

Monday Memo 361: You Don't Have Time

There are two types of people in the world of productivity. There are those who say they don't have enough time and they don't. Then there are those who say they don't have enough time and they don't. Confused? You should be, for I have defined two separate groups with the identical phrase. What could I possibly mean by this? Ah, to find out, you will have to read on.

GROUP ONE

The first group doesn't get things done that they would like to do because they are waiting for conditions to be just right before they move forward. They are waiting to have the mortgage paid off, the children to be grown and gone, their retirement years to arrive, or a ton of money saved in the bank. Then there are others who are waiting for unrealistic chunks of time to become available before they even start on their goal or dream.

I once had someone say to me, "I wish I could go off for about eight weeks and do nothing but write! Then I could get something done." I replied, "Believe me, you don't know what you are asking. If you ever have eight free or uninterrupted weeks to do something, that means you have lost your job, broken your leg or are recovering from a heart attack!" The people in this group remind me of what the wisdom writer had to say: "Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap" (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

Some of those in group one are perfectionists; others are fearful that they can't produce or do what they want, so they use the excuse that they don't have time to prevent them from ever starting or seriously planning.

GROUP TWO

Then there is group two who says they don't have time and they are correct -- they really don't! This group, including yours truly, usually tries to shoe horn four hours work into two hours. We can't say "no," so we tend to overcommit, believing that all things are possible for those who work hard and are called according to His purpose (a slight variation on Romans 8:28). Our to-do list is as long as our arm and even then we feel like we are underachieving.

For group one, the solution is to be realistic. You usually don't have huge blocks of uncommitted time, so you must learn to use what you have. This group must also deal with their unrealistic perfectionism, which says that only the perfect will do in any situation. This group would do well to heed the verses immediately following the verse mentioned above: "As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well (Ecclesiastes 11:5-6).

For group two, the solution is also a dose of realism. If we are doing to do some of the things we want to do, we must stop doing some of the things we are currently doing. There is only one way that I could embrace going to school and that was to stop traveling as much as I was. There are only 24 hours in a day and no matter how organized or committed you are, there are limitations. Where are those limits? I don't know; that's what you have to find out. For group one, the answer is a to-do list; the answer for group two is a stop to-do list.

I know which group I am in. Into which group do you fall? It would be good to find out and then take steps this week that will enable you to do some of the things that are important to you and that are in your heart to do. Discover this week why you don't have enough time and then find the proper mindset that will enable you to produce. The answer is to get more busy so you can use the time you have or to get less busy so you can use the time you have. Have a great week!

Monday Memo 362: Nice Fruit

Have you ever heard anyone quote John 15 where Jesus said that apart from Him you can do nothing? I heard my pastor say it the other night and some people responded "Amen," as well they should. It is a truth that we need to hear as we seek to fulfill our purpose and be productive. Did you know, however, that the opposite of what Jesus said is also true? What do I mean by that? You know by now I won't give you any hints, otherwise you won't have any incentive to read on.

THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE

So if Jesus said that apart from Him you can do nothing, isn't it true that in Him you can do anything? Alright, maybe not everything, but something? Let's look at the entire passage and you'll see what I mean:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples (John 15:1-8).

Jesus said if you don't abide in Him you can't do anything; if you do, however, you will bear much fruit. If you don't, you are a useless branch and will be pruned and burned. Of course, if you are fruitful, you will also be pruned and burned, but that is so you will bear

more fruit. That is another message for another time. Did you also notice that if you abide in Jesus, you can ask for whatever you wish and it will be given to you? So while the warning of what you can't do without Jesus is real, what you can do is much more prevalent in this passage.

NICE FRUIT OR REAL FRUIT?

Many people are content with bearing fruit in the context of holiness, which is very often not bearing bad fruit, which we equate with sinful behavior. They want to bear "nice fruit." They believe if they don't get impatient, for example, then they are bearing good fruit, fruit of the Spirit even. Yet I would argue that we have our concept of fruit all mixed up.

Let's continue to reflect on patience. Do you think God wants you to develop patience where His purpose for you is concerned? Do you think if your purpose is to save orphans, that God wants you to be patient with child abuse, slavery or exploitation? Instead of bearing fruit by opening orphanages, you think good fruit is not doing anything and then you call that patience? Do you think that is what Jesus was teaching in John 15? I don't. Do you think you will find or accomplish your purpose without offending someone who doesn't want you to do what God wants? I don't.

