

The Monday Memo
from the vacation location of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 26

I am 51 years old and I've never looked for a job in my life. Every job I've had has come looking for me; I didn't have to go looking for it. And each job has needed what I had to offer: a life purpose of bringing order out of chaos, order out of potential.

As I was sitting on the beach yesterday in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina (with sunburned legs, no less), I was thinking about what Jesus said, "By their fruit you will know them." As I reflected, I decided to ask you in this week's *Monday Memo*: What fruit are you known for? If you can answer that, you are well on your way to knowing your life purpose.

I am known as someone who can bring order out of a mess. I can also see the potential in people and situations that others can't see. It's not what I hope to do or try to produce. It's the fruit that I was born to produce; it's the real me.

A friend recently sent me an article entitled "Are You Listening to Your Life?" by Parker Palmer. I want to quote from this article to help you "listen" for the fruit that you're to be known for:

Vocation doesn't come from a voice "out there" calling me to become something I'm not. It comes from a voice "in here" calling me to be the person I was born to be.

Accepting this birthright gift of self turns out to be even more demanding than attempting to become someone else. I've sometimes responded to that demand by ignoring the gift or hiding it or fleeing from it, and I don't think I'm alone. An old Hasidic tale reveals both the universal tendency to want to be someone else and the importance of becoming one's self. Rabbi Zusya, when he was an old man, said, "In the coming world, they will not ask me, 'Why were you not Moses?' They will ask me, 'Why were you not Zusya?'"

When we lose track of true self, how can we pick up the trail? Our lives speak through our actions and reactions, our intuitions and instincts, our feelings and bodily states, perhaps more profoundly than through words. If we can learn to read our own responses, we'll receive the guidance we need to live more authentic lives. The soul speaks only under quiet, inviting, and safe conditions. If we take some time to sit silently listening, the soul will tell us the truth about ourselves--the full, messy truth. An often ignored dimension of the quest for wholeness is the need to embrace what we dislike about ourselves as well as what we're proud of, our liabilities as well as our strengths.

As you examine yourself this week, can you be honest? Are you in a job or life situation where you can bear the fruit that was meant to come from you? If so, then at least you are in a place where you can bear fruit. If not, what are you willing to do to make that happen? You know, if you are doing what you do for money or security, no matter how noble or spiritual, you are a hireling, a hired hand that may very well be cut off from who you are and what is important to you. If that's the case, then there is no way you will be known by the fruit you bear, because you aren't bearing any.

I urge you this week to listen in the quiet of your own heart to identify your fruit and then take whatever steps you must to be in a place to bear that fruit. After all, you won't ever be asked, "Why weren't you Moses or Paul?"; but what will you answer if asked, "Did you bear the fruit that was to be yours?"

The Monday Memo
written at 30,000 feet
by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 27

I am writing this *Monday Memo* while flying from Pittsburgh to Dallas. Normally, that would be of little significance. In light of last week's terrorist attack in New York City, however, I think it makes this *Monday Memo* stand out from all the others. The world is a different place than when I wrote you last week. I want to try to put

this new world into perspective for you and me. I ask your indulgence as this week's *Memo* is longer than usual. I also ask that you pay particular attention to the end of this *Memo* when I will tell you how you can add your friends, relatives and associates to this mailing list. My goal was to have *The Monday Memo* list at 10,000 subscribers by the end of December. I am moving that goal up to the end of October.

Towers Falling Down

In Luke 13:4, Jesus responded to a question from his audience with another question. "Do you suppose that these eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?" It seems that buildings have been falling on people since the time of Jesus. There are so many lessons for us from this week's tragedy, and one of them is that life is fragile. None of us know when our end will come; we only know that we were born to die. We grieve and weep for the families affected, and trust that God will comfort them with His divine hand.

Our lives will end, almost always when we don't expect it. Unless we are doing what God wants us to do, our death will be to no avail. When you say that **one day** you will write your book, go on the missions field, start your business, or learn that new language, when exactly will that one day be? You aren't guaranteed life until you retire, your mortgage is paid off, or your children finish college. You may not be able to wait until the economy improves or you feel more comfortable or prepared. It is **critical** that you take advantage of today, that you make it all that it can be. I am on a plane because I have work to do and I don't really know how much longer I have to do it. If the tower falls on me, I want to be doing what it is that I was born to do.

Your Purpose and Your Enemies

Talk of war means that people will be set against one another in conflict. Conflict is nothing new to the world; it is a consequence of our fallen state. If you are afraid of your enemies, however, you will never embrace or fulfill the purpose God has for you. Let me explain.

Several weeks ago, I was conducting a purpose seminar in Providence, Rhode Island. My good friend, Pastor Jeff Williams, closed the session in prayer and said something about purpose revealing our enemies; the lights came on in my spirit. Purpose and enemies--they go hand in hand. Think about it for a minute as we consider these people from the Bible.

