

THE MONDAY MEMO

From the desk of John W. Stanko - Issue 221

It is so good to be back home, to look across the table and see my wife, to talk to my grown children on the phone. Yesterday I sat and watched two American football games (my team lost one of them) and one baseball game. Of course, while watching I sat on the couch sorting out mail and papers and preparing for a busy week ahead. But it is still nice to be home for a while.

This past week, I celebrated Independence or Emancipation Day. No, I'm not talking about the American holiday, but rather a day that commemorates an important transition in my own PurposeQuest. It was on September 20, 2000, that I resigned my paid ministry positions to start my organization, PurposeQuest International. What a journey it has been! The last five years have been filled with joy, disappointment, hard work, mistakes, lean times, and new friends. I lost some old friends in the process, and I actually gave up three paid positions to do what I'm doing today. I remember thinking, "I don't have enough to live on if I resign, but if I don't try this, I'll regret it later." So I stepped out and the rest is history, so they say. I thought it would be good to reflect on some lessons I've learned from the past five years since gaining my independence, lessons that could perhaps help you in your own PurposeQuest.

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED SO FAR?

1. **God is faithful.** I seem to remember a line from an old hymn that states, "He may not come when you call Him, but He always comes on time!" That is so true. My wife has said, "God has provided for us, sometimes in the very hour we have needed Him." And she half-jokingly adds, "And I've hated every minute of it!" So much of what all of us does and doesn't do is because of money, and that is understandable. The wisdom writer stated, "A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes life merry, but money is the answer for everything" (Ecclesiastes 10:19). But when we most needed Him in these last five years (which was daily), the Lord provided faithfully. Earlier this year, we were in a lean place. In the last month, God has provided through many surprising sources and we are encouraged. What could you do for the Lord if money weren't an issue? It's worth considering.
2. **Not everyone is happy when you pursue purpose.** As I stated above, I lost some friends along the path of my PurposeQuest. Some of the losses were my own fault. I have found that there is no manual entitled, "How to Make a Perfect Transition." But others were there to oppose my growth and PurposeQuest, pure and simple. Just this morning I was reading about Paul and his own quest from being a Pharisee to an apostle of grace. When he made the transition, which obviously involved God's hand, many of his former friends opposed him and even tried to kill him. I found the same to be true in my own quest. I am not equating my work to Paul's, but I am comparing my quest to his and I find some similarities. Are you not pursuing purpose because you are afraid of offending someone? A group of people?
3. **It is critical that you determine who you are.** If you don't determine who you are, then others will try to do it for you. Again, let's consider Paul. He was a Pharisee, but one day he made a change. Perhaps it was his Independence Day. It states in Acts 13:9, "Then Saul, who was also called Paul." At this point in his life, perhaps Saul said, "Wait a minute! I know four languages. I'm from Tarsus, one of the most cross-cultural cities in the Roman Empire. I have worked with Gentiles all my life and enjoyed it. I'm a Roman citizen. Jesus called me to work with Gentiles. I don't want you to call me Saul any more. From this point on, I will be known as Paul." That simple name-change changed the world! We don't refer to him as St. Saul, but as St. Paul. At the same time, that

name change got him into a lot of trouble, even with believing Jews. But Paul stood his ground. He was set free from being who others wanted or expected him to be and became who God wanted him to be.

DO YOU NEED AN INDEPENDENCE DAY?

The fact that I needed an Independence Day tells you that I wasn't always independent or emancipated. I was bound up by my own confusion where purpose was concerned. I was afraid that God wouldn't or couldn't provide for me if I didn't have a paid position. (I'm not against organizations or paid positions.) I was concerned what some would think of me if I started my own ministry. Yes, I was a man badly in need of being set free. And you know what? God did set me free! And what did He use? He used the power of my purpose. I didn't look for another job five years ago; I looked for a way to express who He had made me to be and PurposeQuest International was born. Five months later, **The Monday Memo** burst on the literary scene and five months after that, the weekly Bible studies. Today, thousands of people around the world celebrate my independence as they read my work, hear me speak or visit my website.

Do you need an Independence or Emancipation Day? As we close, there is one passage that is particularly meaningful where purpose and freedom are concerned. It's found in John 8:31-32 and states, "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" Who are you? What were you created to do? Seek those answers and then seek ways to express your independence. You'll be glad you did and so will the world around you, who is waiting for the real you to emerge. But most of all, the God who had made you as you are will rejoice as well, for then the world will behold the beauty He had in mind when He created you. Have a great week!

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The weather here at home has been magnificent and I'm so glad I'm here to enjoy it. I'm using this time at home to catch up on many things and to teach a class on Wednesday nights entitled "The Classical Christian Understanding of Life." Plus I took my mother on an outing for her 89th birthday last Friday! So all in all it's great to be home, but at the end of the month, I hit the road for the rest of the year. So I am enjoying my time here while I have it!

