

The Monday Memo 251

I just got back to Harare from Kenya where I helped coordinate the Tambira Nairobi 2006 tour featuring the Celebration Choir. It certainly brought back memories of the days when I coordinated tours for Integrity Music. It was when I was working for Integrity Music that I began to travel in earnest and to teach workshops on purpose during the worship seminars I organized. So I have many fond memories of that season in my life.

IT'S OVER.

But that season of my life is over. I kept thinking the entire time that I was on tour last week, "Did I really do this for a living at one time?" It was strange because I loved what I did when I was with Integrity Music and I admit that I enjoyed some of the aspects of the tour last week. I no longer enjoy the pressures of putting on an event, however, where it takes so much work for everything to go well, and still have many things that are beyond your control go not so well.

That is the point I want to make this week. You must give yourself permission to grow and for things to change if you are to have a successful PurposeQuest. When things change and when you change, you must not spend time and energy trying to recapture what is gone. When a season is over, it's over. You must learn to let it go.

I spent time last night with a businessman who was trying to talk himself out of how he felt. There is an aspect of his company that is making money and that work is something he has done for many years. In some ways, he is emotionally attached to that work. Yet the joy is gone and he was wrestling with the fact that he didn't have the time to build other aspects of his business because that particular division took so much of his time and energy. What's more, he no longer enjoyed that aspect of his work.

By the end of our three-hour session, he decided to let it go to pursue other things. I think he made the correct decision.

MOVE ON.

Has something changed in you or your work? The answer may not be to redouble your efforts to capture what is gone. The answer may be to discover new areas where you can invest your energy with renewed enthusiasm. I am not spending any time trying to recover my long-gone love for event planning and touring. Instead I want to invest my life and

energy in writing, seminars and eventually media. That's where the life is for me today.

I thank God for my past work as an event planner, but I thank God it is in the past. What should be in your past that you are trying to keep in the present? If there is anything that needs to end, I urge you to be honest with yourself and let it go! There's so much more ahead for you, but first you must decide to move ahead. I'm not saying it will be easy. It requires great courage to face reality, but if you don't, you will never find all that God has for you to do. So do what you know you must do and, in the meantime, have a great week!

The Monday Memo 252

I am in Johannesburg on my way home. I have been gone since April 23, so I am anxious to get home and enjoy some of our summer weather. I will post an entry to my blog later today about what I will do when I get home, so if for some strange reason you are interested in what that may be, you can check it out for yourself.

I've been thinking about Pharaoh this past week. That may sound like strange meditation material, but I've been reflecting on the Pharaoh without and the Pharaoh within each of us. You may respond, "I don't know what you're talking about. I don't have a Pharaoh in my life." I hope you don't, but just in case you do, read on.

THE PHARAOH WITHOUT

There are two Egyptian Pharaohs that get attention in the Bible. Joseph was the contemporary of one and Moses the other. I have done some study and writing on the good Pharaoh over Joseph and that can be found on my website. For now, we want to look at the bad Pharaoh, the one whose stubbornness brought the plagues upon his people and affected his nation's effectiveness down to this very day.

What was this bad Pharaoh like? He was consumed with working and building, with amassing wealth and using people to get that wealth. He was a hard taskmaster and drove the people and his overseers, not allowing any off days or seasons of rest. When Moses confronted him, Pharaoh got even more difficult, ordering that the Israelites were to make bricks and gather their own straw, the straw having been provided for them previously. He was suspicious and was focused on one thing-- production.

Perhaps you have worked for a Pharaoh like this. There is no joy in working for or with this kind of manager or leader. They see you as a means to production, nothing more, nothing less. It is easy to dislike this kind of leader, but often what can you do? You must work to feed your family and besides, work isn't something really to enjoy. It's often something to endure, which leads us to our discussion of the Pharaoh within.

THE PHARAOH WITHIN

When you "buy into" Pharaoh's attitude, even if you aren't in leadership, then you are working for a Pharaoh. What do I mean? Your mentality says, "I need to work. It's not something that I should expect to enjoy. I should just do it and look for fulfillment outside of my place of employment." That is what it means to have a Pharaoh within--you are your own taskmaster!

When I work with people one-on-one, I ask them what they would do if they had all the money they needed. Many struggle with the question. Then I urge them to ask me. When they do, I respond, "I would do what I'm doing today, except that I'd fly business class more often!" About six years ago, I stopped being driven by a false concept that my work is to be endured and not enjoyed. I faced my Pharaoh within and fired him! Now I work for the Lord, who ordered Pharaoh to "let my people go."

