

Monday Memo 356: A Little at a Time

Today I am on my way to the Christian Booksellers Convention to premier my new book, *The Faith Files: The Gospels*. This is the first of three volumes that looks at every verse on faith in the New Testament, and there are a lot of them. I first wrote *The Faith Files* in 2001 and made the notes available to those who were receiving *The Monday Memo*. That is how I got started sending out my weekly Bible studies. (See the end of this Memo to find out how you can order a copy.)

When I finish working on Matthew later this year, I will complete my nineteenth New Testament book, doing a verse-by-verse study. It all started, however, with *The Faith Files*. If you have a project and don't know where to start - which should include just about everyone reading this Memo - I urge you to read on. If you don't think you can accomplish a lot by doing a little at a time, I urge you to read on as well.

HYPOCRITE!

In 2001, I was revising my first book, *Life is a Gold Mine*. At the end of the section faith, I urged readers to study all that Jesus and Paul had to say about faith as a way to increase their own faith. When I read that, I thought, "Hypocrite!" I was recommending that others do something that I had never done! I decided to rectify that by doing the study, which I thought would take a few days.

I looked up every verse in the New Testament that had the words faith, believe, believes, believing, unbelief, unbelieving and trust and found that there were hundreds of them! What I thought would take a few days required a few months! As I was compiling my notes on each verse and passage, I asked those who were reading *The Monday Memo* if they would like to receive my notes on what I came to call *The Faith Files*. Hundreds of people said they did. I would send out the notes every week to my mailing list that I compiled and maintained on my personal computer. It was a lot of work and I have never charged any money for any of my studies, and I have sent out millions of them.

You can see the unpublished portions of *The Faith Files* on my new website.

WHY STOP THERE?

After I completed my study of faith, I had an idea. I had always said that "one day" I wanted to write commentaries on the Bible. I decided to start such a study, determining that I would look at four verses every day and write some devotional material for those verses. At the end of every week, I would send out those notes to those who were already getting *The Faith Files*. The list continued to grow and today about 6,000 people receive my weekly studies.

You can see the past studies in the archives of my new site or subscribe to the weekly studies (currently from Matthew) on the site where those are posted every week.

So by studying four verses every day since 2002, I have completed studies of 19 New Testament books! Lord willing, I will have the entire New Testament completed by the end of 2009. Writing about four verses a day every day has enabled me to accomplish a huge task a little at a time. I exercise faith every day I sit down to write that I will see something in every verse and also see ways to help the reader apply those verses on that particular day.

Needless to say, I have learned a lot since I began writing those studies in 2001 and I hope my readers have, too. Now I excited to start publishing those studies with this first volume of The Faith Files. I know it is the first of many volumes to come.

So what about you? What can you accomplish if you do just a little every day? I have found that most people won't be anything because they can't see how to do everything. They won't give a little because they can't give a lot. Won't devote a little time because they don't have huge chunks of time. I decided to do what I could do every day -- four verses -- and now the end of my project is in sight. There's no telling what you can do if you apply the same principle.

Stop procrastinating and take one step at a time. If you keep putting one foot in front of the other, who knows how far you can go. The Chinese say that the journey of a 1,000 miles starts with the first step. Why not take your first steps this week? Have a great week. I know I will.

Monday Memo 357: What's In Your Hand?

Have you ever thought that you had nothing to give? Have things been so tight that you went into survival mode, doing what you could to keep your head above water? I've been there. When my wife and I began PurposeQuest International seven years ago, we had no money, support or income. I had written four books at that point and was known for my unique purpose message, but many of my former contacts and ministry partners were no longer a source of income-generating ministry opportunities after I started the company. In my mind, I had nothing to give, so I began only to focus on what I could do to generate revenue.

Yet I found that I had a lot to give. God used that season to expand my faith, which is still growing seven years later. What did we have to give? For the answer to that question, you will have to read on.

WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND?

Years before I stated my business, I was complaining to the Lord that I had no Christmas gifts to give anyone. While I was complaining, He reminded me three times that I had a nice library. I finally got the message and pulled books off my shelves to give away to family and friends. They were blessed and I learned an important lesson. I learned that I had something to give; I just didn't see it. Seven years ago, I wanted to apply that lesson as I started my company, but how?

Then I read Exodus 4:2-4 “Then the Lord said to him, ‘What is that in your hand?’ ‘A staff,’ he replied. The Lord said, ‘Throw it on the ground.’ Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the Lord said to him, ‘Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.’ So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand.” The Lord was teaching Moses to trust Him as He went to Egypt in the power of his purpose. That caused me to reconsider if there was anything I had to give at that time, even though I had no money.

