

Monday Memo 366: Wait, Fly, Run, Walk

I meet with hundreds of people every year to talk about their purpose, productivity, goals and dreams. I often hear people say that they are waiting on the Lord and they sincerely believe they are doing the proper thing. They will often quote Isaiah 40:31, which states "Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength" (NAS). The only problem is that anyone who quotes this verse in support of a passive kind of waiting on the Lord is mistaken. To understand how, you will have to read on.

WAIT OR HOPE?

Let's look at the Amplified translation not only for Isaiah 40:31, but also for the verses immediately preceding it:

Why, O Jacob, do you say, and declare, O Israel, My way and my lot are hidden from the Lord, and my right is passed over without regard from my God? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not faint or grow weary; there is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the faint and weary, and to him who has no might He increases strength -- causing it to multiply and making it abound. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and the selected young men shall feebly stumble and fall exhausted. But those who wait for the Lord -- who expect, look for and hope in Him -- shall change and renew their strength and power; they shall lift their wings and mount up [close to God] as eagles [mount to the sun]; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint or become tired (Isaiah 40:27-31 Amplified, emphasis added).

First of all, the word so often translated "wait," which can speak of passively sitting around for something to happen or someone to show up, is better translated "hope." Hope is more active, spurring one to action because there is hope. A football player plays hard to the very end because he or she hopes that the team may still win. I go to the mall hoping that there will be a good sale on something I need. So if you are waiting and hoping in the Lord, and I truly hope you are, I must ask you what you are doing while you are waiting. Your waiting should actually increase your activity level and not decrease it!

NOT CONVINCED?

So how can I say that waiting on the Lord should increase and not decrease your activity level? Just look at what happens to those who "wait" or "hope." They will renew their strength and power. What's more, they will fly like eagles and run without getting weary. If they can't fly or run, they will at least walk and not faint or become tired. If waiting is a passive word, why is it mentioned in the context of such action words like fly, run and walk?

The Lord also promises to give power to the faint, weary and to ones who have no might. Who is faint and weary but those who have been involved and active, seeking ways to achieve and express their purpose, which is God's will for their lives? I ran into a person

the other day who said to me, "I am waiting for a crystal clear understanding of what the Lord wants from me in this next season of my life." I wanted to respond, "I hope you find it, but from the sounds of it, you are waiting for God to do what He will not do." God will not jump through hoops or provide dramatic acts to confirm what He wants you to do. You will find out as you fly, run or walk in an attitude of hope and expectancy.

I acknowledge that what God wants you to do can only be accomplished in His strength and not your own. Yet do you need God's strength if you aren't doing anything? Is God required to sustain you if you are waiting for heaven's phone to ring so that God can speak to you clearly and directly? I don't think He is.

So are you prepared to wait on the Lord this week? Good! That means you will be actively hoping and waiting as you pursue open doors and knock on closed ones. You will wait as you dream, write, pray and plan. You will wait as you talk to those who can help make your dreams and purpose a reality. As you do all this, God will cause you to cover a lot of territory, no matter whether your mode of transport is flying or by foot. The important thing is that you move and then see God move with you. Have a great week!

Monday Memo 367: How Long?

I was reading last week and came across these verses in Joshua and I immediately thought, "These would make a good Monday Memo." The verses are The whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh and set up the Tent of Meeting there. The country was brought under their control, but there were still seven Israelite tribes who had not yet received their inheritance. So Joshua said to the Israelites: "How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you?" (Joshua 18:1-3).

To see if I was correct that they would make a good Memo, you will have to read on.

HOW LONG?

I wonder what the people were waiting for before they moved forward to take the land that God had promised? Perhaps they were afraid or maybe they were "waiting on the Lord." Yet it seems like they were waiting and Joshua could not understand what they were waiting for. So he helped them devise a plan to go in and they did so, yet they had wasted a lot of time living in less than God's best for them. I find many people with whom I meet are doing the same.

I won't review all that I have written about trusting and doing what is in your heart, for you can easily go back through my past Memos to read for yourself. Let me simply divide people into three categories and you can see if you fit into any one of the three.