If you work for a Pharaoh without, there may not be much you can do as long as you stay where you are. But if you work for a Pharaoh within, then there is something you can do. You can change the way you view work and purpose. It is possible to enjoy what you do; in fact it's the will of God for you! Once you embrace that truth, it will cause you to pursue different things to do. You will give yourself permission to pursue what you enjoy. When you are free from the Pharaoh within, you can be a person of purpose on and off the job. It's a great way to live.

If I were you, I would assess how many Pharaohs there are in your life right now. I would suggest that even one is too many! Determine this week to at least face the truth and, if one of those Pharaohs is inside you, to face and deal with him. Don't let him bully you anymore, but rather determine to free yourself so that you can pursue the word of the Lord, the word that says you are free. Have a great week!

The Monday Memo 253

Before I left Zimbabwe last week, I did a book review for the Victory Business Forum. The book was Jack Canfield's *The Success Principles*.

How to Get From Where You Are to Where You Want to Be, which I read and enjoyed last year. The book outlines 65 principles that, according to Canfield, will bring you success if you apply them in your life. I didn't know success was that complicated until I read the book. In some ways, the 65 principles made me tired just reading about them, let alone applying them. (You can order your own copy by clicking on the title above. I am only kidding; I really did enjoy the book.)

One principle in particular caught my eye, however, and that was the principle that was related to purpose. Principle two is "Be Clear Why You're Here" and included "The Life Purpose Exercise" that I thought I would share with you this week. I am always looking for things that can help you define your purpose, so I pass this on hoping it will do just that. Take a few minutes this week and see what you come up with from this exercise.

1. List two of your unique personal qualities, such as enthusiasm and creativity.
2. List one or two ways you enjoy expressing those qualities when interacting with others, such as to support and to inspire.
3. Assume the world is perfect right now. What does this world look like? How is everyone interacting with everyone else? What does it feel like? Write your answer as a statement, in the present tense, describing the ultimate condition, the perfect world as you see it and feel it. Remember, a perfect world is a fun place to be.

EXAMPLE: Everyone is freely expressing their own unique talents. Everyone is working in harmony. Everyone is expressing love.

4. Combine the three prior subdivisions of this paragraph into a single statement.

EXAMPLE: My purpose is to use my creativity and enthusiasm to support and inspire others to freely express their talents in a harmonious and loving way.

Canfield urges his readers to read their purpose statement from this exercise every day. He even suggests that artistic or visual people draw or paint a symbol or picture that represents their life purpose. I would think that this could lead to you developing a personal logo or coat of arms that would describe and embody your purpose statement.

If this exercise helps you, please go to the Monday Memo blog (just click on the word "blog") where you can enter your statement for others to learn from in the comments section at the end of this posted Memo. If this exercise doesn't help you, don't give up. Purpose is a quest and you never know when your breakthrough will come. Keep reading, keep seeking and keep asking quality questions. In time, you will clarify your purpose and the seeking will only serve to enhance your appreciation of what you have. In the meantime, I hope you have a great week!

The Monday Memo 254

When I am in Africa, I spend a lot of time thinking about home. When I am at home, I spend a lot of time talking and thinking about Africa. In keeping with this pattern, today I think I'll write about a lesson I learned in Africa.

I was in Kenya recently and took my son on some game drives at the famous Masai Mara region. I have been there three times and have done numerous drives in other parts of Africa. It never gets old, however, no matter how many drives I do wherever they may be. The Mara happens to be my favorite area for drives.

There is one outstanding lesson I always take away from every game drive and that lesson is abundance. Let me explain.

ABUNDANCE

When you go on a drive, you go through many square miles of grass and trees. You see warthogs, wildebeests, lions, giraffes, elephants and many other creatures. Unless there are unusual circumstances that create a drought, there is always plenty for everyone to eat. Granted, they may eat one another, but there never seems to be any lack.

While we were in Kenya last month, the migration of zebras and wildebeests had begun. More than one million wildebeests and even more zebra come into the Mara area from Tanzania for a month of feeding on the high Mara grasses. Can you imagine how much grass it takes to feed millions of animals for one month? Yet there is always plenty for all comers. And the animals who migrate feed the lions, hyenas and crocodiles who await their arrival.

I never see any anxiety among the animals, not that I would recognize it if they could be anxious. When they are hungry, they eat. When they are tired, they sleep. When they are thirsty, they look for water. Everything they need, they have.

So if God can provide such abundance in that world, why don't I believe that He can produce it in my world as well?

MONEY

I marvel when I travel to cities where millions of people live. How does everyone get fed? How is there enough water for those residents to drink, bathe, eliminate waste, and cook? How is there enough electricity? How is there enough housing for most of the people? Truth is, the abundance is there, just like on the plains of Africa where the animals roam.

