

## **521: I Was Wrong**

I have often written about failure and the role it plays in your development. Perhaps you have heard me present or read my four-question series designed to help people understand the importance of failure:

1. Is failure a learning experience?
2. Do you often learn more from failure than success?
3. Are you always to be learning and growing?
4. Then should you fail as often as possible?

Usually, people answer "yes" to the first three questions, but answer "no" or not at all on question four. I have come to see that I have been misleading people on that fourth question and I am here this week to tell you that I was *wrong*, or at least incomplete in my thinking where question four is concerned. You will have to read on to understand how I was wrong.

### **AN IMPORTANT ADJUSTMENT**

I was teaching a class last Friday and we were discussing failure, and it was then that I realized question four was incomplete. It should read

4. Then should you fail *on purpose* as often as possible?

Think of the most famous example of failure in the world of business: Thomas Edison's discovery of the light bulb. Edison experimented and failed with thousands of materials to find the correct filament that would burn and give light for a long period of time. While you can say that Edison failed thousands of times, he failed with purpose. He was trying to achieve something and the achievement was so important and valuable to him that he persevered and eventually found success.

If you just set out to fail so you can learn, your failure will not be tied to anything important and will not lead you to any success. Therefore I was wrong when I urged you to fail. I am confident I am correct when I direct you to fail on purpose.

### **MORE EXAMPLES**

A baby gets up every time he or she falls because the baby has purpose: learning to walk. You failed in school and gave wrong answer in the pursuit of learning. You did not hit every ball you swung at, did not make every goal you kicked a ball to score, nor did you hit every jump or foul shot. Yet you kept swinging, kicking and shooting because you had a purpose to win and improve. You could tolerate failure because you had purpose.

What implications does this have for your PurposeQuest? It has serious implications, for you will not tolerate or even allow failure unless it is in the pursuit of something that has overriding value, enough to keep you on the path to success no matter what the cost.

What's more, you won't endure failure in searching for your purpose unless you see the value in the search and ultimate conclusion. Without that, you will be content with the status quo and endure failure if it leads to your success, which in that case is to preserve the status quo.

I am excited about my new found discovery and adjustment. We will come back to this next year when we take time to enjoy another Celebrate a Failure week. This time, however, I will be armed with new insight that will make failure more purposeful, where it will play an even more important role in your life and personal development. Until then, enjoy being a person of purpose and if you happen to fail, fail with purpose. Have a great week!

## [522: Succcess](#)

Don't write to tell me I misspelled succcess. I did it on purpose because this week I want to start a series on the five c's in succcess. Since success only has two, I thought I would add three more for effect. So without further ado, let me spell out for you those five c's.

### **THE FIRST THREE**

I am currently co-teaching a class on "A Love and Theology for the City" and I was discussing with the students what it takes to launch and sustain succcessful initiatives in poor areas. The longer I thought about it, I realized that what it takes to succceed in urban work and ministry is the same as what it takes to be succcessful in any other area as well. Armed with that conclusion, let's dive into the first three c's.

**1. Curiosity.** If you want to know where to start in your quest for purposeful succcess, start with your curiosity. Answer the question, "What interests you?" and then follow the answers. Too often you may try to "figure out" how you can make money from that interest and, if you can't see how, you abandon your interests. You must be careful not to do that. Follow your interests and see where they lead you. God can take some of the simplest things and help you turn them into a business, organization, or project that will bless or edify others.

**2. Creativity.** I have written extensively on creativity and you can read some of what I have written here. Suffice it to say here that you were created by the Creator in His image, which is to be creative. There is no end of your ability to be creative as you express your life experience as seen through your eyes. Adam named all the animals in the Garden and he used his God-given creativity to do so. What assignment has God given you that require you to do the same?

**3. Competence.** God does not promote people with potential. He promotes those who have developed their potential. You need to become the best you that you can be, and that will require work, training, education, apprenticeship, spiritual disciplines and godliness. There are no shortcuts to obtaining any of those aspects of life, so don't even look for

them. There is only one way to develop yourself and that is to invest time, money and effort into becoming more effective tomorrow than you are today.

## **THE LAST TWO**

Now let's look at the last two c's in succcccess.

**4. Collaboration.** You will need to team and partner with other people if you are going to make a major impact in your life's work. You can't do it all. Rather you must do what you do best and team with others who do what they do best that will contribute to the overall effort. What's more, you must know your own strengths and weaknesses and understand how your personality and characteristics will best mesh (or cause some friction) with others.

