

## **The Monday Memo 256**

I encounter people regularly who don't do things that are a little different because they are concerned what other people will think. They may be worried about what their mother, father or spouse will think, and that is certainly understandable. The approval of the people closest to us is an important thing. Often, however, it isn't even those closest to us who cause us not to step out and try something out of character, risky or seemingly foolish.

I have had a startling revelation in my own life the last few years. I came to realize how often I hadn't done something because I was concerned with how I would be perceived by others. And those others were people who didn't matter, sometimes even those who I didn't know. For example, I wouldn't make certain requests in a restaurant because I didn't want to look foolish. I wouldn't ask for directions because I didn't want the people in the service station to think I was stupid. I wouldn't wear anything orange, my favorite color, because I was afraid that others would think that a strange thing for a grown man to wear. I think you get the idea.

### **NORMALCY**

Almost all people pursue behavior they and others consider "normal." Some people would call it being balanced. Yet normal or balanced people, and people pursuing this normalcy, seldom achieve greatness or even purposeful living. They do all that others expect of them, all that society expects even, but they stop short of doing what is in their heart--sometimes for fear of what others will think.

I notice that an American rider won the Tour de France bike race today. I read that his conservative Mennonite parents discouraged him from riding his bike. That was his passion, however, and today that 30-year-old man won the world's greatest bike race, with an arthritic hip no less. I notice that no one was there to celebrate with him but his daughter. I wonder if his family boycotted the race?

While many people pursue normalcy, no one can describe what this normalcy is when I ask them. What's more, none of the people I ask about normalcy are normal, including you and me. If we are going to be people of purpose, we must accept the fact that you and I aren't normal.

### **YOU'RE QUIRKY!**

Before you run off and say that I called you "weird," let me explain. We all have things we love that others would never understand and would perhaps even consider a bit "quirky" (which is defined as a peculiar trait). So what? To be true to ourselves, you must pursue those quirks because those quirks will lead you to your passion and your passion is where your purpose lives.

If you could play the piano all day, then play as often as possible. If you love to hike in the woods, hike. If you like the color purple, then purple your whole world. Who cares? If someone does care, it's really none of their business. I have written 256 Monday Memos and given them away, free of charge. Some people would say that's not smart; others have told me it's not normal, that I'm just playing around.

Why am I giving this advice? Why do I think this is important? Because you are a one-of-a-kind creation. You need to stop trying to imitate what others do and be your original self. Samuel Johnson once wrote, "No man ever yet became great by imitation." I agree. If you love chemistry, then be a chemist. If you enjoy reading, then read, read, read. And if you have children and they love something, let them do it as much as possible, as long as it's not harmful to their health.

Perhaps this week you need to stop having normalcy as a goal and start having quirky as your goal. As you do, you'll be happier and you'll have a better chance of being purposeful. But if you continue to pursue normalcy, you will be after something that can never be achieved in your lifetime. Have a great, quirky week!

If you would like to add your comments to this Memo, please go to the Monday Memo [site](#) to do so.

## **The Monday Memo 257**

We are not alone. Today there is another memo going out that is known by the name The Monday Morning Memo. Written by Roy Williams, it is an update that focuses on branding, ad copy and creativity. I recommend it along with Williams' book entitled The Wizard of Ads as tools that can help sharpen and focus your creativity. Several months ago, Williams wrote a Monday Morning Memo that I want to summarize for you this week.

### **AHEAD OF THEIR TIMES**

First Williams quoted Peter Drucker, late management guru, who pointed out that business schools today are studying books that were poorly

received at first and didn't sell very well. Williams went on to conclude that the loneliest people can often be those who create ahead of their times.

This led to a discussion of Ludwig von Beethoven, who basically gave up on his ability to please and compose for his generation. Instead he composed for a "later age" because so many of his contemporaries criticized and ignored his work!

"When a true genius appears in this world, you may know him by this sign, that the dunces are all in confederacy against him." -- Jonathan Swift, author of Gulliver's Travels.

"Great spirits have often encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds." -- Albert Einstein

"Funeral by funeral, science makes progress." -- Paul Samuelson.

"Yes, even scientists ahead of their times are rejected by their peers," added Williams.

