

## [441: Fear and Intimidation](#)

I recently asked someone, "What are you afraid of?" Her answer was quick and adamant, "Nothing!" And that was a true statement, because that woman was doing nothing that would warrant fear. She had perfectly controlled her life so that as soon as she sensed fear, she backed off and returned to her comfort zone. What's more, she conveniently involved God in the process, relating how the timing wasn't right or the Lord had not released her to do anything beyond what she was doing.

Are you like this woman? Perhaps we all are to some degree. Let's look this week at what you can do if you ever find yourself with no options but to step out and encounter both fear and risk of failure.

## **RECONSIDERED**

Last week we [saw](#) how Pharaoh ordered the Israelites to continue their work making bricks without the straw being supplied for them. I identified this as economic terrorism, something many encounter as they step out to fulfill their purpose. From that point on, Moses and Pharaoh were in a tug of war for the freedom of God's people, which was finally won after the Passover night when the firstborn of all the Egyptians were slain.

So Israel left Egypt and headed for the Promised Land. The story didn't end there, however. Pharaoh reconsidered his decision to let the people go. He assembled his army and took off in hot pursuit of his former slaves. What did the people do? They cried out to Moses and God:

[As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" \(Exodus 14:10-12\).](#)

The people panicked and they were ready to go back to the slavery of Egypt.

## **APPLICATION**

Can you see the application for your own life and work? If economic terrorism doesn't keep you from purpose and you escape its clutches, then fear and intimidation can come in like a flood and threaten to sweep you off your feet. All the evidence helps you have thoughts like, "We will starve. We won't pay our mortgage. People will laugh. We will lose our health insurance!" What can you do?

At that point, you need to face the fear and intimidation and do what Moses told the people to do:

[Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still" \(Exodus 14:13-14\).](#)

The last thing you feel like doing when afraid and intimidated is to do nothing, but that may be the best advice and action you can take. When you are powerless to make a difference, why not put it in the hands of the One who can. And there is no better Financial Adviser, Business Agent or Board Member than the Lord Himself.

So if you are facing extreme pressure and everything in you wants to quit, don't do it. Don't deny the truth of your situation, but don't deny God's power to overcome it. Today you may simply need to rest in the

power of your purpose, a purpose that has been assigned by God Himself. And we know where God guides, He provides and where it is God's will, it is God's bill. Have a great week!

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## **442: Just a Few Sticks**

Have you ever faced what you considered a hopeless situation? Are you facing one now? The last couple of weeks, we have looked at the role of economic hardship as a means either to scare you off your purpose or to refine you along the way. This week I want to continue that theme and look at a woman who had given up hope, who was ready to go home and give up. If you are about to give up, read on. If you aren't facing that scenario yet, read on anyway, for you may face that kind of hopelessness one day.

### **A FEW STICKS**

The Lord sent the prophet Elijah to a woman in 1 Kings 17 during a famine. The woman did not know it yet, but she was going to feed Elijah during the drought and, in feeding Elijah, she would feed her family as well. Sometimes God wants you to be generous when everything in you says that isn't possible.

So Elijah came face to face with the woman and asked her for a drink. We know that she was generous at heart, for she gave the man some water even though there was a severe drought. Then Elijah asked her for some bread. When he did, this is what she said:

**"As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die" (1 Kings 17:12).**

This woman was saying, "It's over. Things could not possibly get any worse. Death is the next step." Yet Elijah told her that she had seen the worst and things were going to get better:

**Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land'" (1 Kings 17:13-14).**

And that is exactly what happened. That woman went from having a few sticks and a piece of bread to an endless supply for her, her son and the prophet.

### **SCARCITY MENTALITY**

When things have been tough, you naturally switch into survival mode. This woman was just trying to survive and she had run out of hope for that. The thought of prosperity was out of the question. Yet her breakthrough was just a moment away. What's more, your breakthrough may be only a chance meeting, a phone call or an idea away as well.

Notice that Elijah told the woman what Moses told the Israelites in last week's lesson: Don't be afraid! Fear will cripple you in a crisis and you need all your creativity and hope to make it through the tough times. Tough times come to prove that God is faithful and to make you resilient and hopeful, but hopeful not in your own efforts or ideas, but rather in God.

