

Monday Memo 346: Failure P.S.

Greetings from England! I hope you had a good week celebrating failure. I sure did as my wife and I celebrated by moving into a brand new house! It's a lovely home and we are just thrilled to be there. It has everything we want and need, in part of town we like, overlooking a valley with lots of trees and hills. It has a full basement, from which we will run our PurposeQuest business. It's new construction and everything is, well, it's so new. What a blessing that home has already been

What the home represents makes it all the more special, for it truly represents a journey that included a lot of failures and heartache. Those failures only served to enhance our appreciation this week as we moved. When we moved out of our last house in 2005, it felt like the Bataan Death March. The trip to our new home this week could best be described by Psalm 126:

When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion,
we were like men who dreamed.

Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.
Then it was said among the nations,
"The Lord has done great things for them."

The Lord has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like streams in the Negev.

Those who sow in tears
will reap with songs of joy.

He who goes out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with him.

THE JOURNEY

When I started PurposeQuest in 2001, it represented a failure of sorts. I had failed to start it earlier in life and had lost many opportunities. I was afraid, however, and put it off too long. When I left my church work to start the business, the people I had been with for many years were not

happy and were unable to bless my departure. I found myself with no money, four books I had written, a purpose message and no place to go at 50 years of age.

Starting over proved to be a struggle. Before long, we found ourselves in debt, and I was traveling long distances to pursue business opportunities, often staying away from home longer than I wanted to stay. God was always faithful and we never lacked, but the pressure finally got to us in 2005. We decided to do what we had to do to downsize, pay off our debts and save some money to buy another home. I wish I could tell you that all my business decisions since 2001 have been good ones, but they have not. Yet I learned along the way and also found and sharpened my "voice" -- my message and how to deliver it.

All week I have been humming, listening to and singing Barry Manilow's song, I Made It Through the Rain. I won't include the lyrics, but you can watch and listen to that song here along with a moving purpose tribute from Barry to his grandfather (or listen only to the song in its entirety here). Perhaps then you will understand some of what I felt this past week and maybe it will encourage you along the way.

If that doesn't do it for you as we put the topic of failure to bed, then I know this last passage will. It's found in the short letter of Jude, verses 24 and 25, right before the book of Revelation. The verses are actually a prayer, and I hope you can hear me praying this for you as I sit and write this Monday Memo as a Failure P.S., celebrating the goodness of God while I do here in England what I love to do:

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Feel free to write a comment to this entry on the [site](#) where it is posted.

Monday Memo 347: Invite Yourself To The Party

I've had a great week in the UK and now it's time to head home. I can't wait, not because of any problem here, but because I want to enjoy our new home as much as possible. Thanks goes out to my new friends at Micah Community Church in London and Carmel Christian Centre in Bristol, and my "old friends" at New Jerusalem Apostolic Church in Birmingham, for their wonderful hospitality and openness to me and the purpose message. I trust I will be back with all three ministries soon.

One of the questions Jesus' opponents asked Him on several occasions was, "By whose authority do you do the things you do?" Perhaps someone has asked you the same question. Do you know what to answer? You should give the same answer that Jesus gave. What answer did He give? Ah, for that you will have to read on.

GOD'S AUTHORITY

Jesus never gave a direct answer to those who asked this question because He didn't need permission to do what He did. He was sent by God and therefore answered to no man. Yet Jesus was subject to the governing officials at all times and submitted to their authority even unto death. How was Jesus able to function in the will of God and be subject to the officials at the same time?

It is because He understood the power of purpose. If you have the same understanding, you will be able to flow in your purpose as well.

You need no one's permission to flow in your purpose. Purpose represents your orders from heavenly headquarters. You do what you do because God wants you to do it. In a manner of speaking, you invite yourself to the party, whatever the party represents for you.

If your purpose is to help orphans, you can go wherever the orphans are and begin to flow in your purpose. If your purpose is to heal the sick, you have God's permission to go to them. When I received the purpose message, I started teaching and writing. I showed up on the scene and began sharing what I knew and saw. I have made a place for myself because God gave me something to do. That's all the authority Jesus needed and it's all you and I need as well.

CAUTION!

When you invite yourself to the party, that doesn't mean you can be arrogant or rude and it doesn't mean you don't have a lot of work to do to prepare yourself for effectiveness. You must still play by the rules of your "hosts," and you can't rely only on your good intentions. You just can't show up at an orphanage, for example, and expect them to accept you without any questions. You may need training or they may not welcome you at all. Jesus spent 30 years preparing for His public ministry. He was never invited into the inner circle of Jewish leadership, so He went His own way. Yet He submitted to the authorities, even when it meant persecution. Notice what Jesus said to Pilate:

"Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin" (John 19:9-11).

