

Monday Memo 316: Kopos

It's 5 AM and I am sitting in the Pittsburgh Airport heading to Kansas City. I got home last Thursday night from Zimbabwe and I'm on the road again, certainly sooner than I would like to be. I will be with the Celebration Choir from Zimbabwe for most of October and there are many details to cover before the team arrives this Thursday.

At one time in my life, I was an event coordinator for Integrity Music and I conducted 50 seminars and conferences in one year alone. Conference, event and tour organizing is stressful work. You are only as good as your next event (not your last one) and the clock is always ticking. If you aren't ready for the next event, there is no way to put it off a day or a week. The show must go on.

I am not happy to be leaving home this soon, but what can I do? I have a kopos and it awaits my arrival. You don't know what a kopos is? Well, I have another piece of news for you. Not only do I have a kopos, but you have one, too! I bet you didn't know that! So if you want to find out what a kopos is, you had better read so that you can join me in our kopos club.

KOPOS

To find out what a kopos is, let's look at the word in the context of something that Paul wrote:

If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work (1 Corinthians 3:12-13).

The word for work in those verses is the Greek word kopos. What does kopos mean? It literally means intense labor united with toil and trouble. You have a work to do and it isn't easy by any means. What's more, it will be tested by fire to prove the worth or flimsiness of its quality. This may not be the news you wanted to hear on this particular day, but it's important to understand for several reasons.

First, when tough times come, and they will come, you can often think that you are doing something wrong, that you have missed the Lord or your purpose. In fact the opposite is true. Your tough times can confirm that you are doing something right and not something wrong. Second, when your work is tested, you can panic and even consider quitting. That would be a mistake. Finally, if you have unrealistic expectations and the

reality of kopos settles in, you can become discouraged and quit your work.

PURPOSE WORK

If you are a regular reader, you know that I love what I do. I have joy and that translates into God's strength. Yet that doesn't mean it's easy or without its challenges. I am facing a tough four weeks, but I'm not surprised. In fact, I'm gearing up for it. Your purpose brings you work you love, but that work won't always be easy.

So don't be surprised at the situation you're in, if circumstances seem to be going against you at this point. You may want to review the Memos from the last two weeks and remember the verses that I mentioned in those two issues. In case you missed them, here they are:

"Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves" (Psalm 127:1-2:).

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Can you see how these verses apply to your purpose work or kopos? As you meditate this week on this concept, I hope that you will be encouraged in your toil that you aren't doing something wrong but are smack in the center of God's will. In the meantime, I will be engaging my kopos on the road again, drawing on all the strength and help I can get as I do what I was created to do. Have a great week!

Please feel free to submit your comments to this entry on the [site](#) where it is posted.

Monday Memo 317: Live Like You Were Dying

I've been on the road since last Monday, driving a truck for the Change the World tour with the Celebration Choir from Zimbabwe. The truck I'm driving has no CD player, so I am forced to listen to the radio. While I was

listening this week, someplace in Oklahoma, I heard a song that has impacted me whenever I hear it. It's sung by country western singer Tim McGraw, and it's called Live Like You Were Dying. I thought I would share the lyrics with you and let you draw your own lessons from what they have to say.

THE SONG

He said I was in my early forties
with a lot of life before me,
when a moment came that stopped me on a dime.
And I spent most of the next days
looking at the x-rays,
talking bout the options
and talking 'bout sweet time.
I asked him when it sank in
that this might really be the real end .
How's it hit you when you get that kinda news.
Man what would you do?

And he said,
I went sky diving,
I went Rocky Mountain climbing.
I went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fumanchu.
And I loved deeper and I spoke sweeter,
and I gave forgiveness I'd been denying.
And he said someday I hope you get the chance
to live like you were dying.

He said I was finally the husband
that most the time I wasn't.
And I became a friend a friend would like to have.
And all of a sudden going fishin
wasn't such an imposition,
and I went three times that year I lost my dad.
Well I finally read the good book
and I took a good long hard look
at what I'd do if I could do it all again.

And then
I went sky diving,
I went Rocky Mountain climbing.
I went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fumanchu.
And I loved deeper and I spoke sweeter,
and I gave forgiveness I'd been denying.

And he said someday I hope you get the chance to live like you were dying.

Like tomorrow was a gift and you got eternity to think about.
What would you do with it? What did you do with it?
What did I do with it?
what would I do with it?

