

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

"Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress" (1 Timothy 4:15).

"But who has despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10).

Well, how did you do last week? How much of what you set out to accomplish did you actually accomplish? I set three objectives last week, and I finished two of them (I finished my paper and made some significant ministry contacts that will open doors later in the year). What will I do with that third objective that I did not finish? I am going to set it as an objective for this week! There's nothing I can do about last week; it's gone forever. But I have this week, seven glorious, unscripted, full-of-potential days ahead of me and I am going to make the most of them. I invite you to join me.

I give you three quotes this week from Stephen Covey of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* fame.

1. Look at the weaknesses of others with compassion, not accusation. It's not what they're not doing or should be doing that's the issue. The issue is your own chosen response to the situation and what you should be doing. If you start to think the problem is "out there," stop yourself. That thought is the problem.

2. Our language is a very real indicator of the degree to which we see ourselves as proactive people.

The language of reactive people absolves them of responsibility:

- "That's me. That's just the way I am." (I am determined. There's nothing I can do about it.)
- "I can't do that. I just don't have the time." (Something outside me--limited time--is controlling me).
- "I have to do it." (Circumstances or other people are forcing me to do what I do. I'm not free to choose my own actions.)

Reactive language comes from a basic paradigm of determinism, and the whole spirit of it is the transfer of responsibility.

I am not responsible, not able to choose my response.

3. Here are two ways to put ourselves in control of our lives immediately. We can make a promise--and keep it. Or we can set a goal--and work to achieve it. As we make and keep commitments, even small commitments, we begin to establish an inner integrity that gives us the awareness of self-control and the courage and strength to accept more of the responsibility for our own lives. By making and keeping promises to ourselves and others, little by little, our honor becomes greater than our moods.

I encourage you to take Mr. Covey's words to heart and make a promise or set a goal for the seven days that are ahead of you. What can you do this week that you will do for no other reason than it is something you want to do, something the Lord has put on your heart to do? No one is making you do it and no one will condemn you if you don't. It is something that **you** have talked about doing, perhaps for a long time. This week you are going to take the first or next step in achieving some goal that has been courting you for quite some time now. What is it?

In addition to finishing my study on purpose that I mentioned last week (but did not do), I am going to take steps to make my PowerPoint presentations more effective. I have been talking about it for some time, but before I go to Zimbabwe on May 23, I am going to have more graphics and better designs for three of my presentations. And I will take the first steps this week.

Write me and let me know what **you** will do this week that will add something to your life, business, family or ministry. Don't wait any longer; and no more excuses. Take the first step, **this week!**

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Issue Seven*

My sister-in-law sent me a quote from a new book entitled, *When God Comes Calling* by Ted Fletcher. Ted is the founder of Pioneers, the fastest growing member of the interdenominational Foreign Mission Association. The quote itself is from Mark Twain:

"Twenty years from now, you'll be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than the ones you did.
So throw off your bowlines. Leave the still waters of the harbor.
Catch the trade winds with your sail."

Then I ran across a quote from a FC Future Forum Series sponsored by *Fast Company* magazine:

" 'Significance' means doing work that you are *called* to do, rather than work that you want to do or work that merely pays well.

It means following a vocation, rather than performing a job."

What are you called to do? If you know, why aren't you doing it or at least more of it? What is stopping you from doing the work that you were called to do? If you don't know, what are you willing to do to find out?

I have always been intrigued by the word *called*, because if you are *called*, then *someone* is doing the calling. You and I know who is doing the calling; it is the Lord God. But that makes your work and purpose all the more serious. The calling you have isn't just a good idea, a hobby, or something you want or have chosen to do; it is something that *God* has set aside for you to do. If God has called you, then you need to be about doing whatever it is He called you to do.

What is stopping you from moving out of the harbor where you are tied to the dock? I have found three main reasons that you may not be functioning in your calling, the purpose that God has for you:

1. Lack of faith -- your concern for how you will pay your bills is keeping you where you are instead of where you need to be.
2. Fear -- you may be afraid that you will do the wrong thing.
3. Passivity -- you may be waiting for God to do (or waiting for Him to confirm it with writing in the sky) what only you can do.

Which of the three are holding you back? What are you going to do about it?

In 20 years, what will you regret *not* having done? I am now starting a business and I have left the safety of my previous position to do it. I am scared, yet excited; I need resources, but God is my source; I have stepped out to do what it is that I can do, and I am trusting God to do what only He can do. It is an exhilarating time, but I have cast myself on the Lord and His mercy. I have prayed that He will show Himself strong.