Jesus stated that He had more of a problem with Judas betraying Him than with Pilate exercising the authority that God gave him. Jesus invited Himself to the party while He was at the same time subject to all authorities. It never prevented Him from pursuing and fulfilling His purpose.

What about you? Are you hesitant to take matters into your own hands when you know your purpose? If so, then you can stop and go. Stop waiting for an invitation to function and just go where the action is so you can fulfill your purpose. You don't need anyone's authority to flow in your purpose, yet you must always respect the authority structure where you are going. But God, who wants you to fulfill your purpose more than you do, will open doors and you will experience the joy of doing what you were created to do. Have a great week!

Monday Memo 348: It's My Party and I'll Cry If I Want To!

Last week, I wrote about how purpose allows you to invite yourself to the party, whatever the party represents for you. If your purpose is cooking, then you can open a restaurant, invite people over for dinner, head a hospitality team or do just about anything your purpose and heart dictate to do. It's that simple. What's more difficult is preparing yourself for success once you get to the party, but finding the party is usually pretty simple. Or is it?

This week I am starting my own party and you're invited to come! No, it's not at our new home; it's not even in a banquet hall or public venue. Where is this party, you may ask? For that, you will have to read on.

IT'S MY PARTY AND I'LL CRY IF I WANT TO

That line is the name of an old song from the '60s sung by Lesley Gore, but that's just how I feel as I get set to launch my radio show this coming Wednesday, May 21, on Voice America. What's more, I am launching it under a new business division of PurposeQuest International, something I'm calling PurposeQuest Media. For many years, I have known I was supposed to be on media. I would be invited to be a guest on shows and the interviews would always go well. One year, two interviews I did on a

local channel won national awards for excellence. I have said for years, "I am both a good interview and a good interviewer." Yet seldom would anyone invite me back to be on their show, except my good friends the late David Vincent in Zimbabwe and Dr. Mitch Nichols here in Pittsburgh.

I wrote proposals for radio and television alike, and they were all rejected. Hosts would tell me, "Wow, that was great! We'll have you back again soon." They never did. My last radio interview was supposed to last 20 minutes and went on for an hour. People called the station to get in touch with me for two weeks. The man never invited me back. It was frustrating.

Then I had the idea last December while flying home from Zimbabwe that I was waiting for something that would never happen. I realized that if I was ever going to be the media host and presence I thought I should be, I was going to have to start doing it myself. So I decided to invite myself to the party. I will host my own show, have my own guests, talk about what I want to talk about, and I will cry if I want to – but I won't, I promise.

SO WHAT'S THE SCOOP?

In case you've missed the announcement the last few weeks, my show, Your PurposeQuest: The Power of a Focused Life, will air this Wednesday and every Wednesday after that on the Voice America Internet radio network. You need no special equipment to listen. Just go their website and go to their flagship station at 9 AM Eastern time (8 AM Central, 2 PM in the UK, 3 PM in Zimbabwe, 4 PM in Kenya or 9 PM in Singapore). The show will air again 12 hours after the initial broadcast, and it will be archived so you can listen or download any show at your convenience to listen on your computer or on your MP3 player. Just think, soon you can listen to me while you walk along the street or ride the bus! Pretty cool!

Here is the summary of this week's first show:

Episode One: Write a Book, Save a Child -- Have you ever thought about writing a book? Ever wanted to travel or start a company that will make the world a better place to live? If so, then you won't want to miss John Stanko's inaugural program with his guest, Diana Scimone. Diana is a publisher, author, world traveler and founder of "Not For Sale," a nonprofit organization working to alleviate the child trafficking problem around the world. Join John and Diana as they talk about writing, travel, purpose and how you can be a person of purpose, too!

So there you have it. You can call the show while it's live at 1.866.472.5787 or email me your questions before, during or after the show. Then tune in every week as I introduce you to people of purpose whom I've met over the years. I want to give you a chance to hear from people just like you, people who are struggling at times to clarify purpose. Yet they have made tremendous progress in their Quest and I want you to learn from them.

You know, however, that this isn't the only thing I want you to do. I'd love you to call, I want you to learn, but more importantly, I want you to find your own party and stop waiting for someone to invite you to theirs. As I start radio, ask yourself what you can do to come closer to fulfilling your purpose or a long-standing dream. It's within your grasp and you don't need anyone's permission to proceed. And when you find it, call my show and tell everyone what you've done and how you did it. Have a great week!

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

Monday Memo 349: Servant or Friend?

I have often said and heard it said, "I'll do whatever God wants me to do." While that sounds spiritual, in a sense it really isn't. How can saying, "I'll do God's will" be anything but spiritual? Have I gone too far this time in my pursuit of purpose and excellence? To find out and decide for yourself, you will have to read on.

A COP OUT

Sometimes saying you will do whatever God wants is a cop out. It enables you to avoid doing something by determining that you will do anything. It also makes you passive, waiting for God to reveal what that something may be. While you wait, you cannot be accountable to do something because the burden is on God to provide proof, beyond a reasonable doubt, that this or that is what He wants you to do.

