

[531: My Work, Your Work](#)

I wrap up my stay in Africa today and will be home tomorrow, Lord willing! It has been a great stay, as always, with many open doors for the purpose message. It's time to go home, however, and I have been seeking the Lord about "home" while I have been here. I thought I would share some thoughts with you in this Memo.

GLORIFY GOD

Jesus had work to do that only He could do. That seems like an obvious statement. When Jesus was praying in John 17, he said:

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ***I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do***" (John 17:1-4, emphasis added).

Jesus glorified the Father by completing the work the Father had assigned. He did not glorify Him by talking, singing or preaching. You will glorify God in the same manner. Because there are many things you can do, it is essential you identify and engage the work that only you can do.

MY WORK, YOUR WORK

I have prayed this year that God would help me structure my "world," which consists of: 1) pastoral duties; 2) college instructor; 3) author; 4) administrator; 5) coach; and 6) consultant. I have been looking for how I can perform more effectively in all these areas, or seeking to determine which areas I should eliminate or reduce.

In my most recent efforts to structure, I have been praying, "Lord, show me the work that I am supposed to do, that only I can do, and then help me delegate or eliminate everything else." One big breakthrough is that I hired an administrative assistant who has been a wonderful addition to my life and work (my first assistant since 1991). Yet there is more to be done if I am to do the work that only I can do and glorify God in the process. I sense I will have to stop doing some things, perhaps many things, if that is to occur.

This will require some additional adjustments and changes as I enter 2012. I must ruthlessly jettison all things that others can do in the interests of doing what only I can do. That will require courage and self-awareness, for I must pay attention to my heart: ***"Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy"*** (Proverbs 14:10).

No one can tell me the condition of my heart, or yours for that matter. No one can tell you, "Oh, you should be so happy with what you are doing. You are so talented and

gifted, there is no way you should be doing this or not doing that." It is my job to get in touch with my heart and then follow its leading, trusting that God is in control, fulfilling the promise in Psalm 37:4: "[Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.](#)" God fulfills those desires because He placed them there in the first place.

As you close out 2011, I encourage you to do what I am doing: Take a good, long look at your "world" and identify the work that only you can do. Then with courage and determination, structure your life to do that work. As I return home, I don't have all the answers, but I will not give up, for I want to glorify God just like Jesus did - by completing the work God gave me to do. Have a great week!

532: Down But Not Out

Last week on my long trip from Munich to Atlanta, I had a chance to listen to Handel's Messiah in its entirety. That reminded me of this post in the Monday Memo archives, and I thought I would revise and share this classic with you again this year. Have a happy holiday season and remember to set some goals for the new year during this festive season - JS.

I have seen and listened to the *Messiah* many times but it never gets old. Let's take a look at the circumstances that surrounded Handel as he composed his work and see if there are any purpose lessons there for you (you know there are).

MESSIAH

The *Messiah* is considered by many to be the greatest musical accomplishment in the history of mankind. Commissioned by a charity for a benefit concert, Handel wrote the *Messiah* in only 24 days. A musician once told me that someone trying to copy the *Messiah* could not do so in 24 days—that is the level of inspiration in which Handel operated when he wrote. Handel never left his house for those three weeks. His food trays remained untouched outside his office door. A friend who visited him as he composed found him sobbing with intense emotions. Later, as Handel groped for words to describe what he had experienced, he quoted St. Paul, saying, "Whether I was in the body or out of my body when I wrote it, I know not."

What's even more impressive is that Handel wrote *Messiah* under extreme duress. The Church of England strongly criticized and opposed Handel and his previous Scriptural works put to music. At the age of 56, he had no money, often going out only at night so as to avoid his creditors. Handel performed what he considered his farewell concert and went home, fully expecting to end up in debtor's prison.

Yet the first performance of *Messiah* in Ireland in 1742 raised almost £400 for charity and freed 142 men from debtor's prison. Of course the rest is history as countless millions have enjoyed and marveled at this work for more than 250 years. Handel also went on

from there to enjoy tremendous success and popularity in his latter years.

What does this have to do with you? Perhaps you are a person of purpose but you feel frustrated, even defeated in your PurposeQuest. Maybe you find yourself down and out, discouraged and criticized, forgotten and a failure. Perhaps your finances are in poor shape. If that description fits you, read on, for this *Memo* can restore your hope and faith. If that's not you, read on anyway, for you will probably enter that phase one day as you pursue your purpose.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE DOWN AND OUT.