**5. Commitment.** You will be tested in your resolve to finish the task at hand. God will use your failures and setbacks to conform you to Christ's image. If you faint in the heat of the day, you will not be able to achieve your dreams or fulfill your purpose. Winston Churchill once addressed an audience of youth and he said, "Never, never, never, never, never give up." Then he sat down. That's all he said, but it was great advice. As long as you have breath, stay the course.

There you have the five keys to succcccess. We will take a closer look at each one over the next five weeks and learn how to apply and develop them all in your life. I have not included any Bible verses this week but don't worry, there will be plenty in the weeks to come. In the meantime, meditate on these five concepts and, while you are doing so, have a great week!

You can respond to this entry on the [site](#) where it is posted.

### **523: Curiosity**

Last week I began a six-week series on the five c's in Succcccess. I promised to touch on each one of the five in more depth in the coming weeks, so here is the follow up to that promise. I have actually thought of several more c's since last week, but I am not ready to expand the series, otherwise I will have to spell success "Succcccccccccccess." Maybe that would not be such a bad thing, but for now, let's dive into the concept of curiosity and how it ties in to succcccess.

## **A BURNING BUSH**

We know that Moses tended sheep in the wilderness for forty years! I have been to the Middle East numerous times and it is a hot, hot place. Moses had to work in this heat year in and year out, and I am sure that every now and then a dry bush would burst into flames due to the super-hot conditions. Then one day Moses saw something unusual that captured his attention:

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up" (Exodus 3:1-3).

What was unusual about this bush is that it burned, probably a common sight, but the bush was not consumed. It just kept on burning. Moses could have easily dismissed this sight and went about his business, but he decided to investigate further. Upon closer examination, he had a surprising thing happen: "When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am" (Exodus 3:4).

## **SO WHAT?**

It is interesting that God did not call Moses and that is what drew Moses to the bush. It was his curiosity that caused him to pause and look, and then and only then did God call out to Moses and initiate a series of events that changed the course of history. In this order of events, first came Moses' curiosity, his reaction, God's call and then Moses' response to God. What does this have to do with your success?

There are many people waiting for God's call. Perhaps you are one of them. Did you ever consider that the call may be in what interests you? You are busy and don't see how what interests you can add to your career, so you don't pursue what is in your heart. Because you don't trust what is in you, you go about your business and wonder why God is not answering your prayers to be used or promoted.

Do you realize that it was Saul's interest, his obsession with persecuting Christians that led him to be a Christian and become the apostle Paul? If God can use Saul's misdirected interest to direct his steps, then God can use your curiosities to do the same? Success starts with investigating what piques your interest and I urge you to do something to satisfy your curiosity this week. As you do, be listening for the voice of God and then follow His directions, just like Moses and Saul did. Have a great week.

## **527: Commitment**

This week I wrap up the fifth c in success, the first four being curiosity, creativity, competence and collaboration. You can catch up on any you didn't read [here](#), but let's move on to this fifth and final c and wrap this series up!

## **THE WINNER IS**

When I think of one who had to persevere and endure but who was totally committed to God's plan, I think the winner is Joseph in Genesis. Joseph had his visions from God indicating that he would lead his family when he was just 17 years of age. After that, all hell and parts of heaven broke loose for him and before he knew it, his brothers had sold

him into slavery, then covered their deed with their family by concocting a story that Joseph had been devoured by a wild animal.

Joseph prospered in Potiphar's house and then languished in prison until he was 30 years old. It was then that Pharaoh had his two dreams and Joseph was summoned to the palace to interpret the dreams. Joseph not only interpreted that there would be seven bountiful years and then seven of famine, but he also came up with a plan that pleased Pharaoh of how to prepare for those lean years. Joseph went from the dungeon to the palace in a matter of minutes, but he had been in Egypt for 13 years up to that point.

If the story ended there, it would be a good one - but it doesn't! Joseph serves Egypt during the seven good years, storing up grain and establishing Pharaoh's throne. Then the lean years begin and Joseph's family, not knowing he is alive or in Egypt, came down to buy food. They appear before Joseph and he recognizes them, but they don't recognize him. Joseph told his brothers, "[I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute](#)" (Genesis 45:11).

What's my point? Joseph was 39 when his brothers came to get food and he revealed himself to them. That means he lived in his dreams before they became reality for 22 years. Can you wait for your dream that long, preparing for the day when it will come to pass?

## **YOU MAY BE NEXT**

If you have done all you can do, are you prepared to wait? Are you committed to see success in the long run, whether that is in business, ministry, publishing or some other purpose expression? You can be the next Joseph, if you are willing to pay the price for success as I have spelled out over the last five weeks. Like Joseph, you can wait long, but then have your life change for the better in five minutes.

