

Monday Memo 326: Down But Not Out!

We interrupt our series on Moses because it's almost Christmas. I have reached back into the archives to bring you one of my favorite Memos, which I like to share every year. I hope you enjoy it, and please read to the end for some current announcements.

I love London. Last year I went to see the show *The Lion King* with some friends. While I enjoyed it, it wasn't as special as what I did there in 2005 right before Christmas. Then I went to see Handel's *Messiah* at the Royal Albert Music Hall. What a wonderful way to enjoy a timeless masterpiece of music and Scripture in the city where it was composed.

MESSIAH

The *Messiah* is considered by many to be the greatest musical feat in the history of mankind. Commissioned by a charity to produce a benefit concert, Handel wrote the *Messiah* in only 24 days. A musician once told me that someone trying to copy the *Messiah* could not do so in 24 days—that is the level of inspiration in which Handel operated when he wrote. Handel never left his house for those three weeks. His food trays remained untouched outside his office door. A friend who visited him as he composed found him sobbing with intense emotions. Later, as Handel groped for words to describe what he had experienced, he quoted St. Paul, saying “whether I was in the body or out of my body when I wrote it I know not.”

What's even more impressive is that Handel wrote *Messiah* under extreme duress. The Church of England strongly criticized and opposed Handel and his previous Scriptural works put to music. At the age of 56, he had no money, often going out only at night so as to avoid his creditors. Handel performed what he considered his farewell concert and went home, fully expecting to end up in debtor's prison. Yet the first performance of *Messiah* in Ireland raised almost 400 pounds for charity and freed 142 other men from debtor's prison in 1742. Of course the rest is history as countless millions have enjoyed and marveled at this work for more than 250 years. Handel also went on from there to enjoy tremendous success and popularity in his latter years.

So what does this have to do with you? Perhaps you are a person of purpose but you feel frustrated, even defeated in your PurposeQuest. Maybe you find yourself down and out, discouraged and criticized, forgotten and a failure. Perhaps your finances are in poor shape. If that description fits you, read on, for I believe this Memo can restore your

hope and faith. If that's not you, read on anyway, for you will probably enter that phase one day as you pursue your purpose.

HERE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW

God knows how to prepare His workers for their work. There is always an element of suffering, misunderstanding, success and then failure before there is the breakthrough success that God has for His servants. You are no exception to this timeless rule. The Bible and history itself contain many examples of this truth. This week, I would like to focus on one such example: Daniel.

Daniel had distinguished himself in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. His exploits are described in the first four chapters of the book that bears Daniel's name. When Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar took the throne, we have the well-known story from which we get the oft-used phrase "the handwriting's on the wall." I urge you to at least read Daniel 5, for I will now quote from only part of that story:

Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled. The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. "O king, live forever!" she said. "Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale. There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father — your father the king, I say — appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. This man Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means" (Daniel 5:8–12).

Now my question to you is this: if Daniel had been so successful in serving Nebuchadnezzar, why didn't Belshazzar know who he was? Why did the queen have to remind the king that Daniel even existed? The answer is simple: after his long success, Daniel now faced a down time in his life. He was forgotten, retired and rejected by the new leadership! Daniel was famous one day and forgotten the next.

While man had forgotten Daniel, God had not. And the same is true for you. It may seem like all your doors are closed and that the success you once enjoyed has now evaporated into thin air, never to return. Or you may feel like you are at your end, not able to go on another day. But that

isn't necessarily the case. As with Daniel and Handel, your best days may yet be ahead. In fact, 2008 could be the year for your breakthrough. After Daniel gave the king the bad news of what the writing on the wall meant, Daniel was once again restored to prominence:

Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom (Daniel 5:29).

WHAT TO DO WHILE YOU'RE DOWN AND OUT

What should you do if you are in a season of "un-use," disfavor or inaction? As we close out 2007, I would urge you to do three things if you are discouraged, disillusioned or dismayed. And if you're not, I urge you to find someone who is—you shouldn't have to look too hard—and encourage them in their dark time.

