



“I Can’t Stand No More” #1: Overview

Some of you are old enough to remember the cartoon “Popeye the Sailor Man.” He’s a stocky man with thinning hair, huge forearms and a jutting jaw. His face is in a perpetual squint with his left eye closed. There’s always a corn cob pipe dangling from his mouth at a jaunty angle. The love of his life is Olive Oyl, a tall, pencil thin woman. With her oversized feet, large nose, and hair tied in a bun, only Popeye would call her attractive.

Whenever something is wrong Popeye exclaims, “That’s all I can stand, and I can’t stand no more.” He opens a can of spinach, downs it in one gulp, and suddenly has supernatural strength. In a flash, and with fists flying, Popeye saves the day.

Our world is broken. Poverty. Homelessness. Starvation. Unsanitary water. Divorce. Poor parenting. Irrelevant churches. Uninspired leadership. Need I go on?

What is it for you that triggers the words, “That’s all I can stand, and I can’t stand no more?”

- What breaks your heart?
- What moves you to tears?
- What’s wrong that needs to be made right?
- What unmet need must be met?
- What problems must be solved?
- What causes you to say, “Someone should do something?”

Perhaps God is calling you to be the one to do something about it!

Before you were born God embedded within you a desire for purpose. Intuitively, you sense that He put you on earth for a reason. Deep down you recognize there’s something you’re supposed to do, some assignment you’re meant to complete. You know in your soul that God created you for a purpose that is unique to you.

Before the foundations of the world, God looked across the mists of time and saw – you. He loved you from the moment He saw you. When He created you, He gave you a special assignment that is unique to you. This is your calling – the unique reason you are here on earth. He designed and equipped you with everything you need to accomplish this task, including His promise to be with you always. The Great Adventure of the Christian life is to know and live out your calling.

- What difference do you long to make with your one and only life?
- What change for the better do you yearn to take place?
- What impact on the world do you want to leave behind?
- What do you want to see improved because you walked this earth?

What is the “one thing” God assigned you to help fix? This is your calling. This is the reason God put you on earth.

Note: An excellent resource is the book “Holy Discontent” by Bill Hybels, Zondervan, 2007. The Popeye metaphor comes from this book.

“I Can’t Stand No More” #2: Old Testament

In the movie “Network” Howard Beale (Peter Finch), anchor of the UBS Evening News, is notified that he will be off the air in two weeks because of declining ratings. In an act of desperation, he tells the nation to go open their windows and scream, “I’m as mad as hell, and I’m not going to take this anymore!”

What is it that makes you want to yell out your window, “I’m as mad as hell, and I’m not going to take this anymore!?” The world around us is getting worse, not better. Inequities abound; poverty overwhelms; corruption runs rampant; children can’t read; AIDS in Africa is a pandemic. Half of the world’s population lives on less than two dollars per day. Nearly 20% or 1 billion people in the world live on a dollar a day. Meanwhile, the world’s wealthiest 16% consume over 80% of the world’s natural resources? If that list doesn’t make your blood boil, nothing ever will!

People – believers in Christ – those who are called by His Name – we must DO something to bring the love of Christ to a broken world. Fortunately, in every generation throughout history, God has raised up someone who has said, “I’m as mad as hell, and I’m not going to take this anymore!”

In this post we’ll look at some of the people God raised up in the Old Testament. In later posts we’ll examine similar people in the New Testament and the modern era.

For 400 years the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. They were held captive, mistreated, and nearly starved as their “masters” worked them to death. When the Israelites met impossible work quotas, their sadistic overseers increased the benchmarks. The cries of the Israelites were heard in heaven, and God raised up Moses who said, “I’m not going to take this anymore!” God worked through Moses to lead His people to freedom.

During the Babylonian captivity the Jewish people were marked for extermination. God raised up Mordecai who said, “I’m not going to take this anymore!” Mordecai lacked a platform to intervene, but he knew someone who could. He implored his niece Queen Esther to use her royal position to save God’s people. Fortunately, Esther stepped to the plate and prevented a holocaust.

Nehemiah was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. He tasted the food and wine before the King was served. One day he received visitors from Jerusalem and asked about the living conditions there. The report was so distressing that Nehemiah sat down, wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven. Something broke inside Nehemiah, and he said, “I’m not going to take this anymore!” With the King’s full support, Nehemiah led an expedition that rebuilt the walls in 52 days and triggered a spiritual revival among the Israelites.

