

THE TWELVE BEST MONDAY MEMOS

March 1, 2013

Memo 90: Nancy's Testimony

Years ago I was teaching a seminar and thought about my friend Nancy. I was telling of the impact one of my first purpose seminars had on her and wanted to make sure I had her "story" correct. Through a mutual friend, I contacted her and asked her to write about what has happened in her life the last 12 years. Here is her reply:

I remember hearing you teach on purpose in your "Life is a Gold Mine; Can You Dig It" seminar. At that time I was at a critical point in my faith journey. I ached for more creative expression in my life. Being the daughter of the sports editor for our local paper, writing came naturally and easy for me. I loved words and I had always loved music. Little did I realize that your seminar would be one of the things God would use to help me find the courage to believe and pursue the desires of my heart, namely songwriting. First, I had to acknowledge the desire that I wanted to write to myself, to God, and to family and friends. Then I began to actively pursue this dream and desire one day at a time, one step at a time. I remember the phrase "Never despise small beginnings." Maybe I heard it from you.

Now some years later, I have published more than 300 songs, written 12 musicals (children and adult), have had four songs nominated for a Dove Award, and created the children's praise character Miss PattyCake. The Miss PattyCake line now has 6 videos and 2 CD's, which I helped to write and create. I just finished my first book to be published and released in March, which will be A Miss PattyCake Easter story. There's so much more, but I don't know how much you want to hear.

As a speaker, writer, worship leader, and a creative consultant, I desire to increase my speaking venues and to write several books. I now have my own publishing company, Mother's Heart Music and Mother's Heart Ministries. They both exist to nurture, inspire and encourage all people to experience and know the love of God.

You would have to know Nancy to fully appreciate this report. She is neither wealthy, nor was she "well connected" in the music industry. She is a "regular person" like you and me who decided one day to step out "to actively pursue this dream and desire one day at a time, one step at a time." She gave God something to bless and He did. And the exciting thing is that she isn't finished. God has more for her to do and she is still young (well, she's around my age, which is looking younger all the time!).

Like Nancy, your journey can begin one day this week. And your journey will start where hers did – by acknowledging to yourself, to God and others what it is that you want, that you were created, to do. They may laugh, yawn, misunderstand or ignore. Their reaction (or lack of it) isn't important because you're not saying it for them. You're saying it for *you* and for God who put that dream in you in the first place. And you're saying it to release the dynamic of a spoken vision as outlined in these two passages:

Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name (Malachi 3:16).

“Surely then you will find delight in the Almighty and will lift up your face to God. You will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will fulfill your vows. What you decide on will be done, and light will shine on your ways. When men are brought low and you say, 'Lift them up!' then he will save the downcast. He will deliver even one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands" (Job 22:26-30).

If you don't have anyone else to tell this week, then write and tell me, but tell someone and then get started. Have a great week!

Memo 152: The Funnel Affect

I have been teaching about purpose for more than 20 years now. I have noticed a phenomenon among those who have clarified their purpose. I call that phenomenon the funnel affect. What is the funnel affect? I'm glad you asked.

To explain it, let's think about a funnel for a moment. A funnel is wide at the top and very narrow at the bottom so that liquids may pour into something with a small opening. When you begin your PurposeQuest, you are at the top of the funnel. The whole world and all its options are available to you. But then something happens and it can unnerve or make you uncomfortable. As you progress down the funnel of purpose, you may begin to feel restricted in your activity. Things you once did have no meaning or you lose your enthusiasm for things you once had energy to do. You also may find that you evaluate everything you do differently. As you go down the funnel, you find there is no room or time to do some of those things that are no longer related to your purpose.

Some are concerned that their lives will be less meaningful if they get to the bottom of the funnel. They can't see how God can use them when they seem to be doing so little. But to the contrary, the bottom of the funnel is your point of greatest effectiveness. It is at that point where you find what you do that no one else can do. While it seems restrictive, that point allows God to send you anywhere in the world that needs who you are and what you do. The narrow point is why the funnel exists; without it, there would be no purpose for the funnel.

Perhaps an example will help. History tells us that Mozart was a virtuoso violinist and pianist. Rarely in history has anyone been a world-class performer with two instruments. Mozart was so good at both that he gave up playing the violin! Mozart knew there weren't enough hours in the day to practice, so he decided to focus on what would serve him best as a composer. This is what I would call the funnel affect in Mozart's life.