1. Renew your faith in God. – Your success and purpose expression doesn't depend on your faithfulness; it depends on God's. So remind yourself that God can do anything, and then rest in Him. Handel went home to retire and Daniel perhaps thought it was all over for him. Yet God helped both of them and He will help you.
2. Keep preparing for your day of success. – I don't think Handel went home and abandoned music. And I don't think Daniel went home and stopped seeking God. Keep writing, reading, learning and practicing. When the phone rings or the mail comes with your opportunity, you will be fresh and prepared, having worked in faith for the day of success.
3. Be generous. – Handel wrote the Messiah for charity, even though he was destitute. Daniel, having been snubbed and ignored, could have refused to render his wisdom services for Belshazzar. What can you do for someone else, even though you are down and out? If you need more encouragement concerning giving, then see Memo 231.

I'm grateful for 2007 and I hope you can find reasons to be as well. If not, then just thank God for His faithfulness. At least you're still alive! Then take this Memo to heart or share it with someone who needs it. I pray that as you do what I recommended above, you will see the purpose breakthrough in 2008. Thank you for allowing me to come into your life every week and thank you for being a purpose seeker. As I close this Memo, I wish you not only a great week, but also a very Merry Christmas!

Monday Memo 327: Christmas Creative Collaboration

It's Christmas Eve 2007 and I am wondering where this year has gone. As I get older, it seems that the days just fly by, which is why I am determined to enjoy every one of them. I don't know how many I have left.

I've been Stateside for a few weeks, which has given me ample opportunity to listen to Christmas music. The men who wrote the carols of old were theologians who had a deep grasp on the significance of Jesus' birth. If you go past the first verse of some carols, you hear some magnificent truths about Jesus and the implications for mankind of His coming. One hymn that caught my attention this year is Hark the Herald Angels Sing!

WHO WROTE IT?

All credit for Hark the Herald Angels Sing is usually attributed to Charles Wesley, the brother of Methodism's founder, John Wesley. Charles was a prolific song writer, with almost 9,000 hymns to his credit. Charles only employed sombre, slow and solemn music for his lyrics, however, so this particular carol was sung to a tune other than we know for at least 100 years after it was written in 1739.

In 1840, a man named Felix Mendelssohn wrote a commemorative cantata to honor Johann Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. What does that have to do with this carol? Nothing except that a man named William Cummings heard the cantata and felt that one of the melodies could better serve the magnificent lyrics that Wesley had penned for Hark the Herald. Cummings adapted Mendelssohn's melody to Wesley's lyrics and the result was the version of Hark the Herald Angels Sing! that we know and sing today. So Hark the Herald is the result of a century-long creative collaboration by three men who never met.

CHRISTMAS CREATIVITY

This strikes me as a classic example of the simplicity and interconnection of the creative process. Your creativity doesn't have to involve something completely new or original. Cummings took two existing things-- Mendelssohn's music and Wesley's words--to create something new again. He improved something that already existed to create something fresh that has impacted the world for more than a century.

As we end 2007, I want to begin a new discussion of the creative process to encourage you to take your own creativity more seriously in 2008. You are a creative person! The ideas you have can change the world, if you will stop discounting them as meaningless or insignificant. You don't

have to invent something totally new to qualify as creative; you just have to act on your ideas and release them to the world. With God as your agent, the world will then act to endorse the very creativity that you may be dismissing or taking for granted.

Do you have any good ideas, even if they are only to improve something that already exists? If you do, take heart and remember Wesley, Mendelssohn, and Cummings. Those three men who never met collaborated to create something memorable. There is no reason why you can't do the same.

From my house to yours, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a creative and purposeful New Year!

Feel free to post your comment to this Memo on the [site](#) where it is located.

