

Monday Memo 286: Watch What You Don't Say.

Have you ever said something about yourself or referred to something you wanted to do and then thought, "Why did I say that? What are people thinking of me right now? They must think I am boasting or have a big ego!" If so, then that may be why you can't clarify your purpose, simply because you are not comfortable talking about or referring to yourself. Don't worry, however, for I have someone who can help you. Read on.

DID HE REALLY SAY THAT?

Last week we looked at one aspect of the story of David and Goliath. We saw that David could not wear Saul's armor to go and face Goliath. He had to wear and use what was most comfortable for him. I pointed out that you cannot walk in someone else's expectations for you, no matter how well-intentioned they may be.

So David, armed with the right equipment (a sling and some stones), stepped onto the battlefield to face this fearsome giant. Immediately he was confronted with some daunting threats from this behemoth:

He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!" (1 Samuel 17:43-44).

Now if David was like some people I know, he would have then said, "Well, maybe, I mean perhaps the Lord may want to use me, but don't get me wrong, I'm not saying I know for sure and if something good does happen, it will be the Lord and not me. I don't want you to ever think it's me."

Fortunately, David was of a different mindset. When Goliath verbally attacked, David was quick to retaliate:

"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands" (1 Samuel 17:45-47).

What bravado! What courage! What confidence David had! There was nothing tentative in what he said or planned to do. He was bold and specific. Many think that kind of talk alienates God. Are you one of those who thinks that? If so, then you need to change the way you think!

God isn't repelled by such talk; that talk drew Him to David's cause. He promptly went out with David to meet the giant. David made good on his promises, while Goliath died tried to figure out what went wrong.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

How can you apply this lesson to your life right now? First, David had a track record from which he could draw. He had killed lions and bears, and he saw killing this giant as a continuation of those exploits. You must allow God to put you in challenging situations so that, when you overcome, you will be able to refer back to those experiences to help you fight future battles.

Second, you must know who you are and what you want to do. David did not hold back; he was clear and concise. He said, "I am a champion of God and you, Goliath, are not. You are coming down, in spite of your size, words and confidence."

Finally, David said what he was going to do without fear of what others thought of him. He spoke positive, affirming, and powerful words and then set about fulfilling them.

What are you speaking these days? A better question is what aren't you speaking? Tentative, faithless words produce tentative, faithless actions. Positive, powerful words produce similar actions. Stop being hesitant and fearful of making bold statements where your purpose and dreams are concerned. Dream great things, talk about them and don't worry about how you sound to other people. Only be concerned with how you sound to God.

Dream great things, talk about doing them and then go for it! It's simple to describe but not simple to do, I know. I also know that you can only do great things once you stop stumbling and mumbling through your purpose and dreams. Every day this week, you need to watch what you don't say and follow David's example. That's what I will do this week and I plan on having a great week. I invite you to join me.

Monday Memo 287: What to Do with a Big Head.

What do you do when you do something well? What's more, how do you handle it when someone compliments you for something they admire about you? If you're like some, you may not know what to do in those situations. You don't want to appear proud or egocentric, so you actually may minimize your strengths and achievements in your eyes and in the eyes of others. This may seem spiritual or noble, but it's actually detrimental!

What should you do when you succeed or receive a compliment? I'm glad you asked. For the answer, however, you will have to read on.

A BIG HEAD

We have looked at the story of David and Goliath the last two weeks. (If you didn't read or receive those Memos, you may want to go the site where they are posted and get caught up.) Last week, we saw how David made specific declarations of what he was about to do to Goliath. David made good on his promises and killed Goliath with one stone from his slingshot. It's what he did next that answers the questions I raised above.

David cut off Goliath's head! That was one big head not only to cut off but also to carry around.

The armies of Israel were encouraged by David's victory, and went forth to win a great victory over the Philistine army. That was one byproduct of David's success. Then David did something else that would be quite uncharacteristic for many I know, perhaps even for you:

David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, and he put the Philistine's weapons in his own tent (1 Samuel 17:54).

What did David do with the head? I doubt if he kept it in his tent or made a keychain out of it. He did what most champions did with such spoils of battle. David probably hung the head on a post for everyone to see. David celebrated his own victory and advertised his achievement! What's more, he kept a souvenir of the battle by keeping the giant's sword in his trophy case.

How does that answer the question of what to do when you achieve success? How does this give you insight into how you should respond when you receive a compliment?

DON'T WORRY THAT A BIG HEAD WILL GIVE YOU A BIG HEAD.

