

The Monday Memo
from the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 71

If you have heard my purpose presentation, you know that I usually begin by looking at Acts 6:1-4:

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

I study this passage regularly and it speaks to me every time I do. Three things impress me most:

1. There were problems, even in the early church.
2. The apostles could not solve or be involved in all the problems.
3. The apostles refused to help the widows with their direct involvement.

I like this passage so much because it portrays a problem that you and I have all the time, and that is knowing to what we say "yes" and to what do we say "no." The more successful you are in your job, ministry or purpose, the more this problem seems to appear, because success only leads to more opportunities, more "open doors." I talk with people regularly who are facing those "open doors," but for whatever reason find themselves unable to walk through them.

Sometimes the problem is what you are currently doing. It is familiar; you have had a measure of success or at least know more or less what is expected of you. The current situation may provide a safe environment in which to function. But if you continue doing what you currently do, you won't be able to embrace that new thing, opportunity, or "open door" that is before you.

At other times, you may have an "open door," but as you begin to walk through, a new development in your current situation comes to confuse and distract you. It may be more money, a slight variation in your current routine, or an offer of some new responsibility that causes you to reconsider that "open door." The Apostle Paul wrote, "Because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me (1 Corinthians 16:9). Sometimes the opposition presents itself as a chance to stay in your comfort zone where you know the people and the routine.

I ran across a quote this week that may help. It is from Baruch Spinoza, a 17th century Dutch philosopher. He wrote, "A good thing which prevents us from enjoying a greater good is in truth an evil." I'm sure the apostles in Acts 6 saw helping the widows as a good thing, but helping them would have taken them away from something better. Thus they declined to get personally involved.

As you approach this week, ask yourself if some good thing is keeping you from a better thing and has thus become a bad thing for you. If the answer is yes, then what are you prepared to do about it? Do you have the courage and faith to address that good thing, even lay it down, so you can embrace the greater good for you? I am going to spend my week on the cruise looking at that very issue in my life. I pray that together we will all be able to move on to the greater good that God has for us. Have a great week!

from the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 72

I just got off a cruise ship working with a group that was touring Alaska. Last year I wrote a popular **Monday Memo** after the same trip and I thought I would offer it again this year. I am sending this one not because I didn't have time to write a new one, but because the truth from last year impressed me again this year.

* * * * *

I suppose if I had lived in Alaska, my first book would have been titled, ***Life is a Gold Mine: Can You Pan It?*** as opposed to ***Can You Dig It?*** The early Alaskan settlers panned for gold in Alaska's streams and rivers in hopes of finding their golden treasure. With that in mind, I decided to try my hand at gold panning this past week while on my Alaskan cruise in a town called Skagway.

I did indeed find about 10 small pieces of gold during my panning experience. And I found that if you're digging or panning for gold, it's certainly similar to what you and I go through to find our life purpose. How so? Consider these similarities:

1. You can pan on your own, but having someone who knows how to do it is a great help. My guide Tom began panning two years ago. He taught us the proper procedures that enabled each one of us to find gold. When you are looking for your purpose, it often helps to involve other people. Ask them what they think your purpose may be. Better yet, find someone who knows their purpose and ask them to help you find yours.
2. Panning is hard work. I stood over a trough for a few minutes panning for the gold I found and my back ached. I thought about those who panned in the cold Alaskan weather, standing in cold water, and bending over for most of the day. Finding your purpose can be hard work, too; there is no guarantee when you'll find it or what you'll go through to discover the big golden nugget called purpose.
3. You don't need a lot of tools. You only need a pan to pan for gold, not a lot of sophisticated equipment. That's how it is as you search for your purpose. You start where you are, with what you have, and look in faith.
4. You can't see the gold right away. When I began panning, my pan was filled with dirt and gravel. That's how it is when you search for your purpose; you can't see the "gold" because of all the other "stuff" in your life. It's there, however, and you simply have to know how to find it.
5. It's exciting when you find the gold. When I found the gold at the bottom of my pan, I felt like I was rich! When you find your life purpose, you feel the same way. The God of the universe knows who you are and gave you something to do that's just right for you.
6. The gold stays in the pan. Gold is so heavy that it's almost impossible to lose it when you're panning. Your life purpose is the same way; it's a part of you that goes with you wherever you are, and is relevant no matter what mistakes you've made.
7. People came from all over the world to look for gold. When the news of gold spread from Alaska in 1897, men the world over dropped what they were doing to go in search of fortune. How much more should you and I search diligently for the gold that lies within us, the gold of knowing and fulfilling our purpose.