Over the years, many people have asked me what my wife's purpose is. I've never answered them. I have often said that I'm not the purpose police. I don't go around asking people what their purpose is and only get involved in helping them if they ask me. I also vowed that I would never force ministry or my teaching on any of my family. I wanted them to see what I teach the same way others do—by the power of the Spirit. While I believe that my wife and children are people of purpose, I never used them as "trophies" of my purpose teaching, respecting their privacy and their need to travel their own PurposeQuest.

But this week, for the first time ever, I want to share something about my wife's purpose.

KATHRYN THE TEACHER, KATHRYN THE ARTIST

One of the things I have been enjoying is seeing my wife engage her purpose while I've been home. Kathryn came with me to Zimbabwe this past May and on her way home, she saw something in the Johannesburg airport that gave her an idea. Consequently, she came home and began to make jewelry and she has named her brand MetaLace®. She has devised a technique that combines metal wire with beads and has come up with a unique design for purses, necklaces and earrings. To make a long story short, she showed her wares to a local business

woman who owns an art gallery and on October 21 and 22, the local gallery is going to host an exclusive show for my wife's line of jewelry. Kathryn is so excited and I'm excited for her.

Just this weekend she had a private showing at our home for some select friends and associates and she made quite a few sales. Kathryn is so friendly and quite the sales woman, and I watched and heard her "do her thing" as the people came to our home. But now we have to get ready for the big show in three weeks, and there's no telling what doors will open for her from that.

I always told Kathryn I saw her in a shop somewhere meeting the needs of people who came in. My wife is one of the friendliest people you will ever meet, and she's creative, too. But for the last five years, she tried to be a teacher. She struggled with teaching, but has a master's degree in education and really gave it her all to make it work. Yet when she surrendered who she wanted to be to who she was created to be as an artist, all kinds of doors have opened to her—not to mention the tremendous joy and fun that she gets from creating and seeing her jewelry go to people who love her work.

Not only can Kathryn design, she can also paint. She has dabbled in oil painting and has pictures hanging in many homes, although if you ask her, she feels that her work isn't worth exhibiting. But everyone disagrees, and I've always felt she could do more with her painting. When our children were young, Kathryn designed a line of decorative wreaths, using vines we gathered from the trees around where we lived. People still remember and comment on the beautiful work she did with those. Yes, my wife is an artist and has an eye for design, color and style.

KATHRYN THE PASTOR'S WIFE, KATHRYN THE PERSON

When I pastored, I tried hard not to force my wife into the pastor's-wife mold. I wanted her to be her own person. She didn't teach the ladies class, she didn't work in nursery, nor did she counsel the women in the church. She just never enjoyed ministry that much. So I released her as best I could from doing what was so often expected and protected her from the demands of many who assumed that she wanted to do ministry because I was in ministry. I also tried not to identify her purpose as my wife or mother of my children. She was and is both of those roles, but there is so much more to who she is. And now, I'm seeing it blossom, and the fragrance of her creative flower is sweet to smell. I never wanted my wife to be defined in terms of what I did, but rather in terms of who she is, who God created her to be.

So now we have to get ready for the big show in three weeks. And I'm glad I'll be here to see it and help her get ready. If you live near us and would like to come, let me know and I'll get you the location and time. But more than that, what can you do this week to get ready for your own "showing?" Have you taken on roles that were imposed on you? Have you defined yourself in terms of what others do? Have you walked in the shadow of your spouse, children, pastor, supervisor or parents? If you can't make Kathryn's show on the 21st or 22nd, why not use those days to do something to showcase what you do best? Could you host a reading of your poetry at your home? Or could you take some family or friends to a museum and give a tour of the artwork there? Maybe you could spend the day doing something else you enjoy, something that will enable you in the future to unveil the real you. I urge you to follow in Kathryn's footsteps this month and step out of the shadows into the light of your purpose. If you commit to do that, I know you'll have a great week!

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I have a surprise for next week's Memo. I'm tempted to announce it this week, but I will refrain. But let me say that what I will announce is going to be a valuable tool in spreading the purpose message far and wide and helping you connect with other Memo readers. But I won't say any more until next week.

Last week I wrote about my wife's jewelry and upcoming show at a gallery. Many wrote to say how that story encouraged them to pursue their own purpose-which is of course is why I write The Monday Memo. This week I have another story to tell, this time about my friend Nick. At this very moment, Nick is gravely ill at his home. I went to see him last Friday, and I want to tell you about that visit in this week's Memo. So let's talk about Nick.

NICK IS SICK.