How about you? Are you uncomfortable as you travel down your purpose funnel? Does the thought of restricting your activity according to your purpose scare or concern you? Well, don't worry. The bottom of my funnel is to bring order out of chaos. Armed with that knowledge, I know what I am supposed to do and I have eliminated many activities that are not related to my purpose. So spend some time this week thinking about where you are in your purpose funnel. You may need to abandon some activities, but that will give you more time to do the things that you do best. Have faith and continue down the funnel to your point of greatest effectiveness. And as you do, have a great week!

Memo 229: Self Isn't Selfish

At times you may give away too much. Is this possible when the Lord commands us to be generous as He is? To what am I referring? 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 met with more than 3,000 people in the last 20 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 in a particular area in which you are gifted or called.

A few years ago, I was at my daughter's college graduation. The speaker asked each person present if he or she 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 superb 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.

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. 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!

Memo 252: Outer Pharaoh, inner Pharaoh

I've been thinking about Pharaoh this past week. No, not the Pharaoh with Moses, but the one who ruled when Joseph was alive. 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 OUTER PHARAOH

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 obstinate, 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 inner Pharaoh.

THE INNER PHARAOH

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 an outer Pharaoh, there may not be much you can do as long as you stay where you are. But if you work for an inner Pharaoh, 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 inner Pharaoh, 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!

Memo 267: Who Needs Balance?

I was adding up the numbers the other day, and discovered that I've met with almost 3,500 people in the last twenty years to talk one-on-one about purpose. One thing's for sure: Those numbers give me a unique perspective on purpose and the challenges people face in finding and fulfilling it. There is one phrase that I hear all the time when I meet with people. Perhaps I would hear you say it if got together. What is the phrase? I'm glad you asked. That phrase is a simple two words.

YES, BUT...

I hear "yes, but" all the time. Do you hate your job? "Yes, but I can't quit." Are you good at what you do? "Yes, but it's not me, it's the Lord." Do you want to travel? "Yes, but I'm not sure it's God's will." Do you want to be in ministry full-time? "Yes, but I'm not sure if it's the right time or season." Are you ready to do God's will in your life no matter what the cost? "Yes, but I want balance and don't want to go overboard on any one thing."

I have come to the conclusion that "yes, but" people are expert excuse makers. They use their magnificent creativity to concoct all kinds of reasons why now is not the time for them to produce, shine or make an impact. I have come to the conclusion that "yes, but" is really the same answer as "no." "Yes, but" sounds a whole lot better.

The last excuse on my list of examples is one that I would like to explore more closely and that is our desire for balance.

BALANCE: WHO NEEDS IT?

Many people stop short of effectiveness because they don't want to go overboard. They want to be balanced. They want to have faith, but not excessive faith. They want to address racism, for

example, but not make anyone unhappy or uncomfortable. They want to see world-class results in their life, but not have to pay a world-class price.

I challenge you to name one person who was balanced who made a difference in the world. Was Martin Luther or Martin Luther King? How about Nelson Mandela or Florence Nightingale? Perhaps Winston Churchill or Billy Graham?

Now you would say that those were great people who had a unique purpose to fulfill? All right then, think of your favorite teacher when you were growing up. Were they balanced or were they passionate about teaching and learning? Think of your favorite athlete or singer? How did they achieve that special place in your mind? They did it, I would guess, because they were totally committed to their craft, their purpose. I would further imagine that they were not "yes, but" people, but "yes, and here's how we will do it" people.

Yes, I believe that balance is overrated, a myth that we pursue in our minds. The pursuit of balance makes us ineffective and at times boring. Listen to yourself this week and see if you are in the habit of saying, "Yes, but." If you are, then keep the yes, and get rid of the 'but.' From there, I urge you to get busy giving the world what you have that it needs. As you do, I know you'll have a great week.

Memo 296: Getting Ahead Of God

I got an excellent response a few years back to one of my Memos about timing and getting ahead of God. Here is what one reader posted:

I usually don't find much to disagree with in your posts, and always appreciate your insights on purpose. But in this case, I have to mention one of the most glaring examples of bad timing and "getting ahead of God" in all of scripture: the birth of Ishmael. I believe we can attempt to fulfill God's purpose in our own strength and time, as Abraham and Sarah did, with an outcome perhaps not as disastrous as theirs.