I would argue that so many people are worried about doing something that isn't the will of God that they often miss what they could do. Perhaps that's not true in your life, but it's sure been true in mine. I have been so cautious that I have missed many opportunities and then I didn't pray for as much as I could because I did not want to pray for too much. Crazy thinking, isn't it?

So what fruit are you bearing since you are in Jesus and His words have made you clean? What are you praying and doing with the results of those prayers? How lofty are your goals? How ambitious your plans to change the world, or at least your world?

I urge you to study John 15 this week not for the warning of what happens when you don't abide, but from the perspective of what will happen when you do. Then get out there and bear some fruit that is consistent with being connected to the Lord of the universe. By doing so, you will glorify God and show yourself to be good disciples. Have a great week!

Feel free to comment on this entry on the site where it is posted.

Monday Memo 363: Reverse the Curse

I have what may be a radical concept to share in this week's Memo. If I am wrong, it won't matter much. If I am right, however, it could mean a movement of unprecedented proportions as people of purpose join together to accomplish significant things to address serious problems and launch creative initiatives. If you are interested in such possibilities, you want to read on.

A BIG PROJECT

In Genesis 11, we have the story of a group of citizens who joined together to build a tower. We aren't sure what this tower was. Some think it was to be a refuge from any future floods like Noah's. Others believe it was some kind of Temple or shrine to the gods. Whatever it was, God looked at it and didn't like it.

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other" (Genesis 11:5-7).

God saw something in this tower that wasn't good and he knew their ability to communicate with one another was the source of their strength to accomplish this deed. So the Lord actually stepped in and confused the languages of the people so they could not understand one another. That project was called the tower of Babel, babel being a word close the Hebrew word for confused.

REVERSE THE CURSE

So mankind was plagued with many languages that confused communication and hindered their ability to work one with another. If the Lord cursed mankind with confusion and communication problems, however, could He not also reverse that curse and restore man's ability to work together? Does the reverse-curse process as possible as the initial intervention that caused the confusion in the first place? I think it does.

In Christ, our ability to join and work together to extend the kingdom of God was and is restored. You can discover your purpose, I can clarify mine and together we can join together in the power of God and perhaps "nothing they [we] plan to do will be impossible for them [us]." We can become tremendously productive together if we have the right motivation. Their motivation in Genesis 11 was to build a name for themselves. Our motivation is to glorify God's name (this reminds me of what we looked at last week in John 15).

I am a firm believer in synergy, which is when the sum of the parts is greater than their individual sums. When synergy occurs, one plus one equals five, ten or however much God allows it to be. If you believe God reversed the curse of Genesis 11, what are you doing with that power? On and from what team are you producing great results for Him? Where does your purpose join with others to create a divine dynamic of productivity? I don't think this has to take place in a church setting, for we should be building hospitals, starting businesses and creating whole industries that meet the needs of others in the power of our united purposes in Him.

What can you do with this concept? At this point, I would be convinced that it's true if I were you. If it's not, then please disregard this Memo! If it is, however, then I would look to join with some other people of purpose to build a team that can create something

significant. You know I am a firm believer in individual creativity and productivity, but I know we as purposeful individuals will learn how to work with one another in ways that will achieve good results for and in His name. And when we do, to God be the glory! Have a great week.

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

Monday Memo 364: Big Fruit

This past week I went to our local farmer's market and the vegetables were the biggest I've seen this year because it's the end of the summer. That gave me an idea for this week's Memo. Two weeks ago I wrote about Nice Fruit, where I mentioned that the Lord isn't simply interested in you being holy, but both holy and productive. This week I want to write about what I call Big Fruit.

HE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH

In John 14:12, Jesus made this astounding statement: "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." Did you ever notice how often Jesus said, "I tell you the truth"? It's because what He was about to say would sound so preposterous to the small thinking of His audience that He had to assure them He was not exaggerating.

Now think for a minute. In your opinion, what was the greatest thing that Jesus did? Most people respond that it was when He raised the dead. If that's true, then what could be a greater work than raising a dead person? Raising more dead people? Clearing out a cemetery or hospital?