I am 61 years old, and I have yet to see some of the things I believe God put in my heart. That is why I keep writing, praying, learning and growing. I am committed to do what it takes to see my dreams, and that may mean I see them from another vantage point after I am gone to be with Him. Whatever it takes, I won't give up.

I invite you to join me in the pursuit of success. Let's not stop until we run as far and fast and as long as we can, as He empowers us. I hope these last five weeks have helped you and that you have learned something. Have a great week!

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**KENYA UPDATE:** I posted an entry explaining that we raised our money for the matching grant, which you can read [here](#). We need more, however, and I tell you how you can give in the same entry.

**ZIMBABWE, HERE I COME:** I will be back in Zimbabwe for the first time since December, 2007 starting November 27. If you would like to be part of my visit, you can read about my schedule [here](#). I look forward to seeing all my friends there when I return.

November 13, 2011 in [Personal Development](#), [Productivity](#), [Purpose](#), [Upcoming Events](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(2\)](#)

## **526: Collaboration**

We are almost finished with our discussion of the five c's in succcess. To date, we have covered Curiosity, Creativity, and Competence. This week we will take a look at collaboration. Without further ado, let's get into it.

### **YAY TEAM!**

God did not create you to do everything, just certain things. If you could do it all, you would not have need of anyone else. The same is true for organizations. Even large corporations need to collaborate with others or else build an organization big enough so that everything they need is under one corporate umbrella. In a sense, they are then collaborating within their organization, but still must at times build partnerships with other entities.

Here are a few examples of teams working together in the Bible:

1. Joseph and Pharaoh made a great team in Egypt, with Joseph providing the administration and Pharaoh the leadership.
2. Moses and Aaron led the Israelites out of Egypt.
3. Saul and David enjoyed success early in their partnership as they defeated the Philistines again and again.
4. Nehemiah partnered with the king her served to secure permission and resources to rebuild Jerusalem.
5. Daniel had his three friends serving with him in Babylon.
6. Jesus had twelve disciples with whom he collaborated and worked closely.
7. Barnabas and Saul, Paul and Silas, Paul and Luke, and a number of other combinations worked together to spread the gospel to the Gentiles in the early church.

I hope you get the idea that is you are going to be succcessful, you are going to need to collaborate or partner with others, whether you are looking for individual or corporate succcess.

### **SOME SUGGESTIONS**

Here are some quick suggestions to enable you to collaborate effectively:

1. **Find those who share your values and ethics.** Don't collaborate with those whom you can't trust.
2. **Partner with your opposite.** This assumes you know your strengths and are willing to collaborate with those who are strong where you aren't.
3. **Know your purpose.** If you know where you are headed, you can join up with people who are on the same road.
4. **Network.** Get out and meet people. Build relationships before you even think of collaborating. Don't just build a card file of acquaintances, but listen and learn what motivates other people.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive teaching on partnerships and collaborations. Rather it is an attempt to help you get out your own little world and learn to "play well" with others. If you want to do great things and enjoy success, then there is usually no such thing as a one man or woman act. Success usually comes through strategic collaboration.

Stop going it alone and playing it safe, and learn to partner with others so that you can enjoy the synergies of joint ventures that will allow you to reach your goals. Have a great week!

### [525: Competence](#)

This week we continue our discussion of the five c's in success with the third c - competence. (If you missed the previous two, you can access them [here](#).) I want to say at the start that God does not promote or use people with potential. He does not promote holy people just because they are holy. God promotes and uses people who have developed their potential and have coupled their holiness with competence and fruitfulness. Don't believe me? Then read on and see if I can convince you.

### **PROOF PLEASE**

How can I make statements about the importance of competence? Consider these examples:

1. **Daniel** - Daniel served with distinction in Babylon. He was promoted because of his gifts that God gave him, but he developed them, as it was said of Daniel: "[At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent](#)" (Daniel 6:4). Daniel was a good, perhaps even a great, skilled administrator.
2. **David** - David was a prolific songwriter and poet who honed his skills by regular use. He was also a magnificent warrior and leader, of whom the people sang: "[When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the](#)

women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres. As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands" (1 Samuel 18:6-7).

3. **Esther** - Esther was a beautiful woman, by God's design: "This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful" (Esther 2:7b). What did God do with her beauty? He dispatched her to the king's servants, who bestowed beauty treatments on Esther for one year. The result: She was even more beautiful than before!
4. **Paul** - Paul knew four languages and was from one of the most cross-cultural city in the Roman Empire. He was a Jew of Jews, who was a stellar keeper of God's law by his own admission: ". . . as for righteousness based on the law, faultless" (Philippians 3:6). What did God do with this man who had excelled in Judaism? He chose Paul to be His representative to the Gentiles. God took Paul's skill, redirected and perfected it, and used it for His glory.

