

**“Good resolutions are often checks drawn on an account with insufficient funds.” —Jules Renard**

said I had none. “I am only interested in being healthy,” I told him. My weight loss is the result of a healthier lifestyle and not the result of a diet. Why do I want to be healthier? I think of the people I love and how I want to spend time with them doing the activities that we enjoy together. That is my WHY. I don’t just want to live long; I want to live well.

My sons and I had been camping and hiking in Lassen National Park. We were near the highest point where the road passes the trailhead to the summit of Lassen Peak. As we ate our lunch, my sons began a conversation with two middle-aged women who had ridden bicycles up the

mountain. “Why do you ride bicycles all the way up a mountain like this?” one of my sons asked. The two women looked at each other, laughed, and said, “So we can eat anything we want.” Maybe that isn’t a good reason for you but it was a clear WHY for them.

What is it that you intend to do this year? Maybe you want to be healthier, or perhaps you are planning to create that budget you know you need. Possibly you need to pay off debts, or save for a new car. Whatever your resolution might be, don’t begin with HOW or WHAT. Make certain you have a clear WHY. Find your clear WHY and then you can accomplish what you resolve.



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# The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS  
to help you become a better steward

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## RESOLUTION WHY?

By Edward W. Fergusson, M.Div.

A family from our church was helping us move into a townhouse

I had just rented. Fixing her little girl eyes on me repairing a small leak under the sink, she finally blurted, “What are you doing?” “Why?” followed by an incessant string of WHYs. Nothing I said seemed to satisfy her.

Why? That seems to be a leading rather than an answerable question. Our children ask WHY first out of curiosity and then later out of defiance. “Daddy, why is the sky blue?” “Dad, why do I have to be home early on a school night?” At times in our lives we all have asked the “why” question regarding suffering, death, or other unsettled issues.

In this Stewpot I want to focus on



WHY for a different reason. This is the time of year for

resolutions like losing weight, paying off debts, saving money, or starting a budget. We have good intentions but for some reason we typically fail to follow through. Why?

### The Golden Circle

In his book entitled, *Start with Why*, Simon Sinek describes the Golden Circle. It is a simple diagram with three concentric circles. In the center is WHY. Around that is HOW. And the outside circle is WHAT. His point is simple, begin with WHY and the HOW and WHAT will fall into perspective. His argument is that we often begin with the WHAT or HOW while never knowing WHY.

*Stewardship is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality, and finances.*

## “What you are to be, or become, depends on the character of your resolution.” —Walter Matthews

For instance, a typical New Year’s resolution is to lose weight. That is a WHAT. We may likely develop a plan that includes a diet and/or exercise: a HOW. We may even have a WHY: wanting to be healthy. Our WHY may be to lose weight to fit into certain clothes, or into society’s idea of how we should look! We may be envious of how someone else looks or we just don’t like the way we look in the mirror. But is our WHY appealing enough? Is it worth our effort? Having a clear and significant WHY is critical.

### Carrots and Sticks

In the same book, Sinek reminds us of the ineffectiveness of carrots and sticks. While we all know of the short-lived value of negative input, we are sometimes surprised at how ineffective rewards can be. Often punishment only work until the threat is no longer felt. Rewards are similarly ineffective in

producing desired changes in behavior.



When I was a child I read a story that stuck with me about a man who was heckled by some children on their way home from school every day. One day he called the children over and said, “I have a request of you. Can you make sure to come by next Monday and heckle me? I’ll pay you each \$5.” On Monday they were there like always and after they finished heckling him he paid them and said, “Can you come by Thursday, but I can only pay you \$3.” Tuesday and Wednesday passed by without them saying a word but Thursday came and they were loaded with insults. After paying them, the man said, “Can you come by next Monday but I can only afford \$1.” The children said, “Oh, it’s not worth it.” And they never heckled him again.

The internal motivators such as pride of work, believing you made a difference, or satisfaction

with the result, are far more powerful than any external motivator such as money.

### Sharpen the WHY

Having a clear WHY is critical to real success. If you view the Golden Circle as a cylinder like a pencil, you can look at the end and see the concentric circles. If you sharpen the pencil to write with it, the center becomes the point. Sinek uses that to illustrate the focus of WHY.

Sam Walton had a clearly-focused WHY. He often said, “Treat people right and they will treat you right.” He didn’t seem back then to realize the value of that, nor did he pass it on to his family or co-workers. While he ran Wal-Mart, it was a company in which people wanted to work. People wanted a Wal-Mart store in their communities. Because of Sam Walton’s WHY, he offered good value for the common person and was fair to those who

worked for him. While he was one of the richest people in the world, he drove an old pickup and took an annual salary of about \$400,000. After his death, the company became all about cheap prices—quality went down, wages went down, morale went down, the company’s reputation went down, and the CEO’s salary went up.

Apple has a clear WHY: to give people tools to change the world. Microsoft has a clear WHY: to put creative tools into the hands of everybody. These two companies have often been pitted against each other as rivals by people who didn’t understand that they are not competitors but rather companies with clearly different purposes. Both have been tremendously successful fulfilling their purposes.



At my annual physical, my doctor noted I had lost 25 pounds and asked my weight loss goal. He looked surprised when I