

Why do we do what we do at Linglestown Life?

This past week while I was out running I was listening to an interview with Simon Sinek, the author of a book entitled, *Start with Why*. Simon may not be a well-known figure to most of us; but he is a much sought after speaker world-wide whose simple motto is: 'to inspire.'

He certainly inspired me; and I hope till I am done this morning that you are equally inspired by the three words Simon shared: Why, How and What.

Now what Simon said that inspired me was that 'people don't buy *what* you do, but *why* you do it.' That may not sound inspirational to you but it sparked something in my own thinking. According to Simon most people answer the WHAT and HOW before they get to the WHY. But if we are truly inspire people we need to answer the WHY before we proceed to the other two questions.

So let me take you through Simon's three questions and see if together we can answer the WHY about ONEderful and Linglestown Life.

So, Why do we do what we do at Linglestown Life?

Better yet put it in the context of last week's sermon that launched our ONEderful campaign; 'Why are we doing this ONEderful campaign?' So tell me, 'Why, why do we do what we do?'

["To change lives!"]

Simply put the reason why we exist, our whole reason for being; is simply to change lives.

After all, when Jesus inaugurated his ministry he announced it with words from the prophet Isaiah which speak of his life-changing ministry: good news to the poor, freedom for prisoners, sight for the blind... (Luke 4:18) Jesus ministry was all about changing lives!

The scripture is full of descriptions of life change that happens in the lives of Jesus' disciples. Our lives are changed, when we decide to follow Jesus! Think about some of the changes: We've gone from darkness to light; from death to life; from fear to faith; from selfish to loving; from...to...

As Mike reminded us last week, our WHY is Life Change!

So we are clear, we all understand why Linglestown Life exists, to Change Lives!

Now let me ask you Simon's second question, 'How?'

How do we communicate that life change? How is it that people will know that our life has been changed? How will people who place their faith in Jesus and begin to follow him know that their lives have changed?

Around here we can answer that HOW question with the four words that make up our mission statement at Linglestown Life, which is:

[Love God, Love Others]

When a life is changed by Jesus Christ it is demonstrated by loving God and loving others. As Mike shared in his testimony last Sunday, someone began to take notice of the changes that God was causing in Mike's life as he began to love God and love others with more passion and consistency.

And because our lives are continually changing; the way we love God and love others should be changing as well, and hopefully changing for the better! So when we set out to incorporate our ministry plans for the next two year as a part of ONEderful, what we want to do is make it possible for people of all ages and in all stages of their faith development to grow more and more in their love of God and love of others.

You see, we don't just change once; our life is full of continual change. Our circumstances may not seem to change dramatically; but there are daily changes, some so small that we may not notice- but others do! You see, we never arrive at a point in our lives where we have reached the zenith of loving God and loving others; there is always room to grow.

And from Sunday morning in worship, to EDGE youth meetings, to working at the Food Bank; everything we do at Linglestown Life is designed to help us learn HOW to love God and love others.

So let's review:

WHY do we do what we do? To Change Lives.

And HOW do we demonstrate the change? By loving God and loving others.

That brings me to the final question which Simon asks, 'WHAT?'

WHAT do we do to love God and love others, so that people's lives are changed?

Well I want to get really personal here. Because ultimately the lives that are going to be changed are going to be yours and those of the people God has placed in your life.

So my answer for what we do (personally) to change lives is to see that we must begin to live like missionaries.

Now that may sound intriguing, funny, or down-right scary, or just impossible; but the truth is you can find missionaries for just about any cause, any idea, anything- from football teams to political candidates. As a matter of fact you probably already are a missionary, you just don't realize it!

Missionaries are those individuals who understand the 'WHY' and are willing to do whatever it takes to see people come around to their viewpoint or to act in a certain way, or to cheer for a certain team.

What do you know about missionaries? What do you think of when I say the word missionary? [They live in different countries, they share their faith with those who never knew about Jesus, they translate the Bible into other languages...]

