

[426: Wake Up!](#)

I apologize for not writing last week. We had to take my wife to the hospital when she could not see out of her right eye. She was diagnosed with a torn retina and the doctor is trying to repair it with laser surgery so she won't need major surgery. We are praying for his success!

This week I want to finish up our study of Deborah that we began two weeks ago. You can read the first installment [here](#) if you missed it. You may want to read [Judges 5](#) also before we go on from here.

INACTIVITY

When I read Judges 5, I get the idea that Deborah's main role was encouragement and influence the people of God to act. She urged God's people to do something and they did it. Without Deborah's influence, they could have remained in bondage much longer. Here are some of the verses that give me the sense that Deborah stirred people to action:

"When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves—praise the Lord!" (Judges 5:2).

"Village life in Israel ceased, ceased until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:7).

"My heart is with Israel's princes, with the willing volunteers among the people. Praise the Lord!" (Judges 5:9).

"Wake up, wake up, Deborah! Wake up, wake up, break out in song! Arise, O Barak! Take captive your captives, O son of Abinoam" (Judges 5:12).

"Why did you stay among the campfires to hear the whistling for the flocks? In the districts of Reuben there was much searching of heart" (Judges 5:16).

"Curse Meroz," said the angel of the Lord. "Curse its people bitterly, because they did not come to help the Lord, to help the Lord against the mighty" (Judges 5:23).

Deborah basically encouraged the people to wake up and act. They were tolerating a bad situation and had even become accustomed to it. It was time to put a stop to it and Deborah saw that it happened. Those who did not help or act were "cursed of the Lord."

WAKE UP!

So maybe it's time for you to "wake up"? What situation have you accepted as normal that you have the power to change? Where has inactivity led to complacency? Where do you need the Spirit of Deborah to call you to action? Then again, it may be time for you to wake someone else up, to stimulate the people around you to action through your action. If you have ever said, "Someone needs to do something," have you considered that the someone may be you?

Deborah called the people to arms and then she accompanied them to see that the victory was secured. You can do the same and, when you do, you will follow in the footsteps of a "mother" in Israel who knew that the situation was unacceptable and needed changed. Why not impact your world this week the way Deborah did hers? As you do, I know you will have a great week!

[427: Number Two Man](#)

Thank you for your prayers and best wishes for my wife and her eye problem that I mentioned last week. We had a breakthrough this week when some of her sight returned in that eye, but she still has a ways to go. We appreciate your prayerful support.

Last week we finished up Deborah and this week I would like to begin looking at Joshua for a few weeks before I pull out some classic Christmas Monday Memos from the archives. Then we will resume looking at Joshua after the first of the year.

NUMBER TWO

Joshua is one of the few men in the Bible (Joseph, Daniel and David being others) who was a number two man who eventually became a number one man. He served Moses from his youth and then, when it was time for Moses to die, Joshua became the leader in Israel. It was Joshua who led the people into the Promised Land and it was Joshua who has a book in the Old Testament named after himself. That is a quite and honor and accomplishment for a man who knew how to serve and how to lead, something rare in number one men.

We know little about Joshua. He appears on the scene in Exodus 17 when Moses ordered him to go to war while he, Moses, stayed behind to pray. That tells us a lot about Joshua. This conversation did not occur when Moses gave the order to go to battle:

Joshua: You want me to go to battle?

Moses: Yes.

Joshua: What are you going to do?

Moses: I will pray.

Joshua: You mean I will risk my life while you stay behind to pray?

Moses: That's right.

Joshua: Forget it. I'm not going unless you go. That's not fair! I quit.

Joshua went, understanding his role in his partnership with Moses, and what's more, he led the people to victory. Yet it was Moses' prayers that made the difference in the battle (see [Exodus 17](#)), and Joshua learned an important lesson about prayer and authority that played a major role in his development as a leader.

PERSONAL PURPOSE DEVELOPMENT

And that reveals an important step in finding and fulfilling your purpose: You must allow God to put you in some tough, demanding situations where you will learn, grow and develop trust - in God and in those whom He puts in your life to develop and train you.

You see, many have ideas and dreams and that's a good thing. You probably have them, too. Yet the proof of your mettle isn't in expressing those dreams. It is enduring and devoting yourself to the preparation process. The higher the building, the deeper the foundation must go. That is true for you. Once you have the blueprints for your vision, you must allow God to lay and dig the foundation that will be able to handle the weight of His glory in your purpose.

Joshua was faithful to the preparation process and one day his time to lead came. He was ready and he did a fabulous job for the Lord. He wasn't a perfect man, as we shall see, but he was faithful. He learned faithfulness by serving God, Moses and the people, and God was pleased. His promotion did not come from Moses; it came from God. That is where yours will come from, too.

Do you sense that God has something purposeful for you to do? Are you ready for the testing and preparation process? I hope you are. I am at a point in my life where I can look back and see God's hand of preparation and it has been a good work. Now I am engaging so much of what I once dreamed of doing. I urge you to be faithful to God's preparation plan for you and not to give up because it is difficult. Hang in there and I know that you will come into your own, whatever that may be, in the fullness of time. Thank you and have a great week serving the Lord and your purposeful preparation for service.

