

396: Encore!

Since it is my birthday today and in light of just finishing my latest book manuscript (it is off to the publisher), I decided to dip back into the archives for this week's Memo. Actually, I found this encore Memo when I was researching some material on failure for my latest book. The Memo below appeared under the title Failure P.S. last May and was the final Memo in a series on learning to celebrate failure. I hope you enjoy this edited and encore presentation of Monday Memo 342.

My wife and I moved into a brand new house this past week! 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.

THROUGH THE RAIN

This morning I walked through our youth department at church and heard a song from the movie, Joseph King of Dreams. The song title is You Know Better Than I. I invite you to watch and listen to the song and see if it speaks to you like it did to me.

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, celebrating the goodness of God while I do with my life 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.

Amen and amen. Now that you have overcome your fear of failure, it's time to go and do something great for Him!

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

397: Work, Ministry and Purpose

Are you stuck where purpose is concerned? Are you confused about the difference between ministry and purpose? Do you understand the potential difference between your purpose and your occupation? If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, then this Memo is for you. If you answered them no, then this Memo is still for you because I am

using a different format this week that requires you to do some work! In other words, this Memo is for you, so you had better read on and not miss out.

PURPOSEFUL MINISTRY

I have noticed that we allow people to do "anything" they want in the church, as long as it's ushering, nursery or choir! How and when did we lose our sense of creativity in ministry? In part, it is because we have assumed that only those who derive their income from ministry are truly in ministry, and those are usually pastors, administrators and musicians.

That leaves everything else for the "non-ministry" people to do. Consequently, too many people see themselves as not doing ministry, even though they have important things to do in the church. Thus the church loses valuable human resources and their gifts, all because of bad thinking.

PurposeCoach Points: 1) You may already have a ministry, even though you are working outside the church. 2) God may also want you to work in the church without pay as He provides your needs through your job.

CASE STUDY

Consider this case study of Paul and see if you can answer these questions:

1. What did Paul do for a living? (see Acts 18:3).
2. Who wrote the book of Acts? (his name begins with L)
3. Do you think it's interesting that Paul wrote 13 letters in the New Testament, but never mentioned what he did to make a living?
4. In every letter, however, Paul mentioned what his purpose was (go to Acts 26:9-19 and see if you can describe Paul's purpose in a short phrase. Need help? Then go to Galatians 2:7).
5. Can you find those references that Paul wrote? if not, then go to my site and look for the article, *Paul: A Man of Purpose*.

So what is the significance for you?

1. Define our purpose by what you do that gives you pleasure and serves Him and not by what you do for a living.
2. You don't have to be paid by a church to work in a church. In fact, Jesus never recruited anyone to a paid position with benefits!
3. Be creative and define your purpose according to who you are, not by what already exists.

I have given you some work to do this week, so you had better get busy. As you study and reflect on what I wrote, however, I know it will help you have a great week! Blessings!

Memo 398: Purpose Ramblings

I feel pensive and reflective as I sit at my desk to write this Memo. So allow me to share some random ramblings with you about purpose. I won't follow the format of any past Memos, but here goes.

1. My most recent purpose coaching sessions have been fascinating. They have all been accompanied by tears, something that happened twenty years ago when I first presented purpose and has not stopped. When you realize that God knows your name and that you have something from Him so deeply ingrained in who you are, it is hard not to weep for joy.

2. It has taken me 15-20 minutes in my last few sessions to get to the bottom of someone's purpose, or at least to give them a lot of things about which to think and pray. I hope those I am coaching don't dismiss the results because they come so quickly.

3. To be good at something, anything, you must put the hours and effort into developing your greatness. I have sat with more than 2,500 people in the last ten years in one-on-one purpose sessions. I would like to think God has helped me hone my skill.

4. I am often sad that I don't speak or preach more regularly, but the other day I had this thought: "If I was preaching, I probably would not be writing as much as I do." God closed one door and opened another. He knows what He is doing.

5. I still have the duty to find more opportunities to use my speaking gift, so I am teaching some classes at the Center for Urban Biblical Ministry. I just finished a class entitled, Messianic Prophecies: The Old Testament in the New. It was a great class!

6. I am now writing a daily Proverb and one inspirational quote on Twitter and Facebook for my "twitterati" and "friends." Here is one from the other day:

"There comes a special moment in everyone's life, a moment for which that person was born. That special opportunity when he seizes it, will fulfill his mission - a mission for which he is uniquely qualified. In that moment, he finds greatness. It is his finest hour" - Winston Churchill.

