

Monday Memo 331: Don't Put Me In, Coach!

It's frigid here in Pennsylvania, but I am keeping warm and busy. Today is a national holiday in the States -- Martin Luther King Day -- so this is a good week to finish up our series on another liberator, Moses. Before we discuss Moses, let's begin with a story from the world of sports.

DON'T PUT ME IN, COACH

Several years ago, a professional basketball game was in the final seconds. The coach called time out and called a play that he hoped would win the game. But when play resumed, only four of his players were in the game. The fifth player, who was also the star, refused to go back in because he wasn't appointed to take the winning shot. He forced the coach to put someone else in; the good news is that his team won, but that player lost. Players, writers and fans castigated that player for his selfish behavior.

As we look this week at Moses' seventh comment at the burning bush, we see that Moses, having exhausted all the excuses and questions he could think of, simply refused to go to Egypt. "But Moses said, 'O Lord, please send someone else to do it'" (Exodus 4:13). In essence, Moses said "no" to God! Moses refused to go into the game just like that basketball player.

What was God's response? "Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses" (Exodus 4:14). Up to this point in the story, God had been patient and gracious with Moses, responding to all his objections. At this point, however, God was angry. I hope I never make God that angry, but this story proves that it can happen. God is patient but there are limitations to His patience and we are never quite sure when we will reach those limitations.

MISSING PURPOSE?

I have people ask me all the time, "Can you refuse your purpose?" and my answer is always, "Yes!" Consider these two passages:

1. "But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves" (Luke 7:30); and
2. "As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1-2).

You can receive the grace of God's purpose in vain, choosing to ignore or do nothing with it. You can sit on your gifts, choosing to remain in the

comfort zone of life rather than experiencing the discomfort of new faith experiences. You can also be so afraid of doing the wrong thing that you choose to do nothing.

God had answered and addressed each of Moses' questions and concerns so that the real reason for Moses' reluctance could be revealed: Moses just didn't want to do it. Like that star basketball player, Moses just didn't want to go into the game.

How about you? Are you testing God's patience through delay and excuses? The good news is that after Moses said this, God assigned Aaron to go with Moses and then sent them both on their way to Egypt. If you confess this week that you don't want to fulfill your purpose, that you're scared, lazy or lack confidence, then the Lord will still help you!

You are not alone in your PurposeQuest; God is with you, even if you are hesitant. All you have to do this week is acknowledge where you are and ask God's help. He will do the rest. Let this be the week when you face reality and still move on to do great things for God, just like Moses. Have a great week!

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

Monday Memo 332: One Word

A few years ago, my purpose statement changed. My purpose didn't change, but my statement did. People often ask, "Can your purpose change?" or "Can you have more than one purpose?" I always answer, "No," to both questions. Yet now I am saying my purpose definition or description did indeed change. Am I confused? Have I changed my mind? To find out the answers to those questions, you will have to read on.

ONLY ONE WORD

For many years, I stated that my purpose was "to bring [or make] order out of chaos." Then one day, while driving in Zimbabwe, I saw that this definition wasn't correct. It wasn't so much that the definition was incorrect, but the way I interpreted my purpose was. On that fateful day in 2003, I realized that I don't bring order out of chaos, nor do I make order out of chaos. Rather I create order out of chaos. It dawned on me that I am a creative person and thus my statement should be [as has been since], "I create order out of chaos."

What a difference one word can make!

I had always viewed myself as an organized, administrative-type person. I saw musicians, songwriters, and poets as the creative people, while I existed to organize their creativity. Then one day, I realized that my ability to bring order is in and of itself is a creative act. I was defining my purpose according to something I could not see. When I saw and gave myself permission to be creative, permission to consider myself creative. That decision changed how I defined my purpose -- and changed my life.

PERMISSION TO BE CREATIVE

A few weeks before I saw this change, I was heading to Uganda with a team from my home city. On the plane, the team leader asked me to fill out a form outlining my goals and objectives for the trip. Then she asked me to do something that would normally bring fear to my heart: She asked me to draw four pictures on the back of the paper to describe myself before, during and after the trip.

I actually felt my body stiffen as she asked me to draw those pictures, because "I can't draw," or so I thought. Right there on the plane I decided to face my fear of being ridiculed or of not being very good, and proceeded to draw four pretty simple but effective pictures. They were the first four pictures I had ever drawn that I could remember.

Then I took out a sheet of paper and listed all the areas in which I could be considered creative. Here is how my list read: humor, consulting, conference and event coordination, The Monday Memo, the weekly Bible studies, my books, public speaking, my daily to-do list, my website and blog, the seminars that I teach and the two businesses that I have started. These are all creative acts, so therefore I am creative! I create order out of chaos.

YOU TOO!

