



A Sweet Summer
Part 8 – Why
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Today, I get to take the baton and run with it. The title of today’s message is one simple word – *Why*. It’s a simple interrogative with profound implications. The other interrogatives – who, what, when, where, and how – are pretty straight forward and they tend to just be factual, right? But when you get to *why*, it requires an explanation.

We find that young kids are professionals at this question, aren’t they? We have a four-year-old in our home and he is the ultimate professional at this question right now. You tell them to do something and the response you get is, “Why?” You give an answer and the response you get is, “Why”? And it can wear you out.

An example – He may say, “Dad, can I go outside and play?”

“No, not right now.”

“Why?”

“Well because it’s getting late, it’s getting dark, and it’s almost your bedtime.”

“Why?”

“Well, because you need to get some sleep.”

“Why?”

“Well, because you see, the more time you spend in stage four deep sleep, your parasympathetic system can work to heal your physical body. And the more rem cycles you go through, the more your brain can organize your thoughts and your inputs from the day, so that tomorrow, your brain can be refreshed and ready to go again.”

“Why?”

We finally end up at the answer to end all questions – “Because I said so.” This usually doesn’t fly. It doesn’t go over very well.

But kids ask some very difficult questions that we don't have very good answers to, and we can't just say, "Because I said so." Sometimes they will ask hard questions like this one, "Why is there evil in the world?" This is a question that we as adults even struggle with. We may be asking the Lord, "Why? Why am I having to deal with so much stuff right now? Why are there hard things that are going on in my life." We find ourselves asking, "Why?" I think about this. With the last hymn that we just sang, I think about the author and all that he was going through in that last hymn. H.G. Spafford and losing his whole family. And I think of the struggles that a lot of us are dealing with in our church family right now, asking questions, "Why this? Why now? Why the timing of what's going on?" Asking some hard questions.

The answer to the question *why* is there evil in the world, it's very simple. The answer is because of sin. That's why there is evil in the world. So, what should you ask then? As a good four-year-old, "Why?" Let's look to Genesis. Haven't you read, right? Genesis, 2: 16-17 – **16 And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."** That is a death that would be a physical death, but also a spiritual death in separation from God and our right relationship with him. But look what it says. "...**from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...**" And that is how evil entered the world. And that's the answer to the question: "Why is there evil in the world?"

That's not the point of what we're really going after today. That's laying a ground work for a lot of our discussion though. Today, we want the question to be a little bit more introspective. Kind of an examination of ourselves. Looking in the mirror and asking ourselves why, why, why over and over, drilling deeper.

So, the ultimate question we're trying to answer of ourselves is this: "Why do we say and do the things we say and do?" It's a hard question. And you can keep after it with why, why, why. Another way you might see this question is explain yourself. We've asked our kids this one and if you're like me, you've had to ask yourself this question many times as well. "What were you thinking?" I'll have that thought after something comes out of my mouth or I do something. "What were you thinking?" What's the usual answer to this question? "I wasn't." Because it comes naturally; that was just in there, right?

What we're looking for is the driving force or the motivating factor behind our words and our actions. What we're going to do is start surface level today and peel back the layers and drill down into the deeper why.

First, we're going to start with what I call the primary *why*, surface level. I'm going to go through some examples of things that we say and things that we do and it's just that, just the obvious, the surface level reasons why we do and say the things that we do and say.

The first is to **eat and drink**. It's very obvious. I eat because I'm hungry, I drink because I'm thirsty. I have to do both so I can survive.

Pay bill, pay taxes. I want to pay bills so that I can keep the electricity on. I pay taxes so I don't go to jail. I racked my brain for a political joke and I couldn't do it. I'm leaving that up to Ted, so we're going to move on.

Work. Why do I go to work? Again, this is Ted's wheelhouse right here. Why do I go to work? I go to work so that I can earn money to pay bills and to put food on the table.

Why do I **make a sale**? Yes, if sales is part of your job, but I make a sale because that is how I'm going to earn money.

How about **perform**? We have a lot of performers, right? Singing, dancing, acting, comedy, ventriloquists, you name it. We have all kinds of different performers. Why do you perform. It may be your job, but you do it to entertain, so entertainment is the *why*. That's why you perform.

Why do you go to **school**, young people? "Because my parent make me." No, you go to school because you want to get skills and knowledge so you can be an active participant in society later on.