I first met Nick in 1996 and immediately liked him when I heard that he had been a pastor and quit. Since that is what I did, he became a man after my own heart. But after he quit, Nick and his family went on the mission field in Asia. Then they moved back to Pittsburgh and started a ministry called China Passage, devoted to literature evangelism in China, Tibet and other hard-to-reach areas. Since I had little experience in missions, Nick became my mentor and helped me formulate both a missions policy for the church at which I was working at the time and a personal philosophy as well.

While we worked together, we became friends. Nick helped get one of my books published in China and we met regularly, even after I started PurposeQuest in 2001. We would call and talk, sharing stories about life and ministry on the road. We would meet for lunch a few times a year and Nick would always challenge me with his stories of life in the villages where he would go unannounced, not knowing where he would stay or what he would eat. But God always provided somewhere for Nick to stay and he would take great joy in talking to the residents and distributing his literature.

But in August, Nick's wife wrote me while I was in Zimbabwe to say that Nick was ill. At first the doctors thought he had a stroke (he's only 56), but then they ruled that out as he got progressively worse. At first, he was dizzy and couldn't sleep. That was followed by memory loss and lethargy. Finally, the doctors sent Nick home from the hospital with the news that, in their best guess, Nick has Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease. In plain English, Nick has what is commonly known as "Mad Cow Disease." It is estimated that only one of every million people are afflicted with this disease every year and it appears that Nick contracted this disease by eating contaminated meat on one of his missions trips.

NICK IS DYING.

Apart from God's intervention, the doctors believe that Nick's disease is fatal. There is no cure and nothing they can do to lessen the symptoms, which include involuntary twitching, blindness, and pronounced weakness. When I went to see Nick on Friday, he tried so hard to talk to me but was unable to do so. I stood crying by his bed, stroking his hair and telling him that I loved him. I thanked him for how he impacted my life and I prayed for God to heal him. I told him how bad his jokes were and how I wished he could tell me one then and there. Then I made some promises to Nick. I promised Nick that I would do my part to make the enemy pay for what had happened to him. I promised that I would do my best to encourage others to take advantage of today, for that is all we have. I promised Nick that I would do all that I could do to see the gospel preached in the nations of the world, including his beloved China.

And then I left. I cried on the way home and ended up on my living room couch, flipping through the channels but watching nothing in particular. But today's Memo is a partial fulfillment of my promise to Nick. I want to urge you to honor Nick's life by fulfilling your purpose. More than 20 years ago and armed with only his purpose, Nick started an organization that touched many lives over the course of the years. He stopped talking about what he was going to do and did it. And along the way, he influenced people like me to do what I was created to do, not just in my country, but in the nations of the world. You just don't know whose life is hanging in the balance, waiting for you to come along in the power of your purpose.

If you think of it this week, pray for Nick, his wife and 18-year-old daughter. But better yet, pray for what you can do to follow in Nick's footsteps. Join with others all over the world as together we seek to clarify and fulfill our purpose so that our lives are not in vain and the cause of Christ can be exalted. Have a great week!

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I promised a surprise this week and I'll get to it in just a moment. First, thank you for your prayers and concern for my friend Nick, whom I wrote about last week. I was out of town this week and have not heard of any change in his condition. Please keep him and his family in your prayers. Also, this is the week my wife has her jewelry show here in Pittsburgh. If you would like to attend, please let me know and I'll send you the information.

I have come to the conclusion that I'm happiest when I'm traveling, speaking and writing. To help me write more, I am announcing the launch of a new site that will handle more of my writing and give you a chance to respond. Interested? Then read on.

WHAT'S A BLOG?

There is a reasonably new phenomenon in cyberspace and it's called blogging. The word blog is an abbreviation for weblog and it is a site where individuals can record their thoughts on a regular basis concerning just about any topic under the sun. There are political blogs, news blogs and blogs that offer comments and dialogue about a host of other subjects. Blogs spread information quickly, get people involved in talking to one another, and provide the means for individuals to communicate their opinions and views.

For some time, I have wanted to make adjustments to my website that would enable you to hear from me more often and allow you to respond. The more I read about blogs and the more I visited the blogs of others, I more I realized that this was a means to achieve that wish. Then my friend, Bill Kinnon, a committed blogger, contacted me with the offer to help set up my blog. So I am pleased to announce as of today that I have an official blog that you can visit at www.johnstanko.us. Thanks, Bill, for your help! (And thank you, Justin, for your faithful work on my website.)