What should you do if you are in a season of “un-use,” disfavor or inaction? As we close out 2011, I would urge you to do three things if you are discouraged, disillusioned or dismayed. And if you're not, I urge you to find someone who is—you shouldn't have to look too hard—and encourage them in their dark time.

1. **Renew your faith in God.** Your success and purpose expression doesn't depend on your faithfulness; it depends on God's. Remind yourself that God can do anything, and then rest in Him. Handel went home to retire and perhaps thought it was all over for him. Yet God helped him, a group found and commissioned him and God can and do the same for you.
2. **Keep preparing for your day of success.** I don't think Handel went home to retire and abandoned music. Don't you abandon your love either. Keep writing, reading, learning and practicing. When the phone rings or the mail comes with your opportunity, you will be fresh and prepared, having worked in faith for the day of success.
3. **Be generous.** Handel wrote the Messiah for charity, even though he was destitute. What can you do for someone else, even though you are down and out? It is a good thing to do the unexpected in hard times, and giving something away definitely fits the bill when you are in need yourself. What better way to express your trust in God?

I'm grateful for 2011 and I hope you can find reasons to be as well. If not, then just thank God for His faithfulness. At least you're still alive! Then take this *Memo* to heart or share it with someone who needs it. I pray that as you do what I recommended above, you will see a purpose breakthrough in 2012. Thank you for allowing me to come into your life every week and thank you for being a PurposeQuest-er. As I close this *Memo*, I wish you not only a great week, but also a very Merry Christmas!

[533: Daylight on the Night Shift](#)

This week I borrow another classic Monday Memo from the archives in honor of Christmas. After you read it, please make sure you see the announcement at the end of the Memo for another matching grant for Kenya that expires on December 31. Here's wishing you and yours the happiest of holiday seasons!

I receive many emails every year asking how to find purpose. Many say they have "no idea" what their purpose is and ask me for help. While I respond as best I can, after all these years I know that I cannot help anyone see his or her purpose. I know the One who can, however, and how He does it is similar to the story of the shepherds at Christmas, something I call daylight on the night shift. Read on to see what I mean.

THE NIGHT SHIFT

The shepherds in the Christmas story were working the night shift, doing what they and their ancestors had done for centuries. They went to work that night without any thought that anything extraordinary was about to happen. On the night Jesus was born, they were tending their flocks on the hillsides outside Bethlehem, minding their own business. Suddenly God sent them messengers, who brought great light to the night shift:

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. (Luke 2:8-16).

These shepherds were doing what they knew to do at that time in their life and God interrupted them with a special news report. This both scared and thrilled them. That's how it is when you find your life purpose. Often you are doing what you know to do at the time, usually a job or role that is less than fulfilling. Suddenly God, the Great Communicator, breaks into your conscious being and brings a message of purpose, of what He has always wanted you to do. That not only terrifies you but also gives you a desire to clarify and fulfill it.

That night the shepherds went to work like any other day. God spoke to them, however, and they were never the same. They started by sitting on a hillside in cold weather; they ended by finding a great treasure in Bethlehem, a treasure that had not been revealed to anyone else but them.

YOUR PURPOSEQUEST

Maybe you have been in a desperate search for your purpose and its expression. As we end this year, I suggest that you be encouraged as you remember the shepherds. Finding your purpose doesn't depend on your diligence; it depends on God's grace. Yes, you must search for your purpose, but only God can reveal it to you. I don't know when or how He will do that. It may be one cold, dark night when you go about your business like countless other nights. At that point, God may send His messenger and change your life forever. I don't know when or how He will do it, I just know He will.

So have faith and relax this holiday season. Keep asking God to help you see who you are and what you were born to do, and after that, trust Him. You may even want to thank Him for your purpose whether or not you understand what it is. He wants you to fulfill your purpose more than you do. He will show you in the fullness of time, bring you daylight even if you are working the night shift. When He does, you will join with the shepherds as laborers who found more than business as usual one night when they went to work. May the God of purpose speak to you soon and may you have the courage to believe what He says! Here's wishing you and yours a happy holiday season!

