

Asking “Why?”

Reflect on your confessions or your emotions. You can use your negative emotions as a red flag. They often indicate a time when our selfish or sinful nature is active and causing us suffering. If you can identify a time when you were angry, resentful, jealous, judgmental, fearful, or feeling another such emotion, that may be a good starting point.

For the very deep questions, asking ourselves why may be only one of many steps we should take. We may need to seek counseling, develop new skills, or establish reminders to help us make that real change in the moment. We may need to ask for accountability from our small group. But without understanding our true *why* and letting God heal us, these other steps are not as powerful as they could be in facilitating our transformation and getting out of or avoiding a coming crisis. We need to let God show us our inner self if we want to let him change us, heal us, and replace our brokenness with his wholeness.

There are many things that I can ask why about. Such as:

- Why do I get angry? Sad? Resentful? Afraid?
- Why do I like to talk about my kids (the good and the bad)?
- Why do I like to talk about myself?
- In fact, why do I say almost anything in conversation?
- Why do I post on Facebook?
- Why do I read Facebook?
- Why do I highlight my hair?
- Why do I buy things that are more expensive than I need?
- Why do I eat junk food?
- Why do I try to do two things at once?

- Why do I talk about other people?
- Why do I find people who annoy me offensive? (And if the answer to a question like this has to do with them and not me, I may not have found the core of the answer.)
- Why am I driven to be so busy?
- Why don't I get the rest that I need?

Give it a try!

- With your journal handy, relax and breathe deeply. Invite the Holy Spirit into your mind to open your eyes to what you need to see.
- Start to ask yourself the *why questions* about your emotions or difficult areas of your behavior. Allow the Holy Spirit to help you peel back those layers. Don't settle for the first answer that comes to your mind or the one that defends you and places the blame externally. Let yourself look at your own thoughts and feelings where you may not have looked before. Journal your internal dialogue and observations.

“We must also find out the why of our feelings. Why do I have such strong feelings of despair (or fear, or anger) when this or that happens? What are the inordinate desires that are being frustrated? What are the idols and false beliefs behind them?”

“Whenever you see your heart in the grip of some kind of disobedience or misery, some temptation, anxiety, anger, etc., always ask, (1) How are these effects being caused by an inordinate hope for someone or something to give me what only Jesus can really give me? and (2) How does Christ give me so much more fully and graciously and suitably the very things I am looking for elsewhere?” (Keller, Timothy. *Gospel in Life Study Guide*. Zondervan, 2010, p. 45.)

Timothy Keller identifies the things we find at the bottom of our *why questions* as idols (including things such as pleasures, security, power, control, and approval). He encourages us to name our idols and repent of them. For example, you might say something like:

- “This _____[name your idol] is not my life – Jesus is my life. This is not my righteousness and worthiness. It cannot give me that – but Jesus, you can and have!” (Keller, Timothy. *Gospel in Life Study Guide*. Zondervan, 2010, p. 47.)

He also suggests that we recognize how dangerous these idols are to us. Perhaps you might say:

- “Lord, why am I giving this so much power over me? If I keep doing it, it will strangle me. I don’t have to do so – I will not do so any longer. This will not be my master. You are my only King.” (Keller, Timothy. *Gospel in Life Study Guide*. Zondervan, 2010, p. 47.)