

Dr. John W. Stanko

**The Monday Memo
written from London by
Dr. John Stanko
Issue 56**

It has been my privilege to talk and write about the topic of life purpose for the last eleven years. I have traveled to many places and have seen many people come to an understanding of who they are and who they are not. Furthermore, I have seen countless people set free from the futile efforts to be something or someone they are not.

On several occasions, I have begun to do a Bible study on the topic of purpose. When I do, I always run into the Greek word for purpose, which is "prothesis." It literally means "setting forth" and "exposed before," and almost always is used in connection with the showbread that was part of the tabernacle and Temple. This showbread is also referred to as "the bread of the presence."

I have put off further study for several reasons, but I don't feel I can wait any longer. Several weeks ago I was in Birmingham, England and felt an impression that now was the time to take a comprehensive look at the bread of the presence as it relates to the topic of purpose. I have written a paper that contains the results of my study, and later I will tell you how to get your own copy. For today, I just want to touch on a few similarities between this bread and your purpose (there are more listed in the actual paper).

1. The bread was made of fine flour. You make fine flour by beating and grinding wheat. The higher the quality of flour, the more beating the wheat has endured. That is how it is with your purpose. Often it is only released through a process of preparation and that preparation can be deep and even traumatic. The finest bread is made of the finest ingredients, which often take time and effort to prepare. There is no other way. The fine flour of the Old Testament is always a type of Jesus, who endured tremendous tribulation to see His purpose released and fulfilled.
2. There were twelve loaves in two rows. After the wheat is beaten into flour, it is then exposed to fire. This bread is unleavened bread, similar to modern crackers, which had no leaven. There was nothing in it to puff it up and make it look bigger than it was. There were twelve loaves. Why twelve? There were 12 tribes in Israel. There was enough bread of purpose for all the tribes. The message of purpose is for everyone, all God's tribes. And the bread was baked under intense "heat," another "ingredient" in the development of your own life purpose.
3. There was incense along each row of loaves as a memorial. When you function in your purpose, you are a pleasing aroma, a fragrant sacrifice to the Lord. When you try to be something you're not, you can only do that in the strength of your flesh. Flesh doesn't smell so good in God's nostrils, but His

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incense is pleasant. It is interesting that the wise men brought frankincense to the baby Jesus as a gift. Could that have been symbolic of Jesus' life purpose, which was "to seek and save the lost?"

4. The incense was an offering to the Lord by fire. When you function in your purpose, there is a fire about you that burns but doesn't consume you. You are like a burning bush and what you do, you do for God. It rises before God as a fragrant sacrifice.

5. The bread was set out Sabbath after Sabbath. Isn't it interesting that the bread of the presence was changed every Sabbath? When you function in your purpose, there is rest for you. You stop striving in your own strength and operate in the divine energy that comes when you function in your purpose. Rest isn't always a cessation of activity, but can be activity that actually rejuvenates you as you engage in it. Jesus often functioned in His purpose without food or rest and was effective.

I concluded my paper by referring to one line in what is known as The Lord's Prayer. Jesus said: "Give us today our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). I am not quite ready to reinterpret the Lord's Prayer, but if man doesn't live by bread alone, then could this request have a *spiritual* application as well as a natural one? When I pray for daily bread, am I only praying for food, or am I asking God to give me opportunities to do His will as it is expressed in my life purpose? If I am fed by heavenly and natural bread, then could the context of this petition be a cry for purpose? What do you think?

I have found people of purpose have the ability to lose track of time and not eat when they are doing what it is they were created to do. It is said that when Handel wrote The Messiah, food trays stacked up outside his door for 17 days. He was too busy, too fulfilled, to eat. He was eating the bread of life, the bread of the presence, and it sustained and nourished him. What is the bread of His presence for you?

