

A PURPOSE REVOLUTION IS COMING
By Dr. John W. Stanko

It was Saturday, November 7, 1991. I was working with Integrity Hosanna Music as a consultant and we decided to offer a class entitled “Effectiveness: Finding Your Life Purpose” for the non-musicians attending our worship seminars. I anticipated a small crowd, but more than half the people attended. When we offered the same class three months later, the results were the same: people came and people loved it.

Since that November afternoon, I’ve taught that class or preached that message more than 700 times. I’ve taught it so often not because I’m a good teacher, but because God is a God of purpose. He wants His people to do His will and for that to happen, He must reveal what that will is. As I’ve taught, I’ve seen thousands of people all over the world come to know their purpose. I’ve also seen a dramatic increase in books and articles that focus on purposeful living. People are hungry to read about, talk about or hear about purpose and Kenyans are no exception. I’ve come to the conclusion that there’s a purpose revolution sweeping the Church and I’m privileged to be part of it.

I’ve coined a term that summarizes the journey that every person must go through in order to clarify their purpose. That term is “PurposeQuest” and portrays that clarifying your purpose is a process and can take days or even years to complete. It also speaks to the fact that once you’ve found your purpose, you still must endeavor to walk it out in the midst of your career, ministry and family responsibilities.

My own PurposeQuest began in the Catholic Church on April 19, 1950. That’s the day I was born. From my earliest years, I told people I wanted to be a priest. At the age of 14, I entered a seminary to study and fulfill that desire. But after five years, I left the seminary and enrolled in a Catholic University in my hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the United States. I studied economics and graduated in 1972, determined to get my MBA and move on to a business career.

On May 18, 1973, I became a Christian. The next day, I sensed the presence of the Lord as He indicated three things that would take place in my life. First, He said I would leave the Catholic Church. Next, He told me I would go into full-time service. And finally, He indicated that I would give my life to His service.

I interpreted “full-time” service to mean that I would become a pastor, even though at the time I was in the business world and had my masters degree in economics. Five years later in 1978, I became an associate pastor and thought it would only be a few years before I led my own church. But the few years turned into 11 years, and it wasn’t until 1989 that I became the senior pastor of New Hope Community Church in Orlando, Florida.

God was working in my life during those 11 years as I held every position there was in our church. I worked with children, youth, the school, cell groups, publishing, crusade coordination, and eventually became the church administrator. But I always kept the vision that I would pastor one day. But something happened when I finally became the pastor I thought I should be. I wasn’t happy!

I came to dread Sundays, even though the church was growing and the people seemed to enjoy and appreciate my ministry. But I knew something was wrong and tried everything to overcome my unhappiness. I even enrolled in seminary and earned my doctorate in pastoral ministries. But a doctorate didn’t make me happy and it didn’t turn me into a pastor.

Eventually I came to realize that being a pastor was what I *thought* I was supposed to be; it was what I thought **God** wanted me to be. I had made the assumption that if I was really going to serve the Lord, then I had to pastor. I was wrong. I was unhappy and it was clear to everyone around me.

It was at this time that I began to teach the purpose class I mentioned in the opening paragraph while serving as a consultant with Integrity Hosanna Music. I had the idea for the class out of my own experience of a failed business opportunity in 1981. While I was praying and asking God to save the business (which He did not do), I heard the Lord say “I made you to create order out of chaos.” Furthermore, I felt like He gave me a verse to go with that phrase in Genesis 1:2: “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (NIV).

That verse provided a graphic picture of what I had always done up to that point in my life. I’ve never looked for a job in my life. I’ve never had to go looking for chaos; chaos has always come looking for me! When I began teaching the purpose class in

1991, I shared this experience of how I came to realize that my purpose was “to create order out of chaos.” It helped many people then and is still helping people today.

So in 1993, I resigned my position as pastor to work with Integrity Music. When that position ended in 1995, I became the administrative pastor at Covenant Church of Pittsburgh. In that same year, I published my first book, “Life is a Gold Mine: Can You Dig It?” In that book I wrote about the five Gold Mine Principles of success: purpose, goal-setting, time management, organization and faith. Since then I have written five more books.

In 2000, I found myself without the joy of the Lord once again. I was busy and productive in the church, but my books had created many invitations to speak and consult. I didn’t have enough invitations to earn money to live on, but I had too many to continue my ministry job and travel to speak. So in 2001, I resigned another church job to do what I’m doing today. And I’m so glad I did! There have been some tough financial times and I’ve made a lot of mistakes. But today PurposeQuest International is growing and I’m happy. I sense the joy of the Lord as I help people find purpose through my teaching, writing and coaching.

In March, 2001, I had the idea to write a weekly email update that would help people have a regular perspective on purpose and productivity. I called that update “The Monday Memo” and started sending it to 30 people. Today it goes to 9,000 people all over the world every Monday! What’s more, I began to develop weekly Bible studies and today send those studies every Thursday to 4,000 people. I’m fulfilling my purpose and I’m a happy man, sensing the joy of the Lord in my work. My new book, *Keys to Unlock Your Purpose*, will be published soon.

I tell audiences wherever I go that I can’t tell anyone what their purpose is. Only the Lord can do that. But I can give them better questions to ask the Lord so that, when He responds, they will recognize their purpose. Here are some of those questions that will help you clarify your purpose as you seek God for insight:

1. What situations seem to seek you out that you don't have to go looking for? Is there a problem that always finds its way to you to be solved? Is there a certain type of person to which you find yourself drawn and with whom you enjoy

effective work or ministry? What kinds of jobs or ministries have given you the most joy?

2. What have people given you compliments about over the years that you don't think are very spiritual or special? Very often those hold clues to your purpose.
3. Is there a passage of Scripture that is especially meaningful to you because it summarizes who you are and what you do best?
4. What would you do with your life if money wasn't an issue?

One of my favorite verses concerning purpose is found in Revelation 2:17: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it" (NIV). For you to find your purpose, first you must have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to you. Then you must overcome your own bias against who you are and what you do best.

Then the verse says that God will give you hidden manna. Didn't Jesus tell His disciples that He had food to eat that they knew nothing about? (See John 4:32). Your purpose will sustain you in hard times and give you joy and energy. And finally, the verse promises that you will receive a white stone with a new name, known only to you. That's what happened to me that morning in 1981 when I was praying to save my business. Instead God gave me a stone with my purpose written on it and my life has never been the same.

So are you ready to continue your PurposeQuest? You can start by visiting my website, www.purposequest.com. You can sign up to receive The Monday Memo at <http://www.purposequest.com/mmemo.htm>. You can also send gift subscriptions to friends at that address. Or feel free to write me at [purposequest@ att.net](mailto:purposequest@att.net). But don't wait another day to begin the journey of a lifetime. I can't promise you when you will clarify your purpose, but I can promise you that it will happen. Have faith and seek God and remember this important verse: "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6 NIV). Keep on seeking and you will find the secret that will lead you to a productive and joy-filled life. That secret is your purpose and God wants to share that secret with you. God bless you!