I've got one more example of what could be considered getting ahead of the Lord and that is when Moses killed the Egyptian in Exodus 2:11-13. So we may as well examine both these examples at the same time. Are these good examples of how we can get ahead of the Lord as we discussed last week? I think not. To find my reasons, you will have to read on.

OLD TESTAMENT

Breaking God's moral laws is never justified in trying to do His will, and that is what both Abraham and Moses did! Let's consider Abraham. God established in Genesis that man will have one wife. Abraham did not obey this law. On two occasions, he put his wife in jeopardy by not identifying her as his wife. On another occasion, he followed the custom of the land and took Hagar, Sarah's maid, and got her pregnant. That's not getting ahead of the Lord; that's sin!

Then what about Moses? Moses killed an Egyptian and he knew it was wrong. How do we know that? Because he "looked this way and that" before he killed the man. Then Moses hid the evidence, yet fled when he discovered that others knew what he had done! He did all this before the commandment came not to kill. Yet Moses had that law written on the tablets of his heart, so when he took another's life, he fled in guilt and fear. Moses didn't get ahead of the Lord. He murdered. It's no wonder that God took him to the backside of the desert for 40 years.

These examples would be the equivalent of someone robbing a bank today to get the money they needed, money for which they were believing the Lord. That would not be getting ahead of God. That would be criminal, and sinful.

These examples are from the Old Testament. I wonder if there are any examples of getting ahead of the Lord in the New Testament?

NEW TESTAMENT

The only example I can think of is when Simon the magician offered a bribe in order to receive the ability to impart the Holy Spirit to others in Acts 8:17-19. I can't think of another example, can you? (If you can, send it along in the comments section on the site where this post is located.) In the New Testament, people were led of the Spirit who was giving them the mind of Christ. They were aggressive and active in their faith. Look at Acts 4. The apostles were standing before the leaders of their day and preaching only a few years after they had met and been with Jesus. They never worried whether or not they were getting ahead of God. They had faith that God was leading them and they stepped out. You need to follow their example. I assume as you do that you will not follow the example of Abraham or Moses – or Simon. Follow the example of Peter, James, John and Paul, who never stopped moving forward, doing what was in their heart to do.

In Acts 16:6-10, Paul was trying to go in one direction and the Lord resisted him. Then Paul finally had a dream that set the correct course for Macedonia and Paul set out immediately. That is the mindset you and I need to have as we pursue our purpose and dreams.

The comment about Abraham and Sarah this week really got me thinking. I am not trying to argue the point with the person who sent the comment, and I hope this will encourage and not discourage you from sending your own from time to time. Move out in faith and see what happens. Just don't rob any banks as you do. Have a great week!

Memo 303: Joy Feast

My favorite book in the Bible is Proverbs. As you may know, I published a book in 1997 entitled *A Daily Dose of Proverbs*. It is still one of my best-selling books, in which I wrote one page of devotional material focusing on one verse from Proverbs for every day of the year. While

reading through Proverbs again recently, I ran across a few verses on joy that stood out to me in light of the discussions we have had about joy in many Monday Memos.

JOY VERSES

The first verse that caught my attention is Proverbs 14:10:

Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy.

No one can tell you what you should like or not like, energize you or not. You know what your heart is telling you when you love to do something, and when something is a drag. You can't explain it, justify it or dismiss it. It just is. I love to write. I love to work in Africa. That joy is my indicator that those are things I am supposed to do. At the same time, I was depressed when I was the pastor of a local church. A pastor does a noble work, but there was no joy in it for me. So I stopped being a lead pastor in 1993 and I have never looked back or had any regrets. I didn't leave church work; I just pursued work in the world that gave my heart joy.

The second verse is found in Proverbs 17:22:

A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Joy, or lack of it, affects your physiology. If you have joy, you have a better chance for health. If not, then you are in danger of dried up bones. How often do you laugh every day? More importantly, how often do you laugh while you are working or doing whatever it is that you do all day, like going to school or tending your children? Laughter is good medicine, so doing what you enjoy is a health tonic of sorts. Not doing what you love is a prescription for illness, pure and simple. No wonder I feel so good these days!

