

# Bible Study: Persevering in God's Work

If you will, please give attention to two common words of Scripture:

“So that”

You have undoubtedly read these words hundreds of times, possibly without notice. The phrase occurs nearly one thousand times in the HCSB version of the Bible. The words may seem inconsequential but have become one of my favorite biblical phrases.

The appearance of “so that” in Scripture gives us a divine clue into our “why,” or the reason we follow hard after Jesus and pursue the calling He places on our lives.

I love finding answers to the question of “why” but even more, I adore knowing that God wants us to understand the reasons behind what He asks us to do. That’s an aspect of tenderhearted caring if you ask me.

God doesn’t always say, “Do it because I said so,” although such instances do appear in His Word. Many times, He helps us understand the motive and benefits behind the instruction.

## The Reason Behind the Reason

Declaring our “why” seems quite in vogue as an effective approach to ministry or business, but it’s not a new idea. It was around twenty years ago when a coach first encouraged careful consideration of why I was involved in a home-based business. And long before that, the Word of God emphasized the practice.

Why do we need to know our why?

Because what we do isn’t easy. In fact, it can feel excruciating. There are days when we’ll want to give up. I’ve been there many times - when I momentarily decide all the work and sacrifice just isn’t worth it. On mornings when I’d prefer to stay in bed with my head under the covers, or start glancing through online ads for a “real” job, or begin looking at real estate for sale in Fiji...



# Bible Study: Persevering in God's Work

Maybe you've been there too.

Those are the moments when we need to have a firm grasp on why we do what we do. Knowing our "why" is how we persevere.

Review some mentions of "so that" in Scripture. Highlight "so that," then in the space provided, restate the reason the Holy Spirit provides in your own words. (These passages are from the HCSB):

For this reason also, since the day we hear this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God. Colossians 1:9-10

Re-state the reason below:

"And now I am on my way to Jerusalem, bound in my spirit, not knowing what I will encounter there, except that in town after town the Holy Spirit testifies to me that chains and afflictions are waiting for me. But I count my life of no value to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God's grace. Acts 20:22-24

Re-state the reason below:

Read Matthew 26:40 in your Bible. This passage also contains a "so that," but we'll investigate this one more thoroughly.



# Bible Study: Persevering in God's Work

“Couldn’t you stay awake with Me one hour?” As with many other questions asked by the Lord, Jesus was fully aware of the answer. This question was posed as a follow-up to an instruction given to Peter, James, and John.

In an hour of distress, Jesus told the three to “remain here and stay awake” (v. 37) while He found solitude to pray. When Jesus discovered they were asleep, He posed the **question** along with an **instruction** and a **reason**.

What was the question in Matthew 26:40?

What was the instruction?

What was the reason?

Keep in mind that the Last Supper immediately preceded this scene. Jesus and the disciples left the upper room and went out to the Mount of Olives where Jesus continued his instruction.

In Matthew 26:31 Jesus predicted the fulfillment of prophecy and said, “All of you will run away...”

Peter, being the bold, outspoken man that he was, declared his loyalty and answered, “Even if everyone runs away because of You, I will never run away!” (v. 33).

This provides a little more context to the Lord’s instruction and explanation in verses 37-38.



# Bible Study: Persevering in God's Work

Peter was about to undergo great temptation following his bold affirmation.

Write the words of Jesus in Matthew 26:34 here:

How did Peter respond? (v. 35).

Yet, when Jesus told Peter to stay awake and pray so that he would not enter temptation, the disciple could not keep his eyes open.

What did the Lord find in Matthew 26:43?

Most are familiar with the story of Jesus' betrayal, his trial, and His crucifixion. If you are not, I encourage you to read all of Matthew 26 for context. If you are somewhat familiar, you can follow along with the events here:

When Jesus was arrested, how did the disciples respond in Matthew 26:56?

Peter wanted to see the outcome and followed Jesus, but how does verse 58 depict the manner in which Peter followed?

A servant girl approached Peter as he sat outside the courtyard and identified him as one who was with Jesus. How did Peter respond in verse 70?

Another woman also said Peter was with Jesus. How did Peter respond in verse 72?



# Bible Study: Persevering in God's Work

A third time, Peter was identified as being among the followers of Jesus.

How did he respond in verse 74?

Also in verse 74, immediately a \_\_\_\_\_ crowed. Just as Jesus prophesied.

Write verse 75 in the space below:

Do you believe Peter might have prevented this betrayal? How so?

What value do you place on the “so that” provided by Jesus in Matthew 26:40?

Peter did not have an opportunity to speak with Jesus again before he was crucified. Consider the depth of his despair at having betrayed the Lord who was also a close friend and mentor.

## Final Restoration

God is in the business of restoration. (I'm immensely grateful for that, aren't you?) To tie a bow on this account, read John 21, paying close attention to the interaction between Peter and Jesus.

To recap, how many times did Peter deny Jesus before his death?



# Bible Study: Persevering in God's Work

After the ascension of Christ near the sea of Tiberias, how many times did Jesus ask Peter to declare His love (v. 15, 16 17)?

Scholars believe this three-fold question was Peter's full and complete restoration into ministry. Peter denied three times and the Lord provided three opportunities to declare his devotion. What a beautiful demonstration of the fullness of His grace.

Our "why" is important. Sometimes Jesus provides the reason behind our calling through His Word. Sometimes, He seals it on our hearts and reveals it through the power of the Holy Spirit. Either way, God will not instruct anything that is contrary to the Scriptures. Any promptings we receive from the Holy Spirit will always line up with the Bible. Always.

Our obedience demonstrates our love to God. It reveals His glory to a lost and hurting world. Our obedience also brings blessing and reward. Since walking in obedience and fulfilling our purpose is vital in our ministry to the Lord, knowing our "why" and persevering through trials is fundamental.

Peter went through a heartbreaking and humbling experience of betrayal, yet went on to serve the Lord with power and might. We will struggle as we pursue our purpose, but we must stand firm and walk in steadfast obedience, too. Knowing our reason, our "so that," our why, will fuel our determination and help us press on toward the goal.

## **My prayer for you:**

May the Lord clarify and solidify your calling while removing any doubt that the enemy may project into your life. As your purpose comes into focus, may He help you prioritize your activities and plan your time to serve as a bridge between your ideas and your actions. And as you move to action, may you always know the reason behind your work. May the Holy Spirit use that reason as the wind in your sails so that the good works that God prepared for you to do will demonstrate your faith in Jesus Christ, our Messiah. May He use you to shine His light to a dark and hurting world in Jesus' name.

