

THE MONDAY MEMO

From the desk of John W. Stanko - Issue 226

WHAT A WEEK I HAD!

Last Monday, we got word that my wife's 83-year-old father had passed away. He lived in Maryland and Kathryn, of course, took off immediately to be with her mother, sisters and brother. I stayed behind for a few days, for I had some juggling to do if I was going to go to the funeral. First, I had to reschedule my flight to London from Thursday to Friday night. Then I had to get everything I needed to get done and pack my things by Wednesday so I could drive down to Maryland. And of course now I had to pack not only for my trip, but also for a funeral. During this time, I kept in constant touch with Kathryn to see how she and the family were doing.

The funeral was a small affair with mostly family and a few friends. My father-in-law was a good man, who worked hard, enjoyed his retirement, loved his family and served God as best he knew how. It is unfortunate that it takes a funeral to bring together a family and it was quite good to see everyone, even though our hearts were heavy.

So after the funeral, I had to race to Dulles Airport in Washington DC for the flight to London (see www.johnstanko.us under the "John's travels" category for my report on the trip). Once I arrived at 7 am, I was picked up and taken to my hotel for a quick shower. Then it was right to the church where I spoke at a leadership conference. Then it was back to the hotel for a quick nap, after which I returned to the church to speak at the evening session. I got back to the hotel about midnight last night, grateful to God that we turned the clocks back Saturday night and got an extra hour's rest. Sunday I spoke at the morning and evening services, and now I am writing The Memo before I get up at 3:30 am to catch a flight to Nairobi. I guess I'll just have to sleep on the plane.

WHY AM I TELLING YOU THIS?

I am neither bragging nor complaining when I report these things to you. I have found it a fact that I don't always know what I can do until I have to do it. I wasn't sure I could fit everything in last week, but with God's help, I did. I am trusting him to help me every day this week, as I maintain my ministry, writing and reading schedule as I travel, consult and counsel.

Some of the events like the funeral were imposed on me this week—I didn't have anything to do with them happening. Then others I planned and had a hand in creating. And both statements provide the reason why we should set goals to achieve what we didn't think was possible. Let me explain.

My father-in-law's death created urgency in my life that caused me to maximize every minute. I planned my work and worked my plan if I was ever going to prepare, pack, drive, and then fly to London. I had no time for frivolous activity, and the goal of attending the funeral helped me stay focused. But then I had another goal of being in London and that goal gave me added incentive to keep my eye on the future and prepare not only for the funeral, but also for something beyond that.

WHY SET GOALS?

You set goals because things like funerals, emergencies and the unknown will always occur, usually without warning. If you're not careful, you can use those as never-ending excuses not to produce. "I'll do that after I rest, or I'll do it next month when I have a few days off or I'll get to that when I retire." Truth is, however, that conditions are seldom "just right" for setting and achieving

goals. So if unexpected things are going to happen, you need to set goals for what you expect and want to happen. When you set a goal, the unexpected can't sidetrack you for very long. After you've attended to the urgent, you can redirect your attention to the important, to the object to achieve when you set the goal.

I have an assignment for you this week. I want you to read and study Philippians 3:14 for the next seven days. Look at it in different translations. Write down what you learn from that verse concerning goal-setting. Next week, I'll share with you my own thoughts and insights on that verse. You may also want to begin preparing for the new year (yes, there are only two months left in 2005) by jotting down some goals you would like to set and achieve in the coming months. But whatever you do this week, I hope you will determine to no longer allow the unpredictability of life to keep you from doing what you want and what is in your heart to do. Don't forget to study Philippians 3:14 and have a great week!

THE MONDAY MEMO

From London, England - Issue 227

Greetings once again from London. I flew down to Nairobi last week between engagements here in London, and I'm glad I did. I had a wonderful time with my friends and purpose partners in Kenya and now I am back with some more friends here in London. After a busy week, I went to see a play here in London last night. As you know, it just takes one play to make me feel like I've been on vacation. You can check out my blog at www.johnstanko.us for the details of the play and my travels this past week.