As a result, I decided to start The Monday Memo. I’ve had many people tell me (even someone just last week) that I’m crazy to send The Memo and the weekly Bible studies free or charge. I saw it differently. If my message and company are to prosper, I have to sow some seed that will lead to a harvest. The Memo and Bible studies were the only things that I could give at that point in my life seven years ago. Just like Moses ran in fear when the Lord transformed his staff, so I went through many times of doubt and fear that the Lord would not provide, that the things I was giving away would not generate a return. Yet just as Moses touched the snake and it turned back into a staff, I have seen the Lord transform these free services into an abundant harvest.

THE FAITH FILES

Part of that harvest is my first volume of The Faith Files, released just last week. To the right is a picture My Book Signing of me standing at my publisher's booth prior to my book signing. I started by giving away The Faith Files, and now they are published. I’m not minimizing the importance of giving what financial resources you have, but there is often so much more that you can give even when you have no money. If you have nothing to give, then give away yourself, the essence of who you are. Take your purpose and apply it to the need of someone else, just like I’ve done with my weekly emails and watch God bless you.

As I write, I reflect on what Paul wrote: “And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will” (2 Corinthians 8:5-6). Is there someone to whom you can give yourself and it will possibly be the best gift they’ve ever had? If you can organize, go organize someone’s home or office? If you can fix things, go gather things that are broken, repair them and make them even better than they were before they broke. And last and not least, you can also give them a gift subscription to The Monday Memo!

I’ve often said that God has a big book and a sharp pencil and He records everything you do for Him. In the fullness of time, He rewards you. God is a debtor to no man, nor can any man give more than He does. So take some time this week to determine what you have in your hand. Do your best to produce an atmosphere of giving in faith and let’s see how you can make your purpose a part of that giving. Have a great week!

Feel free to add your comments on the site where this entry is posted. Monday Memo 358: Eyes Wide Open

I love to talk and teach about faith. In my latest book, *The Faith Files*, I mix some personal faith stories with my study of faith in the New Testament. In my introduction to Matthew's gospel in the book, I relate one my all-time favorite faith testimonies and now I want to share it with you. To get the rest of the stories, you will have to buy the book. For now, you can read on.

A HOUSE FOR SALE

At one point in our marriage, my wife and I needed a new home. We thought the obstacle in our way was the home we had that we first needed to sell. Faith requires action, so we asked ourselves, "What can we do in faith that would be a step closer to our new home?" The answer was easy: we put our house on the market to sell.

After several months, nothing happened. So we asked ourselves the same question: "What can we do in faith?" We decided the next step was to go out and look for a new house. After all, we reasoned, it didn't cost anything just to look.

To our surprise, we fell in love with the first house we saw. I can still remember our seven-year-old son running through the house, saying, "Bless the Lord, oh my soul!" We went home confident that we had found our new home, but unable to do anything until we sold our old one.

Another few weeks went by, and we asked ourselves that same question as to what we could do. We weren't experienced home-buyers, but we thought that we could make an offer on the new house contingent upon selling the old one. We did that and the sellers accepted our bid. We then had until a certain date by which we had to sell the current home to move into the new or the deal was off.

Over the next six weeks, we had only one East Indian family look at our house. They gave us a bid and it was so low that we didn't even counter offer. We thought they weren't serious. Then we came to within a week of our deadline and we prayed as a family at the dinner table one evening, "Lord, show us what we're not seeing here." What you aren't seeing is often the key to your faith breakthrough.

A HOUSE SOLD

Our four-year-old left the table and shortly came running back in to announce, "Daddy, the Indian family just drove by."

It was then that I saw what we had not seen. We had sold our house, just not for the price we expected. I contacted our realtor and instructed her to make the best deal she could with the Indian family. She did and we sold our house just thirty-six hours before our deadline. There was only one remaining problem. We did not have the \$10,000 we needed to get into the new home, since we had sold our house for much less than we had

anticipated. You may suspect what happened next. Someone gave us the money and we closed on our new house that faith had made possible.

I have come to realize that faith isn't so much an event as a lifestyle. We must learn to trust God for many other instances like our home sale and purchase. I have drawn lessons from that story for many years and present it to you to see if you can apply it to your current situation.

If you are going to fulfill your purpose or obtain any breakthrough, you will need to act in faith. God isn't against you, He is for you and He will help you, but you must have the courage to do something in faith. More importantly, you will need to see what it is that you can't see that may be blocking your path. In other words, you need faith, but you need to have your eyes wide open. Ask God this week to show you what you aren't seeing and then be prepared to act, for I anticipate that God will answer your prayer. When He does, I know you will have a great week.

