

## **501: Don't Put Me In, Coach!**

This week we finish up with Moses' excuses after the Lord directed him to go back to Egypt to set the people free. My intent is not to diminish Moses' standing as a great leader, but to show you how his struggle to fulfill God's purpose for his life may have some similarities to your own struggles. My hope is that you will learn to overcome your hesitation, which usually appears as a list of reasonable excuses why you cannot be the one to do what is before you.

### **DON'T PUT ME IN, COACH**

A number of years ago, a professional basketball game was in the final seconds. The coach called time out and designed a play that he hoped would win the game. When play resumed, however, only four of his players were in the game. The fifth player, who was also the star, refused to go back in because he wasn't the one to take the winning shot. He forced the coach to put in someone else; the good news is that his team won, but that player lost. Players, writers and fans castigated him for his selfish behavior.

As we look this week at Moses' final comment at the burning bush, we see that Moses, having expressed five excuses, simply refused to go to Egypt. **"But Moses said, 'O Lord, please send someone else to do it'"** (Exodus 4:13). In essence, Moses said "no" to God! Moses refused to go into the game just like that basketball player.

What was God's response? **"Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses"** (Exodus 4:14). Up to this point in the story, God was patient and gracious with Moses, responding to all his objections. At this point, however, God was angry. I hope I never make God that angry, but this story proves that it can happen. God is patient but there are limitations to His patience and we are never quite sure when we will reach those limitations.

### **MISSING PURPOSE?**

I have people ask me all the time, "Can you refuse your purpose?" and my answer is always, "Yes!" Consider these two passages:

1. **"But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves"** (Luke 7:30).
2. **"As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain"** (2 Corinthians 6:1-2).

You can receive the grace of God's purpose in vain, choosing to ignore or do nothing with it. You can sit on your gifts, remaining in the comfort zone of life rather than experiencing the discomfort of new faith experiences. You can also be so afraid of doing the wrong thing that you choose to do nothing.

God had answered and addressed each of Moses' questions and concerns so that the real reason for Moses' reluctance could be revealed: Moses just didn't want to do it. Like that star basketball player, Moses just didn't want to go into the game.

How about you? Are you testing God's patience through delay and excuses? The good news is that after Moses said this, God assigned Aaron to go with Moses and then sent them both on their way to Egypt. If you confess this week that you don't want to fulfill your purpose, that you're scared, lazy or lack confidence, then the Lord will still help you!

You are not alone in your PurposeQuest; God is with you, even if you are hesitant. All you have to do this week is acknowledge where you are and ask God's help. He will do the rest. Let this be the week when you face reality and still move on to do great things for God, just like Moses. Have a great week!

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

## 502: Graduation

This coming Friday I will graduate from Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary with a Doctor of Ministry degree. I am surprised by how relieved and excited I am as I approach that event. I began my studies in 2007, after I was confronted by the fact that the school where I earned my first doctorate had never completed their institutional accreditation. Now I am looking back on my last four years and I have some thoughts to share with you about the experience.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

First, I started in 2007 with no idea where I would get the money or the time to complete the program. The cost was in excess of \$10,000 and the classes (eight of them) were held one week each from Monday through Saturday, 8 AM to 4:30 PM. In addition to the class time, there were gobs of reading and tons of writing. My final project alone was 265 pages! Yet my desire overcame the obstacles and God always made a way to finish with excellence.

Second, my project was an exercise in confronting my fears. Many times I sat down to write and found every convenient excuse why I could not write that day - I was too busy, I didn't have enough time to do quality work, it was too difficult, the professors would not like it, just to name a few. I almost threw up my hands and gave up when I had to write my five page bibliography. It was a war to finish, and I wish I could give you some secret of how I did it. There was none. God helped me, but I had to sit down and fight through my fears to get the job done.

Third, I grew tremendously through the whole project. I learned so much, not only in new material, but about myself. I began when I was 57 and now I am 61 when I graduate. I moved out of my comfort zone and confronted head on material, people and projects that I chose to confront.

Fourth, my degree and experience has opened new doors for me. I now teach courses at a masters level in organizational leadership. I am helping to start what we are calling a Divine Design Team at my church to assimilate people not only into their role in the church but also into their life purpose. My class project, *Back to the Garden: A Theology of Creativity and Productivity*, will undoubtedly be a book one day. My confidence has grown when I discuss theological matters.