Why do we **compete**? Have any of you ever been accused of being overly competitive? Yeah? Some of us are more competitive than others, but there is a tendency to just want to compete to try to win. Some of you, like in sports or game nights. When you think of game night, some of you are like, "I don't really like game night, especially with this person or this couple because they are overly competitive and I don't want to participate with them." Some of you are like, "No, game night is awesome! We're going to go and we're going to win!" You're the ones the others don't want to play with. But many of us like to compete, at least to some level, to get that competitive energy out, that's why

Why do we **teach**? Because we need to pass on skills and knowledge to the next generation to be able to have a functional society and culture.

Why do we **discipline**? Because we're tired of all the why question. No, we discipline because we want to correct behaviors so that it can go well with our children, and so that the behaviors they had when they were three and four years old don't continue into their teen years.

There are some things even at the surface level, that can be good or bad and we can acknowledge it and recognize it right away. Like paying a **compliment**. It can be because I know this person would like to hear this nice thing about themselves or because I'm trying to get something from them in return or earn favor with them.

Or **criticize** because I know this can be constructive for them. Or I'm trying to bring them down a level, trying to tear them down.

To **serve**. Last week was all about service and Sweet Spot. There can be different reasons that we serve someone. We can serve in church or even outside the church that we serve. We see a need and we're taking care of it. Or I'm looking for something in return.

These are the surface level reasons when we just look at the things that we say and the things that we do throughout our days that are pretty obvious. Again, we want to start peeling back the layers and looking deeper into ourselves for the reasons why. I call these our secondary *why*, the deeper reasons. What it is in there that's driving you? What are the motivating factors? These tend to come naturally. And this can be a little uncomfortable to think about, to pray through, to walk through. We would ask that you just allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you as He would this morning and work through you and anything that He sees fit.

We are going to talk about some earthly *whys*. Because of our sin nature, we tend to default to these reasons for our words and our actions.

I want to start with the first one which is **position**. By position, I mean prestige, control, recognition, popularity, position in society, at work. Look at 1 John 2. ***16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life... That's a big one. ...comes not from the Father but from the world.*** Pride tends to be at the root of us looking for a certain position in life in our family, in our church, or wherever. So, you kind of have this almost deeper reason of pride that drives us for position that drives us into the things that we say and the things that we do. This can happen at work, it can happen in ministry, it can happen almost anywhere.

We said it last week and we'll say it again today. Jesus wants for you to descend into greatness. Jesus wants you to descend into greatness. Positions of leadership are not positions of authority necessarily, but they're positions of service.

Next is **possession**. The thing about possessions I want to clarify is that possessions, in and of themselves, are not evil, they're not wrong. We look at 1 Timothy 6: 10. We reference this scripture a lot. ***10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.*** Not money, but the love of money. ***Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*** Have any of you noticed that the more stuff you have, the more stuff can break? Many griefs... The more stuff you have to deal with.

The love of money or possessions, or the desire of possessions. I want to work through a few definitions this morning as we talk about possessions and that possessions, in and of themselves, are not necessarily evil.

The first one is **greed**. Greed says I want something, and my joy depends upon it. Then there is **envy** that's kind of like greed, but it's a little bit different. I says I want something, and I'm upset that you have it and I don't. That's a little more outward.

And then there is blessing. I'm grateful to have something and I hope you get it too. That's what blessing is. There's a litmus test that we can put on this as well. If I have something that's a blessing and it gets removed from me, it was still a blessing that I had it. I don't lament that it has been removed from me. I don't lament that you still have it and I don't (envy), but it was still a blessing.

For how many of you does this picture (phone with battery going dead) make you nervous? And if your phone is like mine, the red on the battery means that you are at or below 10%? Does that make anybody nervous? We have different kinds of battery behaviors in our family, different approaches to battery life. We have some that will be at 98% and they are going to go seek out the closest charger they can find to plug it in to get back to 100% as quickly as they can. Even at 100% they might still stay plugged in. We have some that will be at 2% and be sitting by 10 chargers that are plugged in and will still not plug in. Those of you that like to plug in no matter what are thinking *how can you not plug in?* We have a lot of different attitudes towards battery. I want to use the battery illustration to talk about greed, envy, and blessing.

Greed – I'm at 10% and I'm not going to be happy until I'm at 75%. That's what's going to bring me joy.

Envy – I'm at 10% and it's frustrating to me that you are at 75% and I'm at 10%

Blessing – I'm at 10% and I'm good with my 10%. I think it's great that you are at 75%. I used to be at 75% and now I'm at 10%. Maybe someday I'll make it back to 75%, but either way, I'm blessed with my 10%.

