**Purpose and Understanding**

We don’t always have to perceivethe *purpose* to *understand* and obey the command, but it usually helps.

Children often ask “Why?” when told to do something. If the question is a real request for information rather than a mere delaying tactic, and if they’re actually old enough to comprehend the answer, by all means explain the reason. Otherwise, “Because I said so!” is probably the best reply.

For us adults, ***purpose***and ***understanding***are more closely linked. When we grasp the *purpose* for something, we *understand* it on a deeper and more complete level. For a quick and simple example, consider that when/if we know the *purpose* of God’s requirements for us (*positively* “do this” or *negatively* “don’t do that”), we *understand* Him more fully. Thus, *“for our good, that we may share His holiness”* from Heb.12:10 not only answers our “Why?” questions, but aids our willingness to accept His *“discipline”* and our ability to obey, cf. Heb.12:4-11. However, “Because He said so!” is sufficient even if we don’t “get” His *purpose.*

But let’s get back to our primary pointfor this article. **When we know the *purpose,* our *understanding* is improved.** So if we actually desire to *understand,* “Why?” is a great question. For instance, follow this thread and see if it helps…

* **“Why was Jesus *born?”*** The *purpose* for His entrance into the world was to enable Him to **die**, cf. John 12:27. Deity is eternal and therefore cannot die. *“Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same,* ***that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death****, that is, the devil;* ***and might deliver those who through the fear of death*** *were subject to slavery all their lives,”* Heb.2:14-15. Our *understanding* of the necessity of His birth (and His humanity) is greatly enhanced by comprehending its *purpose.*
* **“Why did Jesus have to *die?”***If we perceive the *purpose* of His death by what it accomplished, then we *understand* why He had to die. So note the answer God supplies: *“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust,* ***in order*** (note “purpose” words!) ***that He might bring us to God****, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,”* 1Pet.3:18. The righteousness of God required *death* for *sin,* cf. Gen.2:17; Rom.3:23. With no sins of His own, Jesus’ death could propitiate (pay the required price of redemption) for our sins, cf. 2Cor.5:21 and Rom.3:21-26.
* **“Why was Jesus *resurrected?”*** To *understand* the “why?” look to the *purposed accomplishments* of Jesus’ *resurrection:* a) It proved Him to be exactly who He claimed to be- the *Son of God,* Rom.1:4; b) It proved that ALL that He said was true, John 2:19-22; and, c) To allow forand prove that ALL will be resurrected, 1Cor.15:16-22; Rom.6:5,8ff.
* **“Why did Jesus *ascend back to heaven?”*** *Understanding* is again linked to *purpose.* What did His ascension *accomplish?*  It *returned Him* to *from whence He came-* the Father’s *right hand,* where He could (and does!) *rule* and *reign* over His *kingdom* until the *end of time,* Mark 14:62; 1Cor.15:25; Eph.1:20b-23. His ascension allowed Him to *“prepare a place”* for those that are/become His, John 14:1ff; and also allows Him to *mediate* (1Tim.2:5) and *intercede* before God for them, Rom.8:34; Heb.7:25.
* **“Why will Jesus *come again?”*** To *claim, gather,* and *take to God* those who belong to Him (1Thess.4:16-17a) that they may *“always be with the Lord,* 1Thess.4:17b.

Now, let’s put all of this together in a simpler way: Jesus was *born to die, died to resurrect; resurrected to ascend;* and *ascended to return;* and all of this was so that through Him, **we could be *returned***(our *spirits*) ***to God*** (Jas.4:5) ***dwell with Him for eternity****,* 1Tim.2:4; John 3:17.

When we grasp the ultimate ***purpose***of and through these things, we begin to ***understand* God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit,** and **OURSELVES**- at least our *worth* and *value* to God, and therefore how to live according to *His* purposes rather than our own, and “Why?” we should do so.

Thanks for sticking with me through this feeble attempt to provide some clarity and comprehension. I hope I haven’t made things worse rather than better for you in these regards- but if I have, please forgive and I’ll try to do better next time, Lord willing! (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)