I just don't always believe that there is abundance when I need something. If God is able to take care of millions of people as well as millions of animals, He can certainly take care of me.

Do you believe in abundance? Don't answer too quickly. If you do, then why don't you start your business, publish your book or take that trip you have been talking about for years? Is it because you don't have the money? Why would money be exempt from the abundance principle that we see all around us?

THREE THOUGHTS

May I offer three thoughts that may help you include money in your abundance philosophy.

1. Money is included in the abundant provision of life. When Peter needed money to pay his temple tax in Matthew 17:27, Jesus sent him to the lake to pull out a fish that had the required money in its mouth. That story alone tells us that God has no problem providing you with the money that you need to do His will.
2. When you need money, you will have money. Don't wait to make your plans until you have money. Make your plans and the money will be there when you need it.
3. When God provides for you, He hasn't taken it away from someone else. There isn't a fixed amount of currency in the world. God can create wealth and money just like any other entity. Your blessing doesn't come at the expense of someone else. Therefore you don't have to be ambivalent or guilty about your provision.

God provides for the animals and for millions who live in cities. God can also provide for you as you seek to be productive and fulfill your purpose. I would suggest that you examine your attitude about abundance this week and especially where money is concerned. Then armed with confidence, I urge you to make great plans that will enable you to use God's abundance to carry out His will. Have a great week!

If you would like to add your comments to this Memo, please go to the Monday Memo site to do so.

The Monday Memo 255

I am sorry this Memo is a day late. I ignored the saying, "Never put off until tomorrow what you can do now!" I flew into Dallas last night and all day kept thinking, "I'll do the Memo later in the airport or when I arrive." Flights were late, I was tired, and, well, here is this week's better-late-than-never edition.

Last week we discussed abundance and I got some encouraging feedback. But then, I always get positive feedback about abundance in general. It's when people have to apply the abundance principle in their own life that the problems often start. I hear some people say on one hand, "God can do anything," and then say, "But John, you don't understand. I'm from a poor family" or "I don't make much money at my job" or "I live in Africa and we're poor" or "I live in the United States and the cost of living is so high in my area."

Either abundance applies to everyone in God's kingdom or it doesn't. I'm not talking about fancy cars and big homes. I'm talking about you having all the resources you need to fulfill your purpose and be productive. The problem isn't the abundance; the problem is how you think about abundance. Let's look at a story that could help you with your thinking where abundance is concerned.

MOSES ARRIVES ON THE SCENE

When Moses arrived in Egypt, the Israelites were living in Egypt. Times were tough. They were oppressed by the Egyptians and forced to work as slaves. It is interesting that they were numerous and potentially powerful, but they had a slave mentality that kept them locked into what they had always done.

Along comes Moses and announced that it was a new day; God was going to set them free! The only problem was Pharaoh. He refused to cooperate when Moses told him the good news and made the work

conditions more severe to keep the Israelites "occupied." This caused the Israelites to grumble against Moses, their liberator. Any time you have a slave mentality, you resent someone who wants to set you free.

So God stepped in and initiated what we know to be the ten plagues on Egypt. Each plague confronted an Egyptian god and proved that Moses' God was more powerful and had the right to set His people free. Things got worse and worse in Egypt as God sent hail, gnats, frogs, darkness and boils on the Egyptians.

At this time, the Israelites lived in an area called Goshen. The most amazing thing happened while the Egyptians were going through their plagues. I refer to this amazing phenomenon as the Goshen Principle.

THE GOSHEN PRINCIPLE

To explain the Goshen principle, let's look at three passages:

1. "But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen , where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land. I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This miraculous sign will occur tomorrow" (Exodus 8:22-23).

2. The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen , where the Israelites were (Exodus 9:26).

3. So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived (Exodus 10:21-23)

Do you see the Goshen Principle in action? God blessed and protected His people while He plagued Egypt! Your abundance doesn't depend on external conditions. Your abundance depends on God and God alone. You must position yourself mentally, however, to receive this abundance or you can and will block or limit it in your life while you celebrate it in other people's lives.

This week would be a good time to examine your attitude toward abundance, not where other people are concerned, but where you are concerned. Do you believe that you have access to all that you need to be purposeful and productive? If you do, can you prove it? What are doing because you know the resources will be there when you need them? You see, the Goshen Principle wasn't just for Israel; it's for you and me. Armed with that fact, I hope this week you will act like a

resident of Goshen where the sun always shines and the air is free of dust and gnats. Have a great week!

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