I write this to you because you are creative, too. The Creator made you in His image and part of that image is to create. You may not see yourself as creative, but you are. You may not have any original ideas (who does?), but you probably have ideas of how to creatively apply concepts that already exist in new ways.

Why not do what I did? Take out a piece of paper and write down all the ways that you are creative. Don't overlook activities like cooking, baking, gardening, floral design, letter writing, teaching, cleaning, repair work, interior design, and makeup and hair styling.

I also write this to help you overcome any bias that you may have against your creativity. Stop comparing yourself to others and don't compare what you create with what others create. This week let your creativity flow, just like I did with my four pictures I drew. Your creativity may hold a key to help you clarify your purpose.

Facing the fact that you are creative may set you free to do things that have been in you to do all along. I have enjoyed my awareness of my creativity for the last four years, and I believe the best is yet to come! Now I tell everyone and anyone that my purpose is to create, not bring order out of chaos. I hope this week will bring you a renewed sense of who you are and what you were created to create. We will focus more on creativity in the coming weeks, but in the meantime, I trust that you will have a great week!

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Monday Memo 333: Adam's Zoo

Do you consider yourself a creative person? What creative outlets do you have, or rather how many do you give yourself permission to have? For most of my adult life, I did not give myself permission to pursue creativity and I wasn't open to the fact that I may be creative. My self-image was that of an administrator and creativity and administration were at odds with one another -- or so I thought.

Are you creative? If your answer is no, then perhaps you need to expand the way you view creativity and, consequently, view yourself. If you are open to that possibility, then urge you to read on.

ADAM'S ZOO

Adam was made by God to be creative and we are Adam's children. After God created Adam, He invited Adam to enter into the creative process by naming the animals: "Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field" (Genesis 2:19-20). Adam decided what the animals were to be called; it was an expression of his creative dominion in the Garden.

Too often, we have identified only musicians, songwriters, poets and writers as creative—and they are indeed creative. Those expressions,

however, are only a few of the creative expressions that are available to Adam's children. Let's take a look at some of the creative expressions that are available to you:

1. Child raising—Raising a child requires tremendous creativity as you teach, train, entertain and discipline each child according to his or her personality and needs.

2. Handwriting—Do you have beautiful handwriting? Then stop using the computer. Use your creative, artistic flair to communicate with others in your own writing.

3. Dress—You may have an eye for color or fashion. Be creative and adorn your body, God's creation, in a manner that is distinctive and uniquely you.

4. Repairs—It takes creativity not just to invent or design something, but to keep it in working order. Your ability to read a manual and then fix something is an expression of your creativity.

5. Gardening—Do you like flowers? Enjoy raising vegetables? Then plant to the glory of God and do it with your style and grace. If you don't plant the seeds, they won't grow! So join in the creative process and do what Adam and Eve did in the Garden. (Don't forget to pull the weeds, too!)

6. Time management—Can you organize your time and activities? That requires creativity. Can you help others organize? That requires even more creativity.

7. Problem solving—Do you face new problems and apply timeless wisdom and solutions? Then you are not just organized or efficient. You are creative!

YOU ARE OH SO CREATIVE!

I hope you get the picture. Like Adam, you are creative and God wants and needs you to express your creativity in every day life. Stop saying you aren't creative—you are! I have assembled a list of creative expressions from past studies on creativity and that list is posted on my website. Take a look at that list and see how many expressions are present in your life and then, settle once and for all your perspective on your own creativity.

Perhaps then you will see yourself as creative, which is just how the Lord wants you to see yourself. Once you see yourself as creative, you will then give yourself permission to pursue and release creativity in ways not possible up to this point in your life. As you do, I know you will have a great week!

Monday Memo 334: Creator God, Creative Man

I am in Big Spring, Texas in west Texas. I've had a great time with the folks at Life Church with Pastors Clint and Cami Collins. I'll be blogging this coming week about my time here.

We've been discussing creativity these past few weeks and in that context I've been thinking about Jesus. Jesus was a creative man. If we attribute Jesus' creativity to His divinity, we can't gain much help or understanding that will assist us in our own creative search. If we see, however, that Jesus was a creative man then there may be things in His life to help us be more creative. You probably know what I think about this issue, but to make sure you do, you had better read on.

A TEACHING CARPENTER

We know that He was a carpenter, so He made things from wood with His hands. One second-century bishop reported that wooden yokes that Jesus made in the first century were still being used 100 years later! That tells us that Jesus wasn't only creative, He was committed to excellence—He did good work.

There's also a good chance that Jesus, as the oldest son, ran a carpentry business that supported more than just Himself. His brothers could have been in business with Him and that meant He also expressed His creativity by running a business, making payroll and managing inventory, accounts and customer service. He also would have supported His widowed mother from the business as well.

