

## [456: Pay Attention](#)

If you are going to discover your purpose, you must pay close attention! That sounds so obvious, but it isn't always so easy to do. To better understand what I mean and how to follow through, it will be necessary for you to read on.

### **WHO TOUCHED ME?**

There are many stories from Jesus' life and ministry that intrigue me. Here is one of them:

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it (Mark 5:24b-32).

Jesus was so in touch with his surroundings that He knew when someone with a need touched Him. I am sometimes not aware that someone is in need when they tell me, but Jesus knew just by a touch. He could feel that something had happened, although for some reason the Son of Man did not know who it was (or perhaps He knew but wanted to the woman to speak up for herself, since she had tried to maintain her anonymity).

I relate this verse to one found in Proverbs where seeking your purpose is concerned.

Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy  
(Proverbs 14:10).

So how are these two passages related?

### **PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR HEART!**

If you are searching for purpose, you must pay attention to what touches you and takes something from you. If you help an elderly person and you have unspeakable joy, you must ask, "Who and what just touched me? Why am I so exhilarated?" If you create art and it is a spiritual and emotional high for you, you must ask, "Why do I love it so?" if you are in a job that everyone says you should love but you don't, you have to ask, "Why am I so unhappy? What's missing here? What do I know that others don't' about my heart?"

If you are going to find and fulfill your purpose, you must stop talking yourself out of or into how you should feel. You must pay closer attention than ever before to your own bitterness and joy and start asking better questions, questions like, "What just touched me and why did I feel so good (or bad)?"

I stopped trying to make myself enjoy something I don't. I stopped listening to others tell me why I should be joyful when I was not. I stopped trying to explain why I loved doing something or going somewhere when others didn't feel the same thing or even understand what I was sensing. In other words, I started paying attention and stopped apologizing for who I am.

So what about you? Are you ready to pay attention and then do something about what you love and don't love? Are you ready to stop apologizing for who you are? Are you ready to stop following others' expectations and follow your heart? If you are, then you will surely find your purpose. God wants you to know and if you will stop fighting it, you cannot help but find it, probably with the evidence from the encounters with your own heart and experience. Have a great week!

Feel free to write your comments to this entry on the [site](#) where it is posted (plus you can check out my new promo picture on the site itself!)

### **[457: The Barometer of Purpose](#)**

I was sitting in the radio studio with my headsets on, ready to be interviewed to promote a school where I am a board member and professor. I had gone over the questions with the show host and we were ready to go. The red light came on, indicating that we were on the air and the host looked at me and asked a question that wasn't mentioned in our briefing. "Dr. Stanko," he asked, "how would you define success based on your purpose teaching?" I was stunned and obviously had to come up with an answer quickly. After I answered, his telephone lights erupted, and my 20-minute interview turned into 60 minutes. We never got around to talk about the Center.

#### **WHAT DID I SAY?**

I responded, "I define success as doing what you love and finding work that gives you joy." Just those two simple phrases touched so many listeners that I received phone calls at my office for two weeks after the show from people who wanted advice or to share personal stories. Since that show years ago, I haven't changed my definition. In fact, I feel more strongly than ever that you should do what you enjoy as often as possible for as long as possible.

I recently ran across a verse that reminded me of what I said on that show:

"Therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with *the oil of joy*" (Hebrews 1:9).

The oil of joy - what a great phrase that is! That oil of joy didn't refer to preaching, although Jesus preached. It wasn't about teaching, although He taught. It wasn't about healing, but certainly Jesus healed. All those magnificent activities were byproducts of the anointing, and the anointing was found in the joy that Jesus felt and received when He obeyed the Father and did all those things.

## **JOY THE BAROMETER**

Joy is the main indicator and barometer that indicates whether or not you are in the will of God. If you feel joy when you play the piano, then play. It's that simple. If you sense joy around children, then connect with as many children as possible. If you love to sing, then sing in every venue and on every opportunity you have. It's not about money, prestige, fame, salary or health benefits. It's about the sense that you are doing what you were created to do - and you know that because you have joy.

I love to travel. I enjoy meeting with people one-on-one, in small groups or before large crowds to talk about purpose. I've traveled 3.5 million miles since 1989. Last week I got a charge out of being in five airports, even though I've been in airports hundreds of times before. I can't explain it; I just can't ignore it.

What can you do this week to capture this joyful anointing?