I will try to post an entry every day about something that is of interest to me. That may include short articles about purpose, servant leadership, reading, creativity and sports. You can visit the site once a week, once a month or once a day, depending on your time and interest. But best of all, you can post your own responses to what I write for those visiting to see as well. And I will read the comments and comment as I have time. I will also recommend other blogs and websites that could be of interest to you, and will list books for you to consider adding to your library. What's more, I hope that you will consider developing your own blog at some point. It's a tremendous way to publish what you write and have others provide feedback. I will continue to

add material to www.purposequest.com and hope to make it even more focused and user friendly in the near future. But for right now, www.johnstanko.us is where the action is for me. Check it out and see what I mean.

BLOGGING HERE WE COME!

I hope you will respond from time to time on my blog articles that pique your interest. But more important than that, I urge you to evaluate your own commitment to writing and communication as you check out my blog. Is your organization doing all that it can to build relationships with your clients, members, and customers? Are you personally using technology to further your purpose? How's your website? If I were you, I would have someone do a technology assessment for you or your organization. If you don't have anyone to do that and like what you see on my blog, I know that Bill, who helped me with my blog, could do an assessment for you. It may cost you a few dollars but could make you more effective, and make money as well. You can check out Bill's blog at www.kinnon.tv and email him from there. A blog may be something that's right for you, or maybe it's simply time to develop or upgrade your website.

But this week, I want you to stop talking about what you're going to do where writing and technology are concerned and take a step toward being more effective. What you have to say is important. You must find ways to tell the world about the good things that you know, see and hear. You must find ways to spread your testimony to places that you may never visit firsthand. Maybe you should renew your desire to write something like this Monday Memo. I hope that my blog will provide you an incentive to move forward and be more productive as you fulfill your purpose. And I further hope that this week you will visit www.johnstanko.us and add your comments to my world there. Have a great week!

THE MONDAY MEMO

From the desk of John W. Stanko - Issue 225

I have never used **The Monday Memo** as a newsletter, preferring to teach or express something that is on my mind or heart. This week I have a lot of news, so I hope you'll indulge this update.

NICK UPDATE

First of all, Nick passed away last Monday night. I am so glad he didn't suffer long. My love and condolences go out to his wife Mary Cay and his only daughter, Caytie. If you missed Nick's story, please refer to **Monday Memo 223**. I will spend some time this week meditating and strategizing how I can continue the kind of work that Nick did. This is the first year I haven't visited a new country with the message of purpose. I know that must change in 2006. What can you do to fulfill your purpose among the nations of the world?

BLOG UPDATE

I have enjoyed the first week of blogging (see last week's **Memo** for the official announcement). If you haven't checked it out, please do so at www.johnstanko.us. Add your comments to those on the site and spread the word to your friends and associates. Thank you for all the feedback and attention. Just a few things to keep in mind where my blog is concerned:

1. I post a new article every day, not just on Monday. So feel free to check the blog daily for my regular updates.
2. You can actually receive my daily blog updates automatically via email. Go to www.johnstanko.us and look halfway down the right hand column. There is a box and below that box it says, "Subscribe me." Just enter your email address in the box, click

"subscribe me" and you will receive every article I post. There is also an entry on the blog that describes how to subscribe for this service in case I'm not being clear.

3. I have posted my itinerary for the remainder of 2005 on the blog in article form. Check out where I'll be and come see me if I'm in your area.

My thanks again to Bill Kinnon for his help. His blog is informative and diverse, and I am learning a lot by studying his site at www.kinnon.tv.

KENYA VISIT

I have decided to come to Kenya for a few days from November 1-4. If you wrote for an appointment, we'll be in touch with you this week. If you didn't write but would be interested in a meeting or in having me speak to your group or organization during the short time I am there, let me know right away.

HELP!

I have written **The Monday Memo** and sent out weekly Bible studies for more than four years free of charge and will continue to do so. But I need your help at this point. I will spend five of the last eight weeks of 2005 in Africa and England. (In England, I will be working with African churches.) International travel and ministry are tough and there are always hidden costs, like currency exchange fees, Internet costs and lost luggage. If the **Memo** or studies have helped you, or if you believe in the purpose cause that I have stood for since 1991, would you please consider a financial gift at this time? Perhaps your church or company could consider a year-end missions gift for the work I do. If even a fraction of my readers would make a small gift, it would be a tremendous help and blessing. There are two ways to give:

1. You can go to <http://www.purposequest.com/pg-contribute.htm> and follow the instructions to make a contribution using PayPal. You can use your checking account or credit card to make a contribution with PayPal, and it is safe, quick and reliable.
2. You can make a check out to PurposeQuest International and mail it to PO Box 91099, Pittsburgh, PA 15221-7099.

I am grateful for all the encouragement I receive every week from you, my faithful readers. May the Lord continue to bless our efforts as together we walk out our PurposeQuest. Come visit me via my blog and stay in touch. And most importantly, have a great week!