

## **Monday Memo 376: Trash Talking**

Greetings from Kenya! It's great to be back after a one-year absence. Sorry I didn't get the Memo out yesterday, but I was in transit. While I was flying over, however, I was reflecting on what a good warrior King David was, in spite of his trash talking. Do you know what trash talking is? It's a sports term used when someone talks or even brags about what he (or she) is going to do to the opposition. How does this fit with your PurposeQuest? You know by now that to find out you will have to read on.

### **TRASH TALKING**

When David went out to face Goliath, he didn't sound very "Christian." In fact, he sounded more like a trash-talking braggart than a humble servant of God. Let's look at what David said to Goliath:

David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands" (1 Samuel 17:45-47).

David did not say what he might do; he didn't talk about what could happen if God helped him. No, he said in no uncertain terms that he was going to defeat Goliath, cut off his head and parade it around for all to see. There was nothing tentative about David's speech; he was certain of what he could do and he said so. It wasn't braggadocious; it was a statement of fact.

### **FAITH TALKING**

Did David engage in trash talking or faith talking? While some may think it's the former, I think it was the latter. He was so convinced that God was with him that he spoke strongly and acted accordingly. He did that, however, because David thought correctly. David's victory began in his mind, when he told Saul:

But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:34-37).

You can be sure that your victories and defeats begin in your mind just like in the case of David. If your thoughts are rightly aligned with God's purpose for you, you will talk and act with great power. If you are tentative, cautious and apprehensive, you will act the

same way. So what's it to be? Do you want to be nice and polite or do you want to say what you are going to do in the will and purpose of God? I hope you go the route that David went, for your Goliaths will not be defeated by half-way measures, but by right thinking expressed in positive speech that leads to victorious action. Have a great week!

## **Monday Memo 377: What Aren't You Saying?**

Last week we looked at one aspect of the story of David and Goliath. I pointed out that David engaged in some "trash talking," which was describing out loud what he was going to do to Goliath, his opponent. If David was like some people I know (including me), he would have said, "Well, maybe, I mean, perhaps the Lord may want to use me, but don't get me wrong, I'm not saying I know for sure and if something good does happen, it will be the Lord and not me. I don't want you to ever think it's me."

Fortunately, David was of a different mindset. When Goliath verbally attacked, David was quick to respond. What bravado, courage and confidence David had! There was nothing tentative in what he said or planned to do. He was bold and specific. God isn't repelled by such bold talk; that talk drew Him to David's cause. He promptly went out with David to meet the giant. David made good on his promises, while Goliath died trying to figure out what went wrong.

### **WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?**

How can you apply this lesson to your life right now? First, David had a track record from which he could draw. He had killed lions and bears, and he saw killing this giant as a continuation of those exploits. You must allow God to put you in challenging situations so that, when you overcome, you will be able to refer back to those experiences to fight future battles.

Second, you must know who you are and what you want to do. David did not hold back; he was clear and concise. He said, "I am a champion of God and you, Goliath, are not. You are coming down, in spite of your size, words and confidence."

Finally, David said what he was going to do without fear of what others thought of him. He spoke positive, affirming, and powerful words and then set about fulfilling them.

### **WHAT AREN'T YOU SAYING?**

What are you speaking these days? A better question is what aren't you speaking? Tentative, faithless words produce tentative, faithless actions. Positive, powerful words produce the same. Stop being hesitant and fearful of making bold statements where your purpose and dreams are concerned. Dream great things, talk about them and don't worry about how you sound to other people. Only be concerned with how you sound to God.

Dream great things, talk about doing them and then go for it! It's simple to describe but not simple to do, I know. I also know that you can only do great things once you stop

stumbling and mumbling through your purpose and dreams. Proverbs 18:21 says that life and death are in the power of the tongue. So what you say and what you don't say can bring either life or death, success or failure, victory or defeat. Every day this week, you need to follow David's example and not only what you say but also what you don't say -- and start saying it. Otherwise your tentative words will lead to tentative actions and next year you will get more of what you had this year, which may or may not be a satisfying thought. Have a great week!

## **Monday Memo 378: What Not How**

Christmas is fast approaching and it easy to miss the significance of the event due to the busyness of family and church commitments. So I thought we would take the three remaining Mondays in 2008 to focus on three significant characters in the Christmas story -- Mary, the shepherds and the Magi. Let's start this week with Mary.