## **AN AUDIENCE OF ONE**

Emily Dickinson wrote with complete confidence that her words would never be read. When she died, her family found 1,700 of her poems in a drawer. Many of these poems rank with the greatest ever written, but were never read by anyone while Dickinson was alive. Perhaps she was being prophetic when she wrote:

FAME is a fickle food upon a shifting plate,  
Whose table once a Guest, but not the second time is set.  
Whose crumbs the crows inspect, and with ironic caw  
Flap past it at the Farmer's corn; Men eat of it and die.

Williams concluded by writing that "Dickinson wrote for herself, an audience of one. Study the lives of the Great Ones and you'll find this to be a common characteristic among them."

The application for you is simple. Do you have something new and different to say or do? Are you willing to write or perform for an audience of one? If so, then get busy this week being true to who you are and

don't pay attention to what others think or say. Just do it. Better yet, just be it. Have a great week!

## **The Monday Memo 258**

Did you know that you smell? No, I'm not talking about what you do with your nose and, yes, I should state it more delicately. You have an aroma, a fragrance, that you carry wherever you go. This fact occurred to me this past week while I was writing my weekly Bible study. While studying 2 Corinthians, I ran across these words from Paul:

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? (2 Corinthians 2:14-17).

Let's look at this principle in the light of your purpose and see if I can't help you determine exactly what fragrance you are.

### **PAUL'S FRAGRANCE**

Paul's purpose was to take the gospel to the Gentiles (see Acts 26:9-19). When he proceeded to do that, there was a natural flow to his work. Paul went to an area, God helped him gather a crowd, some people decided to follow Jesus and a church was started. Before long, Paul left the church in charge of some elders and went on to another location. He stayed in touch by letter, sending emissaries and return personal visits.

I find this whole process remarkable. How was Paul able to do this? By his own admission in 2 Corinthians 2, he did it because he had a scent that either attracted or repelled Gentiles. He went to an area and, before long, everyone was taking sides for or against Jesus, for or against Paul. Some would say it was a gift, others a calling. I say it was his scent, which is another way of saying it was his purpose.

### **WHAT FRAGRANCE ARE YOU?**

You've seen movies where dogs are dispatched to follow the trail of an escaped prisoner or missing person. The dogs smell a piece of clothing or blanket that the missing person used and off the dogs go, following the trail of that particular scent. The dogs know that each person gives off a unique odor, unless of course the dogs are searching for a dead

body. Every dead body gives off the same scent, while every living one gives off a unique one. There's a spiritual lesson in there somewhere.

What are the implications to the fact that you smell, I mean, you have a fragrance. There are three that I can think of:

1. There is no use trying to adopt someone else's smell, someone else's purpose. You have your own.
2. You have nothing to do with this fragrance. It is a part of who you are. Accept it and make the most of it.
3. Others are often more aware of your smell, I mean your fragrance, than you are. What opportunities, situations or people regularly find you because they are attracted to who you are?

I work with many people who either don't like their fragrance or don't believe they have one. For years, I tried to wear pastoral cologne. It didn't work, at least not as I tried to function in the traditional Sunday morning role. When I stopped putting that cologne on, my true fragrance began to emerge. Today I speak and work with thousands more than if I had tried to stay a Sunday pastor. I stopped fighting my true scent and people have been drawn to, and some driven from, who it is that I was created to be.

So do you see now why I say that you smell? Are you running from it? Have you embraced it? Do you accept the fact that God made you just as you are, with tremendous strengths and some limitations? Don't spend another minute trying to adopt or wear a scent that isn't right for you. Instead, embrace the fact that you give off an aroma of purpose that is first and foremost pleasing to God. And if it's good enough for God, shouldn't it be good enough for you? Have a great week!

## **The Monday Memo 259**

It's late and I've been on the road all week. Today we finished up a big family weekend in Maryland where we celebrated my mother-in-law's 80th birthday, our son's 29th birthday and our sister-in-law's, well, she didn't tell me which birthday it was for her. We all had a great time but I was reminded that getting together with family takes a lot of planning, some hard work and thick skin. It would be easy for everyone to walk away disappointed, hurt or angry. As far as I know, everyone is going home still talking to one another.

I sat on the plane the other night before I went to sleep and wrote about the great week I had last week in Seattle and then coming here. In my journal, I listed all the things I did last week that were so special. The list filled a whole page! I would give it a 10 on a scale of 10. And I plan on having another 10 this week, which hasn't always been the case. How did I get the idea to rate my days and weeks? I'm glad you asked. Let me explain.