### THE LESSON FOR YOU

The lesson for you should be clear. God uses you to the extent that you have developed your skills and gifts. If you are competent, He will use you. If you are competent and have integrity, He will promote you to the highest levels that your gifts and foundation will allow you to attain. Your success in any field or endeavor is a partnership between God, who provides the grace and opportunities, and you, who develop your competence.

What is your plan for competence? Do you even have one? In what field or effort do you want to be competent, even world-class in skill and effect? Mind you, I am not suggesting that competence is more important than holiness or integrity? I am saying, however, that without competence your holiness alone will limit God's ability to use you to the fullest extent of your potential. Give some thought this week to the importance of competence in success and then go about a one-, five- or lifetime plan to achieve the greatest skill possible for you as you express your purpose and pursue your goals. Have a great week!

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**MATCHING GRANT:** Today is the last day for the \$1,500 matching grant we had received for the library work in Kenya. That means unless \$1,500 comes in today, we lose the grant. That's alright, for God has a plan, so I am not worried. There is still time today, so I have not given up until I check the mailbox this week to see if someone sent a check. If this is the first you have heard about this grant, you can read about it [here](#) and then give through my [website](#) or by sending a check today to PurposeQuest, PO Box 8882, Pittsburgh, PA 15221-0882. His will be done, so give as He leads and directs and if He doesn't do either, then I and we will trust Him for other sources.

**I NEED FEEDBACK:** I am in the middle of revising my book, *So Many Leaders, So Little Leadership* and posted some definitions of leadership, team and purpose on my blog. If you have a chance, take a look at them [here](#) and tell me what you think of how accurate they are and/or how they can be improved.

October 30, 2011 in [Creativity](#), [Leadership](#), [Personal Development](#), [Productivity](#), [Purpose](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

## **524: Creativity**

In case you are just tuning in this week to read the *Monday Memo*, we are in the midst of studying the five c's in succcess. If you think succcess isn't a consideration for you, read these words from Psalm 1:1-3 in the Good News Translation:

"Happy are those who reject the advice of evil people, who do not follow the example of sinners or join those who have no use for God. Instead, they find joy in obeying the Law of the Lord, and they study it day and night. They are like trees that grow beside a stream, that bear fruit at the right time, and whose leaves do not dry up. **They succeed in everything they do**" (emphasis added).

With that in mind, let's look at the second c in succcess, that being creativity.

## **YOU ARE, TOO!**

In 2006, I had a startling revelation and changed my purpose statement from "I *bring* order out of chaos" to "I *create* order out of chaos." It was then that I accepted the fact that I am a creative person, something I had denied up to that point. I began to write and teach about creativity after that, and I have many *Monday Memos* devoted to the subject of creativity. You may want to take some time and review them [here](#).

Over the years, I have also collected creative life expressions from *Monday Memo* readers and posted that collection on my website. You can find that list [here](#) titled, "Samples of Creative Expressions." Once you read that list and some of my past *Memos*, I hope you will come to the same realization that I did: You are a creative person, too!

## **CREATIVITY FOLLOWS CURIOSITY**

Last week we looked at the first c in succcess and that is curiosity. Once you are curious and decide to follow your heart and what interests you, it is time to express your creativity. You can then begin to structure your world and invest your time in such a way that your creativity can take shape as a practical expression of who you are. I am interested in writing, and have been since I was young. So in 1995 at the age of 45, I started to pursue my interest and today I write every day to an audience all over the world.

I have written 12 books, 524 *Monday Memos*, finished a verse-by-verse devotional on the entire New Testament, and write a daily devotional online featuring one verse from Proverbs every day (I want to turn that into a desktop calendar soon). This semester I am teaching five classes and have no end of other creative projects and ideas in the works.

I love to do media but got tired of waiting for people to invite me to be part of their media world. What did I do? I started my own online broadcast, *Your PurposeQuest*, that is live via the Internet every Tuesday at 4 PM my time (you can access some of my shows on the site where they are stored [here](#); feel free to download and listen).

You don't have to do any of those things that I am doing to be creative. You just have to be yourself. You cannot be fighting yourself, however, and be creative. My experience is that most people (perhaps even you) are trying to talk themselves out of their creativity instead of into it. With that in mind, I encourage you to read my past *Memos*, think about this in the coming days and embrace your creativity. You cannot be successful without employing it, but you cannot employ it if you deny that it even exists. Have a great week!

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