

# WHY BELIEVE?

Couples Following Christ

Why Believe?

# NONES

Do you know what the fastest growing religious group is in the US? It is the same as the fastest growing religious group in the world. It is the Nones, not the N-U-N-S but the N-O-N-E-S. As in what is your religion? “None” “I have no religion.”

I learned this a couple of years ago when several people close to me completely abandon their Christian faith and became Nones. And these weren't marginal Christians. It was a huge shock and something I really struggled with. As a result, I spent a lot of time researching the changing patterns of faith in our country, and frankly I was stunned at what I discovered.

It turns out 23% of all adults in the US call themselves Nones. In 2007 this number was only 16%. And 35% of those under 30 in the US call themselves NONES. What is really concerning is that many of the Nones grew up in the church and at some point called themselves Christians. This has huge implications for us, for our children, for our country, for our world. What is going on?

At the same time I was doing this research, I re-watched one of the most popular TED talks of all time called “How Great Leaders Inspire Action” by Simon Sinek. Many of you have seen it. And while I had watched this a half dozen times before, this time was different. Even though this Sinek's talk has nothing to do with spirituality, when I saw it this time, all I could think about was how incredibly powerful the golden circle is to the Christian faith. I want to play a short clip from this TED talk to help you understand the context for our devotion this morning.



***This is where the Simon Sinek video clip goes***

Key points from the video

The Golden circle, Why, How, What

Do you know why you do what you do?

**Your why is not a result.**

What's your purpose, your cause, your belief. That is your why.

Outside in or inside out – do you focus on the What or the Why?

So, how does this apply to the Christian faith? I think it is critical that we approach our faith from the inside – out, but I am convinced that most Christians in Western culture view their faith from the outside - in, and that is very dangerous. Here is how the golden circle can be applied to Christianity.

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### Why Believe?

- What is a Christian?
- How do you become a Christian?
- Why are you a Christian?

I would imagine that everyone in this room can tell me what a Christian is. You can describe what a Christian looks like and what you gain from being a Christian. Some of you can tell me how to become a Christian and how to live the Christian life. But only a few of you can tell me *Why* you are a Christian. And by *Why*, I don't mean so that you will go to heaven or have a better life. Those are results and results are part of the *What*.

By *Why* I mean what do you believe about Jesus that causes you to want to follow Him? Your *Why* will drive your behavior because it's not *What* you do, it's *Why* you do it.

When I originally asked myself *Why* I believe, it drove me to God's Word. And specifically it caused me to want to understand what caused the disciples in the New Testament to leave everything and follow Jesus. I wanted to know what their *Why* was, because I wanted to have the same *Why* that they had.

My journey began in Matthew chapter 4

## Why Believe?

### Matthew 4:18-22 (NIV)

<sup>18</sup> As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." <sup>20</sup> **At once** they left their nets and followed him.

<sup>21</sup> Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, <sup>22</sup> and **immediately** they left the boat and their father and followed him.

I imagine that all of this happened very quickly. I think these brothers looked at each other, maybe had a short conversation, and then left everything and began following Jesus. I find it fascinating that they didn't say, "What will we eat?" "Where will we sleep?" "Do we get paid?"

They didn't say "That sounds intriguing, but first answer this for me. Why is there so much evil in the world?"

Why did they not question more? What caused them to leave everything and immediately follow Jesus?

Maybe Jesus was so captivating that everyone that He talked to just left everything and followed Him?

Luke 9

## Why Believe?

**Luke 9:57-62** (NIV)

<sup>57</sup> As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." <sup>58</sup> Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." <sup>59</sup> He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." <sup>60</sup> Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

<sup>61</sup> Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." <sup>62</sup> Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Now this is getting serious. We still don't have our answer as to Why some followed, but we are quickly figuring out that Jesus is not interested in those who will be somewhat or mostly devoted to Him. This is all or nothing. To be His disciple requires a total and complete commitment. This makes it all the more intriguing to understand why some made this all-in commitment?