### **GRADUATION**

Now I will go forward this Friday to receive my diploma and my doctoral hood, but I have already received so much more. Why am I telling you all this? Am I bragging? Well, sort of, but I want to stimulate you to action and help you overcome your fears to do something that is in your heart to do. The time is not tomorrow, it is not next year, it is now. The time to take the first step is now, whether or not you know what the second step will be. I want you to learn from my experience and then go create your own experience that exceeds anything I have done or could do.

May I recommend two books to help you at this point? I must warn you, both books have some "bad" words in them, words that can offend your sensitivities. Yet the truths contained are vital if you are to be creative and productive, and these books are the best I have found recently to help you be just that. They are both by Steve Pressfield. One is *Do the Work* and the other is *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Creative Battles*. The former is available as a free Kindle download from Amazon, but both are available in paper editions. I wish I had written them - except for the bad language - and I have already begun to refer to them both in my counseling and coaching sessions.

I have a busy week, but Friday will be here before I know it. In fact, these last four years have flown by. I am so glad I started and so glad it's over. Now I want to savor this moment, but only for a moment, because I am eager for more learning and growing adventures, more purposeful activity. Will you join me in my

quest for meaning and purpose? I look forward to seeing you on the road to "graduation," which is the completion of any work God has put in your heart to do. Have a great week!

### 503: Post-Graduate Studies

I graduated last Friday night with my Doctor of Ministry, as you can see from the picture at right. It was a family showed up to celebrate the evening with me, I posed for lots of pictures and savored every moment. Many have asked me, "Now what are you going to do with your free time?", knowing that I stay pretty busy. Yet it is a legitimate question, for I learned long ago to set goals through a point and not just to a point. I do have goals to accomplish, by God's grace, from this point. I thought I would outline a few of them for you this week.

#### **WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?**

1. I will publish at least one book every year for the rest of my life. If I live to be as old as my mother (92), I will have 44 books to my credit when I die. I may not live to be her age, so that may require publishing more than one a year
2. I will teach well. When I say teach, I want people to seek out my classes because they have the reputation to make a deep impact on lives and work.
3. I will teach a lot. You may think I am repeating myself, but I am not. I will trust the Lord for time and for what He has put in me, by expecting it to come out when needed. Therefore, I will not say "no" to an opportunity to teach unless I have something already booked to do in that class time.
4. I will work smarter and not harder. I am looking for wisdom to restructure my world of volunteers, staff and time available to maximize my impact on as many people as possible.

#### **POST-GRADUATE STUDIES**

The fifth goal to go with those above is that I will continue to learn and grow until I have no strength. I think (and hope) that my classroom time as a student is over, but not my classroom time as a learner. I will attend one seminar every year in some area of relevant interest and I will continue to read or listen to four to six books every month. I will accept the assignment to teach new classes with material with which I am not familiar and I will not allow perfectionism or fear to stop me from exploring, teaching and writing about new subjects.

I am now 61 years of age and I realize that my end may be tomorrow or in 30 years. All these plans are meaningless apart from Him and His help. I have to assume, however, that He is directing my thoughts because I have asked Him to do so. He is free to adjust me in any way, but I assume that He will actually help me do more than I am thinking, for Paul wrote, "[Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen](#)" (Ephesians 3:20-21). What's more I count on Him to provide the energy for me to do the work as well: "[I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power](#)" (Ephesians 3:7).

I am no longer afraid of making a mistake or choosing the wrong path. I am capable of doing so, but He is not! I trust Him to direct my steps and strengthen my legs.

I have other goals, but these will do for now. I just wanted you to know that I have a plan from here, and I invite you to join me in developing your own plans. Last Friday night was so enjoyable that I want to set and achieve even more for Him. It was so good that I want you to experience it for yourself. Have a great week as you take the first steps toward your own post-graduate studies in life and purpose.

## **504: Weight Loss**

I looked at a picture of myself when I was preaching last December, and I was pained by what I saw. There was more of me than ever before, as gradually my weight had risen to an unacceptable level. In other words, I was chubby, hefty, large or any other word that is synonymous with fat. I had been to the doctor's office in 2009 and looked on his weight chart. For my height, I was progressing into the danger zone. Right then I vowed not to go back to the doctor until I had done something about that.