Someone gave me an idea this week and I want to mention it to you to see if you are interested. The idea is to have a purpose retreat right after the first of the year from January 6-8. The retreat would probably be in western Pennsylvania near my home and would be open to anyone who wants to come. This would be a great way to start the year by gathering to talk and pray about purpose with family and friends. And you would have me, the Purpose Doctor, all to yourself! I don't have much more information but, if you would be interested, send me an email with the word "retreat" in the subject box and I will send you the information as soon as I have it (probably in the next week or so). Who knows, you may even see some snow that weekend!

Last week we began to prepare for the New Year by talking about goals. Did you have a chance to read Philippians 3:14 and meditate on its meaning? Did you take notes of your meditations? If not, why not spend a few minutes doing that and then come back to pick up **The Memo** at this point. Here is the verse to help you out: "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (NASU).

THE ROLE OF A GOAL

Why do you need to set goals? Why can't you just float along with the tide and go where the Spirit leads you? Because there are too many factors that work against you to prevent things from happening in your life. You must cooperate in the creation of the life you would like to lead. Paul outlined the dynamics of a goal in this one verse. Consider these words and phrases:

1. **I press on.** That means there is something pressing against you, and you must exert greater force on it than it is exerting on you if you are to make any progress. What are some of the things pressing against you? Consider such things as laziness, fear, time and money constraints, confusion, and doubt, just to name a few. Feel free to add your own ideas to the list. Whatever you do, don't allow those forces to press you into their mold and keep you where you are. Set a goal and then press through your opposition.

2. **For the prize.** A goal has a reward—achieving something that you really want to do. Reaching the goal is the prize and there is nothing wrong with competing against your own capabilities and the circumstances of your life to do something meaningful. But a prize can also be lost, and it is possible to set a goal and not achieve it. But if you don't set the goal, you definitely won't make it. The prize is more special when the obstacles overcome were insignificant. Someone once wrote, "There's no thrill in easy sailing when the skies are clear and blue, there's no joy in merely doing things which any one can do. But there is some satisfaction that is mighty sweet to take, when you reach a destination that you thought you'd never make." The prize is reaching the destination you thought was impossible.
3. **Is upward.** A goal takes you closer to God and godliness. The struggle and faith work something in you like nothing else can. You grow when you set a goal and make it, and the growth is almost as good—if not better—than the achievement. My writing and speaking has blessed a lot of people, but I have gained much more than I've given. I've learned about God and myself in the process and now I'm better equipped to serve Him. Don't stand around with your feet on the ground. Soar to great heights in God by setting and achieving some goals!
4. **Involves a call.** A goal is something that is a desire of your heart, something that God put there in the first place. When you acknowledge that the desire is there, you honor Him by recognizing that God is the caller and you are the called—you are simply responding to His will and initiative. I have seen many people get hung up in asking, "How do I know that this is what God wants me to do?" And I always respond, "How do you know it *isn't*?" Then I quote Proverbs 16:3 from the Amplified Version: "Roll your works upon the Lord [commit and trust them wholly to Him; He will cause your thoughts to become agreeable to His will, and] so shall your plans be established and succeed." If your heart is to do God's will before you know what it is, God will direct your thoughts into His paths for you. Such a deal! What a promise!

SO NOW WHAT?

We will continue our study next week, examining the common enemies we have in the goal-setting and achieving process. But this week, you can continue the emphasis on goals by identifying things you would like to accomplish over the next year in the areas of work, ministry, family, finances, and personal development. Feel free to identify any other categories and write down some ideas of things you would like to achieve. Don't get too formal yet; just jot down some ideas. You can continue to study Philippians 3:14 and see if you get any more insight into the role of a goal. But don't be content to study a goal; don't stop until you set some. Better yet, don't stop until you achieve some. As you work on this process, have a great week! And don't forget to let me know if you may be interested in attending the January retreat.

THE MONDAY MEMO

Written and sent by John W. Stanko From Dallas, Texas - Issue 228

I haven't been in Dallas since last February and it's been good to be back to meet with old friends and make new ones. I made a quick trip over to Shreveport, Louisiana yesterday and now I'm heading home to move our belongings from our house into an apartment. It has been an interesting process downsizing so we can move, and I wrote about it on my blog site at www.johnstanko.us. My comments on the spiritual dynamic of downsizing may be of interest to you.

