

## The Divine “Why” of Your Life

1 Corinthians 10:31

### Introduction

In his bestselling book, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, Simon Sinek explores the power of “why,” the power of possessing a clear purpose behind our actions. In his book, Sinek tells the story of two stonemasons. He invites his readers to ask the two stonemasons a question: Do you like your job? The first stonemason answers, saying, “I’ve been building this wall for as long as I can remember. The work is monotonous. I work in the scorching hot sun all day. The stones are heavy and lifting them day after day can be backbreaking. I’m not even sure if this project will be completed in my lifetime. But it’s a job. It pays the bills.”

Then, we move to the second stonemason and ask him the same question, “Do you like your job?” This stonemason says, “I love my job. I’m building a cathedral. Sure. I’ve been working on this wall for as long as I can remember, and yes, the work is sometimes monotonous. I work in the scorching hot sun all day. The stones are heavy and lifting them day after day can be backbreaking. I’m not even sure if this project will be completed in my lifetime. But I’m building a cathedral.”

Sinek notes that these two stonemasons are doing the exact same thing, but that the difference between the two is the sense of purpose. For the first stonemason, his “why” was not clear. If he had a purpose at all, it was to “pay the bills,” which is hardly a purpose. But for the second stonemason, his sense of “why” changed his entire perspective about his work. There was power in possessing a clear purpose behind all the backbreaking and sometimes monotonous work. He was building a cathedral. He was building a masterpiece that though he might not ever see it, would be filled with worshippers who would stand in awe.

It is interesting to me that Sinek refers to building a cathedral in his story. It could have been any number of other buildings, but in this case, it was a cathedral that the stonemasons were building. From their inception, cathedrals were aimed at communicating a sense of awe and wonder.

If you have ever been inside a cathedral, especially the style that we see in Europe, they tend to make us feel relatively small. The towering walls, the breathtaking detail in the stained-glass windows, and the complexity of the construction leave us in wonder. And this is partly what such cathedrals were intended to do. As one historian noted about stained-glass windows, the artists typically had a two-fold desire: to create something a sort of “heavenly light” which symbolized the “presence of God in the church” and also serve as a type of “poor man’s Bible,” which taught the biblical stories to those who were illiterate in the congregation. Something similar could be said of the height of the ceilings and the acoustics that would support the singing of the gathered congregation. These are at least some of the more positive reasons why cathedrals were built the way they are built. No wonder the second stonemason was motivated by the thought of building a cathedral. It was a place of glory.

But do you know the sad thing about cathedrals? They don’t last forever.

When I think of Simon Sinek's story of the two stonemasons, I am grateful for the image that is provided about having a clear purpose, a "why" in our work. Possessing a purpose is vital, but I'm also a bit sad for the second stonemason. While the man had a clear purpose and that purpose gave him joy in his work, I cannot help but think of the many cathedrals in the world that no longer serve the purpose for which their builders intended.

One of the most beautiful and awe-inspiring cathedrals in the world is the Sainte Chappelle in Paris, France. It was completed in 1248 A.D. Yet, now, this beautiful building, constructed for a holy purpose is not even a church building anymore. During the French Revolution, when the state church lost its power in the country (which was not necessarily a bad thing), this building became secularized. How many stonemasons endured the backbreaking labor of building such a cathedral with hopes and dreams of its permanence, only now for it to no longer be what it was intended to be.

My sadness for the second stonemason stems from the fact that if he had spent all those hours of backbreaking labor on building such a cathedral only to see its purpose abandoned years later, then there is a sense in which the stonemason's purpose, the "why" which made his work joyful, was a false hope. It was a fool's errand. While he was convinced that his work would have lasting significance, in order for a purpose to have lasting significance, that aim, that "why" must be able to last itself. But sadly, not everything that people work for and on will last.

This morning, my hope is that you and I will think deeply about our purpose in this life in light of what God has called us to and walk out the doors of this building with a renewed sense, a reminder of the divine "why" that God has spoken over each of our lives, so that we might not build our lives around a purpose that doesn't really last...

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### **1 Corinthians 10:31**

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

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As 1 Corinthians 10:31 tells us, the greatest purpose that we possess in this life is to "do everything for the glory of God." Nothing is excluded. As the apostle Paul tells us, even "eating and drinking" are governed by this purpose of bringing glory to God.

What does it mean to "do all for the glory of God? To do something for the glory of God is to think, speak, and act in such a way that God is glorified. It means that God's glory, his holiness and righteousness are put on display in how we think, speak, and act. It means that we live in such a way that people see and reflect upon God.

