

LEADING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Recently I was in Nakuru, Kenya to speak at a conference and to give the pastor an assessment of the current leadership team in his large church. This particular church is growing quickly and many young men and women are being brought into leadership positions. I can already see the pressure they are under as they work to keep up with the growth and programs that this church has.

I was convinced as I sat and talked with these leaders that the leadership call and journey starts from within. Yes, I know that leadership manifests itself when someone steps out in front of the crowd and the crowd follows. But I'm convinced that leaders must begin the journey to lead from within their own hearts.

Leadership isn't about techniques or training only. If leaders don't know who they are, insecurity and the need to stay on top will cause them to make unwise decisions, thus undermining the leadership they're trying to assert and establish. Or they'll work themselves too hard, trying to be all things to all people so as not to fail in their leadership role. I see this, especially the latter, as I work with these young leaders in Kenya.

As we begin, I want to review a concept from my previous books which just happens to be my favorite topic—your life purpose. Everyone has a purpose in life. It may take some time to find or to fulfill, but it's there. In my book, *I Wrote This Book on Purpose . . . So You Can Know Yours*, I've presented many examples and exercises to help you clearly identify your purpose. Without a life purpose or mission statement, you'll be like a sailboat following the wind direction of the moment. Without a destination, any course will do.

Consider one of the great historical leaders of the Judeo-Christian movement—Moses. The New Testament tells us that “Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not” (Acts 7:25). Moses knew what his purpose in life was—to rescue the Jews from Egypt. And he would do just that, but not until he went through 40 years of preparation. Yet knowing who he was and what he was to do kept him on course, even through the tough, lonely years. And when he finally fulfilled his purpose and led his people out, he was for the most part a model leader who combined strength and meekness, power and patience, action and prayer.

Another Old Testament hero was King David. When David was a boy, a prophet poured oil on him and anointed him as the successor to the reigning king, Saul. “And from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power” (1 Samuel 16:13). David knew at a young age that he would be king. He just didn’t know when or how it would come about.

Twenty-five years later, the tribes of Israel came to him and said, “The Lord said to you, ‘You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler’” (2 Samuel 5:2). David knew who he was and didn’t exert power to overthrow the current king or to manipulate the political situation to his advantage. He waited and his time came. He *knew* he was a leader who had to go through the preparation process before he was ready. In short, David knew his purpose.

If you don’t know what your purpose is, then you’ll always be insecure in your leadership. You’ll worry about becoming or staying a leader. And that may cause you to use people for your own ends or make decisions to protect what you have. If you know

that you have a divine destiny, then you can lead without fear! You can make hard decisions, knowing that your leadership is rooted in something deeper than public opinion, the board of directors' vote, or the stock price of your company. Your leadership will be rooted in your heart and only you (and God) can touch it there.

My life purpose, as I explain in my seminars and books, is “to bring order out of chaos.” Here is my purpose statement:

MY LIFE'S PURPOSE

I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ on May 18, 1973.

The next day I received His call to “give my life to full-time service.” From that, I’ve come to realize that my

life’s purpose is to “bring order out of chaos”

wherever the Lord chooses to send me. A verse to

help define this purpose is found 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.”

I know who I am. It’s the foundation for my leadership. I’ve changed leadership positions many times over the last 20 years, but in each position, my purpose has been the same – to find the chaos, the potential, and bring order to it. I don’t have a resume, nor have I ever applied for a job in my 28-year career. God has made me a leader by who I am, not by what I can conquer or control. Yet most who know me would probably say that I’m a strong leader. Strength comes from knowing who you are and where the essence of your leadership comes from. I’ve learned to lead from the inside out.

You can't be the best leader possible if you are trying to be like someone else. You must be who you are—and be that to the fullest—if your leadership is ever to reach its maximum potential.

If you aren't sure about your purpose, then I refer you to my two books, *Life Is a Gold Mine: Can You Dig It?* and *I Wrote This Book on Purpose . . . So You Can Know Yours*. Both books provide helpful insights so that you can identify your purpose, and both books refer you to other authors who can do the same. Don't even think of leading without knowing your life's purpose. It will keep you focused, sane, and effective in the good times and the bad. And your purpose will enable you to lead from the inside out.

You can contact Dr. Stanko at johnstanko@att.net.