Also, don't forget that I am considering a PurposeQuest retreat in early January near my home in Western Pennsylvania. If you would be interested in receiving info about the retreat as it becomes available, please send me an email with the word "retreat" in the subject box. Before

the retreat, however, I will be back in Zimbabwe from November 29 through December 18. If you would like to schedule a PurposeQuest meeting with me while I am in Zimbabwe, please drop me a line and let me know so we can schedule you now.

The last few weeks, we have been discussing goal-setting in preparation for the New Year. (If this is your first **Monday Memo**, write me and I will send you the last two so you can see what we have covered.) This week I want to identify three enemies you have as you attempt to set and achieve your goals.

GOAL ENEMIES

1. **Unbelief.** It's an amazing process to see how quickly you can talk yourself out of a potential goal. Within five minutes of the initial thought, you can determine that you are too old, too young, too ignorant, too poor, or too unprepared to do whatever it is you were considering. And these thoughts thwart your actions, thus cutting short the faith process. How? James wrote us, "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:17). For instance, let's say you want to write a book. Why don't you? You may not know who will publish the book and, therefore you don't write. I present to you that this is unbelief. Just because you don't know who will publish the book doesn't mean you shouldn't write it. In fact, no one can publish a book you don't write it. So you do what you can do—write—and trust God to do what He can do—publish.
2. **Fear of failure.** I have written a lot about fear and your ambivalence about failure. That is why I promote an annual "Celebrate a Failure Day" so that you and others like you can understand the role of failure in the productivity process. It works like this. Would you agree that failure can be a great teacher? Would you further agree that you can often learn more from failure than success? And would you also agree that you are always to grow and learn as you serve God and His world? If you answered "yes" to all these questions, then I have one more question. If those statements are true, then shouldn't you fail as often as possible? If you can see the truth behind that thought process, you will set as many goals as possible, not worrying about whether or not you may fail. No one ever kicked a goal or hit a home run that won a game if they were afraid to try. Yes, they may miss, but they also may achieve their goal because they tried. The same is true for you no matter what you are trying to do.
3. **Lack of diligence.** You may set a goal and establish a date when it is to be accomplished. That date may come and go and you haven't achieved your goal. What should you do then? You should determine if the goal represents something you still want to do and, if it is, you should set a new target date. Don't abandon the goal; extend the deadline! Goal-setting isn't a science; it's an art. You don't ever have perfect knowledge of the future when you set a goal. Often you can greatly underestimate what it will take to get the job done. When that happens, and it will, don't give up. Renew your efforts and keep trying. So what if it takes seven years instead of seven months. You see, when you work on a goal, the goal also works on you. It helps you increase in faith and pay a price to see the goal achieved. There is so much you don't understand when you set a goal, but the goal will keep you on course while you go through the unexpected detours that you encounter on the road.

TIME TO FLY (OR AT LEAST RUN FASTER THAN YOU ARE NOW!)

Isn't time that you stopped talking about what you were going to do and did it? If so, then it's time to set some goals. Read the following verses and then follow the simple steps they recommend: "I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay" (Habakkuk 2:1-3).

1. **Stand and watch.** Go some place quiet, and when you get there, pray, think and listen.
2. **Write it down.** Write your goals down.
3. **Run with it.** Do something as soon as possible that will contribute toward the goal completing.
4. **Appointed time.** Set a deadline, your best guess-timate, of when you can achieve the goal.
5. **Wait for it.** If the deadline passes, don't abandon the goal, just re-calculate the day when you will finish the task. And don't make the mistake that waiting is action-less. It is not.
6. **It will certainly come.** Have faith that the end result will come, whether or not you understand today how it will happen.

So you have your assignment for the weeks remaining in 2005. Spend some time setting your goals. If you need more help, write me and I will send you some articles on personal or corporate goal-setting (you can find these documents for yourself at <http://www.purposequest.com/papers.htm>). Don't be content to be in the same place next year at this time as you are now. Use goals to get moving and enjoy the fruit that only spiritual goal-setting can produce. Have a great week!

