

The Monday Memo
from Birmingham, England
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 136

I'm back! On November 14, my computer crashed and it has taken me this long to get it repaired and to restore my data. Then I was unable to connect last week while in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately I had to use my backup data from October 1, so if you (1) changed your email address; (2) wrote me to unsubscribe; (3) sent a gift subscription; or (4) subscribed to the Hebrews Bible study *after* October 1, you will need to send your request one more time. I am sorry for the inconvenience but I am glad to be writing once again, and grateful I didn't lose even more data than I did.

During these last four weeks, I have been meditating and speaking on faith and trust. Last week, I had the unexpected privilege of speaking at a church service I was visiting. I talked to those present about the faith of Moses' mother. She was a woman who had a baby boy, not an unusual event for a married woman. But the Bible tells us: "**When the baby's mother saw that he was an unusually beautiful baby, she hid him at home for three months**" (Exodus 2:2 TLB). What did Moses' mother see? Perhaps she mistook beauty for purpose. This awareness must have been passed on to Moses, for Stephen said in his address to the Sanhedrin, "**Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not**" (Acts 7:25).

At any rate, Moses' mother had a problem. The king of Egypt had declared that all male babies were to be thrown into the Nile River. She hid him for as long as possible and then did what the king ordered. The only difference was that she put her little boy into a basket that she made: "**But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him**" (Exodus 2:2-4). What an expression of trust in God! What lessons can we learn from this?

First of all, she took steps to preserve the purpose of God for her son by making a basket. I am sure she had to go to some effort to do this, for tar and pitch aren't everyday household items. Then when she had done all she could do to make the basket waterproof, she put her baby boy on the river. Here I can't help but think of the verse, "**Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again**" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). Finally, she stationed her daughter close by to observe and report what happened to the basket. After she had done all she could do, she stepped back to watch what God would do.

In some ways, that is what I did with my computer and **The Monday Memo** the last four weeks. I put them both in God's hands. I was willing to stop writing **The Monday Memo** altogether. I was also willing to start all over again if my address book had been irretrievably lost. I wasn't sure if I would have to purchase a new computer, something I could not afford at this time. I took the opportunity to tell the Lord every day, "I trust you. Whatever the outcome, I trust you." And I meant it.

Do you need to put something on the river this week? Do you need to express your trust in God and allow Him to give you the peace that follows such trust? Do you have something God has given you that now you must put back in His hands for Him to direct

as He wills? Have you done all that you can do and now you must wait and see what He will do? If the answer is “yes” to any of these questions, then you are in a good place, a place of trust, as you experience the truth found in Isaiah: “Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in me will not be disappointed” (Isaiah 49:23). Have a great week and it is great to be back!

The Monday Memo
From the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 137

Thank you for your many letters and emails this past week welcoming **The Monday Memo** back. As I explained, last week’s edition was the first in a month due to computer problems. If you (1) changed your email address; (2) wrote me to unsubscribe; (3) sent a gift subscription; or (4) subscribed to the Hebrews Bible study *after* October 1, you will need to send your request one more time, since I lost the data received after that date. I have not been able to respond to all the mail from last week, so please be patient. I will get to it all as soon as possible.

In a few days, we will celebrate the birth of Jesus the King. This week I want to look at the shepherds of the Christmas story. On the night Jesus was born, they were tending their flocks on the hillsides outside Bethlehem. They were minding their own business when God sent them messengers:

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. (Luke 2:8-16).

These shepherds were doing what they knew to do at that time in their life and God interrupted them with a special news report. This both scared and thrilled them. That's how it is when you find your life purpose. Often you are doing what you know to do at the time. It is usually a job or role that is less than fulfilling. Suddenly God, the Great Communicator, breaks into your consciousness and brings a message of purpose, of what He has always wanted you to do. That not only terrifies you but also gives you a desire to clarify it and fulfill it.

That night the shepherds went to work like any other day. God spoke to them, however, and they were never the same. They started by sitting on a hillside in cold weather; they ended by finding a great treasure in Bethlehem, a treasure that had not been revealed to anyone else but them.

Maybe you have been in a desperate search for your purpose and its expression. As we end this year, I suggest that you be encouraged and remember the shepherds. Finding your purpose doesn't depend on your diligence; it depends on God's grace. Yes, you must search for your purpose, but only God can reveal it to you. I don't know when or how He will do that. It may be

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one cold, dark night when you go about your business like countless other nights. At that point, God may send His messenger and change your life forever. I don't know when or how He will do it, I just know that He will.

So relax this holiday season. Keep asking God to help you see who you are and what you were born to do, but after that, trust Him. He wants you to fulfill your purpose more than you do, and He will show you in the fullness of time. When He does, you will join with the shepherds as laborers who found more than business as usual one night when they went to work. May the God of purpose speak to you soon and may you have the courage to believe what He says! Merry Christmas!

The Monday Memo
From the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 138

I trust that you had a Merry Christmas and that now you are getting ready for a wonderful New Year. My wife and I drove down to Orlando to be with family for Christmas and now we are going to New York City for New Year's Eve. If you watch the celebration from Times Square, look for us among the millions of people. We will be somewhere in the crowd.

And that leads me to this week's topic. We are going to New York because we've always wanted to go. Why have we always wanted to go? I really don't know. But that is irrelevant. And we are talking about spending next Christmas in Hawaii with our son. Why? Well, why not? As you end this year and plan for the next, I urge you to consider a simple, well-known Bible verse: "This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24).