If you aren't facing this kind of hopelessness, then perhaps you know someone who is. You may want to forward this Memo to them. If you are, I am not advising that you ignore the severity of your situation. I am urging you, however, not to lose hope even when your reason for hope is totally obscured. Say what Job said, "[Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him](#)" (Job 13:15). And then keep on keeping on. Then one day I hope you will write your story and send it to me so that others may be encouraged who feel that all they have is a few sticks between them and utter failure. Have a great week!

## **443: Easter Implications**

Next Sunday is Easter Sunday the world over. I thought I would go into my archives and copy a past Memo that focused on Easter and resurrection, and I was surprised to find that I did not have anything in the archives! I write every year about purpose lessons from Christmas, but had nothing on Easter. Well, I am going to correct that this week, so let's get Holy Week started with this Memo.

### **A PACKED HOUSE**

My church has six weekend services and we are getting ready for overflow crowds next weekend. People who don't darken the door of a church throughout the year will come to church on Easter Sunday, which will make for a packed house. They sit with the regular attenders, family and friends, and pay homage to the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. It is probably the same in your church.

We will assemble next week and say by our presence, "Yes, we believe Jesus was dead. Yes, we believe that He was in the tomb for three days. Yes, we believe that God raised Jesus, who was both fully God and fully man, back to life. Yes, we further attest to the fact that Jesus ascended into heaven, and that our flesh, Mary's boy, intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father." I hope you agree that those affirmations summarize truths of Easter. But is that all the truth?

It always intrigues me that many will come and attest to these truths yet all too often those truths have no meaning or application in their daily lives. Stop for a minute and ask, "So what if Jesus was raised from the dead? What difference should that make in my life?" Those are good questions; let's try to come up with some answers.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

If you believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, then you can believe God for anything! If God raises the dead, which He does, then He can cure cancer. He can provide for your business or ministry. He can transform you into the person He intended you to be, that person you want to be. If God can take a dead body and give it life, then nothing is beyond His miracle-working power. What's more, you have the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead living in you! It is not a replica of that Spirit, it is not a portion of that Spirit. You have the Spirit that raises the dead living in you. Here is what Paul had to say about the implications of this Spirit-resident:

*You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you (Romans 8:9-11).*

I trust you plan on being at your local church fellowship next weekend. Don't go as someone merely giving assent to a historical fact, go celebrating the truth that God is alive in You Then find how you can release that resurrection power into your life, relationships, work and purpose. If you can believe that God raises

the dead - and you should - then you can believe God for anything. Have a great resurrection-power-filled week! Happy Resurrection Day!

### **444: Keep Pouring**

Have you ever faced economic pressure that almost paralyzed you? You were in such desperate straights that you did not know what to do next? In 2001, I faced a major life transition when I started PurposeQuest International. The pressure was so great that there were days I did nothing but lie on the couch. We had no money, I had no business and I wasn't always sure what to do next.

If you are facing something like this or have faced it, then perhaps you can relate. If you haven't you may want to read on and then file this away for future use, just in case you need it - and chances are in your PurposeQuest you will face this kind of pressure at one time or another.

### **MORE JARS**

In 2 Kings 4, the prophet Elisha met a widow who was also in desperate times. She was so heavily in debt that she feared losing her son to her creditors. Elisha gave her some strange advice; he told her to go home and find as many jars as possible. Once she had done that, she was to go home, close the door and start pouring the oil she had into those jars. Here is what happened next:

*She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing. She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left" (2 Kings 4:5-7).*

Do you think the women wished at that point that she had gathered more jars to hold oil? The point I am trying to make is that you must still operate in faith when you are desperate. What's more, you must do things that are consistent not with where you are now, but where you will be when your breakthrough comes.

