

431: The Wise Guys

As I write, I am sitting in New York City, here for a few days of rest and relaxation. We have looked at lessons from Handel and the shepherds this holiday season. Let's wrap up the year 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 2010 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.

432: Goals

Happy New Year! I trust 2010 will be a great year for you, filled with exciting purposeful activities and relationships. As you know, I set a goal to have 1,000 friends on Facebook by 12/31/09 (or 31/12/09 if you

live outside the U.S.). As of this writing, I am at 936 and counting. I thought it would be good to examine this goal and the results and see what there is to learn as we enter this New Year.

THE GOAL

Why did I choose this goal? When I joined Facebook last year, I thought it was a good means through which I could "broadcast" some of my devotional writing. Since it is no more difficult to write for one than it is for 1,000, I randomly chose that number as something that seemed do-able but beyond my knowledge of how I would do it. It seemed to capture everything that a goal should be, so I set it and now I am almost there.

I define a goal as a "vision of how it is before it is." It is an end result to be achieved through dreaming, planning and diligence. If there is breakdown in any of those three, you will never reach your goal. First, you must dream it. Then you must put some kind of plan together to do it, even if it is by faith. Finally, you must go for it with an active and not a passive faith.

WHAT THERE IS TO LEARN

So what can we learn from my goal of 1,000 friends?

1. **I created urgency by putting a date with the goal.** There was nothing special about 12/31/09. I just randomly chose it. I am not upset in the least by the fact that I came short of my goal. I got closer to it than if I had hoped to have 1,000 friends one day.
2. **I trusted what was "in" me.** I didn't waste any time wondering whether or not this was a good or perfect goal. I set it and went for it.
3. **My goal was ultimately to help others.** I don't really care how many friends I have. I do care how many I can reach with what God has given me to say and write.
4. **The answers are "out there."** When you set a goal, you should not have any idea how you will accomplish it. You simply have faith that the answers are somewhere out there. Your goal is creating the need and your sensitivity to the answers for that need.

Goal setting is not to be an event, but a lifestyle. You should create urgency through goal-setting in any area of life that is important to you. Today I am sending my publisher my next manuscript, this time a verse-by-verse devotional from Revelation called *The Revelation Project*. I spent about 50 hours this past week getting it finalized and ready to go after spending hundreds of hours over an 11-month period. I could do that because my goal was January 1, 2010. Yes, I missed the goal by a few days, but I don't feel bad at all.

2010 is here. What are your goals? If you don't have any, then you are saying that there is nothing in your life worth exerting supernatural effort to achieve? If that's true, and I refuse to believe it is, then you are not swimming through life - you are just treading water. Eventually you will get tired from doing nothing.

Spend some time this week and get your goal-groove on for 2010. Don't worry whether or not they are perfect. As long as they mean something to you, they are fine. Then tell someone and begin to look for the answers out there. And oh yes, you can tell your friends to be my friend on Facebook. I only have 64 to go! Thanks and have a great week.

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

[433: A Miracle Just in Time](#)

Are you in a battle for time? Do you have more to do than you have time to accomplish? It's time to resume our study of Joshua, which we began prior to the Christmas holidays. Joshua trusted the Lord for a significant miracle that involved time, so let's direct our attention there and see what you can learn to help with your battle for time in the days ahead (you can read Memos 427 and 428 on Joshua [here](#)).

A PRAYER OF FAITH

As you learn to have faith for money, business and ministry to fulfill your purpose, it's important that you also learn to have faith for time. Like you, Joshua had much to do as he fulfilled his purpose to pursue and battle Israel's enemies. The only way he was going to finish was to have faith for more time. His faith caused him to pray an unusual prayer:

“On the day the Lord gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the Lord in the presence of Israel: ‘O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.’ So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the Lord listened to a man. Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel!” (Joshua 10:12-14).

Joshua asked for the sun and moon to alter their normal courses and God answered his prayer! Joshua got creative and prayed a prayer of faith. God answered Joshua's prayer and gave him enough daylight to finish the job he had before him.

A TIMELY MIRACLE

This is an unusual story, but it embodies an important principle where time is concerned: God can help you have the time you need to finish what you need to finish. Armed with that knowledge, can you then believe God for the time you need? This is critical, because often you put off important things because you don't believe you have enough time to fit them in or do them well.

This week, I am determined to have faith for time, to finish all the critical things that are before me. I'm not going to fret, but I am going to keep my priorities in order. That means I will pray, read, write and take time to do some schoolwork for my class in February. Because you believe God can give you time, you can exercise, study or do the other things that you've previously said you didn't have time to do.

When you say, “I don't have enough time,” you are making a statement of unfaith. The truth is, you have all the time there is—twenty-four hours a day. But God is still able to take limited resources and make them adequate, and He can do the same for those twenty-four hours. So why not believe God for a time miracle this week? And how will you walk out this miracle? You will express your faith for time by doing something that is important for you to do, whether you think you have time to do it or not. I invite you to join me this week as together we follow Joshua's example to have faith for a timely miracle. Have a great week!

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

[Memo 434: Sharing Your Wealth](#)

This week I want to wrap up our purpose profile on Joshua, which we began before the holidays and resumed last week. (If you need to catch up, you can go to the [site](#) where these entries are posted and read Memos 427, 428, and 433). This week I want to look a story where Joshua taught others to have the same kind of success he had. Isn't it time that you also encouraged others to step out and fulfill their purpose?