What is your purpose? If you know it, please send me your purpose statement when you read this *Memo*. What work do you need to be doing that is consistent with your purpose? Let me know what that is as well.

If you don't know, then seek the Lord this week to bring clarity. I close with a quote from someone who wrote me last week. My prayer is that your report will be the same as his:

Within 4 days of your seminar, God enlightened me to my life's purpose. I have been one of these people who has continually given to all areas of ministry that come up. And I had also lost touch with the word "No!"

Your seminar and CD have so clearly identified in me what I lacked as far as direction. I thought about what really gives me pleasure and comes easy as you suggested. Then after a couple of days, I asked God! As I turned around, there was a child in need of my counsel. Among the six or seven ministries I am involved in, it is working with the fatherless kids I love!

Once you know your purpose, your calling, do what Mark Twain suggested: cut your bowlines, the ropes that hold you to the shore, and move out of the harbor. You'll enjoy the trip but better yet, you'll love the destination!

The book mentioned in the first paragraph is a book about purpose. Ted Fletcher left his job at 48 years of age to start a missions organization. Today that organization is growing and impacting the world. If you would like to purchase a copy of that book, call (800) 755-7284 or email them at info@pioneers.org. His story may help encourage you to write your own story.

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Issue Eight

This week I am writing to you from Bentonville, Arkansas, home of the world's largest retailer, WalMart. I am doing what I love to do: talking about purpose and goal-setting to people who are interested. Next week, I will be in Baltimore doing the same thing. It's fun doing what you love to do, and that is within the reach of everyone if you know your purpose and values.

I am asked one question all the time, and some of you, *The Monday Memo* readers, have asked it as well: "There are so many things I want to do and feel like I need to do - how do I find the time to do them?" A key is to clarify your values and then allow your goals and daily tasks to flow out of your values system. Let me give you an example.

One of my nine values is that "I am a learner." I don't want to stop learning or I feel I will stop growing as a leader and person. Since learning is a value, I set a goal this year to read or listen to 72 books. On my prioritized daily task list you will find reading as a scheduled activity every day. Today is the end of April, and I have a list of 24 books that I have read or listened to since the beginning of the year; I am right on schedule.

How do I find time to read? Learning is a value, I have a specific goal, and that goal translates into daily action. It is not something I have to labor to do, although reading that much does require some hard work. But it is also fun and something I genuinely look forward to every day.

On the other hand, I am not as effective at a regular exercise regimen. If you study my values, health is not a declared value on my list and therefore exercise does not appear on my daily task list. It should, but to be honest, my lack of exercise is not a scheduling problem, it's a heart problem. I must make health something I value

(and don't take for granted) before exercise will find its way onto my daily list.

If you have attended one of my seminars, you have probably heard me talk about values and how to identify them for yourself. Have you done that? If not, then I would suggest the following for this week:

1. Write me and I will send you my own values for you to use as a guideline, along with the procedure I used to develop them. The attachment I send you will be the actual chapter from my book *So Many Leaders, So Little Leadership*. (This can be downloaded from the **Values** section under the **Leadership** heading on this website)
2. Set aside two hours one day this week and write on your to-do list for that particular day "work on values." Get up early one morning, don't watch television one evening, but find two hours one day this week. Commit to do it and keep the commitment.
3. Once you have identified your values, you can then begin to set goals and daily activities around things that you value, things that govern your life by their place of prominence in your life.

There is no shortcut to being productive and self-disciplined. But if you are serious about answering the question, "How do I find time to do important things?", then you must be serious about writing out your values. If it will help you, send me or a friend an email of your commitment to have your values written by next Monday, and then do it.

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Issue Nine

Wow! What a response last week. I sent my chapter on values to many of you who requested it, and I hope you found it helpful. I trust that the rest of you either have your values spelled out or didn't need any help or guidelines. But whatever category you find yourself in, I am confident that you have written out your values as I encouraged you to do last week.

This week I am writing from Baltimore, Maryland where I conducted a "Life is a Gold Mine" seminar last Saturday. It is always exciting for me to see people spend time defining who they are and who they aren't. I am glad to report that many people took one step closer to knowing their purpose. How about you? Can you define your life purpose in a short, concise statement?

This week, I want to return to the topic from the first *Monday Memo*. In that first *Memo*, we talked about whether or not it would be more beneficial to develop a strength or improve a weakness. In an email update I received this week from the *Gallup Strengthsfinder* newsletter, I found the following question and answer:

QUESTION: Is it possible to over-develop a strength? For instance, one of my Signature Themes is Competition. If I spend too much time developing this strength, might I alienate co-workers, friends, or family?