The thing we have to be careful about is if we start letting greed and envy be the *why* for our words and our actions and our driving, motivating force, we can really start to lean back on this word called *deserve*. I deserve. Entitlement would be another word. Kari and I, a long time ago, in our marriage and our life together, we acknowledged... And this has made this word *deserve* not have such an affect that when we start with scripture in Romans and in Genesis and we understand that the only thing that every single one of us can say that we deserve is death. That's what we start with. The wages of sin is death. And what we just read in Genesis – you will surely die. That's the only thing we can say we deserve for sure.

So, when we all start making our list of things that we deserve... And this doesn't have to be just possessions, not just material, but recognition, respect, notoriety, reward, accomplishment, promotion. / *deserve this...* and we start filling in the blanks. We remember and place at the top of that list I deserve death. Anything after that is gravy. May we remember that when we tend towards greed and towards envy as a driving force of our words and our actions.

So now when one of the kids is in the back of the car and they say, "Hey, Dad, I'm at 5%, I should get the charger," My answer is, "No, you should get death." "That's kind of harsh, Dad." "It's in the Bible and you should read it." So be careful about the word *deserve*.

Anger and frustration – What we find with anger and frustration is generally rooted in unforgiveness. If you're harboring unforgiveness against someone or a group or an organization... whatever, you've got to know that that person, that group, that organization has long since forgotten about the offence and it's you that's harboring this anger and frustration. It tends to be in there. And the problem with it is it causes us to react to things, especially with that person, that group, that organization. Instead of reacting, we should be responding in ways that glorify the Lord.

Our reactions tend to be different. Let me give you an example. Have you ever been at lunch with co-workers or friends, and someone spills their big glass of ice water right on your lap? You know the feeling. You jump up quickly and your response is to brush off the water. They're saying, "Oh my goodness, I'm so sorry. That was so clumsy of me." You're like, "Hey, it's good. We're good. It's so hot outside that it will cool me off anyway." You're making light of it.

Now, when you're at a meal with your family, there may have been a fight, some frustration, arguing over the phone charger before. Someone spills their water on you. What do you do? You jump up, brush it off, and you give them that stare, as if it's going to do anything. And the words that come out may be, "What were you thinking?" "What's the deal?" Look at the two reactions just simply because we are angry and frustrated or we're not. It tends to cause us to react. We do that in all types of situations. In sports, we call it the flop, an overreaction. Someone that has offended us or done something to us and we completely overreact. It's so exposing too, isn't it? And yet we do that; we flop with people all the time.

Proverbs 19: 11 – ***A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.*** To not harbor that bitterness and that anger. Don't let that be the *why* for your words and your actions.

Guilt – Any guilt prone people in here? You don't want to raise your hand like, *Am I doing something wrong by raising my hand?* If you are, these make you nervous, don't they? These are the security gates at the exit to a store.

I do this too. As I'm walking out and I've got my bag at Best Buy and my receipt that I'm holding up as I'm walking through the gate going, "Please don't go off, please don't go off." Because even if it goes off, people don't know that. They're like, *Oh, this guy's a shop lifter.* That's a guilty nature. Or how about when someone you know, a friend, family, co-worker, is clearly in a bad mood when you meet up with them. Your first thought is *what did I just do?* Guilt prone people, you need to hear Ephesians 1: 7 when it comes to your faith and your grace that you have received. ***7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace...*** But sometimes guilt can come out in our words and our actions and be the reasons that we do things.

Later in Ephesians, Paul writes that it is by grace you've been saved through faith, not by works. And we can find ourselves, maybe because of our past, trying to work out our faith through works, but guilt is not the proper driver of our words and our actions. And if God's opinion of you is that you are redeemed, what about the opinion of other people. That's where we move on to the next one.

Approval – The approval of others. We look at Galatians 1: 10 – ***10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.*** I believe this one is one that can really come out on social media as we're criticizing or as we're complimenting and wanting to make it very clear to people what we believe so we can hear approval of people or groups or different things. We can do a lot of maneuvering of approvals online. This one can also be very exhausting because you are never going to please all of the people all of the time. Sometimes, in our sinful nature, that is what drives our words and our actions.

You need to know, when it comes to guilt and approval, we tend to think of these as nice people, right? These tend to be the guilt prone people, the people approving people that come across as nice people. We kind of think I guess that's a wrong reason to drive your words and your actions, but you need to know it's just as wrong and just as missing the mark for a reason for your words and actions as greed and anger. It can be exhausting.