[534: Teenie Harris, Frank Lloyd Wright & Larry Fitzgerald](#)

I am still on vacation, but have used this time to refresh and retool for the coming year. To help do that, I traveled out West and also took some time to visit a museum in my hometown. I encountered three men of purpose during the holidays who inspired me. I would like to tell you about them and their impact on me this holiday season.

THREE MEN

The first man is [Charles "Teenie" Harris](#). He was a local photographer in Pittsburgh who worked for the famous black newspaper, *The Pittsburgh Courier*. Harris spent his life taking photographs of the African American community in Pittsburgh (and things of interest to the black community). He amassed a collection of 80,000 pictures in his lifetime and they are on display now through April 7 in the [Carnegie Museum of Art](#) in Pittsburgh (If you live in or near Pittsburgh, run, don't walk, to see this exhibit).

The second man is Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright was the famous American architect who spent 70 years creating architectural concepts that revolutionized how modern buildings were and are designed. There is a display honoring Wright's work here at the [Phoenix Museum of Art](#). Wright's blueprints and conceptual drawings are framed and hung as art, and the [Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation](#) has its headquarters here in Phoenix at a complex Wright designed called [Taliesin West](#). I am going to visit there later today.

The third man is [Larry Fitzgerald](#), a wide receiver for the professional football team here in Phoenix called the Arizona Cardinals. Fitzgerald played his college ball in Pittsburgh and has gone on to become one of the best receivers in the NFL today. I saw Fitzgerald perform yesterday when the Arizona Cardinals played the Seattle Seahawks here in Phoenix (Fitzgerald had a great game and I think half the people in the stadium were wearing his jersey).

ONE MAN

What do these three men have to do with me (and you)? These men were or are the best at what they do. They impacted the world while alive and two are still impacting the world after their death. They did not try to do all the things they could do, but rather focused on being the best at the one thing they could or can do that no one else could or can match.

That is what I want my legacy to be. I want to do what one man can do, with God's help, to touch and change the world.

I want to be the best purpose coach and writer I can be. While I cannot guarantee the results now or after I am gone, I want to give God my best results and present Him things that, if He chooses, can be used to bless and touch others.

With that in mind, I commit myself to be the best expression of who God intended me to be in 2012. I want to produce resources that will help you and others. I want to "sing my song," and trust God for the results, even if I am only singing for His ears. An audience of one, if God is that One, is not time wasted.

So Happy New Year to you and yours. I invite you to join me, along with Teenie, Frank and Larry, to be the best person in your work that you can be in 2012 and beyond. Continue to lay the foundation and pay the price to be the best you can be, and trust God for the results. Who knows, maybe some day, someone will come to visit your display in a museum and another person like me will write about you. Have a great week and year!

[535: The Five Regrets of the Dying](#)

I found a link to an article over the holidays and wanted to share it first chance I had, so this looks like a good week. It's written by an Australian woman, Bronnie Ware, and can be found in its entirety [here](#). I will summarize the five points of her article "The Five Regrets of The Dying," and focus on one point in particular.

THE FIVE REGRETS

Here are the five regrets that Bronnie discovered in working with those patients close to death over the years:

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.
2. I wish I didn't work so hard.
3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.
4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.
5. I wish that I had let myself be happier.

Here is what Ware had to say about the first point, the courage to be true to self and not others:

This was the most common regret of all. When people realize that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled. Most people have had not honoured even a half of their dreams and had to die knowing that it was due to choices they had made, or not made. It is very important to try and honour at least some of your dreams along the way. From the moment that you lose your health, it is too late. Health brings a freedom very few realise, until they no longer have it.

DON'T LET IT BE YOUR REGRET

It takes courage to be true to yourself and who God created you to be. Before David went out to fight Goliath, King Saul tried to have David wear his (Saul's) battle armor. Saul was a tall man, however, and the armor didn't fit. David did not try and please the king. Instead he rejected the armor and took along his sling shot, something that was more true to who he was. His success is legendary (see [1 Samuel 17:38-40](#)).

Are you wearing someone else's armor? If you are, then you are headed for the number one regret expressed by the dying. Don't do it! I cannot say what you should do, but I can only urge you to follow your heart and stop living your life for someone else, unless however it is for the Lord. I was challenged by this list and I hope you are, too. Now get about the work of living before it's too late. Have a great week!