THE MONDAY MEMO

Sent by John W. Stanko From Temecula, California - Issue 229

This week I want to write expressing my opinion that, at times, you give too much away. But before I do, I want to wish you a Happy Thanksgiving week if you live in the States. If not, I invite you to join us in this wonderful celebration as we take a break and give thanks to God for His many blessings. Right after Thanksgiving, I head off to Johannesburg and Harare. If you would like to schedule some time with me, let me know as soon as possible.

I haven't forgotten about the January retreat. If you asked for more information, it should be available this week. If you would like to be put on the list to receive this information when it is ready, please send me an email with the word "retreat" in the subject box. And finally, please remember the work that I am doing in your year-end giving agenda. What I do, I do by faith and I rely on people like you to help me. If the Memo has encouraged or impacted your life, please do what you can so that I can continue this work.

And now, back to our topic for the week. I stated earlier that at times you give away too much. Is this possible? What am I referring to? As a Christian, is it ever possible to give away too much? I think it is, but let me explain what I mean and see if you agree.

YOU CAN'T GIVE AWAY WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE

I have sat with more than 1,500 people in the last few years to do what I call a Purpose Assessment. It involves 90 minutes of my time and a battery of simple profiles that help people understand who they are and how they function best. One of the profiles is the Values profile and one of the values that it measures is called "personal freedom." I would estimate that 85% of the people I assess are lowest in this value. What's wrong with that? Well, that's my indicator that you may be giving away too much.

Some people are so concerned that they may be selfish that they refuse to pay much attention to self development. They want so badly to do God's will that they are willing to do almost anything that comes along, whether it is suited to what they do best or not. While this is noble and commendable, it is not the best way to find and fulfill your purpose. What's more, you will never

achieve excellence in any area of work or ministry if you don't pay the price to produce excellence.

A few years ago, I was at my daughter's college graduation. The speaker asked each person present if they had a vision for their own life and future. Maybe you should ask yourself the same question: Do you have a vision for your life? Where will you be five years from now? What do you see yourself doing then?

The answers to those questions leads to another question: What are you doing about all that today? What steps are you taking now to help you fulfill your personal vision? Are you taking courses of your own? Reading books on a certain topic? Considering a job change to enhance your professional development? What are you doing that can help you fulfill the personal vision that you have? If you are going to lay down your life for the Lord and His service, you must have a life to give away in the first place. You can't give what you don't have.

SELF IS NOT ALWAYS SELFISH

This may sound selfish to you. I'm not talking about some selfish pursuit that steps on others or serves self at all costs. What I am talking about is something you do that is in the best interest of the vision you have for yourself, the vision God gave you. If you are or want to be a doctor, then it's in your self interest to work at the best clinic or under a superior mentor. Those things will help you be the best doctor you can be and serve your patients with distinction. I have often said if I had a chance to take piano lessons, I would find the best teacher around me, regardless of their religious affiliation. If you want to be the best, you have to work with the best. But too often I talk to people who are afraid of what others will think, therefore they play small as we used to say in basketball. If you're a giant but don't want to go near the basket for fear of what others think, that's not humility or nobility. That's just dumb.

In the book ***Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose***, the author reminded me of the words of F. Buechner: "There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than Society, say, or the Superego, or Self-Interest. The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

I want to be the best consultant, writer and speaker I can be. That is who I am, who God wants me to be. By investing in being the best, I am serving God and the world around me. I have a vision for what I want to do in five years and I am taking steps to be able to fulfill that, by God's grace. What about you? And I am working to be able to fulfill that vision. If I don't, I would be like a body builder who doesn't use weights because I don't want to build myself up!

Is there anything you can do this week that will bring you closer to your self vision? Maybe you can enroll in college and receive your diploma in the coming years. Why not apply this week? Perhaps you will open your business. Call someone who can help you open your business one day; get together with them or take them to lunch! Or maybe this week will be the week when you ask yourself, "Where do I want to be in five years?" and allow yourself to develop an answer. Whatever you do, may you take a step this week that will bring you closer to your God-given destination. Please don't consider this selfish and don't invest your preparation time in noble but frivolous activities. Focus on being the best, **then** feel free to give yourself away in the service of God and your purpose. Have a great week!