1. Abraham had no enemies in Canaan until he lived in the land God gave him.
2. Moses had to flee Egypt as he fulfilled his purpose as the one who was to rescue Israel.
3. Joseph had no enemies until he had his dreams, which revealed his purpose. After that, his life was filled with pain and conflict.
4. David the shepherd boy had no enemies until Samuel anointed him and people sang songs about him. After that, his family abandoned him and Saul hunted him down.
5. Jesus lived in peace for 30 years until He began to seek and save the lost. Then he had bitter enemies who eventually had Him executed.
6. I doubt if the Sanhedrin knew who Peter was until he took the gospel to the Jews. Then they harassed him.
7. Saul had no enemies until his Damascus Road experience. From then on, Jews and Gentiles tried to kill him.

I understood last week more clearly than ever that it is impossible *not* have enemies, no matter where you live or what you stand for. But I see clearly that your purpose will introduce you to new enemies that you may not have had previously. In fact, I am adding another indicator to the list of things that will help you find your purpose: **What is it that you do that attracts the most opposition?** The answer to this is another tool to help you recognize when you are functioning in your purpose.

Those against you will not appear until you stand for something they don't like or want. If life is unpredictable and enemies destroy towers that fall down on people, then I want my tower to find me doing what I was born to do. I want to be fulfilling my purpose so my life has meaning, so my eventual passing will not be filled with regrets over

"what could have been." I want my passing to be a celebration of what God helped me do, even if that is in no other place than His presence.

Trusting God

If you don't receive my weekly Bible study called **The Faith Files**, you are missing a great study on the key element that ties all this together. In plain terms, without faith, it is **impossible** to please God. I am on a plane because I trust God. If when I arrived at the airport today and found the flight was cancelled, that would mean I wasn't supposed to go to Dallas. But my faith required me to go to the airport to find out. Faith without action is dead and useless. There are many saying God is in control. Are you acting like it at this time? Or is fear of lack, danger or failure paralyzing you so that all you can do is watch television while history is being made. Our objective is not to watch history; our objective is to make history.

I am not saying we should be foolish. Paul and others always fled or hid from persecution or danger, unless there was no place to run or hide. Then they faced it and at times it cost them their lives. I gave my life to the Lord on May 18, 1973. How he chooses to claim it is His business, not mine. I will avoid the towers that I see, but I refuse to fear those that I cannot see. God sees them and therefore I put my trust in Him. That is good enough for me.

Now is the time for men and women everywhere to trust God for great results. I urge you to be the person God made you to be today. You have the potential to change the world, or at least *your* world, by releasing the creativity, the purpose and faith that is within. In light of current events, determine to become a person of purpose. Your life can take on new meaning but only if you take the steps that only you can take today. What are you waiting for? You are still here because God has something for you to do. Now you must go do it.

The Monday Memo
from the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 28

What would you think if you got a blank page when you received this week's *Monday Memo*? You would wonder whether it was due to a technical failure, or perhaps a computer problem. Or what if it was due to something worse, like a computer virus? Most virus attacks today are manmade and seek to damage the files or the operating system in your computer. But this isn't a letter about a computer virus, it's a letter about the possible reason behind a blank *Monday Memo* screen.

What would you think if I made the decision to send a blank page on purpose? That would be a different story. What could I possibly be trying to prove, sending a blank page where normally a letter to you should be? That would be hard to explain. But in fact, that is what many people are producing--blank pages where something productive and creative should be. Is that what you're producing?

Proverbs 18:9 states, "[He who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys.](#)" This verse tells us that someone who doesn't produce what he or she should in a manner of speaking "related" to a person who would destroy what is being produced. I don't tend to equate the two, but the writer of Proverbs did. It is wrong to destroy what someone else has done, but it's also wrong not to produce what you can. There is no excuse for that.

What if I had never started *The Monday Memo*? Think of all the ways God has used *The Memo* in your life. That would not have been possible because instead of receiving written pages you would have received nothing at all. And if you're giving God nothing to work with, it's hard for Him to bless your nothingness. To not write *The Monday Memo* would be to selfishly deprive you of something God can use in your life. But He can only use it if I produce it.

Last week's *Monday Memo* was a little longer than usual, so this week's will be a little shorter. But I want you to take the time

that you would devote to reading *The Monday Memo* to doing something that you have put off doing. Write an email or the introduction to your new book; read five pages of the book that has been sitting on your desk for some time; use the time to send *The Monday Memo* to someone; or call a person you love. Don't talk about doing it; do it.

For instance, this past week I received and enjoyed a poem from a *Monday Memo* reader. He wrote and explained why he wrote it by saying, "I am trying to do as you suggested, and put what talents the Lord has given me to use for good purposes." Are you using your talents for good purposes or are you a victim of good intentions only? If you are "slack in your work," then you are related to one who would destroy. What category do you want to be in? The productive or the destructive? If I'm reading Proverbs 18:9 correctly, those are the only two choices you have. Please choose wisely.

The Monday Memo
from the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 29

Later today I leave for England. First I will speak at a leadership conference in London and then go up to Birmingham for a few days with my friends there. As I sit tonight to write *The Monday Memo*, I am grateful to be doing what I am doing. I don't have a ministry agent to schedule speaking engagements for me, nor do I advertise what I do. The phone seems to ring or a letter arrives and an opportunity presents itself. When that happens, I am a happy man.

