We never got around to talk about the Center.

### **WHAT DID I SAY?**

I responded, "I would define success as doing what you love. I think success is finding work that gives you joy." Just those two simple phrases touched so many listeners that I actually took phone calls at my home office for two weeks after the show. Since that show sixteen months ago, I haven't changed my definition. In fact, I feel more strongly than ever that you should do what you enjoy as often as possible for as long as possible.

I recently ran across a verse that reminded me of what I said on that show:

"Therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy" (Hebrews 1:9).

The oil of joy -- what a great phrase. It wasn't about preaching, although Jesus preached. It wasn't about teaching, although He taught. It wasn't about healing, but certainly Jesus healed. All those magnificent activities were byproducts of the anointing, and the anointing was found in the joy that Jesus felt and received when He did all those things.

### **JOY THE INDICATOR**

Joy is the main indicator and barometer that you are in the will of God. If you feel joy when you play the piano, then play. It's that simple. If you sense joy around children, then connect with as many children as possible. If you love to sing, then sing in every venue and every opportunity you have. It's not about money, prestige or fame. It's about that sense that you are doing what you were created to do.

Later today I depart for Africa, with my first stop in Kenya. I can't wait. I love to travel. I enjoy meeting with people one-on-one, in small groups or before large crowds to talk about purpose. I've traveled three million miles since 1989. Tomorrow I will get a charge out of being in another airport, even though I've been in airports hundreds of times before.

What can you do this week to capture this joyful anointing? First of all, you can stop fighting it. You can embrace it and confess to yourself and others, "I am happiest when I am doing this or that." You can stop trying to manufacture joy where you don't find and probably won't ever find it. You can be honest with yourself.

I want you to know the joy that I will feel later today. I don't think I'm anyone special. I think God wants you to have that same joy, too. So stop fighting it and go with the flow, the flow of anointing that comes from doing what you love to do. As you do that, I know you will have a great week.