Monday Memo 328: Daylight on the Night Shift

I trust that you had a good Christmas with family and friends. Our family enjoyed being together in Florida and next week we will reconvene in New York City. I am not ready to proclaim that the holidays are over and plan on celebrating for a few more weeks. I am therefore drawing on the Monday Memo archives to bring you an updated holiday Memo from years past.

THE NIGHT SHIFT

This week I want to take a quick look at the shepherds of the Christmas story. They were working the night shift, doing what they and their ancestors had done for centuries. They went to work that night without any thought that anything extraordinary was about to happen. On the night Jesus was born, they were tending their flocks on the hillsides outside Bethlehem, minding their own business. Suddenly God sent them messengers, who brought great light to the night shift:

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men

on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. (Luke 2:8-16).

These shepherds were doing what they knew to do at that time in their life and God interrupted them with a special news report. This both scared and thrilled them. That's how it is when you find your life purpose. Often you are doing what you know to do at the time, usually a job or role that is less than fulfilling. Suddenly God, the Great Communicator, breaks into your consciousness and brings a message of purpose, of what He has always wanted you to do. That not only terrifies you but also gives you a desire to clarify it and fulfill it.

That night the shepherds went to work like any other day. God spoke to them, however, and they were never the same. They started by sitting on a hillside in cold weather; they ended by finding a great treasure in Bethlehem, a treasure that had not been revealed to anyone else but them.

YOUR PURPOSEQUEST

Maybe you have been in a desperate search for your purpose and its expression. As we end this year, I suggest that you be encouraged as you remember the shepherds. Finding your purpose doesn't depend on your diligence; it depends on God's grace. Yes, you must search for your purpose, but only God can reveal it to you. I don't know when or how He will do that. It may be one cold, dark night when you go about your business like countless other nights. At that point, God may send His messenger and change your life forever. I don't know when or how He will do it, I just know that He will.

So have faith and relax this holiday season. Keep asking God to help you see who you are and what you were born to do, and after that, trust Him. He wants you to fulfill your purpose more than you do. He will show you in the fullness of time, bring you daylight even if you are working the night shift. When He does, you will join with the shepherds as laborers who found more than business as usual one night when they went to work. May the God of purpose speak to you soon and may you have the courage to believe what He says! Happy New Year!

Monday Memo 329: Whatcha Got?

Happy New Year! I trust that your holidays were a special time. They certainly were for our family and, truthfully, I am not ready for them to end! That isn't my decision, however, so as time marches on, so will I. At the end of this Memo, find out how you can employ me as your purpose coach as we start 2008.

This week we continue our study of Moses' comments during his encounter with the burning bush that we began before Christmas. If you would like to review the first four posts, you can refer back to Memos 322–325. Here is a quick review.

PAY ATTENTION CLASS!

When God spoke to him from the bush, Moses' first comment was, "Here I am!" We saw that this indicated his readiness to do what God wanted before He knew what it was, an attitude that you would do well to imitate. Then we studied how Moses asked, "Who am I?" We related that question to our tendency to discount our ability to accomplish our purpose when we find out what it is.

We then saw that Moses' third comment was: "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" (Exodus 3:13). This comment was an example of Moses coming up with an excuse that he wasn't ready and didn't know enough about God.

Finally, we looked at his fourth comment: "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you?'" (Exodus 4:1). This question was an indication that Moses was concerned that he would fail and I asked you to consider what, if anything, you were afraid of.

WHATCHA GOT?

This week we look at his fifth comment, which was an answer to a question God asked him: "Then the LORD said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' 'A staff,' he [Moses] replied" (Exodus 4:2). Moses was concerned he would fail because of all the things he didn't have. In his mind, Moses didn't have enough knowledge about God, he lacked the confidence, he was too old, and he wouldn't be able to respond to the people's questions. But God asked him a simple question. In essence, God asked him, "What do you have?" If God spoke slang or had poor diction, He would have asked Moses, "Whatcha got?"

