

18 March 2023

Your “WHY” for Life

Dear Sisters and Elders,

This week I received an email from Jacob Simpson. Most of you know him as Elder Simpson. He served as one of my Assistants and was an incredible missionary and an excellent teacher. One of the most powerful instructions that he and Elder Sam presented was titled, “Growing and Educating our Desires”. This was part of the October 2022 zone conferences. In that instruction there were some very important statements I will repeat here as a refresh.

- *“People don’t buy what you do, they buy WHY you do it.” (Simon Senek)*
- *“When the salvation of our investigators is a desire, it puts that on the top of our priority list and that is what our mind thinks about. These priorities then shape the future choices we make.” – President Dallin H. Oaks*
- *“As we know from Alma 29:4, what we desire is what we will receive. If we don’t spend the time growing this desire within us, we won’t become the person that God has intended us to become.” Elder Neal A. Maxwell*
- *“I ought not to harrow up in my desires the firm decree of a just God, for I know that **he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life**; yea, I know that he alloteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction.” – Alma 29:4*

The point of this powerful instruction was simply to have each missionary consider their own “why”. That is, why they came on a mission.

In his email, Elder Simpson reinforced the 4 reasons that missionaries come on a mission.

1. *“The first and the worst reason is out of guilt or fear.”*
2. *“The second is out of duty and responsibility.”*
3. *“The third is looking for blessings or personal self-help reasons, such as a testimony, learning the gospel, or even temporal blessings during and after the mission.”*
4. *“The fourth and final reason which is the best, is doing it out of love for God. Aligning your will with God’s and doing it because you are obedient to the two great commandments - love for God and for your fellowmen. Desiring their salvation enough to sacrifice 18-24 months to come and accomplish your sole-purpose of inviting others to come unto Christ.”*

He then posed this important question in his email: *“Want to know why coming and serving a mission for **the right reasons** is so valuable and important? **Because when you get home, you have no purpose.**”* What he means by that is once you go home you do not have the structure you had while a missionary. *“There isn’t a set schedule to go out and do something every day. There isn’t complete and total dependence upon the Lord for success. There aren’t rules and guidelines to keep you away from Satan’s tricks. There isn’t someone constantly with you to keep you safe and hold you accountable. So what do [some] returned missionaries do? They fall back into old habits and things they were doing before because they forget where their happiness comes from. When you are left without a purpose and vision, what happens is you end up wandering around just lost.”*

In the Kumasi zone conferences over the past week, we talked about Wayne Gretzky, the greatest hockey player of all time. Hockey is a game like football, except it is played on ice and instead of a ball, players hit a puck with a hockey stick to score. His famous saying is,

*"Skate to where the puck is going, not where it has been."* As a child, his dad would take him to hockey games and have him draw on a piece of paper the path of the puck. At the end of the games, the darkest areas on the page were the most frequent paths of the puck. After doing this for many years, he came to know the patterns of the game and his instinct for how a play would unfold increased significantly, allowing him to skate to where the puck was going instead of where it had been. (See attached picture)

This is a great analogy for our mission and for our lives. As we pay the price of discipleship through obedience to the 17 points, following the principles in Preach My Gospel, having powerful personal study, keeping our covenants, having meaningful prayer and daily repentance, we develop patterns and a structure for our own life. We come to know the Savior in a way that drives us to be better - and because we want to be like Him, we know our own "WHY". And this is not just for our mission, but for our entire lives! In other words, we know exactly where we want OUR puck to go and so we set goals and create our own structure to get there. **We skate to where our puck is going rather than where it has been.**

When Elder Simpson first got home, he reunited with some friends he knew before their missions. As he saw them doing things that were wrong, he called them out on it. Their response is shocking to me: *"Oh you don't know what you're talking about, you're still weird. You're still in missionary mode. Just give it a few months so you can adjust."*

He said every time he heard this, it "fired him up". He said if this is what "weird" is, then he is all in for being "weird". And that is why he wrote the email to me. As he pondered over this behavior ..., he *"came to the conclusion that it all comes back to what we had been teaching the missionaries about their 'WHY'".* He said he *"had never thought of our WHY in this way, in fact, the way I was teaching it was based around the idea that we need a strong WHY because that is what will get missionaries out of the apartment, that is what will get missionaries to work hard and that is what will get missionaries to be obedient. And yes, all of those things are super important, but what I realized was that even more important than that is who will these missionaries be in 10, 15, 20 years down the road? What kind of lives will they be living? Will they still be true to their covenants? Will they be raising families in the gospel? Will they be teaching their children how to follow true doctrine with no guile?"* ***"...missionaries who come home and jump right back into their old lives and who stop keeping their covenants and who stop doing the things they were doing on their mission are the same missionaries who came on their mission with no WHY."***

He closed by reinforcing that *"serving a mission with a correct WHY doesn't just affect your 18-24 month service, it affects the type of person you become throughout the rest of your life. When someone can have one of their WHY's to be truly connected and build and maintain a genuine relationship with their Savior Jesus Christ, ... it changes the way they live their lives."*

If you came on your mission without knowing your "why", I invite you to figure it out now - before you go home and find yourself lost, not knowing where your puck is going. This will make you a more powerful missionary, and a lifelong disciple of Jesus Christ when you return home. It is not too late to make a change and invite the Savior into your life to help with your own "why" - and to place your will upon the altar.

All my love,

President Kunz