Hebrews 11:32-34 states, “And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.”

What about you? What do you see in this world where something breaks within you, and you say, “I’m as mad as hell, and I’m not going to take this anymore!” Maybe God is calling you to do something about it. What do you think?

“I Can’t Stand No More” #3: New Testament

In every generation God searches for those who love Him with all their hearts. He strengthens those who are fully devoted followers. This truth is captured in 2 Chronicles 16:9a. “For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him ...”

Not only does He strengthen His followers; He identifies those ready to take on special assignments on His behalf. “I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap ...” (Ezekiel 22:30a).

God is looking for “stand in the gap” people. There are gaps everywhere you look. There’s a huge gap between rich and poor; educated and illiterate; strong and weak; holy and impure; and the list goes on.

Deep within you there’s a voice crying out, “Enough! Stop it!! This can’t go on anymore!!!” Somewhere in this big mess of a world there’s a wrong that must be made right; an issue that must be resolved; a truth that must be spread; or a need that must be met. What is it in your heart of hearts where you say like Popeye, “I can’t stand it no more?” What is it in the depths of your soul where you cry out like Howard Beale, “I’m mad as hell, and I’m not going to take this anymore?”

Andrew was the little brother of Simon Peter. Andrew’s only mentioned individually three times. In each instance, he’s bringing someone to Jesus: Simon Peter (John 1:40); a boy with bread and fish (John 6:9); and a group of Greeks (John 12:20-22). These people were the least likely to meet the Lord – a boisterous, uneducated fisherman; a small boy; and a group of Gentiles. Deep down Andrew “couldn’t stand” it no more that any barrier should stand between someone and the Lord.

A man named Matthias is only mentioned in one passage (Acts 1:20-26). The Eleven realized that Judas needed to be replaced. They proposed two men, prayed, cast lots, and the Holy Spirit directed that Matthias was chosen. We don’t know much about Matthias, but it’s not hard to imagine that his heart “couldn’t stand” a false leader like Judas.

A woman named Lydia was a dealer in purple cloths. It was quite unusual for any woman to own her own business, especially a Jewish woman who was a worshipper of God. She accepted Christ after hearing Paul preach the gospel. Then she insisted that the entire group stay at her home. Her heart “couldn’t stand” that God’s workers would travel and not have a safe place to eat and sleep.

Timothy was raised by his mother and grandmother, both strong Christians. As he traveled with Paul, the evangelist must have seen fearfulness and anxiety in the young man. In 2 Timothy 1:7 Paul reminds Timothy, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.” By the end of Paul’s life, Timothy was the pastor of the Ephesus church, and remained in that position until his own death – a martyr’s death. He “couldn’t stand” that fear would keep him from doing God’s work.

God has an assignment for you – a task based on your unique design. And God has equipped you for this job through your abilities, spiritual gifts, temperament, and life experiences. But most of all, your assignment is directly related to the passion burning within you that says, “That’s all I can stand, and I can’t stand no more.”

“I Can’t Stand No More” #4: Modern Era

There are many people in modern times that have stood in the gap to make a difference for Christ. They saw something in society that could be different – should be better. Along the way, they realized that God was calling them to stand in the gap!

After serving as a teacher, Mother Teresa traveled to India in 1929 to begin her service with the Sisters of Loreto, an order of Catholic nuns. She noticed a desperate human need and felt called to help meet that need. Her burden then turned into a searing passion that affected every aspect of her life. In fact, her passion compelled her to leave the comfort of the convent to live on the streets with the people she served tirelessly for the next 50 years. Her vision for what could be done grew each day as she saw more and more needs.

In 1934, Dawson Trotman visited a sailor, Les Spencer to share the gospel with him. In his biography *Daws*, Betty Skinner described the scene: “Parked by a schoolhouse, they were pouring over the Scriptures when a security guard approached and asked what they were doing. ‘Reading the Bible,’ Trotman answered and seized the opportunity to witness . . . Dawson turned from one passage to another to explain the Gospel and answer all the defenses of the hapless guard . . . On the way back to the landing [Spencer] said, ‘Boy, I’d give my right arm to know how to use the Word like that.’” That event was the beginning of the Navigators ministry, the forerunner of campus ministry around the world.