From now on, when I say this phrase, I for one will think of this spiritual application and ask God for opportunities to serve Him as I fulfill my life purpose. I need the bread of purpose, the bread of His presence, in my daily life to satisfy my spiritual hunger, and you do, too! With that in mind, I hope you have a bread-filled week!

**The Monday Memo
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Issue 57**

Are you happy? I didn't ask if you were reasonably satisfied. Are you happy? I'm not sure you can say you're happy just because you aren't sad. Do you have

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enthusiasm for what you do? Is there a joy in your heart and life that energizes you? If not, what price are you willing to pay to get in touch with that happiness?

Several years ago I asked myself that question, and the answer was, "No!" One day I found myself sitting on a plane and began a conversation with the man next to me. He was going to a convention to make a speech, which is what he did for a living. He had written a book entitled, *If Aristotle Ran General Motors* and made a good living talking about his book to business people. As he was telling me what he did, I said to myself, "That's what I want to do!" No, I didn't want to talk about Aristotle to business people, but I did want to travel and speak about my passion before anyone who would listen. I was not happy doing what I was doing then simply because it was time to do something else.

Joy is a barometer, an indicator of sorts that tells you whether or not you are on course in your life and career. If you are doing what you do for money as the main or perhaps only motivation, then you are a "hireling," renting out your skills to the highest bidder. If you have the money but not the joy, then you are missing the main fuel for creativity, meaning and fulfillment. If your joy is gone, if you're unhappy, then that may be reason enough to begin considering your options. Do you want to spend the rest of your life feeling like you do now?

I am not suggesting we worship at the altar of happiness as a life purpose. Joy is an indication that you are functioning in your purpose, but that doesn't mean you won't have troubles and challenges. The joy is there to carry you through those tough times; when you are missing your joy, you don't have what it takes to go through hard times. Nehemiah said it when he exhorted the people, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). If you aren't happy, you may not have the strength you need to fulfill your purpose. In fact, if you aren't happy, you may not be in your purpose at all.

I was asked at a church seminar one time, "Dr. Stanko, where is the cross in what you teach?" The woman had a legitimate question. Was I promoting a selfish pursuit of personal pleasure and hiding it behind what I called "doing the will of God" in fulfilling our purpose? I answered by pointing to the Apostle Paul, a man of purpose. Paul's purpose was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles; that is where he had his greatest success. But there was plenty of "cross" in Paul's purpose. Just read Second Corinthians, chapters four and eleven, to see what hardship he endured and pressure he was under. Yet the joy of his purpose took him through all those things, and later he wrote, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). His joy empowered him to finish.

In regard to my own purpose, I love bringing order out of chaos but if truth be known, doing it in church settings isn't always my favorite work. But it is the will of God for me. When I bring order, I feel His joy and presence, but the cross is present as well. Jesus for the joy set before Him endured His cross and

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despised His shame. He couldn't deny or refuse His joy; for anyone to do so would make their inevitable cross an almost intolerable burden.

I came home from England this week and began working on my next book manuscript. I also worked on my Revelation studies and taught class at a local seminary. Today I took my 86-year-old mother out to eat along with my dear wife. On the way home, I announced to my wife, "I am happy!" I am doing what I love to do but it isn't always easy. I still must pick up my cross daily and follow Him?

What about you? Are you cut off from your joy? Do you know what you want or need to do, but are afraid? Why not meditate on this question for the coming week and see what answers you come up with. I hope you will answer honestly and set your heart to do whatever it takes to reconnect your life with your joy. Have a great week!

**The Monday Memo
from the desk of
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Issue 58**

I want to continue our discussion from last week, so if you haven't read last week's [Monday Memo](#), you may wish to get a copy and do so. I received a lot of feedback from people who are "stuck" in jobs that aren't related to their life purpose. "What do we do with years of seniority and a decent salary, but now we don't feel connected to our purpose?" That would summarize many of the questions I received.