We need to continue to examine Jesus and His disciples in John 6 to get the answer to their Why.

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## Why Believe?

John 6

And after these two amazing days, what happened...

Keep in mind that Jesus had many disciples, not just the twelve that we most often think about. The disciples would follow Jesus from town to town as he would proclaim the Gospel. Often large crowds would develop as a result of his teaching and healing ministry. This sets the stage for an incredible two days in the course of Jesus's ministry, and it is in these two days that we begin to understand *Why* the 12 disciples left everything to follow Jesus as documented in John chapter 6.

The scene is the area around the Sea of Galilee and the Sea of Tiberias. The crowds have been growing larger during the day due to word spreading of Jesus healing the sick. As the day progresses, it becomes obvious that people need to be fed, and Jesus performs the miracle of feeding over 5,000 with 5 small loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus withdraws to be by Himself. As evening comes, the disciples get into boats to go across the sea to Capernaum. When they are 3-4 miles out at sea, they see Jesus coming towards them walking on the water. The next morning the crowds get into boats and go to Capernaum to find Jesus. At this point Jesus has some difficulty to understand teaching where He declares that He is the bread of life and those that come to Him will never hunger or thirst. He proclaims that He is the true bread from heaven that gives eternal life, and that His followers need to eat His flesh and drink His blood.

And then...what happened after all of these amazing two days? John 6:60

## Why Believe?

John 6:60,61,66 (NIV)

<sup>60</sup> On hearing it, many of His disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" <sup>61</sup> Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you?" <sup>66</sup> From this time many of his disciples **turned back and no longer followed Him.**"

They left Him!!!

They just witnessed Jesus teaching, healing the sick, feeding the 5,000, and walking on water, and they left!!!

Why?

They were in it for the what, as in "What did He just say?" as in "I don't like what He is saying!" or "I don't understand what He is saying." It was all about the what, not the Why. They were in it for themselves. It was all about "What's in it for me?" and when that did not seem to be working, they quit. It was not about the why?

John 6:67-69



## Why Believe?

John 6:67-69 (NIV)

<sup>67</sup> "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, **to whom shall we go?** You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We have come to believe and to know that **you are the Holy One of God.**"

This is it!! This is their Why!! Their Why was a Who, and they believed their Who was the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. When Jesus walked by and said, "Follow Me" I believe they looked at each other and said, "Do you think that's Him?" I do. And the answer to that one question determined their destiny. If this really was the Son of God, they would be crazy to not follow Him!! Their Why was completely dependent on Jesus being God's Son, the Holy One of God!

Look closely at Peter's words to understand the difference between living for results (The what) and living for a belief of who Jesus is (the Why). When you are about the What, you have contingency plans. The disciples who left Jesus had contingency plans. "Don't start a company unless it is an obsession and something you love. If you have an exit strategy, it is not an obsession." Mark Cuban

These 12 disciples had no where else to go. There was no exit strategy. They had given up everything to follow Jesus. And they had given up everything because they believed that Jesus was the Son of God.

So believing that Jesus was the Son of God, the 11 stayed with Jesus without wavering for the rest of their lives. Right? Not quite.

About a year later, this happens...

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## Why Believe?

Matthew 26:56b (NIV)

<sup>56b</sup> "Then all the disciples **deserted** Him and **fled**."

They all left Jesus. Not even one of them stayed. What caused this to happen? This was right after Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Most people think they were just scared. I have thought about this a lot, and I think it was much bigger than just being scared. I think they thought they were wrong about Jesus being the Son of God. After all, how could the Son of God be arrested. You see, their *Why* was a *Who*, and their *Who* was supposed to be the Son of god. If the *Who* was not the Son of God, then their *Why* was all wrong. So, they deserted Him.

But the story does not end there. Just a few months later we read:

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### Why Believe?