Comfort and laziness – This I kind of think as a reason or a driver of our words and actions maybe that we don't do or don't say because *I'm really comfortable with where I am right now and for me to address this issue with this person is going to be a lot of work relationally and otherwise.* So, our comfort and laziness sometimes can drive our words and our actions.

So, as we stand in front of the mirror of reflection, we say why? Why is it that these things come out of me, that these words and actions are driven by all of these things? They answer is simply sin. Why sin? Because evil entered the world and it is my nature that I'm redeemed through Christ, but it still tends to try to come out.

What we want to do now is turn the page. We want to reflect on the ultimate why, which is the Great Commandment – Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. For that specifically, we are going to look at Colossians 3: 17. Carolyn read this from the front a couple of weeks ago, so, clearly to me, it's kind of a sacred echo here right now. **17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed... Your words and your actions. ...do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.** The ultimate why.

Christians, especially those that have been believers and followed Christ for many, many years, I want to warn you against another driving force. It's the "It's the way we've always done things." You can have all of the things that you do and all the things you say right, even according to scripture, but your *why* could be wrong.

In the Book of Revelation, Chapter 2, Jesus addresses this to the Church at Ephesus when he says, **3 "You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary."** In other words, you're doing all the right things, you're saying all the right things. **4 "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first."** Their doctrine was in the right place, but their heart was in the wrong place. Their *why* was wrong. You see, they had all of the other interrogatives – who, what, when, where, and how. They had that correct. The why is where they were off. If you address the why, the ultimate why, the Colossians 3:17 reason for your words and your actions, the others tend to take care of themselves pretty well, they come pretty easily (who, what, when, where, and how). Jesus is more concerned about the why than he is about the rest.

Really, what we are talking about today is Worship, which is one of the five purposes of the church, one of the five purposes of the individual Christian. When we talk about worship, we worship with music here before the sermon every Sunday as a part of our act of worship. We also worship when we give of our tithes and offerings. There are people worshiping right now, taking care of the kids and doing other ministries. There are people worshiping in many different ways. Worship simply is acknowledging God for who he is and what he has done for us. That's what worship is.

Now, what I want to do is apply this ultimate why, this act of worship to realize that everything you say or do – your words and your actions – can be an act of worship, making everything you do be in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

So, I'm going to go through that same list we went through earlier. It was very surface level, and it can seem very simple, obvious reasons why we do things, but now we understand that it's important to peel back if there is a different wrong, evil, sinful reason that is driving us. It's important that we replace that with the ultimate why, with God's why for our words and for our actions.

Eat and drink – 1 Corinthians 10: 31 says, **31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.** Now, we can kind of get into a habit and complacency of praying before meals, but I believe that is an important practice. But it's also important for us to remember the *why* because when we eat and when we drink, we can do it as unto the Lord, as an act of worship.

Paying our Taxes – Not just to avoid going to jail. Mark 12: 17 says, **17 Then Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."** We are to be subject to the government. We are to be subject to the government and unless the government tells us to do something scripture tells us not to or the government tells us not to do something that scripture tells us to, we are subject to the government. We can do that as unto the Lord as we are subject to the government.

Pay our bills – According to Psalm 37: 21, **The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously...** When you pay your bills... Think about this. Does anybody still write checks to pay your bills? Some of you. When you click pay now, or when you schedule it or you see it come out of your account, on your electric bill, I want you to consider this. "Thank you, Lord that I can pay this electric bill so that I can have air conditioning when it's 100 degrees out this August." As unto the Lord. Everything can be an act of worship.

When we go to work – Beyond the fact that we need to work to earn money to pay our bills and to put food on the table, we do it as unto the Lord. Colossians 3: 23-24 says, **23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.** It is an act of worship for you to go to work and to work heartily.

Sales people – I say sales people; your main profession might not be in sales. We have Facebook Marketplace, we've got Craig's List, we've got Etsy, and all kinds of other ways that we sell things. Proverbs 11: 1 says, **The Lord detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him.** The picture here is that of a scale that was used in measuring out grain or meat or spices. That scale has, on the other side of it, a standardized weight so that when they are level, we know that we have this much weight of this product over here. So, an unjust weight would be to maybe drill out or scrape away some of the weight from that standardized weight so that it's lighter, so that we're giving up less. When you're selling something and especially if you are in sales... This is not just for the lawyers and timeshare salesmen, okay? Again, Facebook Marketplace, Craig's List, anything... A false balance is an

abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight. The Lord delights when you sell something with a just weight.