Let me answer this question by making a few points:

1. **Know your purpose.** Most people who can't see how to get out of their current job don't have a clear, concise purpose statement. It's hard to see how you can move on until you have some vision of where you're moving to. Just this morning I was talking with a woman after church. She is working for a bank, but she loves to improve women's self esteem through training of all sorts. She also enjoys doing hair, nails and other beauty-related activities. Our whole conversation focused on what her life purpose is. Because she is now clear about her purpose, when we ended our conversation, she had all kinds of ideas of where she can go after her bank job, where she is encountering all kinds of problems.
2. **Choose wisely.** It is important that you choose jobs that are best suited for you and your talents whenever possible. Stephen Covey warns not to start climbing a ladder until you're sure it's leaning against the right wall! If you can help it, don't take a job simply because it is offered. Ask yourself whether or not the job or career has the potential to release you to growth and joy. If it doesn't, then don't take it. If you do, you may be writing me in five years asking how you

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can get out! That is tough to do, for the financial obligations at that point may necessitate that you stay put, even though you're not content.

3. **Work hard**. You already work hard, I know that. But when you know your purpose, your real work may begin at 5:00 pm when you end your day job. Then you are finally free to embrace your purpose. For years, I wrote, taught and studied after work hours. I spent time preparing for the day when I would be released to speak and consult. I developed expertise on my jobs that would add to the repertoire of services I could eventually offer. The woman I mentioned above is probably going to have to go to night school to get the certification she needs to fulfill her purpose. There is no way around that.

It occurred to me this past week that Jesus was a carpenter and Paul made tents. But neither man ever talked about their "trade." In both cases, someone else told us about their occupations. Certainly Paul never mentioned what he did for a living. Yet in every letter he wrote, Paul talked about his purpose of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. He talked about his life not in terms of what he did to make money, but in terms of what he did to change the world. You must begin to define yourself not in terms of what you are doing but in terms of who you are at the center of your being. That is where your purpose resides.

If you are "stuck," then I can only ask you to tell me what your purpose is. From there, what steps can you take to fulfill it, even if it is only part-time or on weekends? It may not be much, but for now it's the best option. Don't wait until next week to do something about this situation; do it now, even this week. It is said that every journey starts with the first step. Take your first step this week by reading a book, enrolling for a class, setting aside two nights for your second business, or beginning to research a new career in earnest. Start making your way out of your dead end and see if the road doesn't lead to the highway of purpose. Have a great week!

**The Monday Memo
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Issue 59**

As has happened before, I had plans to write about something else, but the topic of life purpose is taking front stage in my mind as I begin this week's [Memo](#). I am reading a book recommended by a friend of mine (thanks, Ron) entitled, ***Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose*** by Brian Mahan. I try to read one book every month that focuses on the topics of purpose and productivity in order that I may increase my skill to help others find their purpose.

In the book, Mahan describes a childhood experience of Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement on the Lower East Side of New York City. As I have mentioned in the past, childhood dreams, failures and goals can hold clues to help you find your purpose. Mahan quotes Day's own words:

I think my "pilgrimage" began when I was a child, when I was seven or eight I'm sitting with my mother, and she's telling me about some trouble in the world, about children like me who don't have enough food -- they're dying. I'm eating a doughnut, I think. I ask my mother why other children don't have doughnuts and I do I don't remember her words, but I can still see her face; it's the face of someone who is sad, and resigned. . . . Most of all, I remember trying to understand what it meant -- me eating a doughnut, and lots of children with no food at all. . . . I don't remember my words, I just remember holding the doughnut up and hoping she'd take it and give it to someone, some child I didn't eat that doughnut! I put it down on the kitchen table. . . . I asked her if God knew someone nearby, or if He could help us with our modest doughnut plan. . . . I don't remember asking her that, asking her how we might enlist God in this effort; but she says I kept talking about God and Jesus and feeding the hungry with doughnuts, until she told me, please, to stop!