Now, here's the thing about living for God's glory, it's not just something that we do when we do those "Christian things." You know what I'm talking about? You know, things like reading our Bible, praying, and going to church. Obviously, all of those things are important, but 1 Corinthians 10:31 says that "whatever" you do, it should be done to the glory of God. So how that work?

How do you “eat or drink or do whatever” for the glory of God? How do you do yardwork for the glory of God? How do you study Algebra or Chemistry for the glory of God? How do you play basketball or baseball or softball or water polo or ballet or gymnastics or soccer to the glory of God? How do you play an instrument or sing for the glory of God? How do you treat others for the glory of God? How do you love your spouse for the glory of God? How do you raise your children for the glory of God? How do you eat double-meat, cheeseburger from Whataburger for the glory of God?

Pastor John Piper has two very helpful answers for these questions. In his article “How to Drink Orange Juice to the Glory of God,” he mentions two keys to “doing all things for the glory of God.”

First, he points us to **1 Timothy 4:3-5**, where the apostle Paul writes, “They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.” In this passage, Paul was addressing false teachers who were distorting the blessings of God among his people. Paul corrected this distortion by reminding believers that every good thing comes from God. We ought to be grateful for his good gifts to us. We ought to enjoy them while recognizing that they are from him for our good and his glory.

So, let’s take an example from earlier. How might we glorify God in the sports that we play or that we watch? Well, for starters, we could recognize that athletics are often used as images for the Christian life. They teach us something about perseverance and the importance of self-control. And, when we are not using sports to replace God in our lives, we can receive them as good gifts from him to enjoy and glorify Him with.

We can play and cheer with enthusiasm. We can thank God for muscles that work and for bones that are strong. We can thank God for our success and look to him when we are disappointed. When we practice gratitude for God’s good gifts, we glorify him. Yet, when we are not grateful, the result is that we often turn away from God to his gifts and try to find our purpose and satisfaction in the gifts instead of the Giver. When this happens, we are no longer living for his glory, and we will find ourselves living for vain things, often full of disappointment and dissatisfaction, because the things of this world will never fill the God-sized hole in our souls.

So, the first way that we glorify God in all things is to receive and enjoy the things that he has given us with gratitude and thanksgiving. But what about the second point?

The second point is love. This comes from **1 Corinthians 10:33-11:1**, where Paul wrote, “Even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” Here, Paul is talking about how we are to be loving to others, especially as it relates to them knowing Christ.

So, not only are we to receive God's good gifts with gratitude and thanksgiving, we should also be thinking about how we can receive and enjoy God's good gifts for the benefit and blessing of others. Now, how's that for a change? What would your marriage look like if instead of being consumed with how you can please and serve yourself, you thought about your spouse first? Or what about that difficult co-worker on your team at the office? What, if instead of wondering why you have to put up with them, you started thinking, "You know, maybe the reason that God has placed that individual in your life is because God intends to bless them through you?"

Not only would such paradigm shifts change your marriage or your work relationships, your thinking, speaking, and behavior would be so radically different from the rest of the world that people would start to notice that something is up with you. Something is different. And when this happens, they start asking questions, like "What has gotten into you?" And then you are able to say, I'm living for God's glory. I want others to see his kindness, his patience, his love, his mercy, his grace, and his justice in and through my life. I'm living for something bigger than myself. I'm living with a divine "why."

## **Conclusion**

Is this true for you this morning? Are you living primarily for yourself, or are you living for God's glory? When you wake up in the morning, do you think, "Another day for me," or do you think, "Another day for him?" If you live for yourself, you will eventually find yourself empty and isolated. You will never have true, lasting happiness or satisfaction. And the reason is, you were made for more. You were made to build a cathedral for the everlasting glory of God. You were made to live for God's glory.

I close with one of my favorite quotes in the whole world. It is by a man named C. T. Studd. He was a missionary with the China Inland Mission led by Hudson Taylor. The glory of God was his purpose. The divine "why" of making much of God is what sustained him when the work was hard. And he is quoted as saying, "Only one life t'will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."

How will you use this one life that you have been given? Will you live for Christ? Will you live for God's glory? Will you walk in the divine "why" that God has spoken over your life? Only what is done for God's glory has eternal, lasting significance. So let us live with gratitude for his good gifts and love toward others as we make much of God!

But maybe you are thinking, "Pastor, I'm convinced you are right. God's purpose for our lives is to live for his glory. But up until today, I've lived my whole life for myself. How could God ever forgive me?"

That's the beauty of the good news of God's grace in Jesus. Even when we were God's enemies, Christ died for us, as the payment for our sins, so that we might be made new and be filled by the Holy Spirit to live out God's purpose. We simply receive this good news by faith in Jesus.