But Jesus' creativity didn't stop there. At the age of 30, He changed careers, starting an itinerate ministry through which He continued to express tremendous creativity. He was creative in building and equipping an effective team of men and women who traveled with Him.

When Jesus performed miracles, He did so with flair and distinction. One time He spit on the ground, made mud and smeared it on a blind man's eyes. Another time, Jesus put His fingers into a deaf man's ears and touched the end of the man's tongue with His spit. Jesus answered His critics with creative retorts that delighted the crowds. His insight into Scripture held people's attention for days on end and He impressed the crowd with His fresh approach to God and the Word.

Perhaps Jesus' greatest creative expression, however, was in His teaching. When He taught, He used parables—stories from everyday life that imparted truth. Where did He get those stories? He made up those stories. They came from His creativity, perhaps the same creativity that He learned and perfected as a carpenter. Jesus used parables with lessons

drawn from agriculture, business, current events, family life, and gardening. He was such a creative teacher that the people would walk for days to listen to Him for days. Mark reported: "The large crowd listened to him with delight" (Mark 12:37).

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR US

Why is this important? First of all, I don't think that Jesus' creativity came from His divinity only. He was and is the Creator God and creative Man. On earth He expressed His creativity as a Jewish man who observed life and saw God in all of it. Secondly, if Jesus the man was creative, then He can help you be creative. And finally, you will fulfill your purpose as you carry on the creative tradition that was expressed by the Son of God and continued in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are not here to maintain; we are here to creatively advance the kingdom of God. One might argue that our creativity is how we will fulfill the mandate given to Adam to subdue the earth and rule over it.

This week, I have an assignment for you. Take some time to read Proverbs 8. Do you see wisdom speaking there? That "wisdom" certainly sounds a lot like Jesus to me. Pray through this Proverb and then ask the Lord for creative wisdom. Ask Him to help you use the ordinary lessons of daily life, just like Jesus did, to create something extraordinary. Don't see your creativity as an exception or something that you use from time to time. See it as a powerful source of daily inspiration that will help you fulfill your purpose and do great things. As you do, I know your life will be changed as mine has been these last few years. Have a great week!

Monday Memo 335: You Are a Creative Machine!

Several weeks ago, we began talking about creativity. (If you haven't read my previous Memos on creativity, you may want to go to my site and review them now.) I often hear this comment from people whom I serve as a purpose coach: "I'm not that creative." That just isn't true! Most people assume that unless they have a thought or think of a design or invention that no one in the world has previously conceived, then they don't fall in the creative category. You need to expand your idea of creativity in order to see that you have abundant creativity.

YOU ARE A CREATIVE MACHINE!

A creative God created you to be creative. Creativity is programmed into the very fabric of your being. Consider these expressions of creativity that are part of who you are:

1. I don't want to be offensive in any way, but you were made to create other human beings. When you reach maturity and marry, in most cases you must take precautions to limit your creativity, your offspring.

2. Scientists tell us that every seven years you have a totally new set of cells in your body. Your cells are constantly dividing and creating new cells.

3. One of the first things I did when I returned home recently was to get a haircut. In most cases, your body is creating new hair, nails and whiskers on a daily basis.

4. Your body is constantly creating what it needs to carry on life. Your stomach creates gastric juices, sweat glands produce sweat and your ears create wax!

5. What happens when you go to sleep? You create dreams; you are a "dream machine." For every eight hours you sleep, you dream almost two hours. Your mind is constantly creating symbolic sleep scenarios that help you maintain your psychological equilibrium.

6. Every day you create thoughts and ideas; you also daydream, creating potential scenarios with you in them.

7. You talk every day, stringing words and ideas together creatively.

WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK?

Without even trying, you are naturally a creative being. So why aren't you expressing more of your creativity? The big problem may be your mind. You have been conditioned to believe that you aren't creative, so it is possible to go through life thinking that you aren't. The Pacific Institute has taught me this truth: "We act like the person we know or believe ourselves to be."

When you think you aren't creative, you won't produce or won't recognize your creativity for what it is. For many years, I saw myself as "only" an administrator who got things done. Now I see myself as an administrator who creatively gets things done. That slight change of thinking and speaking changed my life – and released my creativity.

So if you don't do anything else this week, reassess your attitude toward your creativity. You may not be as creative as someone else, but that doesn't mean that you aren't creative. Take out a sheet of paper and begin to list all the areas in which you creatively express yourself. The list may be longer than you thought it would be. (If you need some help, download the "creative expression list found at the end of this Memo.) From that, begin to gradually change your mind and see that you are creative. When you do that, it is just a matter of time before your creativity blossoms and becomes all that God intended for it to be. Have a great week!