I hear from many people every week who are still trying to define their purpose. If you are one of those people, this may be the week! You have panned and panned for your gold to no avail, but

www.purposequest.com

this may be the week when a perfect stranger tells you something that shows you the gold you've been looking for. Maybe you'll find it in something you read or in a quiet time of meditation. However it happens, I hope that your search will be rewarded soon. It may be hard work to find that gold, but I promise it will be worth the effort. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo
from the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 73

I was sitting in a small men's meeting yesterday morning in Cleveland, Ohio. I was asked to speak but, before I did, I asked each man to tell me something that he was learning in his life at that time. One man took us to a Bible passage that I knew right away should be the focus for this week's [Memo](#). But then I had second thoughts.

You see, this passage talks about faith and I feel that I'm often talking to you about faith, about trusting God to provide as you seek and fulfill your purpose. That always leads to questions and some feel pressure from what I share. So I had decided to write about something else. The only problem is, I can't think of anything else! So if you're tired of me writing about faith, or if you feel I put you under pressure when I do, then please skip to the bottom of this [Memo](#) to see what offers I have this week on my website.

The passage we talked about yesterday is found in Matthew 6:25-34:

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Our focus is to be on doing the will of God and that is defined for you and me as fulfilling our life purpose. We could easily substitute "purpose" for the word "kingdom" so that the verse would read, "Seek first his **purpose** and his righteousness, and all these things [food, clothes, housing] will be given to you as well." That is what I have been trying to do in my own life for the last two years. I am taking God at His word and I believe He will provide as I do what He wants me to do. He is not limited to provide by an employer, trust fund or government assistance. The Lord promised that He would provide; He only asks you and me not to worry about it.

Worry is an interesting exercise. For some, it comes with a sense of duty, for to **not** worry may seem irresponsible. For others, worry is superstitious. If they don't worry about the worst that can happen, the best may not happen. It sounds strange, but I've seen it enough times to know that it's true. And then for others, and maybe for you, things are so bad that worry is like an enemy that has surrounded the walls of your life, pounding on the gates to deprive you of peace and sleep. Worry is there to remind you of what isn't happening and how bad things are.

If you are worried about what may happen when you seek God's will and find it, you can stop right now! God has promised to provide for your needs. God may not provide all your wants, but He will never forsake you. Ask yourself this week if worry has stolen anything from you. Has it

www.purposequest.com

kept you from aggressively pursuing or doing God's will? Has it robbed you of joy, thus depriving you of the strength you need to carry on? Has it caused you to question or doubt God's faithfulness? If worry has done any of these things, then it's time to fight back. This week, you need to take steps to bolster your faith.

I know. You may be saying that this is all easy for me to write, that I don't know what you're going through, and you would be correct. But then again, you don't know what I'm going through either. And where I am in my life and purpose, I am choosing this week not to worry and to trust God. I invite you to join me if you are ready to do the same. I don't know what lies ahead this week, but I want to walk in the truth of Matthew 6. I trust you will decide to do the same. Have a great week!

**The Monday Memo
from the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 74**

I introduced the topic of servant leadership in [The Monday Memo](#) 63, and haven't revisited that subject since then. (If you want to read [Memo](#) 63, you can go to <http://www.purposequest.com/mmemo.htm> to find it.) This week I was reading ***Insights on Leadership: Service, Stewardship, Spirit and Servant Leadership*** and spent the week meditating on being a servant and a leader. Most of my servant focus up to now has been on people and how I can help them be what God created them to be.