A LEARNING LESSON

Last week we read how the Lord had stopped the sun so Joshua could defeat his enemies. In the process, Joshua had captured five kings, trapping them in a cave where they had gone to hide. The Lord had granted Joshua great success, but then Joshua wanted to use his success as a learning lesson for those who were fighting with him. So here is what he did:

Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to me." So they brought the five kings out of the cave—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon. When they had brought these kings to Joshua, he summoned all the men of Israel and said to the army commanders who had come with him, "Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings." So they came forward and placed their feet on their necks. Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. This is what the Lord will do to all the enemies you are going to fight." Then Joshua struck and killed the kings and hung them on five trees, and they were left hanging on the trees until evening (Joshua 10:22-26).

Joshua was not content to be victorious. He knew that many battles lay ahead and he wanted those with him to be prepared to do great things. Joshua was not content to win; he wanted to teach others to win as well.

SHARING YOUR WEALTH

If you are not careful, your quest for purpose can be a selfish endeavor. It can degenerate into what you can do and how you can be fulfilled. Don't get me wrong; that's not all bad. Yet you must be mindful that you are going through and accomplishing what you are so you can share your wealth with others. Your wealth isn't necessarily money, but rather the experience and lessons you learn along the way, lessons that can help others.

So how can you share the wealth, so to speak? How can you teach others how to put their feet on their enemy's neck? You can teach, write, broadcast, mentor or coach. You can realize that you have something to share with others and stop devaluing who you are, what you do and where you are. You can look for opportunities to share what you have now, trusting that you will not lose anything when you do. Rather, God will give you more, whatever the "more" is that you need to finish your work and fulfill your purpose.

So when you go to do something good and meaningful this week, stop to think who you can include in the process. When you are about to step on your enemy's neck, bring someone along to enjoy it with you and then see how you can help them do something purposeful. When you do, you won't just have a great week but also a meaningful life.

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[435: Time to Celebrate!](#)

It's been almost two years, but it's that time again. What time is it? Why no other time than to celebrate failure. That's right, I am declaring the week of March 1-7 to be Celebrate a Failure week the world over. If you have read this *Memo* since the beginning, you will know that this is the fifth such celebration we have

held since 2001. If you are new to the *Memo*, let me explain to you what Celebrate a Failure Week is all about.

THE GROUND RULES

I would recommend that you take every chance during the last week of February to talk about failure, its role in your life and the lessons you have learned from past failures. Here are some ideas of what you can do:

1. If you are a pastor, you can talk about failure in your Sunday services on March 7 or during your midweek gatherings starting on Monday, March 1. Someone wrote me that there is no failure in the Bible. See if they're right. If not, then share what you find that can help people who have failed. You have plenty of them sitting right in front of you every Sunday.
2. If you are a business leader, why not talk about failure with the other leaders and staff. Do you have any failures to celebrate as a business or team? What did you learn from them? What is stopping you from creating new failures? What could you possibly achieve today if you weren't afraid of trying and failing?
3. You can celebrate as a family. You may want to study a biblical character who failed, like Samson, Moses, David or Peter. Maybe there is some family story of failure that can be discussed and examined. Maybe you can even focus on some historical figure like Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela or Winston Churchill, great leaders who also experienced great failures at some point.
4. Classroom settings need not be left out of our celebration. If you teach, I would imagine that you can find enough teaching material to make up a classroom session or two. History and science are full of failures that eventually led to success, of failures that provide significant lessons for your students.

WHY?

Why the need for such a celebration? And is it truly possible to celebrate failure? Should it not be tolerated at worst and avoided at best? We should celebrate failure because it is an inevitable part of life. We avoid failure because we believe it is somehow a measure of inadequate spirituality, and in some ways it is, because you will never measure up to the ideal of perfection on this side of heaven or the Lord's return. If you are going to do anything for God, whether to fulfill your purpose or achieve your goals, you will need to embrace the learning process that only failure can provide.

You can read what I have written about failure in past [Memos](#), but let me quote one of my favorite authors, Parker Palmer, and what he had to say about failure in his book, [The Active Life](#):

If I allow my life to be deformed by the fallen angel called "fear of failure," I will never be fully alive. I will withhold myself from actions that might fail, or ignore evidence of failure when it happens. But if I could ride that fear all the way down, I might break out of my self-imposed isolation and become connected with many other lives, because failure and the fear of it are universal. I would learn that failure is a natural fact, a way of discerning what to try next. I would be empowered to take more risks, which means to embrace more life, and in the process I would become more connected with others. The monster called fear of failure (or ridicule, criticism, or foolishness, or any of the other fears that are so easy to regard as mortal enemies) would become a demanding but empowering guide toward relatedness.

But on *this* side of such an experience, we may wonder why we should anywhere near the monsters, let alone ride them all the way down. After all, they are monsters, and they do harbor powers of destruction as well as of creativity. Even if riding the monsters is the only way to reach safe ground, there is no guarantee that we will get there. People have fallen off before the end of the journey and have been stranded in some bad places. So why take the risk of riding the monsters in the first place?

[The reason is that] some monsters simply will not go away. They are too big to walk around, too powerful to overcome, too clever to outsmart. The only way to deal with them is to move toward them, with them, through them. We must learn to befriend some of these primitive powers that seem so much like enemies. In the process we will find them working for us, not against us, working for life, not death.

What are you afraid of? Is some past failure or the fear of a future one keeping you ineffective and paralyzed? Are you so afraid of missing God's will for your life that you *are* missing God's will for your life? This is why we need a Celebrate a Failure Week. It's not to glorify failure but to set the stage for success. That may not make sense at this point, but if you follow along for the next few weeks, I think you'll understand how it works.

So get ready for a big celebration, for we all have some colossal failures to celebrate and some important lessons to review. We want to get failure working for us and not against us, so with that in mind, let the party begin. Have a great week as you make preparations for the big event.