JOY FEAST

The one verse, however, that really caught my attention is in Proverbs 15:15:

All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast.

Some people I know hate to get up and go to work. Their days are wretched and that means they are oppressed. How so? They *have* to do what they do and they somehow feel that this is noble or God's will. God does not oppress you by placing you in situations that you don't enjoy or find happiness. He may do that for a season to train you or develop some aspect of your character, but He won't do it for long.

Yet those who find what they love to do and then do it have a continual feast. They constantly feed at a table of creativity, innovation and significance. They have energy and an attitude that says, "I don't have to do what I'm doing; I get to do what I'm doing." Every day is a "ten" on a scale of one to ten when you do what you love.

So at what table are you feeding? Is it a table of meager fulfillment and occasional joy, or is it a table where there is an endless supply, a feast, of joyful energy? I refuse to spend one day at the wretched table of oppression, but only want to sit and serve where I can access the abundance of joy. I invite you to sit at the table with me, for there's plenty of room and there is no end to goodies that joy can provide. In fact, why not determine to take your place at that table today! If you do, you won't just have a good week in general, but a good week filled with seven joyful days.

Memo 487: What To Do With a Big Head

What do you do when you do something well? What's more, how do you handle it when someone compliments you for something they admire about you? If you're like some, you may not know what to do in those situations. You don't want to appear proud or egocentric, so you actually may minimize your strengths and achievements in your eyes and in the eyes of others. This may seem spiritual or noble, but it's actually not!

What should you do when you succeed or receive a compliment? I'm glad you asked. For the answer, however, you will have to read on.

A BIG HEAD

Consider the story of David and Goliath. In it, you will see how David made specific declarations of what he was about to do to Goliath. David made good on his promises and killed Goliath with one stone from his slingshot. It's what he did next that answers the questions I raised above.

David cut off Goliath's head! That was one big head not only to cut off but also to carry around.

The armies of Israel were encouraged by David's victory, and went forth to win another great victory over the Philistine army. That was one byproduct of David's success. Then David did something else that would be quite uncharacteristic for many I know, perhaps even for you:

[David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, and he put the Philistine's weapons in his own tent \(1 Samuel 17:54\).](#)

What did David do with the head? I doubt if he kept it in his tent or made a keychain out of it. He did what most champions did with such spoils of battle. David probably hung the head on a post for everyone to see. David celebrated his own victory and advertised his achievement! What's more, he kept a souvenir of the battle by keeping the giant's sword in his trophy case.

How does that answer the question of what to do when you achieve success? How does this give you insight into how you should respond when you receive a compliment?

DON'T WORRY THAT A BIG HEAD WILL GIVE YOU A BIG HEAD.

David celebrated his victory. He wanted people to see Goliath's head so that they would be encouraged to fight their own battles. As a good leader, David wanted the people to see that they didn't have to cower in fear. More importantly, David didn't minimize his success. He didn't say, "Well, it was nothing. You know, it was a lucky shot and God really did it, it wasn't me."

No. David said, "Look what I've done. What can you do?" That's what you need to do as well.

If someone compliments you on something you've done or for something you are, say, "Thank you." Don't push their praise away.

If you have done something and no one compliments you, then compliment yourself! Admire what you've done. Savor the moment, without being self-conscious or worrying about what others will think of you. If you achieve a goal for which you have worked hard, throw yourself a party and invite your friends to celebrate with you. Take a trip in honor of your new job, degree or completed project.

David knew how to celebrate his victories and use them to spur himself and others on to greater things. You and I need to do the same. Don't worry about a big head; there will be enough tough knocks and challenges to keep your feet firmly planted in reality. When you do something great, however, don't be afraid to acknowledge that, well, that it was great! And if others acknowledge that as well, then it is all the better.

This whole process may help you see that you may not be afraid of failure, but of what you will do if and when you succeed! Can you handle success and the admiration of others, or are you afraid of it and them? I hope you will learn to broadcast your victories rather than hide behind mediocrity so that no one is offended and you aren't uncomfortable. Aim for great things, do them and tell the world if others don't. Have a great week!