This week, however, I gained a new perspective on servant leaders. I found it in an essay by Joseph Jaworski, who was referring to the writings Robert Greenleaf, who coined the term "servant-leader." Jaworski wrote:

The framework Greenleaf set forth enabled me to understand the underlying dynamics of leadership. There are two essential dimensions of leadership, Greenleaf asserted. The first, and by far the best known, is the desire to serve others. The second is the desire to serve something beyond ourselves--a higher purpose. Greenleaf did not restrict himself to a single term in speaking of this transcendent reality. At one time or another, he spoke of it as the goal, the dream, the overarching purpose.

I had never thought that, as a servant leader, I was not only serving people but also my own purpose as well! My God-given purpose is "to bring order out of chaos." I have never looked for a job in my life; the jobs have always come to me. And each job has had the same need: there was chaos that needed order.

My purpose doesn't serve me and it doesn't always serve other people; I serve it. A chance to function in my purpose presents itself from time to time and when it does, I am obligated to step into that purpose opportunity. If I am going to be an effective servant leader, therefore, I must know what my purpose is, so I know what and whom I am serving. The same would be true for you.

Servant leadership isn't just being polite or helping people in practical ways. Servant leadership is serving people by being who God created you to be, for that is exactly what the people you are serving need from you. To not know or function in your purpose is to deprive others of the gift that God wants you to be and also deprives you of the chance to truly serve and lead.

In another essay in this week's readings, author named Jeffery McCollum wrote:

Our choices are crucial. Annie Dillard says, "How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives . . . There is no shortage of good days. It is good lives that are hard to come by." Good lives, it can be argued, come from choosing service.

You have seven days ahead of you this week. Why not choose to make them good days by choosing to serve someone every day? And why not choose to serve your purpose this week as well? Make your purpose and life this week the focus of your days. Spend some time finding your purpose or being better equipped to fulfill it. As you do, people who need who you are will probably present themselves to you for help. When they do, make it a good day by choosing to serve according to your purpose. With enough good days like that, you will be well on your way to living a good life, a life of purpose-filled days and opportunities. Have a great week!

**The Monday Memo
from the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 75**

I was part of a retreat this past weekend where one of the staff gave a presentation on recruiting volunteers for their organization. During her presentation, she made a statement that left a deep impression on me. She said: "When finances get misused, everyone cares. When people get misused, no one cares." The more I've thought about that statement, the more I realize how true it is. Let a company, church or ministry misuse financial resources, and there is usually a tremendous uproar. Let them misappropriate their human resources, and people (even the ones being misused) are strangely quiet.

Why is this true? Do we value money more than people? Do we see people as replaceable and money as irreplaceable? I can't speak to all the reasons, but I can speak to the fact that it happens all the time. And there is only one way to stop this trend. People, both leaders and followers alike, must know their purpose and work together to find ways to fulfill that purpose in the context of existing and new organizations.

If you are a leader, business owner, pastor or department head, I want to challenge you this week to evaluate whether or not the workers you supervise are being deployed properly. That may mean that you need to ask them directly and then listen intently. You may want to ask them: Are you happy? Do you feel that your skills, experience and passions are being effectively utilized here? Is there any part of this operation that you may be better suited to work in?

Or perhaps you already know someone who is being misused, either underutilized or misplaced. What are you willing to do about it? Are you willing to work to see them properly placed, even if it means helping them find something outside your organization? Will you to continue to ignore that situation, hoping it will somehow go away or improve? Or will you continue to use that person for your own ends, knowing in your heart that they aren't being fully and properly utilized.

If you are someone being misused or in a place where you are not being utilized to the fullest, then I want to challenge you as well. First of all, face reality. Admit that you aren't working to your full potential. Then summon courage and talk to those who can do something about it. But ultimately, you are the one who must exercise a stewardship for your own life, gifts and purpose. If you are doing what you do **solely** for monetary reasons, you run the risk of being a hireling, no matter how noble the task or cause. And I am willing to guess that you aren't happy.

As we enter a new week, let's make an effort to treat our human resources with the same respect and care with which we treat our financial resources. But at the end of the day, no one can do that for you if you aren't willing to do it for yourself. I urge everyone reading this **Memo** to make this week a week of stewardship, where we take extra care to see our lives and human resources put to their best use. Write me with your thoughts on this subject and let me know what you are doing to fulfill your purpose or to help others fulfill theirs. Whether you write or not, I trust that you will have a great week!