[428: A Matter of Perspective](#)

Are you facing difficult, even seemingly impossible obstacles in your life right now? Have you given up before you even started on a dream or goal? Is discouragement clinging to you like cat hair on wool fabric? If you answered "Yes!" to any of those questions, then you need to read the Memo below. (If you answered "No!", you can read on as well.)

A SCOUTING EXPEDITION

When Israel was on the verge of entering the land, Moses sent twelve men to spy out the land as the Lord directed him to do (see [Numbers 13](#)). The men went and saw some spectacular things. They beheld a land flowing with milk and honey, so to speak. Everything in that land was large -- the cities, the inhabitants, and the fruit. One cluster of grapes was so large that it took two men to carry it back to Moses.

This was the land the Lord had promised to give the people, but there was only one small problem: The people panicked! They saw the good but they also saw the bad and they allowed the bad to overshadow the good. This is the report they brought to Moses:

[But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there \(the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim\). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them" \(Numbers 13:31-33\).](#)

The people who listened to them bought into their report and decided that there was no way they were going to enter that land. They also talked of rebelling and even killing Moses and anyone who sided with him that they should proceed.

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

It was then that Joshua and Caleb, two of the spies, stepped forward to rebuke and encourage the people:

[Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them" \(Numbers 14:5-9\).](#)

So what can we learn from Joshua and this story?

1. Joshua saw the giants as too big to miss in battle, the people saw them as too big to overcome.
2. When you share a gloomy perspective, it is contagious.

3. The people lost perspective on how big God is when they saw how big their problems were.
4. The people did not go forward and saw it as reasonable; God saw it as rebellious.

So what can you learn from this story? Where have you allowed your perspective to affect your judgment to act? Have you bought into someone's pessimism instead of the Lord's optimism? It is a matter of perspective as to how you see your problems and challenge? I urge you this week not to be like the people but to be like Joshua and keep your problems and opportunities in proper perspective and act like God is as big and powerful as He truly is. Have a great week!

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

[Memo 429: Down but Not Out](#)

Last night I had the privilege of seeing Handel's *Messiah* performed here in Pittsburgh at Heinz Hall, due to the generosity of a woman in my church. I have seen the *Messiah* many times but it never gets old. Last night was another outstanding rendition of that timeless classic. Let's take a look at the circumstances that surrounded Handel as he composed his work and see if there are any purpose lessons there for you (you know there are!)

MESSIAH

The *Messiah* is considered by many to be the greatest musical feat in the history of mankind. Commissioned by a charity to produce a benefit concert, Handel wrote the *Messiah* in only 24 days. A musician once told me that someone trying to copy the *Messiah* could not do so in 24 days—that is the level of inspiration in which Handel operated when he wrote. Handel never left his house for those three weeks. His food trays remained untouched outside his office door. A friend who visited him as he composed found him sobbing with intense emotions. Later, as Handel groped for words to describe what he had experienced, he quoted St. Paul, saying “whether I was in the body or out of my body when I wrote it I know not.”

What's even more impressive is that Handel wrote *Messiah* under extreme duress. The Church of England strongly criticized and opposed Handel and his previous Scriptural works put to music. At the age of 56, he had no money, often going out only at night so as to avoid his creditors. Handel performed what he considered his farewell concert and went home, fully expecting to end up in debtor's prison.

Yet the first performance of *Messiah* in Ireland raised almost 400 pounds for charity and freed 142 other men from debtor's prison in 1742. Of course the rest is history as countless millions have enjoyed and marveled at this work for more than 250 years. Handel also went on from there to enjoy tremendous success and popularity in his latter years.

So what does this have to do with you? Perhaps you are a person of purpose but you feel frustrated, even defeated in your PurposeQuest. Maybe you find yourself down and out, discouraged and criticized, forgotten and a failure. Perhaps your finances are in poor shape. If that description fits you, read on, for I believe this Memo can restore your hope and faith. If that's not you, read on anyway, for you will probably enter that phase one day as you pursue your purpose.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE DOWN AND OUT.

What should you do if you are in a season of “un-use,” disfavor or inaction? As we close out 2009, I would urge you to do three things if you are discouraged, disillusioned or dismayed. And if you’re not, I urge you to find someone who is—you shouldn’t have to look too hard—and encourage them in their dark time.

1. **Renew your faith in God.** Your success and purpose expression doesn’t depend on your faithfulness; it depends on God’s. So remind yourself that God can do anything, and then rest in Him. Handel went home to retire and perhaps thought it was all over for him. Yet God helped him and He will help you.
2. **Keep preparing for your day of success.** I don’t think Handel went home and abandoned music. Don’t you abandon your love either. Keep writing, reading, learning and practicing. When the phone rings or the mail comes with your opportunity, you will be fresh and prepared, having worked in faith for the day of success.
3. **Be generous.** Handel wrote the Messiah for charity, even though he was destitute. What can you do for someone else, even though you are down and out? It is a good thing to do the unexpected in hard times and giving something away definitely fits the bill. What better way to express your trust in God?

I’m grateful for 2009 and I hope you can find reasons to be as well. If not, then just thank God for His faithfulness. At least you’re still alive! Then take this Memo to heart or share it with someone who needs it. I pray that as you do what I recommended above, you will see the purpose breakthrough in 2010. Thank you for allowing me to come into your life every week and thank you for being a purpose seeker. As I close this Memo, I wish you not only a great week, but also a very Merry Christmas!

[430: 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!