Memo 497: Fear not Failing

Have you ever noticed that Moses was less than enthusiastic when the Lord ordered him to Egypt from their encounter at the burning bush? I have written a series about this entitled *Moses Produces the Best Excuses*, because that is exactly what he did. His first was that he wasn't capable; the second was that he didn't have enough information to respond to the people's questions. I hope you are ready to learn about excuse number three; if you are, then please read on.

FEAR FAILING

Moses' third excuse was, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The Lord did not appear to you?'" (Exodus 4:1). Moses was asking, "What if I fail? What if I'm obedient but the people don't respond?" From my own experience as a purpose coach, I have found that fear of failure is the one of the primary stumbling block for people trying to be more purposeful and productive. You can be so afraid to do the *wrong* thing that you do *no* thing, missing opportunities that could be significant.

Are you afraid of failure? Is that what stands between you and any attempt to fulfill your purpose or achieve your goal? As you think of your answer, consider what former American president, Theodore Roosevelt, had to say about failure:

It is not the critic who counts. Not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood. Who strives valiantly. Who errs, and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming. But who does actually strive to do the deeds. Who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions. Who spends himself in a worthy cause. Who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worse, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

FEAR NOT FAILING

If what Roosevelt said is true, then we should fear *not* failing. It is better to fail trying to do something great than succeed at doing nothing, for the latter isn't really success at all. I have often been more concerned with what other people were thinking and that kept me from trying. I have also been too concerned with trying not to fail than trying to succeed.

Are you ready to face your fear of failure this week? Are you ready to replace it with a fear of not failing? When you fear failing, you won't even try and when you don't try, you won't ever do much of anything. When you fear not failing, you will make every effort to do something, concerned less about what people think and more about the consequences of lost opportunities.

Are you offering God and others the same excuse that Moses offered? Are you asking, "But what if things don't work out?" The way to avoid the answer to that is to never take action. I urge you, even beg you, to stop allowing fear to paralyze you and to take action this week. Be more concerned with the consequences of being purposeless than the consequences of trying and failing. As you do that, I know that you will have a great week!

Memo 535: The Five Regrets of the Dying

I found a link to an article one time and wanted to share it with my readers first chance I had, so I included it in this Memo. It's written by an Australian woman, Bronnie Ware, and can be found in its entirety if you do a search under the title. I will summarize the five points of her article "The Five Regrets of The Dying," and focus on one point in particular.

THE FIVE REGRETS

Here are the five regrets that Bronnie discovered in working with those patients close to death over the years:

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.

2. I wish I didn't work so hard.
3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.
4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.
5. I wish that I had let myself be happier.

Here is what Ware had to say about the first point, the courage to be true to self and not others:

This was the most common regret of all. When people realize that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled. Most people have had not honoured even a half of their dreams and had to die knowing that it was due to choices they had made, or not made. It is very important to try and honour at least some of your dreams along the way. From the moment that you lose your health, it is too late. Health brings a freedom very few realise, until they no longer have it.

DON'T LET IT BE YOUR REGRET

It takes courage to be true to yourself and who God created you to be. Before David went out to fight Goliath, King Saul tried to have David wear his (Saul's) battle armor. Saul was a tall man, however, and the armor didn't fit. David did not try and please the king. Instead he rejected the armor and took along his sling shot, something that was more true to who he was. His success is legendary (see 1 Samuel 17:38-40).

Are you wearing someone else's armor? If you are, then you are headed for the number one regret expressed by the dying. Don't do it! I cannot say what you should do, but I can only urge you to follow your heart and stop living your life for someone else, unless however it is for the Lord. I was challenged by this list and I hope you are, too. Now get about the work of living before it's too late. Have a great week!

Memo 546: A Fat Duck

I read this quote a few years ago from Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be." That is what I have tried to do through the Monday Memo and my purpose teaching: Inspire you to be who God created you to be, who you have always wanted to be. I have found, however, that some resemble the duck described by the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. I hope you aren't like this duck, but just to make sure you aren't, you had better read on.

GROUNDING

The story has it that there was a duck flying with other wild ducks when they flew over some tame ducks in a barnyard. The wild duck decided to stay with these tame ducks for a while. He stayed for an hour, a day and then several months. Finally, his wild duck cohorts flew overhead one day and beckoned the wild duck to rejoin them, which he gladly did.