First of all, you can stop fighting it. You can embrace it and confess to yourself and others, "I am happiest when I am doing this or that." Then you can stop trying to manufacture joy where you don't find and probably won't ever find it. Finally, you can be honest with yourself. If you are not joyful, don't pretend you are. If you are, I want you to dive in and swim in it for all the world to see, as if you were a beautiful tropical fish in a large aquarium!

I am no one special. I think God wants you to have the same joy I regularly experience. So stop fighting it and go with the flow, the flow of anointing and good work that comes from doing what you love to do. Use joy as your barometer to gauge the purpose level of what you are doing. As you do that, I know you will have a great week anywhere and any time you find yourself immersed in the work you love.

### **[458: Joy Journey](#)**

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 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?

## MY JOY JOURNEY

A number of 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.

As I wrote last week, 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 you 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.

## AT THE CROSS, AT THE CROSS

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 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 and joy. 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 creating order out of chaos but if truth be known, doing it in church settings isn't always my favorite work. Yet I know it is the will of God for me. When I create order, I feel His joy and presence, but the cross is present as well. For the joy set before Him Jesus endured His cross and despised His shame. He couldn't deny or refuse His joy; for him or anyone to do so would make their inevitable cross an intolerable burden.

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 answer honestly and set your heart to do whatever it takes to reconnect your life with your joy. Have a great week!

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### **[460: My Joy Inventory](#)**

Have you ever kept track of the money you spend so you can do a budget? Have you ever kept a record of how much time you were spending in a certain area so you could use your time more effectively? If you have, then you know that those simple steps can help you budget your time and money. Have you ever considered a similar inventory to help clarify your purpose? If not, then maybe this is the week for you to do so.

**PAY ATTENTION.**

Joy is an indicator of what you should be doing, where you should be investing your time and energy. When I ask people what they enjoy doing, I get two responses. The first is, "I don't know." The second is, "I enjoy doing so many things that I'm not sure what *the* thing is that identifies my purpose." So what I am suggesting this week is to keep a record of what you enjoy doing. It's what I'm calling a joy inventory.

For you to do that, you must pay attention to your heart. You must not talk yourself out of how you feel or tell yourself that you should enjoy this or that. For example, here would be my joy inventory from this past week:

1. I didn't enjoy getting stuck in traffic this week to and from my church office.
2. I did not enjoy having a discussion with a staff member and friend about job performance.
3. I enjoyed sitting at the baseball game last Friday evening.
4. I enjoyed getting my desk organized for the first time this year. It's so clean and clutter free!

Here is my joy indicator for Sunday.

1. I enjoyed seeing my friends at church.
2. I did not enjoy listening to the same message in multiple services.
3. I enjoyed selling a few of my latest books to those who asked.
4. I enjoyed my conference call last evening to go over my next trip to Kenya.
5. I am blissful writing the Monday Memo to send to you.

So what does this inventory tell me?

### **THE RESULTS ARE IN.**

My inventory tells me that I love to write and get things done quickly. I enjoy small groups, but I don't enjoy larger settings where I cannot connect with the people. I like to connect in some small way with people who buy my books and could sign autographs all day! I am competitive and like games I can play against myself, but not against other people (I am not a good loser and never have been, which is why I agonize over the pitiful state of my local pro baseball team). When I read over this inventory, I am doing something unusual as I do. I am giving myself permission to be who I am, to enjoy what I enjoy and not to force trying to feel something that I don't.

I propose that you do one for every day this week. Keep a notebook nearby and write down what you do that gives you joy and what you do that doesn't all week. Then next Sunday, sit down to study the list. Are there any patterns that emerge? How can you do more of what you enjoy and less of what you don't? Is there enough of a pattern to clarify your purpose?

If there isn't, don't worry about it. The patterns you can identify will still help you. If the activities that give you joy are after work hours, then why is your work so joy-less? If you aren't doing anything all week that gives you joy, then what are you doing with your life? Why is there no joy? What can you do about that?

The objective of this exercise is to get you to pay attention to your heart, for your heart matters where purpose is concerned. Your purpose doesn't have to make sense to you at first; you simply have to recognize it by the joy it generates. After you identify your purpose, God will show you ways to gain meaning from engaging in purposeful activities more often than you are now.

So that's your assignment this week. I would love to hear your results and conclusions next week, so I invited you to enter them on the [site](#) where this is posted. Have a great week!