Monday Memo 359: Doubt Power

Did you know that doubt is as powerful as faith? I was writing my weekly Bible study the other day and I came to Matthew 21:21-22. Jesus had just cursed a fig tree and it withered from the roots up. The disciples asked how this could happen and Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

Now how can I or anyone say that doubt has power? Is that crazy, or what? To find out, you will have to read on.

SINS OF OMISSION

It seems to me that God is always doing new and fresh things in my life and probably in yours. Yet there is one thing that can stop God's work and that is doubt. If faith can throw a mountain into the sea, then doubt can keep it where it is. If faith can wither a fig tree, doubt can keep a leafy but fruitless tree fruitless. If faith is active, doubt is also active, in a passive kind of way. Doubt works to prevent you from acting, so it is indeed active -- it "works" to talk you out of something that is in your power to do, rendering you passive.

St. Thomas Aquinas taught about "sins of omission," not causing a good in your power to produce, which isn't the same as a sin of commission, which is taking up an active evil. Many people are content because they do not commit acts of commission, while they live with acts of omission every day, usually caused by doubt. They live in what I would call doubt power, when we are to live in faith power.

DOUBT POWER

Doubt power is, well, it's powerful. It makes one so concerned about missing God that one can miss God. It is so concerned about doing the wrong thing that it does no-thing. Doubt is so consumed with what others will think that it damages one's decision-making capabilities. I would say that doubt carries with it an equal and opposite force to that of faith. Would you agree?

This is not a debate about the philosophy of faith and doubt. Jesus told us to exercise faith and not doubt. Yet I look for the "balance" in what Jesus said, for surely He didn't mean that anything I ask for in faith I will receive -- or did He? Where are the limits? Where can I go wrong? While I try to figure out those answers, I live with sins of omission every day, more worried about the sins I "may" commit instead of good deeds that I could also "commit."

So what kind of power do you want to live in this week? Do you want to exercise your doubt to keep things as they are, or faith to move forward and progress? I know, I know. You knew a person who knew someone who one time lost everything because they acted in what they thought was faith. I know, I know. You once looked like a fool when you acted in faith and fell flat on your face. Yet I would imagine you also know a person who knew someone who acted in faith and did something great. I would also think that you did the same thing once, and it was grand. You still talk about it all the time.

So why let doubt rob you of your faith success this week? The choice is yours to live in doubt power or faith power. I vote for faith, and I know you do, too. Have a great week!

Feel free to add your comments on the site where this entry is posted.

Monday Memo 360: You Have an Assignment

I am regularly asked one question when I teach on goals or productivity: "There are so many things I want to do and feel like I need to do - how can I find the time to do them?" My answer is that you cannot find time; you already have all the time there is -- 24 hours every day. Often you must stop doing something before you can do the things you need or would like to do. I have found that a key is to clarify your values and then allow your goals and daily tasks to flow out of your values system. Let me give you an example.

BACK TO SCHOOL

One of my ten values is that "I am a learner." I don't want to stop learning or I will stop growing as a leader and person. Since learning is a value, I set a goal every year to read or listen to five books every month. So far this year, I have finished 35 books. Do you see how my goal isn't something I have to do; it's something I choose to do? It is like brushing my teeth; I read every day because it is important to me. I don't even have to think about it.

And now I am enduring a grueling class schedule and study program to earn an advanced degree at the age of 58. Why would I do this? I do it because it's a value. What's more, I do it because I love it.

Identifying your values isn't the most exciting work you can do, but it's important work nonetheless. While I am sitting in class from 8 AM to 4:30 PM every day this week doing my assignments, I have an assignment for you.

ATTENTION CLASS!

1. Go to my website and download the article entitled "How to Define Your Governing Values." This article is an actual chapter from my book, *So Many Leaders, So Little Leadership*. (If you already have that book, refer to chapter two.) Read through the article to get an idea of how I recommend you go about recognizing and writing out your values. Don't worry if it seems a bit strange or awkward. There is no wrong way to do it. You won't be tested; this is for your eyes only!
2. Set aside one or two hours this week. Get up early each morning, don't watch television this week, but do whatever you have to do to find two hours this week. Promise yourself that you will do this and keep the commitment. (If you already have your values defined, is it time to review what you have?)
3. Once you have identified your values following my instructions, you can then begin to set goals and daily activities focusing on things that you value, things that should govern your life and time by their prominent place in your heart.
4. Most importantly, you may have to have a stop to-do list that will free up some time currently devoted to the urgent that you can then invest in the important.

There is no shortcut to being productive and self-disciplined. If you are serious about answering the question, "How do I find time to do important things?", however, then you must be serious about defining and writing out your values. While you are doing this and I am in class, I know that we will all have a great week of learning!