David celebrated his victory. He wanted people to see Goliath's head so that they would be encouraged to fight their own battles. As a good leader, David wanted the people to see that they didn't have to cower in fear. More importantly, David didn't minimize his success. He didn't say, "Well, it was nothing. You know, it was a lucky shot and God really did it, it wasn't me."

No. David said, "Look what I've done. What can you do?" That's what you need to do as well.

If someone compliments you on something you've done or for something you are, say, "Thank you." Don't push their praise away.

If you have done something and no one compliments you, then compliment yourself! Admire what you've done. Savor the moment, without being self-conscious or worrying about what others will think of you. If you achieve a goal for which you have worked hard, throw yourself a party and invite your friends to celebrate with you. Take a trip in honor of your new job, degree or completed project.

David knew how to celebrate his victories and use them to spur himself and others on to greater things. You and I need to do the same. Don't worry about a big head; there will be enough tough knocks and challenges to keep your feet firmly planted in reality. When you do something great, however, don't be afraid to acknowledge that, well, that it was great! And if others acknowledge that as well, then it is all the better.

This whole process may help you see that you may not be afraid of failure, but of what you will do if and when you succeed! Can you handle success and the admiration of others? I hope you will learn to broadcast your victories rather than hide behind mediocrity so that no one is offended and you aren't uncomfortable. Aim for great things, do them and tell the world if others don't. Have a great week!

Monday Memo 288: Friends, Foes and Family

Did you know that your purpose will make you the center of attention in your world? It may only be in your neighborhood and family, or it could be in your church or nation, but purpose draws attention, whether you like it or not. It certainly did for David, and that is our focus for this week.

FRIEND

When King Saul saw what David had done, he inquired whose son he was. After that, the king would not let David go back to his family, but kept him around as a soldier. It was during this time that David developed a friendship with the king's son, Jonathan:

After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt (1 Samuel 18:1-4).

It's nice when your purpose makes a difference in the lives of others, and it always does. I have received some thank you notes just this past week from men and women whose lives have been changed by the power of the purpose message I carry. When I get that kind of feedback, it is both a humbling and exhilarating feeling. I wish you the same joy as you serve the people around you.

FOE

After his initial favor, King Saul turned sour on David and his purpose when he heard people singing and attributing greater results to David than to the king.

Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David (1 Samuel 18:8-9).

It wasn't long before Saul tried to kill David, a hobby of sorts that he maintained for many years hence.

Not everyone will be overjoyed by your purpose success. I have often said that purpose draws enemies just because of the aura that purposeful people carry. That aura is a threat to some who want to maintain the status quo, especially if they have a power or money stake in that present state.

When you think of it, Joseph, Daniel, Jesus, and the apostle Paul never had any enemies until they took steps to fulfill their purpose. Once they did, men went so far as to try and kill them rather than see them fulfill their purpose. I hope that your opposition is never that intense, but you can expect some kind of animosity as you walk out your PurposeQuest.

Your opponents are never an indication, however, that you are doing something wrong, but rather something right.

FAMILY

I wish I had something to report about David's family, but the Bible is strangely silent on this aspect of David's life. From this point on, David's family is seldom mentioned. His family was rewarded with tax exempt status once he defeated Goliath, but no one ever said thanks or acknowledged his great deed. Not one of his brothers served in his administration when he became king.

I hope your family goes along for your PurposeQuest journey. If they choose not to, however, it is something that you must endure as you march on. Jesus' family did not acknowledge His purpose until after His death. Joseph's family only did so grudgingly, and Daniel didn't have any family as he served Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon as an orphan of war.

The point is that purpose draws attention to your life and you cannot escape that reality. So don't fight it! Allow God to use you for His purposes and you will attract some opponents. You will also have those who know what you have meant to them and they will love and praise you for it. Are you willing for that to take place in your life? Are you willing to have some admire you, others ignore you and still others oppose you? If you are, then you are ready to take your place on the world stage to act out your purpose as others watch.

Don't worry so much what you will do when your opponents appear. God will help you with them. You must decide what you will do when people applaud and say, "Thank you." Will you run and hide, or will you say, "You're most welcome, for it really is my pleasure"? If I were you, I would plan for how you will handle your success, for it will surely come. What's more, it's part of God's will for you. Think about it and, as you do, have a great week!

Monday Memo 289: A Bad Leader Can Teach You to be a Good Leader.

Have you ever been in a bad situation, one from which you could not escape or see any reason for being there? I have and so did King David. We alluded to it last week, so let's pick up this week with more of the story.