Sky diving,
I went Rocky Mountain climbing,
I went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fumanchu.
And then I loved deeper and I spoke sweeter,
and I watched an eagle as it was flying.
And he said someday I hope you get the chance to live like you were dying.

ARE YOU READY?

Are you ready to live today and everyday like it was your last? If so, what changes do you need to make? Do you need some calamity to make those changes, or do you have the courage to make them today? I am ready to live today like I was dying. Will you join me?

Feel free to add your comments to this entry on the [site](#) where it is posted.

Monday Memo 318: The One and Only

I used to pray that I could be a Timothy. You know who Timothy was? He was the Apostle Paul's right hand man. I didn't want to be a right hand man, however, when I prayed to be like Timothy. I was really praying that God would join me to a significant man and leader who would promote my ministry and stature. It was a selfish prayer that sounded so spiritual.

Then one day I read a few verses about Timothy that changed my life. I was journaling this morning and thought of those verses so I thought I would share them with you. I have to warn you, however, that your life will be changed too once you see and embrace these verses. So don't read on if you don't want to be challenged or stretched. If you do, then these next few paragraphs could change your life.

THE ONE AND ONLY

The passage is found in Philippians 2:19-22:

But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father.

So what did I learn from those verse that changed my life?

1. Timothy was of use to others. Paul could send Timothy because he would encourage both the Philippians when he arrived and Paul when he returned. I determined to be more encouraging to my leaders and my peers.

2. Timothy was the one and only. Paul had no one else like Timothy. Paul worked with many great men, yet Timothy was unique. I made up my mind that I would not follow the crowd where leadership was involved, but set myself apart.

3. Timothy was unique because he was genuinely concerned. Timothy was concerned for the interests of others and the interests of Jesus Christ. At one point in my life, I saw that I had been too concerned about everyone's interests except those of Jesus, including my own.

4. Timothy had proven his worth. Timothy added value to the team of which he was a member. He didn't just show off or preach sermons. He served Paul and the people. I determined that service was what God wanted me to emphasize, and I have endeavored not just to serve the leader but also the people, but everyone as if I was serving Jesus directly.

TWO QUESTIONS

Paul only had one Timothy, which is remarkable. Paul worked with Silas, Titus, Luke, and Barnabas, but he didn't consider them in the same category as Timothy. So that led me to ask two questions. If Paul only had one Timothy, how many will I ever see? There are only a few who can overcome self interests to come to a place of being genuinely interested in others. So I lowered my expectations of others, trying to understand human nature so that I could work with people more effectively.

The second and more important question was: Could I be like Timothy? I have tried to put my own interests aside, but it is a hard process. Self-interest clings to me like lint to a dark suit, and putting others' interests ahead of my own is a death process. I have to die daily to my own will and identify and serve the interests of others.

What do you see in those verses about Timothy and how can you apply them to you life? I would suggest that you reflect on this passage in the coming week and then share your insights with my readers on the site where this entry is posted. Let's see how many Timothys we can raise up in this generation, who are genuine and who serve the interests of others. If there are no others, then I am still committed to be a Timothy myself.

Monday Memo 319: You Can't Sing

I hear people often say that they are going through warfare when things are not going well. They may even say that the devil is against them. I have been wondering lately whether or not the opposition I encounter is warfare or if it's God resisting or at least not helping me.

I'm sorry. If you are planning a Christmas party or school function and it's not going well, I doubt if the devil is opposing you. I don't think he's that interested. He opposes the gospel and God's word, and in that realm our enemy is ruthless. In other areas, however, we have only our lack of understanding to blame for our difficulties. Let me explain what I mean.

SUPERNATURAL HELP

When you read the book of Acts, you learn about real warfare. There were martyrs, riots, betrayals, and conspiracies, all geared to keep the gospel from spreading. Yet the book of Acts also tells stories of God helping His people. Philip was translated from one location to another; an angel removed the chains from Peter so he could escape. Peter raised Dorcas from the dead and her village heard the good news. I don't see any example of supernatural opposition, but rather supernatural help as the disciples fulfilled their purpose. Can you think of any other examples from Acts?