Someone asked me once if I pray over my invitations to speak, and maybe I should. I **do** pray for God's will to be done and revealed in my life. Once I've prayed that, I assume that when the phone rings, it's God answering my prayer. In other words, I assume that it's God's will until He shows me that it isn't, rather than waiting for Him to "confirm" that it is. I begin to take steps to go until God shows me

that He doesn't want me to go. How would He do that, you ask? And won't God get angry if you step out of His will for your life?

I have had cancellations and other problems arise that let me know it's time to stay home. Until those things happen, however, I am working to get there, wherever the "there" is. I don't see God as some cosmic overseer who is looking to trick me into disobeying His will, nor do I see Him as one who dangles things I desire in front of me only to jerk them away when I make an attempt to take them.

My philosophy is that God will not get angry with anyone who is sincerely attempting to do His will. He may adjust their path or understanding, and that may cause some confusion or frustration, but in the long run, God is for me and not against me. If God wants me to do His will, He must show me what that will is. That is where my faith comes in: I trust that somehow God will make it clear to me what He wants me to do.

An important principle to help discover God's will is found in John's gospel. Jesus' opponents were pressing Him to find out whether or not His teaching was truly from God. Jesus responded by saying, "If anyone is willing to do His will, He will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself" (John 7:17 NAS). Jesus was saying that if you're **committed** to do God's will **before** you know what that will is, God will let you know what to do.

Are you facing a dilemma in knowing God's will? This week, let's try to solve the problem. I want you to tell God every day that you'll do **whatever** it is that He wants you to do. Then in faith, expect the answer. The phone may ring, you may read a verse from the Bible, or someone may start talking to you telling you something that directly relates to what you need to know. Or maybe you'll have an inner peace that lets you know you have your answer. If you're willing to do whatever it is God wants, then He will answer you. Do you have the faith that He will do that?

I know I'm supposed to go to England. The planes are flying, the invitation is still open, there are a lot of exciting things awaiting me there, and I feel the peace of God. That same peace is available to you. Just make a commitment to action and trust God for the action

plan. God is a great communicator and He will tell you what He wants. It's really that simple.

The Monday Memo
from the hotel room of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 30

I'm sitting tonight in my hotel room in Birmingham, England. The wind is howling outside and I have just returned from speaking at a local church for the second time today. The church I was in announced a name change today and you could sense the excitement and anticipation of the days ahead as they forge a new identity and direction. It was an honor to see it firsthand.

Before I go on, I want to welcome all the new readers that have either subscribed this week while I was in England or who had a gift subscription submitted on their behalf. If this is your first time to receive *The Monday Memo*, I hope you will enjoy this first issue. My objective in sending you *The Monday Memo* is this: to be in your life on a weekly basis and help you find and stay focused on your life purpose, and help you lead a more productive life. Later I will tell you how to access my website and send a gift subscription to your friends and associates.

This morning I talked about the need to recognize and relate to the circumstances we find ourselves in. When change comes, and it inevitably comes to everyone, we can be slow to respond for several reasons. First, change represents an uncertain future. Second, change means loss of the present familiar situation, even if that situation is not happy or ideal. And finally, change causes us to make mistakes and look foolish as we awkwardly learn new skills or build new relationships.

I talked about two donkeys this morning and how they took their riders in different directions. The first donkey belonged to a man named Balaam. In Numbers 22, Balaam's donkey refused to proceed when he was directed to do so because there was an angel from God in the donkey's path. Balaam, however, couldn't see the

donkey and beat the donkey on three separate occasions. Finally, the donkey actually spoke to Balaam, but Balaam was so angry that he talked back! Often our circumstances are telling us that it's time to move on or time to stop doing what we're doing. Instead we get mad, and try to "beat" our circumstances into going the way we want them to.

If you've lost the favor on your job that you once had, is it time to move on? If you're not happy in your current ministry, is it time to start a new one? Are you finding it takes more and more energy to get enthused for what you are doing? If so, is the angel of God blocking your path, and is your donkey, your circumstances, trying to speak to you? If you aren't doing something related to your life purpose, is now the time to start?

The second donkey was the one upon which Jesus rode into Jerusalem. In Mark 11, we find out that it was a donkey that had never been ridden and Jesus gave specific orders to bring Him that particular beast. I would not want to be a donkey's first rider, and certainly wouldn't choose that donkey as my means of transport. But Jesus had faith. First, He had faith that the donkey wouldn't throw him off. Second, He had faith that the donkey would take Him where He needed to go. Often we have new, fresh opportunities that frighten us, that may even throw us, but may also be the means to a new, fresh start that will provide the excitement and growth that we are currently missing.

How about you? Which donkey are you on? Is your donkey fighting you? If so, is it time to embrace change? Or is there a risky donkey that could throw you, but could also surprise you with a smooth ride? Is there something that you are doing that has a freshness to it that you are longing, yet afraid, to pursue with your whole heart?

This week, assess your current situation. Which donkey are you riding? If you're on the first, I urge you to determine whether it's time to make a change or not. If the second donkey is parked close by, why don't you give him a try? He may throw you off, that's true, but he also may take you where you need to go. Isn't it worth the risk? I think it is. I hope you do, too.