



# Take Your Purpose Seriously

By:  
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It was already two fifteen when Paul wheeled into the bank's parking ramp. There was a line of cars in front of him, inching its way forward like a caterpillar on a tree, stopping to explore every fresh opening. Fifteen minutes later Paul had reached the top and was coming back down. Then a space beckoned him, big and wide—right there by the door. He pulled in over the wheelchair painted on the asphalt. It was almost half an hour later than it had been in the dream—maybe the parking enforcers had already made their rounds and he would escape the ticket.

Paul punched the button for the elevator then, knowing it would be full, decided not to wait and ran down the stairs. He pushed open the door and found himself in the back alley as the door closed behind him with an authoritative snap. “Damn it, Rafe, dreams are supposed to be anatomically correct! What the hell am I doing in the alley?” A man peered out from behind a Dumpster at the yelling, then darted back when Paul glared in his direction.

Paul was mid-alley. Either way he was going to have to walk halfway around the building to get to the front door. With a resigned sigh, he started walking. He couldn't avoid being late, but he could at least enjoy the walk.

“Hi. Paul Peterson, here to see Marty Weatherford.”

“Yes, Mr. Peterson, he's expecting you. Come on back.” Sarah—that's what the plaque on her desk named the lady guarding the door to the administration offices—rose and shook Paul's hand.

“You mean he's not in the big conference room?”

“Excuse me?”

“Um, never mind. I just thought with all the lawyers and everything we'd need a bigger room.”

“As far as I know, Mr. Peterson, you're the only lawyer who's going to be here.”

Marty Weatherford came out from his office to greet them in the hall. He squashed Paul's hand and dragged him toward his office. "Hey, buddy, it's been too long. We've got to get out on the courts again soon. If you get too rusty, I might even be able to beat you."

Paul laughed as he sat in one of Marty's leather armchairs. Marty played racquetball the way he had wrestled in college, where he ranked nationally. Paul was lucky to get a few points per game.

"Thanks for sending me the receipt on those mortgage balances. I tell you what, the loan committee meets on Friday and I was sweating what to tell them about my friend who only gets around to making his mortgage payments every three months or so." Marty laughed again, but even more than when they were on the racquetball court, Paul sensed how intimidating it must have been to face Marty on the wrestling mat.

### **IF YOU DON'T TAKE YOUR PURPOSE SERIOUSLY, HOW CAN YOU EXPECT THAT ANYONE ELSE WILL?**

"Listen to me, Paul." Marty was no longer smiling. "I've got to talk to you now, not as your friend or your racquetball partner but as your banker. You know, you just can't run that school like some kid's lemonade stand anymore. I've never seen an audit report come back with so many management recommendations. You're just asking for trouble, running things so higgledy-piggledy like that. For cryin' out loud, you don't even have your finances on a computer, man. Did you, like, miss the turnoff for the 1990's or something?"

Paul felt Rafe's silver dollar through his pocket. What was the lesson here? Where was the connection? "I never made any money on lemonade stands when I was a kid, and I guess on that score not much has changed. Maybe I'm missing a gene or something."

"Well, you'd better find it pretty quick. Or find some other way to compensate for it." Marty still wasn't smiling. Paul felt the fear of a weaker opponent being stalked by a champion. "Paul, what you're doing is important. Really important. Too important to let fail because you're not willing to manage it.

"Most people in this world just have jobs, Paul. Look at me. I come in here every day and loan people money, and when they don't pay it back, I break their kneecaps." Marty smiled and Paul laughed, though both knew he wasn't really trying to be funny. "But you've got a calling. And with a calling comes an extra responsibility to take it seriously.

"My sister's kid got mixed up in drugs. Got kicked out of school. They came home one day and found him shot dead. Nice kid, not much older than your Jeffie.

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Shot dead! You're doing a good thing at that school, a noble thing. But if you're going to do it, Paul, please do it right. You won't help anyone if you go under."

Paul regarded his racquetball nemesis. There was a tender spot under that wrought-iron exterior, which he'd never seen before. "What do you suggest, Marty?"

"You can't do it all on your own, man. Get some help." Marty pulled a business card out of his shirt pocket and handed it to Paul. "Give Butch a call. He's a retired accountant, done a lot of work auditing non-profit organization like yours. Now he's just doing some volunteer work to keep busy. I took the liberty of speaking with him. He supports your cause and wants to help."

They made a date for a racquetball game, and Paul turned to leave. Catching Sarah's bemused stare out of the corner of his eye as he walked through the anteroom, he remarked, "He's really an alright guy when he's not surrounded by lawyers, isn't he?"

In the parking lot there was a seventy-five-dollar ticket under his windshield wiper. "Thanks for the silver dollar, Rafe. Now I just need seventy-four more."

Paul smiled as he stuck the ticket in his pocket.

Nothing was going to ruin his day. Not this time.