If you don't have the kind of help they had in Acts, you should ask why not. The other night I went out to get gas for the truck I am driving on tour for the Celebration Choir. It was 10:15 PM and I had a choice of stations, so I chose one to the left of my hotel. As I drove out, I remembered I had not put the water for the tour bus on ice, and decided to take care of it in the morning. When I got to the gas station, guess who else had chosen that station? My bus driver. I know it's a small thing, but I was able to do right then and there what I thought I could only do in the morning.

Do you realize all the supernatural things that had to happen for me to meet the bus driver at that point in time? That is the kind of help I count

on when I am planning events, which is a form of fulfilling my purpose, which is to create order out of chaos.

YOU CAN'T SING

If someone sings and can't sing, we tell them so and try to find something else for them to do. It's no big deal because they don't have a musical gift. Yet we let people administrate, care for children, be the receptionist, organize events and speak when they can't do those things, or at least when God doesn't help them do it. And what is the result? We get un-anointed results because people are doing what they aren't anointed to do. When someone is trying to administrate who can't, it's just like someone singing who can't sing!

When things don't go well, it's all too easy to cry, "Warfare!" It's not warfare; it's people doing what they were never created to do.

I urge you this week to examine where you have used the warfare excuse to explain poor results. Is it really warfare, or are you and someone else around you doing what God created someone else to do. If so, I urge you to stop making excuses and find your right place, the place where you can expect and count on the kind of help the believers had in the book of Acts. Let's get the singers singing, the dancers dancing, the givers giving, the business people doing business and the builders building. Only then will we see true warfare, along with true and anointed results. Have a great week!

Monday Memo 320: You Can't Sow Wheat and Reap Corn

I can still remember one painful lesson from my time as a pastor. While the pastor of a church in Orlando, Florida, I spent hours and hours in prison ministry. I assumed that God would help my church grow as I spent time ministering to inmates and their families. I thought that inmate's families would come to my church and then the inmates would also come when they were released from prison. I further thought that if I ministered to those whom nobody wanted, God would send the kind of people to the church that anyone wanted.

It never happened that way.

I finally realized the futility of my strategy when we had one last inmate stay with a family in the church, only to see him leave and rip them off as he left town. This had happened many times, but I stubbornly stayed the prison ministry course as a means of church growth. At that point, , however, I was angry with that man and disgusted with the lack of

progress in the church. As I was praying one day, it occurred to me the flaw in my plan. I saw that I had been planting wheat and expecting corn, and I had no right to be angry (although I was). Let me explain what I mean.

YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW

I had been sowing heavily into the prison ministry and the prison ministry was prospering. The church ministry was not. If I had spent the time on the church that I had spent in prisons, the church would have grown as I had wanted it to. I saw that my strategy was based on wishful thinking and not sound principles. It was like a farmer planting wheat seeds and expecting a corn crop. That would be a ridiculous plan and, quite frankly, so was my church growth strategy. It was doomed to failure from the outset and I was the last one to find out.

So what's the lesson here for you?

SOUNDS SO SPIRITUAL

The problem is that some strategies sound so spiritual, but they aren't. There are those who say that if you serve someone else's vision, God will give you your own. That sounds spiritual, but I'm afraid it's another example of sowing wheat and expecting corn.

I've known some pastors who have taken care of other's children, while expecting God to take care of their own. It sound spiritual but it's a flawed strategy.

I've seen people give their money away, expecting to receive it back it in abundance. They are playing a spiritual lottery, hoping that their next gift will hit the jackpot and bring a big return. They don't invest their money wisely and consequently give more and more out of desperation.

There are those who pray for money and God gives them an idea. They want cash but God wants them to apply their idea and derive their blessing from hard work and diligence. When they refuse, they lack, but it's not because God isn't faithful. It's because they had a bad plan and wrong expectations.

Where purpose is concerned, you cannot spend time doing something that isn't your purpose and expect to make progress. For example, if your purpose is to write, then you must spend time writing if you are going to be successful. Doing everything else but writing and then expecting to succeed as a writer is sowing wheat and expecting to reap corn.

Is it time to examine some of your strategies for success? Are they based on sound principles or wishful thinking? Are you like me, sowing wheat and expecting corn in any area of your life? The good news is that I have sown in my purpose the last seven years and the return has been great. It's not too late for you to sow correctly and reap accordingly. Don't hesitate for a minute to abandon your flawed strategy to pursue one that is based on common sense and God's laws. God wants to bless you, but you have to do your part and not expect God to cover your bad thinking or wrong assumptions.