A BAD LEADER

I think we can all agree that King Saul wasn't a good leader. While he started strong, he ended miserably. Last week, I pointed out that Saul quickly became David's nemesis. While David faithfully served Saul, the king was increasingly envious of David and eventually tried to kill him on three separate occasions. When that failed, Saul spent years using the armies that should have been devoted to fighting the Philistines to hunting down David.

David suffered greatly during that time. Although David knew he was to be the next king, he had to endure persecution at the suffering of the current king. Many urged David to take matters into his own hands to remove Saul and some tried to act on his behalf. David resisted each temptation to do so, choosing rather to wait for God to put him on the throne rather than put himself there.

Why would God have put David in such a position? Why did David suffer so long at the hands of a man that God had rejected as king? What was God doing during that time?

It's clear what God was doing. God was teaching David how to lead from the firsthand example of a bad leader. David learned more about leadership from Saul than from anyone else. What did he learn? He learned how not to lead!

Could this be the answer to your current dilemma, which finds you far away from the fulfillment of a purpose that you understand and think you are ready to embrace?

TALK IS CHEAP.

There are many who say, "If I was in charge, this would happen or that would not happen." That kind of talk sounds good. Even the leaders in Jesus' day said the same thing:

"And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets'" (Matthew 23:30).

The problem is that this talk is cheap. If you don't decide what kind of purposeful leader you will be before you have money or power, you are doomed to replicate the same miserable leadership style that you had to endure to become a leader yourself. You don't believe me? Read what Jesus said in response to those potential leaders:

"Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue them from town to town." (Matthew 23:34).

God will eventually give you a chance to lead, just he did David. David learned his lessons well and decided what kind of leader he was going to be while Saul was still pursuing him. What's more important, David actually became that kind of leader. He learned his lessons well. Jesus' contemporaries duplicated the same mistakes of the past because they didn't learn good leadership skills from their bad leaders. When they refused to learn, they were doomed to repeat history.

Why are you where you are right now? Why is your situation so tough? Part of the reason may be so that you will learn how not to lead when you finally get the chance. If people are being stingy with you, learn to be generous now. If no one expresses thanks to you now, remember how it feels and say thank you when you are in charge.

If that's what God is teaching you, then you can embrace your current situation more enthusiastically because it's simply part of your learning training. When you learn the lesson, God will move you on. Just don't be guilty of saying today that things will be different when you are in charge. Make it happen tomorrow when you have the chance. If and when you do that, the hard lessons of these days will be well worth the price you are paying to become the leader that God wants you to be. Have a great week!

Monday Memo 290: Learn to Answer What and not How.

What would you do with your life if you had all the money you needed to live on? When you can answer that question, you are well on your way to clarifying your purpose. Yet I find that many people struggle with the answer. Why is that? To find out what I think, you will have to read on.

JOY

There are times in my life the last few years that I have had this tremendous sense of peace that I was where I needed to be, doing what I needed to do. Most of the time it's when I'm traveling and it's always while I'm doing something that is related to my purpose of bringing order out of chaos. For me, the answer to that question is that I would do what I am doing right now. I would write, travel, teach and consult--although I'd fly a lot more business class!

Joy is the indicator that you are doing what you were created to do. It's that simple. Nehemiah 8:10 states, "For the joy of the Lord is your strength." If you don't have God's joy, you don't have God's strength and if you don't have God's strength, there is only one substitute and that is your own strength. The problem is that it is an inadequate substitute. Your strength just doesn't get the job done where purpose is concerned.

So if your answer to the question I pose this week isn't, "I would do what I am doing right now," then why are you doing what you do right now? Is it to make a living? There's nothing wrong with paying your bills, but if there's no joy connected to your work, it will soon grow old and stale. And so will you--grow old and stale.

WHAT AND NOT HOW

If you're like most people, you don't spend time thinking about what you would really enjoy doing with your life because you don't see how you can support yourself doing it. But if you can keep asking God, "What should I do?" and don't spend so much time asking, "How will I do it?", you may find it easier to define your purpose. In other words, if you linger longer in the what, then the how may become clear later on.

I always knew my "what" was speaking before crowds all over the world. I spent preparing for that, not concerning myself with how I was ever going to do that. I learned how to speak and the doors eventually opened for me to do so. Today, I make my living from what I once only dreamed of doing. I stayed with the what and the how presented itself.

So what would you do if you had all the money you needed? I assume it is something you enjoy doing. Then that may very well be your purpose. Focus on and visualize that and don't worry so much about how you will eventually do it. After all, God wants you to fulfill your purpose more than you do. That's why you're still here. Count on His help and dream. Then get ready to give more and more time to what you were created to do. That's what I did and if it worked for me, I know it will work for you, too. Have a great week.