Here was a woman who did something significant for the poor as an adult and the signs of her purpose first became clear in a conversation with her mother while eating a doughnut. It's interesting that Day's mother told her to stop talking about her "doughnut plan." All too often we do stop talking about our passion because it doesn't make sense or we don't see how we can possibly do "that" as an adult and make a living. To her credit, Day may have stopped talking about her plan, but she eventually did it. She took some social action to correct a societal problem in the best way she knew how.

My life purpose is to bring order out of chaos. In my own life, I remember my favorite rainy day activity was to disorganize my room so I could put it back in order! I remember "attacking" my father's messy garage as an eight-year-old in order to put it in order. When I did, I would stand there and behold my work with a strange sense of peace.

If your parents are still alive, maybe it's time to have a talk with them. If not, are there any brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, or close family friends you can talk with? Ask them what you were like and what they remember about you when you were a child. What did you talk about? What games did you play? Something may stand out to them that will provide you a clue as to your purpose.

I cannot tell you when you will find your purpose. That varies from person to person. My objective is to help you identify it when it does come to you, so you won't dismiss it as insignificant or irrelevant. This week, why not conduct an investigation into your past and see what purpose clues show up. Write down everything you know already, plus what you find out from your family, and study your notes. Does any pattern emerge? Don't panic if one doesn't, but keep adding to that page so that one day, you will look at that page and realize you

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have all the pieces of the purpose puzzle and the picture is clear. Have a great week!

**The Monday Memo
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Issue 60**

It seems that there is no end to the interest generated by the purpose message. Every week I meet with many people individually and in groups to help them find their purpose. **The Monday Memo** regularly has purpose as its theme and focus, and I receive many inquiries and questions throughout the week. I said all that because I have found one consistent problem among those who aren't sure yet as to what their purpose is. That problem is trying to understand how they will fulfill it before they know what it is.

I talk to wives who are concerned about how their purpose will affect their families. But when I ask them what their purpose is, they cannot tell me. I talk to husbands who ask questions about finances, career changes and time away from home. When I ask them what their purpose is, they often respond, "Well, it's sort of like, well, you know, to maybe encourage people and to, uh, glorify God. Yeah, that's it!" But that's not it. Until you have a clear statement of what your purpose is, everything after that remains unclear. There is no way you can understand how your purpose will work itself out until you know what that purpose is. Therefore, your primary job is not to figure out the outcome, but to have faith to find your purpose in the first place. When you do that, the rest seems to fall in place, sometimes quickly, sometimes over a longer period of time.

It is absolutely critical that you make a clear sound when describing your purpose. The Apostle Paul wrote the following analogy in one of his letters:

Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? (1 Corinthians 14:7-8)

Once you find your purpose and can clearly describe it in a nonreligious way that makes sense to you and others, you will recognize the opportunities that come your way. But whether you are finding or fulfilling your purpose, there is one key element to your success and that is faith. You cannot "figure out" your purpose, nor can you then set out to accomplish it in the power of your own effort. But I have found that it actually takes more faith to find your purpose than it does to fulfill it! That is why it is so critical that you be clear on what it is. Once you see it, faith rises in you to see it done. Your purpose is what Paul referred to as **"the vision from heaven"**(Acts 26:19). That can only come to you when heaven is ready to release it and you are ready to receive it.

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I am 52 years old, and I have never looked for a job in my life, nor have I been unemployed. It took a lot more time and effort to realize what my purpose was than to find its expression. Are you ready to find your purpose? I can't promise that you will find it this week, but I can urge you to have faith that you will find it, if not this week, then in the weeks to come. Yes, you will seek, work and strive to define your purpose, but in all of that, you must trust that God will show it to you. When you see it, you will be like the parable found in Matthew 13:44: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field." May this week be the week that God helps you clarify your purpose. If that happens, you won't have any problem knowing what to do when you find it. You will go for it because you have found the treasure worth the pursuit. Have a great week!