When God assigned you purpose, He knew your gifts, strengths, and weaknesses. If not having some of those things didn't matter to God, why should they be of concern to you? People regularly tell me reasons why they can't fulfill their purpose or dreams. They tell me that they lack the education, they're too young or too old, they don't have the money or they aren't gifted enough. Have you ever said any of those things? If you have, you must realize that God isn't asking you for an inventory of things that you don't have; He's more concerned that you allow Him to use you and what you do have.

WHAT'S IN YOUR HAND?

Moses went to Egypt with that staff in obedience to God's command. He fulfilled his purpose with what he had in his hand. You will fulfill your purpose the same way. Moses was honest with God; he told him what he had. God went on to show him that it was enough (you may want to read Exodus 4:3-9 on your own). Will you do the same this week? Will you allow God to prove to you that you do have what it takes to do His will, as long as you submit what you have to Him?

You must move beyond the realm of excuses to the Kingdom of obedience. You must learn to face your fears and obey God. In the process, you must also learn to surrender what you do have to God's empowering touch so that you will be equipped to fulfill your purpose. Why not make this the week that you do those things, so that you won't delay any longer in knowing the joy of being used by God? If I can help, let me know. Have a great week and year!

Monday Memo 330: The Need Is Your Call

My heart is with my friends in Kenya as they struggle to restore peace after their elections. I have written about the situation this past week on my blog. I am also concerned for Zimbabwe and the upcoming elections there. Let's all be praying for both nations.

WE'RE ALMOST DONE

We are almost finished with our study of Moses' comments during his encounter with the burning bush. When God spoke to him from the bush, Moses' first comment was, "Here I am!" We saw that this indicated his readiness to do what God wanted before He knew what it was, an attitude that you would do well to imitate. Then we studied how Moses asked, "Who am I?" We related that question to our tendency to discount our ability to accomplish our purpose when we find out what it is.

We later saw that Moses' third comment was: "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" (Exodus 3:13). We saw that this comment was an example of Moses coming up with an excuse that he wasn't ready and didn't know enough about God. His fourth comment was: "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you?'" (Exodus 4:1). This question was an indication that Moses was concerned that he would fail and I asked you to consider what, if anything, you were afraid of.

Last week, we looked at Moses' fifth comment: "Then the LORD said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' 'A staff,' he [Moses] replied" (Exodus 4:2). God was teaching Moses to use what he had and not to fret over what he didn't have. And that brings us to Moses' sixth comment, which was: "Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue" (Exodus 4:10).

THE NEED IS YOUR CALL

With this sixth comment, Moses has moved from honest questioning to procrastination. He is now working hard to come up with some excuse, any excuse so that he wouldn't have to go to Egypt. If you look hard enough, you will always find a reason that could exempt you from fulfilling your purpose. Some of these reasons I hear on a regular basis are: "I'm too young; I'm too old; I don't have the education; I don't like to speak in front of people; I don't have the money; My spouse/pastor/leader/supervisor doesn't feel good about me doing that; I'm not sure it's God's will; I'm waiting on the Lord's timing." I've heard these reasons many times and God has heard them even more often.

I especially want to address the last excuse: "I'm waiting on the Lord's timing." I heard a leader say one time, "The need that you see is your call; you must move now to meet that need." He meant that seeing a need that exists is often the only "call" you are going to receive. When I teach about purpose, I ask what you see that you assume everyone else sees. In most cases, everyone does not see what you see. Seeing it then requires that you then do something about it, without over-spiritualizing the process.

God who has given you the ability to see the need will also equip you to address that need. The Lord responded to Moses: "The LORD said to him, 'Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say'" (Exodus 4:11-12 emphasis address).

God is saying the same thing to you this week. He is telling you to “go” and do. As you go, He will help you speak or do whatever it is that He wants you to do. Stop procrastinating and finding excuses to justify your delay. The good news is that it isn’t too late. The God of your purpose is extending another opportunity to do His will. Don’t disappoint Him or make Him find someone else. You can do it. What’s more, you must do it, if you are to be a person of purpose. As you do, I know that you will have a great week!

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