### **MY JARS**

When I had my desperate time, I could barely function, but I had to get up off the couch and write. I had to prepare seminars and teachings for no one in particular because I had no business. I had to make financial decisions for the future when I had no money on that particular day! What's more, I felt directed to give away things to others when my own needs were critical. It was during that season that I began writing this Monday Memo and giving it away. Shortly thereafter I began to send out my weekly Bible studies, free of charge to any and all. I designed a website and committed money to its development, money I didn't have with no promise of any return.

Now that I look back, I did what this woman did many centuries ago: I kept pouring what little I had and God kept providing more. I am teaching today what I developed in those dark, uncertain times. I meet with hundreds of people every year from all over the world, and I counsel them with things I read about and studied when my pressure almost rendered me helpless and without hope.

So what about you? Is it time to despair, or is it time to gather some more jars and start pouring? Your situation may be critical, but I urge you to think and act this week like it isn't. I am asking you to do what only God can help you do: act today like your breakthrough is already here, even though the evidence says otherwise. If you can do this, then when your breakthrough comes, and it will come, you will have enough jars - whatever that represents for you - to hold the blessings that are in store for every purposeful servant

of God. If I made it through my dark time, you will, too. When it's all over, you will be glad you didn't stop pouring. Have a great week!

## [445: Time to Create](#)

*It's been a few years since I have written about creativity, and I sense it is time to do that again. So let's devote the next few months to a discussion of how you can tap into the massive and unpredictable sea of creativity that is resident in your own heart and mind.*

Have you wondered where creativity comes from? Have you also wondered why some people are more creative than others? For the most part, creativity continues to be a mystery to me. One thing I do know, however, and that is creativity is hard work! Today I am sitting at my kitchen table, composing this [Monday Memo](#). This Memo won't descend from heaven, even if God inspires it (which I hope He does). I have to write it and send it out. That's not glamorous or spiritual; it's just effort.

Many people tell me that they are more productive because they don't have enough time to write, paint, study, or think, for that matter. You know my response to that excuse: You have all the time there is in the world--24 hours every day. It's what you *do* with that time that will set you apart as a creative or non-creative person.

If you have read many of my [Memos](#), you know that I am a big fan of Julia Cameron; In her book [The Sound of Paper: Starting from Scratch](#), Cameron had this to say about the issue of time and creativity:

*Most of us think, "If only I had more time, then I would create." We have a fantasy that there is such a thing as good creative time, an idyll of endless, seamless time unfolding invitingly for us to frolic in creativity. No such bolts of limitless time exist for most of us. Our days are chopped into segments, and if we are to be creative, we must learn to use the limited time that we have.*

*When ego is siphoned of creativity, when creativity becomes one more thing we do, like laundry, then it takes far less time to do it. Much of our desire for creative time has to do with our trying to coax ourselves into being in the right mood to create. We want to "feel like it," and when we don't don't quickly, we think the solution is more time. Actually, the solution is less attention to the vagaries of mood. In short, creativity needs to become daily, doable and nonnegotiable; something as quotidian [everyday, commonplace, ordinary] as breathing. When we make a special occasion out of our art, we rob ourselves of the time we actually have.*

Often I don't start creating because I don't believe I have enough time to complete what I start. When that is the case, I need to trust that God will help me use the time I have. At other times, I don't start something because I am afraid I won't have enough time to do it *well*. When that happens, I need more courage, not more time. I need to begin and trust that what I don't consider "good enough" may be more than good enough to impact someone else. I can't let my perfectionism inhibit my ability to produce what I can, when I can, no matter how meager it may seem.

I have almost every day for the last nine years writing my daily installment for my weekly Bible studies. I have completed a devotional commentary for 25 of 27 books in the [New Testament](#) by focusing on four verses a day every day, usually investing 15-20 minutes. I sit down to write and somehow the creative process kicks in, and the result is a large body of work of which I am quite pleased. Even today I just had to sit down and begin to write; the result is this edition 445 of [The Monday Memo](#) thirty minutes later.

You have the time and you also have the creative ability. Now all you have to do is spend a little time every day bringing forth what has probably been in you for some time. You are a creative person; don't waste

your creativity on excuses of why you can't produce. Move past your fears and invest some time and hard work. In the long run, you and the world will be the better for those efforts. Have a great week!