### **GOD WILL ANNOUNCE THE WHAT. . .**

In past Monday Memos, I wrote about the importance of learning to focus on the "what" and not the "how." When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she was pregnant with Jesus, he delivered the "what" to that young girl. She was to give birth to a Son and He would change the world. This would be a lot of "what" information to deliver to anyone, let alone a young teenaged girl. And like so many of us, Mary immediately began to think of the "how."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34).

The angel was patient with this young girl, more patient than he had been with her cousin's husband Zechariah, who was unable to talk for nine months after he asked, "How?". The angel told Mary:

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35).

I contend that Mary had no more information after the angel answered than before she asked. To understand what I mean, read on.

### **. . . AND THEN HE WILL TAKE CARE OF THE HOW**

Mary could have responded to the angel, "Huh?" When we hear "Holy Spirit," we have a well-developed theology to understand who He is and what He does. Mary, however, had no such thing. When the angel answered her question "how" with, "The Holy Spirit will take care of it," she still had no idea what that meant. Do you see how this relates to your current situation?

You know what you want to do, and you may even know your purpose. You, however, want to know how? How will your book be published? How will your singing career be launched? How will you get the money to start your business? How can you pay for your degree? How will you find your life partner? The answer to every question you pose is

the same answer Mary received: The Holy Spirit will do it! The angel added these words for good measure; "For nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

Since the answer to your question is the same as Mary received, then your response should be the same as Mary's:

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38).

The angel told Mary in so many words, "You just focus on the what. Let God handle the how." That was good advice then and it's good advice now. Do you see how liberating this is for you? You can focus on getting ready for the what and leave the how in God's hands. You can enjoy your PurposeQuest because you don't to have all the answers. You just have to sit back and watch it all unfold. Now that I've made your life easier, you can enjoy a what-filled week and holiday season while you leave the how to Him.

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

## **Monday Memo 379: Daylight on the Night Shift**

This week I retrieve a Memo from the recent archives as we take a look at the shepherds at the birth of Jesus. I wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas as you celebrate the birth of Christ this coming week. But for now, let's learn something about daylight on the night shift!

### **THE NIGHT SHIFT**

The shepherds in the Christmas story 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 conscious being 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 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. You may even want to thank Him for your purpose whether or not you understand what it is. 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! Merry Christmas!

## **Monday Memo 380: The Wise Guys**

As I write, I am sitting in New York City, here to visit family for a few days. We have looked at Mary and the shepherds this holiday season. Let's wrap up by looking at one of my favorite aspects of the Christmas story -- the Magi.

### **WHO WERE THOSE MEN?**

Who were those wise guys known as Magi who came from the east to visit Jesus and bring him gifts? (You can read this brief story by at Matthew 2:1-12.) We aren't really sure. Nor do we know what they were looking for as they studied the heavens and what kind of star they saw that caused them to follow it hundreds of miles to find an infant king.

There were probably more than three men who came to see Jesus, but we have numbered them as three since they brought three gifts of myrrh, incense and gold. They rode on

camels for days, weeks even, not sure of what they would find when they arrived. Now that's faith!

When they did arrive, they checked with King Herod, convinced that he would know where the royal infant was. It is interesting that the wise men knew more of what was going on spiritually in Herod's kingdom than Herod did.

By the time the Magi arrived, Joseph, Mary and Jesus were living in a house, not in a stable, so they came some time after the night the shepherds went to see Jesus in the manger. Since Herod carefully ascertained when the star had first appeared and then had all the male babies two years of age and under killed in Bethlehem, the Magi could have arrived as much as two years after Jesus birth. That's a long time to watch and follow a star.

### **FOLLOW YOUR OWN STAR**

You will need God's help if you are to find and fulfill your purpose. That's not a problem, however, for God is in the business of helping people like you clarify purpose. When Jesus was born, His star appeared and led those who were interested directly to his home. The same thing can happen today for you. God can lead and guide you right where you need to be at exactly when you need to be there. Oftentimes when you can't see your purpose, you aren't quite ready to find it. Yet if you keep searching and following just like the Magi did, your star will appear and suddenly your PurposeQuest will all make sense.

As we prepare to celebrate a new year, I urge you to follow in the footsteps of the Magi. Wise men and women still seek Jesus and, as they do, they find purpose. I pray that 2009 will be a year of purpose and productivity the likes of which you have never seen, imagined or enjoyed. I also pray that when you find the star and follow it, you will end up as the Magi did--worshiping the King and giving Him gifts. There is no greater gift than devoting and dedicating the fulfillment of your purpose to Christ and His kingdom. That is what I plan on doing in the year ahead.

From all the Stanko household, we wish you a very happy, prosperous and purposeful New Year!

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