THREE GROUPS

1. I'm too young. I meet with people who have big dreams but they feel they are too young. So I ask them, "Why are you waiting? Do you think it will be easier to do what you want five to ten years from now?" Many in this category are not married, or have young children, or have a spouse who also works. What a perfect time to go back to school, start a business, go into ministry or become a missionary. Don't be biased against youth, especially if you are young. You have the same Spirit that your elders do and God speaks to you like He does to them. So what are you waiting for?

2. I'm too busy. This group usually falls into the ages between 30 and 45. They are more deeply immersed into life, and have school fees to pay, a mortgage, and a lot of responsibility. They have usually put a lot of time into their career at this point, and they are hoping to reap the benefits of that time investment in the coming years. Many confide that they aren't happy, but just don't think they have any options. Yet you always have options, they just may not be very good ones. I urge this group to picture themselves in ten years and ask, "Is this what you want to be doing then?" If they say, "No!", then we begin to make plans for what they can do with the time, money and freedom that they do have at this present time. It is one of the most difficult things for a 40-something to think about what he or she will do when they are a 50-something. It will be here before they know it, however, so I ask them, "What are you waiting for?"

3. I'm too old. This group is in their 50s and they talk like they have all the time in the world. They act like they have another 50 years to plan and work with the same energy and health that they presently have. They talk about what they will do when they retire like retirement is a guarantee. This group may also feel that time has passed them by, that their best days are behind them and not before them. Since I fall into this age group, I am now able to say, "Hey, we have less days ahead of us than we have behind us. We aren't even guaranteed tomorrow." So I ask them, "So what are you waiting for?"

No matter what group you may fall into, let me ask, "What are you waiting for?" Do you think it will be any easier to do what is in your heart at a later day? Why do you think so? What will change? If nothing will change, then why not find ways to do it (or start doing it) today, right now? And let me also ask you what Joshua asked the people, "How long before you begin to take hold of the inheritance?" You may not be able to take hold of it today, but you can begin to take hold. Don't just talk about what you will do one day. I urge you, implore you, even beg you to do it today no matter what group you fall into. And as you do, I know that you will have a great week!

Monday Memo 368: The Weary Don't Need Rest

I know my title this week isn't true to the original, which says, "No rest for the weary." I think it goes hand in hand with the proverb that states, "If you want something done, give it to a busy person to do." I have found that people of purpose are almost always busy, because situations who need what they are seems to find them. I have also found that people of purpose tend to earn their rest, yet they often don't need their rest like everyone else does. Are you confused? I may be as well, but to find out if I am, you will need to read on.

NO LUNCH, NO BREAK

I have often referred to Jesus when he met with the woman at the well in John 4. He had sent the disciples away for lunch while He rested by the well. When the woman came, He engaged her in conversation and ended up revealing to her the secrets of her heart. She was so amazed that she went back to her village to bring others to “come and see a man who told me everything I ever did!” (John 4:29). When the disciples got back with food, they were surprised to see Jesus talking with this woman.

They were also surprised that Jesus was no longer hungry when they offered Him the food they had brought back with them. Jesus responded when offered something to eat, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (John 4:34).

Jesus was hungry and tired when the disciples had departed. Now He was energized and no longer hungry because He had been fulfilling His purpose of seeking and saving the lost.

PURPOSE LESSONS

Here are some lessons to remember from John 4:

1. Purpose is sometimes better than food. What can you do and not worry about missing a meal? That may be an indication of what your purpose is.
2. Purpose energizes you. It releases adrenaline, the good kind, that gives you the strength to work long and hard. You need rest but usually you aren't fatigued when you function in your purpose.
3. Jesus didn't go looking for the woman; she came to Him. Your purpose comes to you and it doesn't always honor your space or need to be alone. What task or group of people seem to find you.

Jesus added this comment after He said He had other food to eat that the men didn't know anything about: “I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (John 4:35). Jesus was not instituting Sabbath or rest principles here; He was urging His followers to get busy! Could He be telling you the same thing?

What will you look for this week, rest or purpose? I urge you to seek purpose for in purpose you may find the rest for which you have been so desperately seeking. Have a great week!

Monday Memo 369: Timed Out

I took some time to review the results from the 500 or so people who have taken the Purpose Assessment on my new website. The scores vary widely as you would expect,

but there is one trend that seems to be common in many of the assessments. Many people give statement 11 a low score. What is statement 11? It says, "I am in control of my time."