Acts 4:31,33 (NIV)

<sup>31</sup> After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly.

<sup>33</sup> With great power the apostles continued to testify to the **resurrection** of the Lord Jesus.

All of the sudden the disciples were no longer scared for their lives. The resurrection sealed the deal that Jesus was the Messiah, He was the Son of God. Now, nothing would pull them away because they were absolutely convinced that their Why was a Who and the Who was God's son. Game on until their death.

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## Why Believe?

**I Corinthians 15:17,20** (NIV)

<sup>17</sup> And, if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

<sup>20</sup> But Christ has indeed been **raised from the dead**, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

You see Paul tells us that there is one event that validates that Jesus is who He says He is, and it is the resurrection. All of the sudden the disciples were no longer scared for their lives. Instead, they boldly faced imprisonment, persecution and death for testifying about the risen Savior. In fact 10 of the 11 (all except John) died a martyr's death. Because of the resurrection there was no doubt who Jesus was. And that is all the disciples needed! What about you? What about me? Is that all that we need to be His devoted followers? To follow Him no matter what?? It's challenging, but I am convinced it is all we need.

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**Why Believe?**

**Why am I a Christian?**

So, Why am a Christian? Because I am convinced that Jesus is the Son of God since He rose from the dead. Thus, I want to be His devoted follower no matter what. My Why is a Who and my Who is the Almighty One, the Alpha and the Omega, the Bread of Life, the Chief Cornerstone, The Great High Priest, Immanuel, King of Kings, Lamb of God, Light of the World, the Messiah, our Savior, the Son of God!!

And that is all I need.

I like how Andy Stanley says,

“Anyone who can predict his own death and resurrection and pull it off, I’m with Him!”

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**Why Believe?**

Why am I a Christian?

Let's go back to the Nones for a moment and talk about why are so many are leaving the church and abandoning the Christian faith. I think it is in large part because our Westernized view of Christianity is a consumer's view that is based on what God can do for us more than on who God is. A consumer's view is always based on what's in it for me. As a result when life gets too hard, or when we can't answer difficult questions, or the cost gets too great, or someone we love dies too soon, when the world does not make sense, or we are not having fun, or we are not happy, or life does not turn out how we thought it would...we quit. The reality is that Jesus tells us that the Christian life is going to hard. Jesus says, "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few" Is it worth it? Absolutely. But, it is going to be hard. Let what you do be a result of Why you believe, not what you get. And let your Why be based on Who Jesus is!!

Develop your purpose, your cause, your beliefs around the fact that the God of the universe loves you and loves me and wants to accomplish His will in and through us.

That is the greatest why that anyone can have.

He is worth devoting your life to. Don't play games. Don't try to follow Him half way. It is all or nothing. It is the hardest simple concept ever. Nothing is more important than being a devoted follower of Jesus.

**Who is your Why?**

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**Why Believe?**

**Practical application**

Are you all-in for Jesus? Can you honestly say that you are His devoted follower? Is your pursuit  
Be sensitive to know when the things are competing for the devotion that is reserved for Jesus  
Eternal perspective  
Fight distractions

This is what caused the disciples to drop everything and follow Jesus  
Because they believed He was the Messiah  
When the disciples wavered in their faith it was because they doubted if Jesus really was the Messiah, which turned into complete abandonment when Jesus was crucified. But, once Jesus rose from the dead, they were all-in. Why? Because now there was no doubt about who He was.

Everything must revolve around God and who He is, not around us.  
There should be no way we would walk away from God. But, not because of us,

because of Him.

Ultimately, we have to decide if it is about me or about God.

If we are motivated by earthly results, it is really easy to give up or get disillusioned when reality does not match our expectations.

Jesus did not sell Christianity based on what's in it for us. It is all about God.

Don't become a Christian based on what's in it for you. Become a Christian because He is the Holy One of God!!!

What do we need to leave behind in order to truly follow Jesus and be all in as his devoted followers?