GALLUP: First, we need to keep the language precise. In our book "Now, Discover Your Strengths," we define a strength as "consistent, near-perfect performance in an activity." So, for example, one of your strengths might be selling, or public speaking, or developing software. Using this definition, it is impossible to over-develop a

strength. The more you develop a strength, the closer you get to near-perfect performance in that activity. And, as long as you are in a role that requires that activity, this can only be a good thing.

First of all, I would recommend the book "Now, Discover Your Strengths." The book was written based on the research conducted among effective managers the world over. In every case, the authors found that effective managers helped people function in their strengths. The book then helps you identify what your strengths are and aren't. Your purpose is your consummate strength. It represents your point of greatest anointing; it is where you sense God's pleasure and help. You can never spend too much time developing your strength or functioning in your purpose.

Notice the last line in the answer above: "And as long as you are in a role that requires that activity [purpose], this can only be a good thing." It is critical for you to find and define your purpose so that you can evaluate where you are investing your life and time. Once you know your purpose, you can no longer be satisfied with activities that aren't purpose-related.

The Apostle Paul made tents to earn a living at various times in his life. Yet we know that he was a tent maker **not** because he told us, but because Luke told us. Paul never defined himself in terms of his job, but in terms of his purpose. And every chance he had, he stopped his tent making to engage his purpose -- bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. I can't promise that knowing your purpose will enable you to find a job or career where your purpose will be perfectly fulfilled. But if you don't know your purpose or strength, you may never find that activity or work to make it a priority.

What is your purpose? What can you do this week that will enable you to better align your activities with your purpose? If you're still struggling with defining your purpose, write me and I will send you another chapter from one of my books that may help. (this chapter can be downloaded from the **Papers** section under the **Articles** heading on this website). If you know your purpose, can you use some of your free time this week to make your strength even

stronger? Can you do something that is more closely related to what you were born to do? I wish you a week of purposeful activity. I know that is what I am going to shoot for.

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Issue Ten

It was a perfect community. The houses were all neatly manicured and of uniform construction. Not a thing was out of place. There was a church, stores, a post office and a bank. As I drove through Celebration, Florida last week just outside the main entrance to Disney World, I was impressed by this city that Disney's engineers had built. But my biggest impression was that Celebration, Florida wasn't really a place to live, it was a place to visit -- it was a tourist attraction. If you live in Celebration, Florida you don't live in reality.

But I don't live in reality and very often, you don't either. Judging by the mail I get from *The Monday Memo* and by my own planner, you and I try to do too much. We have families and jobs where we have limited control over our time. We live in an imperfect world where accidents happen, things end up taking longer than we anticipated, children need to be held, tires go flat, and others' needs take up time, time we didn't anticipate and often don't have.

Yet we keep right on planning, planning as if we had control over our time and events. The truth is, we do have control over some of the events. But if truth be told, we don't have control over as many as we would like.

So what does this mean for you and me?

It means that we need to live in reality, not in Celebration, Florida or any other make-believe world. You and I need to identify our values and then, with the time we have left, try to do what is really important. I enter this week with five projects on my list from last week. I couldn't get to them. Not because they weren't important, but because last week I did things that were more important. Last week I visited a cousin in Baltimore and met his 36-year-old twin children I had never met. I took time in Orlando to visit my sister-in-law and then came home and drove back to Maryland with my wife to visit her

mother. All those things took time and I had to take that time away from something else I could have done. But I feel good as I review last week -- not because I did everything I wanted to do, but I did everything that was important to me to do.

Last week I kept my priorities. That's all you and I can be expected to do.

Stephen Covey said,

"Time management is not the ability to squeeze more hours into the day. It is not the capacity to triple-book oneself in an effort to get more things done. It's not about getting more things done at all. It's about accomplishing the important."

So as you begin another week, be realistic. You aren't going to sit down and write your book, but can you write one chapter? You're not going to have a one-hour quiet time every day; can you have a fifteen-minute one? If you choose to spend the day with your mother, wife, or child, that is one less day you will have to invest in something else. But if those things are your highest priorities and you do them, you will have had a great week.

So, what three things this week will you do with the discretionary time over which you have control? Write them down **now**. And when you do them, what *won't* you be able to do that next Sunday night you will refuse to feel guilty about not doing?

If I can help, let me know. But I can't be there to help you live in reality. Only you can do that.