THE MONDAY MEMO

**Written Somewhere Over Central Africa
And Sent from Johannesburg, South Africa - Issue 230**

I have been in the air five hours and have another five hours to go. I just finished Daniel Pink's exceptional book, *A Whole New Mind*, and feel inspired to write. So why not write **The Monday Memo** up here? The plane is noisy, with people standing everywhere trying to pass the time and relieve boredom. On the other hand, I have my earplugs in and I'm ready to work. What a gift to be at 39,000 feet and have no distractions! I can read, think, and write, some of my favorite activities. What's more, I am heading to Zimbabwe, a land I love to be with people who are like family to me. I don't know how it can get any better than this. (By the way, if you don't hear from me next week, you'll know that I *didn't* correct the problem I had the last time that prevented me from sending a Memo from Zimbabwe.)

But I don't just get this feeling in the air. Last week I was in a church building on a Saturday afternoon. There was another person there with me, seated across from me and completing a set of profiles as part of the purpose assessment I was conducting. And suddenly I had this flood of joy overwhelm me. I knew that I was in the right place doing what I was created to do. It was just one other person and me, but I had a sense of destiny, a sense of fulfillment that was, well, it was spiritual! I neither cried nor laughed, but just enjoyed the moment. I was in the flow, as athletes would say, and the flow was and is carrying me to vistas of pleasure that are reserved for those who are called according to His purpose.

A WHOLE NEW MIND

Pink's book that I mentioned above is must reading (go below and click on the link to purchase your copy). In his book, he outlines six skills that you must have for this Conceptual Age, as he refers to this present day. I will do a more complete review of this book on my blog later this week, but one of the six skills Pink describes is meaning or purpose. He states that this is one of the factors that will be a hallmark of successful work and lives in the 21st century. I couldn't agree more and that is why I have devoted my last fourteen years to teaching on purpose, working with crowds or just one person at a time, as I was in that church office last week.

Pink ends his discussion of the six skills by recommending exercises, activities and study that can help the reader be more proficient in that area. After his section on meaning, he mentions two exercises that I would like to present as possible guides for your meditation and study times this week.

THE 20-10 TEST

Jim Collins is the author of this 20-10 test that Pink mentions. Collins encourages you to look at your life and work by asking whether you would still do what you are doing if you had \$20 million in the bank or knew you had only ten years to live. For instance, if you inherited \$20 million, no strings attached, would you spend your days the way you spend them now? If you knew your life would end in ten years, how would you spend those ten years? The way you're spending them now? If your answer is no to either scenario, what does that tell you? And if you have an idea of what you would be doing, how can you start doing more of it *right now*?

I have asked similar questions in my purpose seminars and then I urge those present to ask me how I would answer those questions. When they do, I always answer, "I would do what I am doing today! But I would fly business class more often!" (As I write, my keyboard is propped at an angle so I can see the screen and still write.) If I had only ten years to live, I would visit more countries and expose more people to the unique purpose message that God has given me.

PICTURE YOURSELF AT NINETY.

The second exercise Pink suggests in the meaning category is to picture yourself at age ninety. What does your life look like when you view it from that vantage point? What have you accomplished? What have you contributed? What are your regrets? Pink quotes Viktor Frankl, famous purpose guru, who said, "Live as if you were living for the second time and had acted as wrongly the first time as you are about to act now." When I do this, I regret that I didn't love more, write more and spend more time with my children and grandchildren (no grandkids yet). I regret that I didn't take more risks and visit more places.

But Pink recommends that you spend 90 minutes on this exercise and I'll have to wait until I get where I'm going to invest that much time.

So there you have your assignments for the week. First, get Pink's book. Then spend some time on both exercises that I outlined above. Keep good notes of what you see and hear and revisit them from time to time as you get new insights. But as 2005 comes to an end and 2006 begins, do you want to be in the same place next year at this time? Or do you want to be somewhere else (and I'm not only referring to a physical location)? The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, so take that first step this week by recognizing where you are and where you'd like to be. Have a great week!