7. Oh, how I wish I could reach more young people with the purpose message. I just wrote an article for someone in the UK by the title, "Never Too Young for Purpose." I am attaching it to this Memo below.

8. I am selling more of my *Daily of Proverbs* books than ever before. There is no feeling like selling something you have written and then have people come back to tell you they enjoyed it.

Okay, I invite and even challenge you to write me this week with one purpose rambling from your own experience. Click here so you can add it to the end of this entry on the site where it is posted. Have a great week!

399: Dorcas

I can't believe it. I have written 398 Memos and I have never, ever written about one of my favorite stories? I checked and rechecked and it's true. There's no way that can be true, but it is. What an oversight. Here is the story:

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor. About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!" Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord (Acts 9:36-42).

ANALYSIS

If you are like me, for many years, I made Peter the focus when I read that passage. For this Memo, let's make Dorcas the focus. If Dorcas was alive today, she would have a sewing machine, a source for material and a heart to sew for the poor. She was a "nothing" woman - she had no prestige or position - in a "nowhere" village who was helping 'nobody' people. Dorcas had nothing going for her except that she was a woman of purpose, always doing good and helping the poor. Therefore in reality, she had everything going for her.

In her day of trouble, when she could not cry out on her own behalf, the evidence of a life yielded to God's purpose cried out for her. Peter, the most significant spiritual leader at the time, broke off what he was doing to come down and view her dead body. He was so moved both by how much everyone missed Dorcas and by the impact she had made while she was alive that he brought her back from the dead to continue her work.

Once that happened, a revival broke out in Dorcas' village and she never even preached a message. She just did good deeds for poor people. What an amazing story.

APPLICATION

Do you see any needs around you that you can meet like Dorcas did? If you do, what are you waiting for? Go meet them! Are you hung up on what you don't have and what you can't do? Then start focusing on what you do have and can do. Have you convinced yourself that you can't make a difference in the world around you, or have you chosen not to make that difference? Either way, your thinking is wrong! The only reason you can't is that you have told yourself you can't and it has become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Please take the lessons from Dorcas' life to heart this week and follow her example. When you do, you have all of heaven's attention, no matter how trivial or insignificant what you are doing seems to be. It's time to stop examining what you don't have and consider what you do have, and that is a purpose that no one else can perform like you. It's time that you answer a difficult and challenging question: When you leave, will people miss you like they missed Dorcas? The only way you will be able to answer "yes" is to start fulfilling your purpose today, right now. As you do, you will not only have a great week, but also a great life.

400: More Ramblings

This is Monday Memo 400. It's hard to believe I have been writing the Memo for more than eight years. What started simply has taken on a life of its own, with its own site and a pretty hefty following. I have found something to write about on 400 Sunday evenings when I sat down at the computer and i have learned a lot in the process. Here are some of my thoughts, which you may consider ramblings:

1. I have grown more confident in my writing skills since 2001 and it serves me well as I continue to write books and produce papers for my classes at Reformed Presbyterian Seminary. The more I write, the more I want to write. It is almost addictive.

2. When I am afraid, I procrastinate. What am I afraid of? Mostly I am afraid I don't have time to produce something of the quality I desire, so I find all kinds of excuses to put off trying. I have come to the conclusion that most procrastination is rooted in fear.

3. As I have become a better writer, I have been able to encourage others to take the "plunge" and write, too. There are many today who write their own regular updates because of the Monday Memo and I consider that an honor.

4. Every year I seriously consider whether or not I should stop writing the Memo. I am thinking about it now. I think, however, that I would rather change the format at this point and not stop, but I am procrastinating (see number 2 above).

5. I am always amazed at the power of regular Internet communication to build relationships. Many people write or tell me that I have mentored them through the Monday Memo, yet I have never met them face-to-face. When people tell me the Internet is impersonal, I just shake my head, knowing that they don't fully understand what they are talking about.

6. I can look back into my childhood and see the first signs that I wanted to be a writer. Your childhood often holds significant clues as to your purpose.

7. I have written two books using Monday Memos as the content. When you can do two things with one effort, it certainly makes it more efficient and worthwhile.

While many people have been blessed by the Monday Memo, I am the one who is the most blessed. I have given them away free of charge and it is my joy to do so. I never grow tired of someone saying, "I read your stuff." I almost always respond, "Great! If you keep reading, I'll keep writing." So let me close with that thought before I ramble too long and far, and you grow weary of my words. Have a great week!