While on vacation in 1965, the Millard Fuller family visited friends at Koinonia Farm in Georgia. Fuller was impressed with the ministry’s outreach to the poor in building affordable housing. They implemented a similar program during a 3-year missionary tour in Zaire, Africa. The government donated undeveloped land and 100-units were built and sold to poor families. In 1976 the family returned to the United States and began what is not called Habitat for Humanity. By 2003, the organization was active in 92 countries and had built over 150,000 homes.

You may be saying, “Wait a minute!” These people are famous. That’s true. But they’re only famous because they answered God’s call to do something positive in the world. Beforehand there was nothing that made them stand out in a crowd. By most standards their lives were “ordinary.” But there’s nothing “ordinary” about their impact for Christ. God does “extraordinary” work through “ordinary” people.

Everywhere you look there are needs to be met. All around you there are problems to solve. In every corner of the world something good is happening that needs to be spread elsewhere. Throughout your life you’ve experienced ups and downs. The “ups” are things you’d like others to experience, too. The “downs” are things you’d like to help others navigate better than you did.

What is it that lights a fire underneath you? What ember burns within you that only needs a little gust of wind to explode into a raging fire. Pray. Listen. Reflect. And move out!

“I Can’t Stand No More” #5: People I Know

There are many people I know who have discovered their own niche in the Kingdom of God. It's where God has called them to "stand in the gap." It's the unique purpose for which God created them.

Del heard an announcement at church about a short-term mission trip to construct buildings in the Dominican Republic. It sounded interesting so he went to an information meeting. He liked what he heard and went on the trip. Del loved the experience so much that he now leads short-term mission trips.

She can't explain it. Nancy cries every time she sees pictures of homeless people. It's not something she can control. It just happens. She even cries at the mere thought of people living outside in the freezing cold while she is safe in warm in her comfortable home. Nancy finally volunteered at a homeless shelter.

Before his retirement Dave was a high school counselor. Recently the leader of the high school ministry asked him to serve as the ministry's crisis intervention counselor. Dave knew immediately it was where God wanted him to continue serving young people.

Jeanne loves being a mom. She works full-time, but somehow manages to pour herself into her two children. Her eyes light up whenever the topic of parenting comes up. She joined a Mother of Preschoolers (MOPS) small group. Now Jeanne trains other moms to become small group leaders in the ministry.

Whenever the topic of leadership is discussed, Mark's heart beats a little faster. His pulse rate increases as someone describes principles of effective leadership. His home is filled with books and CDs on the topic. He attends several seminars annually to learn how to become a better leader. Mark now serves in a leadership capacity that affects the entire church.

Over the years Scott has benefited greatly by building a few close friendships with other Christian men. He knows that most men don't have close relationships with other men. Scott started a men's small group at church. He's always on the lookout for another guy to bring into the group.

Sally enjoys music and plays the viola. The music ministry at church announced tryouts for the orchestra and she was selected. Sally plays periodically in the worship services, but takes pleasure in using her musical talents to serve others.

Like many soldiers Terry turned to alcohol to calm his nerves and overcome his fears. After his discharge his drinking increased steadily until he became an alcoholic. Through a family intervention he finally admitted he couldn't control his drinking. He began attending a 12-step program and now has 10 years of sobriety. Terry eventually became a sponsor for other men.

What about you? Is there a need or problem that, "Someone should do something about?" Is there a worthwhile experience you've had that you want multiplied in the world? It's time that you had your own "Popeye moment" and start serving. May God guide you to your "sweet spot" – the place He designed and equipped you to make a difference for Christ with your one and only life.

"I Can't Stand No More" #6: My Own Life

So what's your own "I can't stand it no more?" Some identified it immediately; but most are probably still unsure. You may never have considered it before. Sometimes an example clarifies the process. The example I know best is my own.

Before I turned 40 I never considered what my passion area might be. I was too busy building my marriage, raising my kids, getting ahead in my career, and being involved in church activities. But there's something about turning 40. It's the "zero birthday" when you realize you're no longer young, yet you're not old either. You're in the middle; in fact, you're in "midlife."

We often link "midlife" with "crisis." It's true that some go off the deep end by having affairs, quitting their jobs, pursuing reckless activities, and – of course, buying a sports car. These people are desperately trying to recapture their youth. It's pathetic to watch others blow up their lives permanently and pointlessly for something that is unattainable.

