



ROUND TABLE

Knowing Your Why

Knowing *what* we do and *how* we do it is insufficient to get us (and our teams) out of bed every day. We must know our *why*.

Start Here



“Michael Jr: Know Your Why”

 3:50

MICHAEL JR. | SEPTEMBER 10, 2015

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZe5y2D60YU>

Key Verses This Month:

- Matthew 20:28
- John 3:16

You know what gets you out of bed each day, right? People are depending on you. You have mouths to feed, a mortgage to pay, and kids to put through school. You have products or services to create, sell, and distribute; people to employ; customers to serve. There are a whole lot of *whats* that get you out of bed.

But knowing *what* we do and even *how* we do it is insufficient motivation over the long term. As comedian Michael Jr. says, “When you know your *why*, your *what* has more impact because you’re walking in or toward your purpose.”¹ Christ-centered leaders must know our *why*.

Simon Sinek has been sharing this truth since he published *Start with Why* in 2009. Even if you haven’t read his book, maybe you’re one of the 28 million people who have viewed Sinek’s TED talk by the same title.² He has built his career on this principle: “The goal is not to do business with everybody who needs what you have. The goal is to do business with people who believe what you believe.”³ But he’s not talking about what we believe about God or why we go to church. He’s talking about our driving convictions, purpose, causes, or core values for *why* we do *what* we do in our businesses. Sinek argues that knowing our *why* will inform our *how* and result in the *what* that gets us out of bed personally and professionally. But is Sinek’s emphasis on the *why* a novel approach to organizational planning, or is he possibly unwittingly tapping into an ancient wisdom espoused by Christ himself?

JESUS’S WHY

Jesus understood the importance of *why*. Let’s reverse engineer Jesus’s *what* and *how* to discover his *why*. *What* filled Jesus’s daily agenda? Simply put, Jesus fixed broken people. He rescued and redeemed people from a variety of human brokenness. But *how* did he do this?

1 Michael Jr., “Michael Jr: Know Your Why,” YouTube, September 10, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZe5y2D60YU>.

2 Simon Sinek, “Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Action,” TEDx Talks, 18:01, www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4ZoJKF_VuA.

3 Sinek, “Start with Why.”

Jesus summed up his *how* like this: “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28, ESV). Jesus served as he taught, forgave, fed, restored sight to the blind, cleansed the lepers, raised the dead, and even went to the cross.

But what was Jesus’s *why*? *Why* did the Son of God spend roughly thirty-three years on the earth he created? Jesus’s *why* comes into view in the most familiar verse of the Bible, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). That was Jesus’s *why*. His love for humanity informed the *how* and *what* of his daily schedule.

WHY AND THE UPHILL SLOPE

Like us, Jesus was a leader whose path was uphill most of the time. The incline of leading slow-to-learn disciples must have been exhausting, but the Lord never wavered because he knew his *why*. Jesus taught his disciples the principles of the Kingdom, but when the disciples were put to the test, they failed as much as (if not more than) they succeeded. Peter was the only one who attempted to walk on water, and even he didn’t fully trust Jesus to save him.⁴ James and John battled over the heavenly seating arrangements.⁵ And the disciples collectively failed when Jesus submitted himself to death on a cross.⁶ But despite the disciple’s frustrating lack of faith, Jesus maintained focus on his *why* and stayed the course. Just as it did for Jesus, knowing our *why* can enable us to continue pursuing our purpose despite unfavorable or seemingly unfruitful circumstances.

DEFINING YOUR WHY

Our *why* should always start with glorifying God, and it’s crucial to focus on that ultimate *why* as we define our specific personal and business *whys*. Defining your *why*, or your purpose, is more than setting goals and hoping to achieve them. As Ken Blanchard says in his book *Lead Like Jesus*, “A purpose is different from a goal, in that it does not have a beginning or an end; your purpose is your calling, the reason you were created, the place where your passion and giftedness meet.”⁷ Blanchard then provides the exercise on the next page to identify “a compelling vision,” or your *why*.

CONCLUSION

Simon Sinek said, “People don’t buy *what* you do; they buy *why* you do it.” As leaders in business, growing profits and expanding market share are examples of *what* we do. But we must know our *why* if we’re hoping to succeed beyond the balance sheets and create a culture that motivates our teams and inspires our customers.

4 Matt. 14:22–33.

5 Mark 10:35–45.

6 Matt. 26:56.

7 Kenneth H. Blanchard, et al., *Lead like Jesus Revisited* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016).

Application Questions

1. What are your takeaways after completing the “Writing Your Personal Purpose Statement” exercise?
2. Does your company have a *why* (purpose) statement? If not, consider using the steps on the previous page to create one.
3. If you ask your leadership team or managers, would they know your company’s *why*, *how*, and *what*? How can you communicate this clearly throughout your organization?



TAKE IT HOME

1. Use Ken Blanchard’s exercise to write a family purpose statement.
2. Talk through how the purpose statement shows up in the activities of the family. (Why do we attend each other’s events? Why do we give some of our money to the church? Why do we pitch in and help with the chores?) Family actions should grow from our family’s purpose statement.

Additional Resources

For Those Who Want To Go Deeper



“Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Action”

SIMON SINEK | YOUTUBE | ⌚ 18:01

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4ZoJKF_VuA

The classic TEDx talk Simon Sinek gave in 2009 where he explains why and how an organization should start with their *why*.



“A 12-Minute Summary of *Start with Why* by Simon Sinek”

SIMON SINEK | FRESHSALES BLOG

<https://www.freshworks.com/crm/sales/summary-of-start-with-why-blog/>

Simon Sinek’s distillation of the key principles from his book *Start with Why* down to a blog post.



Lead Like Jesus Revisited

KENNETH H. BLANCHARD