I don't know if you realized it while you were sharing those ideas but you in many ways described how each of us, as disciples of Jesus, are being called to live today in our own communities. We live in the biggest mission field right here in our own nation, we live among people who have no knowledge of Jesus, and we have daily opportunities to translate the Gospel of Jesus into a language so that people today can understand who Jesus is.

So ultimately you and I are missionaries! Missionaries, sent by God to change lives! Paul spoke about our role as missionaries in 2 Corinthians 5:20, where he says that we are Christ's ambassadors...

I heard someone recently define a missionary as an individual who is willing to sacrifice everything for what they believe in. So let me ask you a difficult question; Do you believe in the WHY of Linglestown Life to the extent that you are willing to sacrifice everything for changing ONE Life?

Don't answer that just yet. Just think about it for a moment.

Remember the conversation that Jesus had with a young man who lived out all the commandments. (Matthew 19:16-22) He wanted to follow Jesus. But Jesus realized that for this young man to go all in, to totally sell out to Jesus' WHY, to sacrifice everything for the sake of following Jesus and seeing lives changed; the young man needed to do one thing.

And Jesus looked at this young man- this young man who loved God and loved others- and who was blessed with material wealth; and Jesus said to him, Will you take one final step? Sell everything, and then come follow me.

Of course, the young man walked away. He wasn't ready to cash it all in. Maybe he even understood the WHY of following Jesus, but he wasn't inspired enough to take the final step.

Now I don't know what your everything is that Jesus might ask you to sacrifice; but are you willing to do whatever it takes to change ONE Life?

Jesus sacrificed everything to change YOUR Life. He left such a powerful example that his disciples followed him in sacrificing everything to be missionaries.

So, you might be thinking ok, how do I do that? Let me give you some suggestions by answering a few questions:

Where do we serve as missionaries? *In the world, where we live our faith beyond Sunday.* You see the power of Jesus to change your life isn't just so that people in the church see the change; it is so that people outside the church see the change! Living out our faith needs to be more than what we do on a Sunday, it needs to impact every moment of our everyday, ordinary life.

So while what we do here is vital to your growth and a great resource in your work as a missionary; the real key is "Do you live your faith beyond Sunday?" As a missionary, you live your faith 24/7/365.

When do we serve as missionaries? *When we connect with people outside the church.* We need to understand that to impact the lives of people who don't have faith we need to develop relationships with non-church people.

So the where and when are interconnected. We are missionaries every time we talk to a neighbor, a co-worker, a friend, maybe even a stranger.

What do we do as missionaries? *We build relationships that allow others to explore faith.* Let me share something with you that in a sense may sound like I'm letting you off the hook; but it's not up to you to change people's lives. Only God can change a person's life. But God uses you in the relationships that you have with people who are asking question of faith or trying to figure out why your life is different. So as missionaries we are developing relationships that allow others to explore their faith in a safe way.

How do we serve as missionaries? *We encourage people to grow as disciples of Jesus.* Here is where the rubber meets the road! As we are developing relationships with people who are exploring issues of faith, we need to be sensitive to the openings that God provides us to share our faith, to invite people to our wonderful church, and to offer them encouragement about how Jesus has made a change in our own lives.

Why does a missionary do all this? They do it because they understand the WHY; they understand that they are sacrificing everything to see lives changed!

While I was writing this sermon Simon tweeted something that caught my attention. “When we don’t know an organization’s WHY, we don’t know what to expect, so we expect the minimum...”

You see, I want you to know the WHY because God expects nothing less than everything from you and me when it comes to changing lives. I believe in the WHY of ONEderful and Linglestown Life and so I am willing to sacrifice everything to change ONE Life, through ONE Church with ONE Gift.

How about you? Do you know the WHY? Are you demonstrating the HOW? Are you willing to sacrifice everything to do the WHAT?

I invite you to join the journey to change lives!