There is a time when God trains you to do His will and, during that time, it is permissible and advisable to wait on Him. Yet at some point, and I'm really not sure where that some point is, you must begin to release what God has put in you. You will always be a servant of God, but at some point you must transition to also being a friend. While you are a friend, you are still a servant, but when you are a servant, you cannot be a friend.

Am I confusing you? Then let's consider something that Jesus said:

"You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name" (John 15:14–16).

NO LONGER JUST SERVANTS

While Jesus did command the disciples, He called them friends because they understood why they were doing what He commanded them to do. In some sense, you could say that they had the mind of Christ, for they knew what Jesus wanted them to do and why. That made them more than slaves; that made them friends. God wants the same kind of relationship with you.

If you are to have the mind of Christ, when do you receive it? The disciples were with Jesus for three years and they transitioned into friends of God. So how long have you been with Jesus? Are you His friend?

This is an important point because you can ask a servant, "What have you been commanded to do?" You can ask a friend, "What's in your heart to do?" When you are God's friend, you are no longer waiting to be commanded. You trust the work that God has done in you so completely that you begin to trust the very desires of your heart, knowing that God put them there. And they are joyful desires, things that will bring you and others great peace and laughter. Why wouldn't God want you to do those things?

Friends of God don't have to be afraid of Him any longer, or of the things that He has put in them to do. They can see that they are in a partnership, based in the grace of God, but one that gives God great pleasure. If the Spirit lives in you to give you the mind of Christ, why are you surprised that you have it? How long do you think the process will take? Ten years? Twenty? The disciples had the mind of Christ, in the power of the Spirit, in three years. If you have known Jesus for three years or more, it's time you did something with that relationship. It's time for you to become God's friend.

So what can you do this week with your role in life -- the friend of God? Whatever it is, I know it will bring you joy and extend God's kingdom into

some sphere of human existence. Enjoy it, trust God, and stop putting onto God what He has put into you. Have a great week!

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

Monday Memo 350: You Are The Problem

You may be the greatest obstacle you face in your PurposeQuest. It's not the economy, your education, how much money you have, or your age. The problem isn't any of those things. The problem is you. More specifically, it's the way you think.

What's more, you are probably trying to change yourself while holding on to old thought patterns, expecting different results while you think the same thoughts. You are seeking a personal transformation, and you are focusing on changing your habits, knowledge, spiritual disciplines or place of employment. If you are the problem, then wherever you go and whatever you do, you take you with you, along with your old habits of thought. When that happens, even if you pray or read the Bible more, you won't see any difference in your life.

You need to change your mind if you are going to change yourself. It's that simple, but that difficult.

SEND THEM HOME

In Matthew 14, Jesus had taught a large crowd of people in a remote place:

As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat" (Matthew 14:15-16).

What was the problem here? Was it the lateness of the hour? Was it the lack of food that the disciples had? Was it that the crowd, in their zeal to follow Jesus, had not given enough thought about what they would eat? The problem was this: The disciples were thinking too small and, consequently, only saw one option available to them at that moment. They suggested that Jesus dismiss the meeting and send the people home. Jesus had another idea and that was to take what the disciples had, bless it and then feed the people with that. We know that this is

what He did and the crowd of 5,000 plus women and children were fed with twelve baskets of leftovers.

WE STILL CAN'T DO IT

So the disciples learned their lesson, right? Wrong! In the very next chapter, they complained to Jesus that there was no way they could feed a smaller crowd in a similar situation (see Matthew 15:29–39). Jesus did the same thing He did in Matthew 14 and fed the crowd with what the disciples had. The disciples were still stuck in old patterns of thinking and that limited their creativity and ability to solve the problem that was before them.

How about you? Are you any different than those early disciples? The challenge isn't what you have and don't have. It's how you think about what you have, it's how you think about who you are. If you don't think you can, then you won't. You won't even try. If you think you can, better yet if you think God can through and with you, then God will plant new ideas and thoughts just like He did with the disciples when He said, "You give them something to eat."

Paul was clear. If you are going to be transformed, you must do so by renewing your mind (see Romans 12:1–2). That won't just happen, however, unless you take steps to make it happen. You must learn to be ruthless with your old thoughts that have gotten you nowhere and replace them with thoughts that can take you somewhere, thoughts full of faith and possibilities, not thoughts full of defeat and pessimism.

We will continue this discussion next week, but for this week, I want you to become aware -- aware of what you are thinking. Listen to yourself think; listen to what you say. Try to be more conscious of how you are limiting yourself, or how you are limiting what God can do with your loaves and fishes. Then next week we will look at what to do so that your thinking will no longer be the problem but the solution to your lack of progress in your PurposeQuest. Have a great week!