And I did do something. Between 2009 and December, 2010, I put on more weight!

### **TIME TO TAKE ACTION**

In January, it was time to take action. I had been making an affirmation about my weight goal, visualizing a slimmer, trimmer me. It was time to put some weight to my words and thoughts, instead of to my waistline. Here is what I did.

First, I fasted for ten days, no food, only water. This year I have continued to fast every Thursday. I had lost the discipline and desire to fast over the years, which of course is not a good thing. Second, I made a rule not to eat late at night, as had become my habit when I came home from teaching. I would eat a sandwich, maybe two, along with some chips and maybe a dessert at 10 PM or later regularly. Now if I do eat late, I eat salads only. I am still eating, just eating smarter.

Third, I repented of anxiety. You may ask what that had to do with weight loss. While working on my doctorate, I would write and then eat, go back to write some more and then eat. Even when I wasn't writing, I was eating because I was anxious about finishing my writing project. The writing anxiety also caused me to eliminate any form of exercise. Thus I continued to see the image of a man in the mirror that I did not recognize or like, and anxiety was one of the root problems.

### **THE RESULT**

The results are not final, but to date I have lost 30 pounds, with six more to reach my goal. I have made major lifestyle adjustments, including not going into a Starbuck's this year, and I feel better. I did finally go in for my annual checkup and my doctor was elated! A bad knee that was causing me pain is no longer painful. I have more energy and I can look at pictures or in the mirror and say, "That's the man I once knew." It's been a rewarding experience and I am determined never to return to my old ways with God's help and by His grace.

The most enlightening aspect of this journey was the anxiety revelation. I was anxious over my ability to create and it had physical ramifications. While adjusting my eating habits, I am also working on trusting Him more and controlling my thought life, which was sinful, pure and simple. Anxiety is worry, which is lack of faith, and you know what Paul wrote: ". . . and everything that does not come from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23b).

How about you? Where is anxiety showing up in your life? What adjustments do you need to make to root it out? My weight loss has been more rewarding than my graduation, and my graduation was a special time. I will hang my diploma on a wall, and maybe I should put before and after pictures next to it to remind me of where I have been and where I need to be. Have a great week!

## **505: Too Late**

I ran across a quote by Martin Luther King Jr. this week that impacted me deeply. Before I share that quote, however, I want to share a passage from Isaiah that people recite and even sing to me regularly (it was put

to music years ago). It is their life philosophy and approach to missions, creativity and action, and it reads like this in the NAS Version:

"He gives strength to the weary,  
And to him who lacks might He increases power.  
Though youths grow weary and tired,  
And vigorous young men stumble badly,  
***Yet those who wait for the Lord***  
Will gain new strength;  
They will mount up with wings like eagles,  
They will run and not get tired,  
They will walk and not become weary" (Isaiah 40:30-31 emphasis added).

### **A CLOSER LOOK**

The key phrase in that passage for many is "those who wait on the Lord." The implication is that if you are going to serve the Lord, you need to wait. There is only one problem with that philosophy. Everything else in that passage speaks to action, not waiting. It speaks of strength, flying, running and walking. Those who are waiting aren't do any of those things, but the entire context of the passage is God giving strength to those who "wait." I would propose that those who wait don't need the strength.

The NIV for once is more accurate in its translation of the word "wait," for the NIV states, "***but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.***" Insert that phrase back into the longer quote above, and you will see there is a big difference between hoping and waiting. Most already have the waiting down pat. I want to be one who hopes as I run, fly and walk, and I hope that we can run together toward our purpose and creativity.

### **THE QUOTE**

And now for the quote from Martin Luther King's speech "Beyond Vietnam," delivered on April 4, 1967 in New York City. I will offer no commentary on his closing comments. I trust you to draw your own conclusions and make the necessary adjustments in your life and work to make room for what he said:

*We are now faced with the fact, my friends, that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked, and dejected with a lost opportunity. The tide in the affairs of men does not remain at flood - it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is adamant to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words, "Too late." There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. Omar Khayyam is right: "The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on."*