## **1 TO 10**

Earlier this year I was training at The Pacific Institute in Seattle. The Institute trains leaders in goal-setting and personal development techniques. As we finished up one day, the facilitator asked us all, "What kind of night do you want to have tonight? Think of a number from 1 to 10, with 10 being the best night possible."

I chose the number 8 and went back to my hotel. The next morning, the facilitator asked us to rate our actual evening on the same scale. When he came to me, I said, "I chose an 8 but I had a 6. I was jetlagged, had no energy, just sat around the hotel and didn't sleep that well." He then told me something I will never forget.

He asked me, "Why would you or anyone else choose to have anything less than a 10, any day or any week?" He went on, "You didn't pick a number for the kind of evening you wanted to have, you chose an eight because that was the kind of evening you expected to have. And because you set your expectations low, your actual evening was even worse than you expected." Boy, did he nail me hard! I was dumbfounded by what he said.

## **NEVER AGAIN**

That was last February and I learned my lesson well. I determined from that point on that I was going to have nothing less than a 10 every day and every week. So when my computer crashed in Zimbabwe in May, I still had a 10. When I thought I had lost one of my favorite cuff links, I had a 10. When I lost my camera and favorite pen, I had a 10. Why did I have a ten? Because I chose to have a 10. My memories of that trip, as hard as it was at times, are a 10 across the board.

I told my son last night that my computer is fixed, that we found my cuff link just last week, that I found a replacement for my pen on Ebay in Singapore (it arrives this week) and I got a new camera that is better than the one I lost. I got the camera with frequent flier points--it didn't cost

me a penny. I didn't need all those things to happen to give me a 10, however; I was already there.

So what about you this week? What kind of week are you going to have? Not what kind do you expect, but what kind are you going to help make happen. Living a life of purpose and productivity isn't an accident, it's a decision! And I have decided already that this week will be a 10, starting with the drive home tomorrow. Won't you join me in having the best week possible, and then won't you join me in doing things consistent with that ideal week. Have a 10 week!

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## **The Monday Memo 260**

It's time to wrap things up here in the States and head back to Africa. I've enjoyed my two months at home, but it's time to go. I will be hosting a purpose seminar in Johannesburg next Saturday (see below). Then it's on to Harare for what I'm sure will be an exciting and challenging visit, given the current events there. I hope you had time to read my special message I sent out last week. If not, you can find it on the site where it is posted.

I am thinking about it, but I'm not sure when to do it? What is it, you may ask? It's time for another Celebrate a Failure Week when you take time to reflect on and then celebrate the results of a failure in your life, whether it was recent or long ago. This will be our third such celebration and they have always been interesting, learning experiences.

### **FOLLOW MY LOGIC.**

During one such celebration, one woman told me, "Couldn't we make these Tolerate A Failure Weeks? I'm just learning to tolerate failure, but I'm not ready to celebrate failure!" My view on the matter, however, is that we failure plays such a vital role in our life, purpose and personal development that we must value failure for the important part that it plays.

When I conduct leadership and purpose seminars, I usually lead people through this sequential argument where failure is concerned. Perhaps you have heard me go through this:

1. First I ask, "Can failure be an important learning experience?" Everyone usually answers, "yes."

2. Then I ask, "Don't we often learn more from failure than we do from success?" People again answer, "Usually, yes."

3. I go on to ask, "Aren't we as leaders and followers of Jesus to be learning and growing at all times throughout our life?" Once more, the answer that comes back is "Yes!"

4. Then I conclude by asking, "Then shouldn't we be failing as often as possible?" At that point, the room usually falls silent.

That reasoning is why I believe it's important not just to tolerate failure, but to celebrate it.

So in the next few weeks, I will announce our formal plans for Celebrate a Failure Week. I will ask you to help me by posting famous failures from history, maybe even some from your own life. I will ask you to spread the word and get as many people celebrating as possible. I hope that you will celebrate in your families and small groups by leading discussions and studying what the Bible has to say about failure. I promise more to come on this in the coming weeks.

## **THE ONLY REAL FAILURE**

This week I was listening to Marianne Williamson's book *The Gift of Change*. In it, she said, "The only real failure is the failure to grow from what we go through." (That's another way you will help me celebrate--by posting your favorite quote about failure on this site.) If what Williamson said is true, then we need to allow that truth to sink down to the core of our being. Henry Ford said that failure isn't the end of the world; it's just a chance to begin more intelligently. I agree; do you?

So get ready. Celebrate a Failure Week is coming to your world soon. In the meantime, have a great, failure-filled week!

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