To **perform** – Again, a lot of performers in a lot of different ways. I think of Psalm 150; it's one of my favorite passages when we think about performing and music. It applies directly to worship, but really can apply to performing in music and in shows and in different settings. I often meditate on this passage. As a matter of fact, when we're worshipping on Sunday morning with all the instruments and the vocals and everything that's going on, the Psalm 150: 3-6 says, **3 Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre...** I get it; it's an old passage. We don't have any lyres up here. Except for when Ted is talking about his fishing. Am I now seeking the approval of human beings or of God? **4 praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, 5 praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. 6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.** We sang that this morning. Singing and instruments and dancing. Every performance that you do, you can do as unto the Lord. I love that.

When you go to **school** – It's beyond just acquiring skills and knowledge. Love the Lord your God with all your mind in an act of worship.

When you **compete** – Not just for bragging rights, not just for pride, but a unto the Lord.

My high school football defensive coordinator, the thing that he just kept saying over and over was. "I want him on his back. I want him on his back. Hit him so hard his momma feels it." But the thing he would follow it with is, "Then you're going to reach out your hand and you are going to help him up, so that you both can continue to compete." Followers of Jesus, we should compete with a tenacity and an effort that is unmatched by anyone that's out there, as well as character and honor that are equally unmatched.

Parents of children, of kids, of youth, participating in competitions, it is to be unto the Lord that we spectate and support our children in their activities. It's equally important for us acknowledge that. Our character and our honor should be unmatched with coaches and officials and players and other parents.

When you **teach** – Not just raising the next generation of whatever, but considering that those that you are teaching will serve, and counting the impact that you will have on generations to come, and having honor in what it is that you're teaching and how you teach it.

Discipline – Not just because we're tired of the question *why* and not just because of behavior correction. Proverbs 13: 24 says, **24 Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.** And I'm not going to get into the issue of spanking or not spanking. The point that Proverbs is making, that the Lord is trying to get across is that it is an act of worship to Him when we discipline our children.

Compliment – With no concern of the recipient’s opinion of me or to try and gain any favor with them. According to Proverbs 16: 24, ***24 Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.***

Criticize – We can do it constructively. I believe that in order to provide constructive criticism, there has to be some relationship equity. You can’t just pick some stranger and help them to improve in their job or whatever it is that you’re trying to correct. According to Ephesians 4: 29, ***29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.***

Serve – No expectation for anything in return. Philippians 2: 3-4 says, ***3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.***

As we hear those examples, we need to understand those are just a few of the many things that we do and the many things that we say from day to day. Some of those may apply directly to you, some of them may not. As you reflect upon yourself and your words and your actions and the *why*, we would encourage you to allow the Holy Spirit to point out the ways that you say and do things and your motivation for them. Turn the page and get back to the ultimate *why* in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to God, the Father.

So, why do you do and say the things that you do and say? We tend to fall back in that deep dark place of our evil sin condition. May we turn that page and do everything as unto the Lord.

If you’ve never placed faith in Christ, our hope would be that today would be the day, and if not, we would ask you to come forward still and talk to the prayer team. If you’re not ready to make that decision, we would ask you to come forward and ask question like *why*? If they don’t know the answer, they are going to find someone that does. We would love to answer questions that you might have about salvation, about Christ, about sin, about eternity – heaven and hell – all those things.

Even if you're not dealing with that decision right now, we want you to come forward if there is something you need prayer for because we know that in our church family right now, there is a lot that a lot of us are dealing with and we need prayer. We need you to know that this prayer team is here to serve you in that way. They want to pray with you and they want to lead you through that to pray for you, pray with you, pray for you throughout the days ahead. So, we encourage you, as we close today, to consider coming down for prayer.

Father, we love you. We’re grateful for your Son Christ and the redemption we can have through him. Lord, we ask that your Holy Spirit move through us as we reflect on the reasons for our words and for our actions. We ask that you turn our eyes towards Jesus that everything we would say, everything that we would do would be in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to you, Lord, through Him.

Father, we're grateful for this church body. We pray for those that are hurt, that are sick, that are struggling and that need you in this time. Lord, remind us that it is because we have you that it is well with our soul.

It's in Christ's name we pray, and everyone agreed and said... Amen.