Time management is one of the toughest disciplines in life, so I thought I would devote a few weeks to that topic if you don't mind. If you don't need any input on time management, then you can take a few weeks off, but should rather spend your time reading about how to tell the truth! Truth is, we all need help where time management is concerned.

A MISNOMER

Time management is really the wrong term for what we need. We don't need help to manage time, for time cannot be managed. It goes by at the pace it always has. You cannot save it, slow it down, speed it up or recover it once it's gone. You cannot manage time; you can only manage the events that occur within the time that you have. Rather than call it time management, we should really call it event management.

Does that make sense to you?

Think of it like this. There is nothing special about 6 AM, until you set your alarm for 6 AM. The wake up call is the event that takes place at 6 AM. Then you have to be at work at 7:30, so you must manage a series of events to insure you are punctual. Those events include showering, breakfast, devotions, getting the children off, and the commute to work. There is nothing you can do about the 90 minutes you have to get to work from the time you get out of bed. There are a lot of things you can do to manage the events that occur in those 90 minutes and what you do will determine whether you are successful or not, defined by being on time or late for work.

The rest of your life is like that as well. You have 24 hours every day; you just don't know how many 24 hour units you have in total ahead of you. My mother is 92 years old; a young child of 5 who attended my church was killed in a house fire last week. Our times are truly in His hands, and we have the duty and joy of making the most of every day that we have on earth.

EVENT MANAGEMENT

In past Memos, I have told you that you have all the time in the world, and it's true. You have 24 hours for every day you are alive, the same as everyone else. Then why can some produce so much and others seem to struggle just to get through the day? It's because the productive person understands the difference between time and event control.

So perhaps you should start by doing a simple time inventory to determine exactly what events are filling the time that you have. It's not so complicated to do and you can read an article I have about it on my website by the title Know Your Time. Next week, I will have a compilation of all my past Memos on time for you to review. In the meantime,

you can get started this week by learning where you are investing your time. After that, we can see what you need to stop doing so you can embrace new activities and goals that will bring you more joy and fulfillment. As you do your inventory, I know you will have a great week!

Monday Memo 370: A Time to Live, A Time to Die

How did you do this past week with tracking where your time goes? Mine went well because I didn't have a lot of time to spare. I was in Dallas and was busy from morning until night conducting a seminar. Then I came home to Pittsburgh to speak at a local conference for two days and then spent the last 24 hours with my 92-year-old mother who is fading quickly with colon cancer. I mentioned last week that we would spend a few weeks talking about time management, so let's proceed with our plan and see what we can learn together.

A TIME TO DIE

I had the privilege of burying my father twelve years ago. He actually died in my arms as I was helping him on his bed. I prayed that I would and could do the same thing for my mother and now the moment is at hand. So much of my travel didn't work out this year and my trips to Africa came to a sudden halt. Now I understand why. God was answering my prayer and I was home for these last six months to see my mother in her last days. I am home to say goodbye to her.

In times like this, it is simply a matter of following one's priorities. My mother won't be here much longer, so I choose to spend as many minutes with her as I can. I spend the night on her couch, waiting for her to ring her bell when she needs me. I can't do that every night, but I want to do it as often as possible until the end. Everything else pales in importance right now and decisions of time and event management are much simpler. I do what I can with my work, but my mother comes first.

A TIME TO LIVE

When you think about it, time management isn't any different at any other time of life. When faced with tough event management decisions, you go with what is most important to you, things that are consistent with your values. I have no regrets where my mother is concerned. I called her almost every day that I was home and visited her at least every Sunday. I took her on trips and sometimes took her shopping. I used my time to do things with her because she was important to me and now I can look back and be glad.

How about you? Are you happy where you are investing your time? Are you using your time to do things that bring life and cause you to enjoy the opportunities that God has given you? While I was sitting here with my mother today (she sleeps most of the time), I caught up on my next to the last study in my series from the gospel of Matthew. When I finish Matthew next week, I will have completed verse-by-verse studies for twenty

books of the New Testament. I estimate I have spent about 1,000 hours on that Bible project in the last seven years, working on it about 20 minutes a day.

So the choice is yours. You can use the time you have to do important things or waste it doing trivial things – or nothing at all. I had promised this week I would include a summary document with all the past Monday Memos that had time as a theme and it is attached below. I'll have more to say next week but for now, let me urge you to do something this week that will make a difference in your own life according to what matters most. Have a great week!