Most people don't think much about this verse because they don't really believe that they can top what Jesus did, regardless of what they consider His greatest works. When you think like that, however, you miss a dynamic that could greatly help you be more productive and bear big fruit.

Jesus did fabulous things but there were some things He didn't do. Jesus never opened an orphanage. He never wrote a book. As far as we know, He never opened a hospital or organized a group to go on a mission of mercy to a foreign land. He never started a business and never gave a large sum of money to a worthy cause. Why didn't He do those things? He left them for you and me to do.

I promise that I am telling you the truth about the truth that Jesus told you He was telling you about.

YOUR BIG FRUIT

So if you believe in Jesus, and I hope you do, why aren't you doing greater things than He did? Perhaps you have underestimated just how important and possible it would be to

actually achieve the things that are in your heart today. You may ask, “Who am I to think about doing those things?” If you believe in Jesus, the answer is, “Who are you not to think like that?”

The question you have to settle is whether or not John 14:12 only applies to a select few or to every believer. If it’s for you, then you have some work to do. The good news is that you’re not alone if your work is coupled with faith. With faith, you are guaranteed that your results will be great, greater than you could ever imagine because God is with you. You can produce big fruit.

What have you said someone ought to do? Could that someone be you? Write in your journal what about your big fruit. You don’t have to know how you will do it right now; you just have to know what it is. Once you write it out, study and embellish it. Let it become a part of your thinking every day.

If there's something you can do to make it a reality, what would it be? Do you need to go back to school? Do you need to have money to do produce your big fruit? You may meet someone this week who can help you develop a plan or even give you the money for your big fruit. First and foremost, however, is that you must believe that big fruit is within your grasp. Once you decide that it is, you are well on your way to producing it. Have a great week.

Monday Memo 365: You Are Not a Cat

There is an old saying that curiosity killed the cat. Curious by nature, cats can get into trouble and even die when they allow their curiosity to lead them where they don't need to go. You are not a cat, however, and the opposite can be true for you. Your curiosity will seldom harm you and, what's more, your purpose can be hindered and thwarted if you don't follow your interests and curiosity. Allow me to explain.

A CURIOUS SIGHT

I was meeting with someone in a purpose coaching session the other day and I asked her a Bible question: "When did God speak to Moses from the burning bush?" The answer is found in Exodus 3:2-3: "Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.'"

God did not whistle and call Moses over to the bush. Moses had seen a lot of burning bushes in the desert over the years, but this one was different. It was burning but it was not consumed. So Moses followed his curiosity and, when he arrived at the bush, God spoke to him and told him to take off his shoes.

I asked the woman with whom I was meeting the question about Moses because she was telling me what so many people tell me: She was waiting on the Lord. While this sounds spiritual, it is often an attempt to avoid personal responsibility in making any decision

about what to do and not to do. If you put all the burden on the Lord to "prove" to you that there is something you need to do, you are basically saying, "Unless You drop a piano in front of me (or on top of me) from the top of a high building, Lord, I am going to keep doing what I'm doing and getting the same results I have always received. If I don't do more it's Your fault because You didn't show me."

A CURIOUS LEADING

Since you are not a cat, your curiosity not only doesn't kill, but it serves an important purpose, often leading you where you need to be. Stop scrutinizing your interests and thoughts. You need to chill out, relax and realize that God is with you and is directing your interests and, yes, even your curiosities.

I love school and learning. So I have enrolled in biblical Hebrew not because it is required but rather because I want to learn it. I am taking a two-week course in Quickbooks so I can understand that accounting software and use it in my business. Did God tell me to do those things? Well, indirectly He did, for I was curious and now that I am in those classes, He is "speaking" to me. Perhaps God isn't speaking to you because you are insisting that God has to speak to you where you are and not where He wants you to be. You want to hear His voice now and He wants to speak to you when you are where He wants you to be. Guess who will win that battle of wills?

How will you know where you are supposed to be? At least some of the time you will know because you followed your curiosities, nothing more and nothing less. Why not follow your interests and let curiosity lead you this week? It may not be the voice of God, but if you follow it, it may lead you to a place where you will hear what you have been wanting to hear -- the voice of God clearly directing your path. Have a great week!