Most people, however, experience midlife not as a "crisis," but an opportunity for "reassessment." It's a time to reflect on first half of life and consider how to redirect life in the second half. The first half of life is about identity: "Who am I?" The second half is about purpose: "Why am I here on earth?" That's where my journey began.

Up to age 40 I was pursuing success, not significance - and I was fairly successful. I was married with two children, a house in the suburbs, 2 cars in the garage, and - of course - a dog. I also reached the top rung of my career – Superintendent of Schools.

But I found myself asking: "So what? Is this all there is to life? Will I just pound the same nail for the next 40-50 years? What's the point?" Deep within me was a growing hunger to know the specific reason God put me on earth. Surely there was some unique purpose He created me. What was it? I had no clue.

An older, wiser Christian friend offered a suggestion. "Steve, have you asked God why He created you?" Hmmm ... I had read books, gone to seminars, taken tests, and talked to believers. But I hadn't prayed. My friend laid out a plan concerning how to pray for an answer. The remainder of my story is based on this plan.

On a rainy summer day I drove to a state park intending to stay there until God gave me an answer. The downpour kept others away so I had the park and picnic shelter to myself. I went with a question, "Lord, what's my unique purpose on earth?" I also went with a passage of Scripture where I thought there may an answer. I chose John 13-17 which records the final meeting Jesus held with the Apostles. I figured Jesus would likely talk about the most important things at their last get-together.

I read the passage once as an overview. Then I read it again and took notes in my journal. I read it a third time and prayed through the passage. But despite my efforts, I didn't have an answer. I decided to read it one last time devotionally.

The hairs on the back of my neck stood up just before I read John 17:4. I sensed God had something important to say. In Chapter 17 Jesus is praying to His Father. In verse 4 He says, "I brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave me to do." I suddenly saw that God gave Jesus work to do that only Jesus could do. He alone was sinless; He alone could pay the penalty for our sins.

Then I realized that if God gave Jesus work to do, He also had work for me to do. I recognized there was a larger reason behind my pursuit of purpose. All Christians need to know their purpose, too! For the first time I understood that my assignment was to help other Christians understand their assignments. From that day forward my life has never been the same again.

The method God used to reveal my purpose is not likely to be the way He guides you. But the principles are universal. “For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Luke 11:10). Go to God and ask the reason you’re here on earth. Then seek the answer with all your heart. Keep knocking until the door finally opens and you have an answer.

May God bless you as you begin your own great adventure.

“I Can’t Stand No More” #7: Your Passion Area

How can you identify your own passion area? There’s one tried and true method. Listen to your body! Whatever moves you deeply is where your passion lies. Your passion will trigger a reaction somewhere within your body. Notice moments when you become frustrated over a wrong that must be made right. Notice times when you get misty eyed over a need that must be met. Notice situations when you smile over a positive experience you wish others could experience, too.

Listed below are some questions to help you recognize your possible passion areas. Listen to your body and it will not steer you wrong.

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Mind: What dream would you pursue if there were no barriers or worries?

Face: What brings a smile to your face?

Ears: What ministry projects or ideas have you heard about that sound very exciting?

Eyes: What brings tears to your eyes?

Nose: What do you enjoy doing that’s right under your nose [never thought of it before?]

Mouth: What topic of discussion would keep you up late into the night?

Heart: What gets your heart pumping faster whenever you hear, talk or read about it?

Spirit: Which groups of people attracts your spirit like a magnet?

Infants	Young married couples	Athletes	Military
Preschoolers	Married couples	Educators	Media
Children	Parents	Entertainers	Politicians
Junior high	Seniors	Executives	Poor
Senior high	Internationals	Laborers	Women
College age	Other races	Homeless	Veterans
Single adults	Other religions	Menn	Other?

Hands: What hobbies, crafts or skills do you enjoy in your free time?

Acting	Financial planning	Painting	Speaking
Car repair	Gardening	Photography	Storytelling
Carpentry	Graphic arts	Politics	Teaching
Computers	Home repair	Reading	Time management
Cooking	Interior design	Research	Word processing
Drawing	Music	Sewing	Writing
Exercising	Office work	Singing	Other?

Knees: Which experiences in life were so hard that they brought you to your knees?

Feet: What path in your life has been so beneficial you want others to walk it, too?