I want to make the most of every day and every opportunity that I have. I don't want to talk about what I will do *one day*; I want to walk in the reality and urgency that *this* is the day that the Lord has made. As long as I have *this day*, I want to make *this day* everything that it can be. It was said of King David, "Then he died in a ripe old age, full of days, riches and honor; and his son Solomon reigned in his place" (1 Chronicles 29:28-29 NASU). David was full of days when he died; I wonder if it means that he filled his days with experiences and events that allowed him to maximize the impact he made. When I die, I want to be full of days just like King David.

What would you like to do in 2004 that you've always said you would do "one day?" Where would you like to visit? What would you like to accomplish? What goals can you set for 2004? Remember, the Bible doesn't tell us *not* to plan. It just cautions us to temper our plans with an acknowledgment of God's role in the planning process: "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that' (James 4:13-15).

What will you do in 2004 in the will of God? I encourage you to spend some time this week thinking and planning things that are out of the desires of your heart. Then take some concrete steps to make those things happen in 2004. Don't come to this point next year full of regrets thinking about what you could have done, but rather celebrate what you did with God's help. In that spirit, may 2004 be the best and most productive year you've ever had. Happy New Year!

The Monday Memo

**From the desk of
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 139**

Happy New Year! I hope that you and your family enjoyed a fabulous holiday season. My wife and I survived standing in freezing temperatures with 750,000 other people in Times Square on New Year's Eve. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but I was reminded that having fun can be hard work! And now the holidays are over and it is time to continue our PurposeQuest.

On the day that my computer crashed last November in Singapore, I had just finished reading the account of Moses and the burning bush in Exodus 3. I wrote about that in Memo 136 but would like to pick that theme up once again for the next few weeks. While reading Exodus 3, I noticed that Moses said seven things during his encounter with the Lord. The first thing Moses said to the Lord were three simple words: "Here I am." Those words may not seem very important, but they are.

I did a quick study of others who said "Here I am" and found out that Abraham said it twice when God spoke to him to sacrifice Isaac (see Genesis 22:1, 7 and 11). Then Jacob said it in Genesis 46:2 when God spoke to him to go down to Egypt. Finally, Samuel said it when the Lord called him to a prophetic purpose (see 1 Samuel 3:4). What's so important about these words? I think they are critical to anyone who is on a PurposeQuest, expecting to hear or see something from God.

"Here I am" signifies that you are ready to do what God wants you to do *before* you know what it is. It speaks to the fact that you are ready, that you trust whatever God shows you to be right and good. When you are on a PurposeQuest, you can't have a "Huh?" or "What do You want?" attitude. You must have a "Here I am" attitude if you hope to clarify your purpose.

I knew someone who was struggling to find their purpose once and a pastor gave that person good advice. He said, "During your search, can you thank God for your purpose *before* you know what it is? Can you believe that God will show it to you and say thank you in advance?" I think that advice was "Here I am" advice. You present yourself at attention, just like a good soldier, awaiting your orders. And then you wait to hear what they are.

As you start a New Year, you need to have a "Here I am" attitude with "Here I am" faith. Read the passages that are referenced above and study the PurposeQuest of Moses, Jacob and Samuel. Then prepare yourself for the God of your PurposeQuest to reveal your purpose. When and how He does that, I cannot say. But "Here I am" faith will help make it happen. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo
Baltimore, Maryland
Written by Dr. John Stanko
Issue 140

Last week we began to look at the first of seven comments that Moses made when he had his encounter with the Lord at the burning bush. We saw that his first comment was, "Here I am," and related it to our need to always have a ready attitude to listen and do whatever God wants us to do. This week, we will look at his second comment: "But Moses said to God, 'Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'" (Exodus 3:11).

It seems that Moses had something common to many people, and that was low self-esteem. God had just confirmed to him his purpose, a purpose that he already knew; yet Moses immediately began to tell God why he wasn't the one to go to Egypt. Here is a man standing before a burning bush, hearing the voice of God, and he was telling God that he was insignificant. Does this sound familiar? Don't you and I often do the same thing?

We pray to do God's will and fulfill our purpose and then we are the most surprised when God agrees. When we sense our purpose, we can present a litany of reasons why we can't do it. We can say, "Who am I, Lord, for I don't have the money, education, experience, permission or talent to do Your will?"

Are you struggling with low self-esteem or lack of confidence in your PurposeQuest? Then first of all you can take consolation that Moses struggled with the same thing and went on to do great things for God. That alone should encourage you to move on and fulfill your purpose. But if you need some additional encouragement, consider these verses:

1. **"As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1-2).** You are not alone. When you work for God, you work with God. He is your co-worker! If it's only you, you may have cause for concern. But God is working with you in whatever it is He asks you to do.
2. **"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20-21).** More than being simply *with* you, God lives *in* you. You can learn how to surrender to Jesus who lives in you and works through you. That makes you a carrier of something and someone special, who empowers you to fulfill your purpose.
3. **"But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16).** If one of the effects of Christ living in you is to have His mind, why are you so surprised and doubtful that you may have it? When you realize that you have this mind, you will have more confidence in your ability, or rather God's ability to fulfill the task that is before you.

This week is a good week to face your lack of confidence and low self-esteem. Honestly assess where you are in regard to God's purpose for your life. If you are thinking or saying, "Who am I?", then this is a good week to answer that question, relying on the truths found in the three verses above. Move beyond your limitations this week into the vast possibilities of those people who have stopped putting faith in their own abilities to put their faith in God. Have a great week!