He found, however, that his barnyard living had made him so soft and heavy that he could not fly high enough to join his former mates. So he dropped back into the barnyard, promising that he would get in shape to join them the next time. The next time he heard them, he flapped his wings but could not even get off the ground. Finally, after many attempts, wishful thinking and a lot of broken promises, the wild duck became a domesticated bird that looked good but never went anywhere.

FLYING HIGH OR NOT AT ALL?

Did you dream of flying high at one time? Better yet, did you actually taste the heights you had determined to reach? Then where are you now? Are you still flying high or content with the safety and provision of the barnyard full of chickens and goats?

I am more than 60 years of age and I still have a lot of flying I want to do. Every summer, I want to release a new book. I now teach at the university at both the undergraduate and graduate level. I continue to produce regular Bible studies that are regularly sent to 4,000 people, as well as writing a daily devotional. I want to fly high and refuse to forsake the heights of productivity for the safety of the barnyard, with its regular rations. I listen to music that inspires me, go to places that move me and read books that engage me. I want to fly high and far and I do things that contribute to those objectives.

Flying high can be dangerous, but the view is fantastic! This week, ask yourself some tough questions. Do you talk about flying, or do you really fly? Are you content with barnyard chatter and routine, or are you ready to flap your wings to see how high and far you can go? I hope you are ready to fly and you will take others with you on the journey. I look forward to seeing you in high places. If you settle for the barnyard, we won't be meeting any time soon. Have a great week!

Memo 551: The Jonah Complex

The famous psychologist, Dr. Abraham Maslov, described a life condition and identified it by using a name from the Bible. What name do you think he used? Moses? Joseph? Jesus? Paul? If you answered any of those, you are wrong. He used the name Jonah and the entire term is called "The Jonah Complex." What did Maslov mean when he referred to "The Jonah Complex?" I'm glad you asked. You will have to read on to find out

RUNNING AWAY

We know that Jonah was an Old Testament prophet and has a short book that relates part of his life story. Jonah was given an assignment by God to go and deliver a harsh message to a city and people he didn't like. He didn't want to do it, so he ran. He got on a ship and went in the opposite direction from where he was told to go.

A storm arose during the trip and it soon became clear to the sailors that Jonah was the cause of the storm. When they threw him overboard, the storm ceased and a whale swallowed Jonah.

Jonah then spent three days and nights in the whale's stomach. After Jonah relented and agreed to go on God's mission, the whale spit him out and Jonah went on his way.

Maslov used "The Jonah Complex" to describe anyone who was running from his or her true life calling. He went on to say, "If you deliberately set out to be less than you are capable of, you will never truly be happy." This complex accurately describes the condition of many people with whom I have come in contact. If someone you know suffers from the Jonah Complex, they are avoiding or running from the greatness and creativity that is in them. They are afraid not of failure, but of success.

What is it like to be caught in "The Jonah Complex?" According to my experience, these people spend a lot of time trying to weather the storm. They try to stay on the ship where they are instead of jumping into the waves of life. They tell me they are "praying about it," whatever the "it" is for them. Yet day after day and sometimes year after year goes by and they do nothing.

Their prayer can actually be a delay tactic as they wait for God to do something that only they can do. They may not know what to do, but they don't seek advice from or listen to someone who could help them get started. They just hold on and hope that somehow things will change even if they don't do anything to help the change along. Or they are waiting for the "it" to happen all at once, instead of taking faith steps today that will lead them to their destiny.

JUMP SHIP

Are you suffering from "the Jonah Complex?" Are you running from your purpose or from some significant thing that God has for you to do? Is your ship being tossed by the waves of financial lack, unhappiness, and lack of productivity, yet you stubbornly cling to the ship's mast hoping that things will get better? I've found that many know their purpose but are afraid for whatever reason to speak it out. Perhaps it's time for you to face who you are and what God wants you to do. And perhaps it's time for you to take steps to get off your sinking ship and into the purpose of God.

It may look more dangerous "out there," but the only danger lies in you avoiding the great things that God has for you to do. The Chinese say that the longest journey begins with the first step. Maybe it's time for you to take the first steps this week on an exciting journey—your PurposeQuest. I hope you have a great week.