

## **Purpose**

By,

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“One time in my life I felt that, what was my purpose?”(Kevin Levrone) Sophomore year of my high school career, in the height of covid, everything was in a downhill spiral for me. My grades, emotions, friendships, and health, I had gotten broken up with. Everything was simply spiraling downhill. I was just sick of this life cycle I was in. Questioning what I should do with my life, I had an experience that was something straight out of a movie. I had taken a good look at myself in the mirror one fateful evening and I thought this is not what life is all about, it can't be. Now when this happened it was the end of sophomore year. It was like just overnight I had a complete mindset reset. More realistically it was over the course of a few months that I really made changes. I am sure there are many people going through something similar to the situation I was in, and many of them would like to get out of it. Which will take time, effort, sacrifice, and a lot of dedication.

The first thing I realized during that evening was that everything I had been doing was not fulfilling. Especially during a breakup it is very easy to fall into quick and easy distractions that will ultimately hurt us. Which I had done, at that time I had no appetite to eat, so all of my first 6 months of lifting I had lost from not eating. I distracted myself by spending countless hours playing video games late into the night. Which then led me to fall asleep in all of my classes, my grades dropping significantly. I disconnected from all of my friends for a decent amount of time.

The first step of making your way out of this type of situation is realizing you're in it. I

realized what I was doing to myself and what it was doing to me. I was almost back to what I looked like when I started lifting. I was unfulfilled by trying to fill this hole within me from trying to get as much dopamine as I could a day by video games. Somehow in some miraculous way this time aligned with the release of Robert Pattinson's Batman movie, which one of my friends reached out to me and invited me to go see it with him. And it inspired me to honestly become Batman in some way. Just how focused he was on his mission, and how he was doing it all alone made me able to relate to him. At the beginning of the movie, he is this symbol of fear and vengeance, which resonated with me. That next morning I hung up the punching bag and picked back up my kick-boxing gloves, got my appetite back and started lifting again. Went back to my old mma gym, and decided to commit to having a kickboxing match within the next year or so. However all of this was mainly just fueled by anger and frustration.

So that was all I did for a while, just using the anger as fuel. I was training and getting stronger. But still I wasn't happy, I was not fulfilled. Which I thought that for some reason I did not deserve to be. At this time I thought I was a Christian, but I only had Christ in my head, not my heart. I didn't realize that for a long time. I continued to train. Training for me didn't make me happy, but it distracted me from the weight in my chest, and gave me a feeling of self pride, and purpose. Ultimately I think it was not the worst way in which I dealt with these feelings of brokenheartedness, but definitely not the best. Afterall martial arts teaches you many very valuable lessons, such as discipline and sacrificing to achieve goals. In the context of self improvement those two things are two of the biggest components of actually improving yourself both physically and mentally.

But even when you get physically and mentally strong it will not fulfill you. I was at what I thought to be my peak after a solid year of training every single day. I was approaching my first

fight, which was more of a scrimmage, but they kept score so you knew if you won or not. And I ended up coming very prepared and beat my opponent pretty easily I thought. At that moment all of the work I had put in had paid off and for the first time in a long time I had felt happy, maybe even fulfilled. However the days after that moment, after that giant hit of dopamine from victory, everything feels the exact opposite. Falling back into my pit of darkness I began to question if that was just how life would go, go through a storm of negative emotions, to overcome and then go back to feeling the same way again. If it was something that truly fulfilled you it would have lasted more than just a day. Even one of the greatest boxers of all time Tyson Fury, attempted suicide after he won multiple championships. Which that got me thinking of what it is that might make someone happy, if someone like Tyson Fury would even think about suicide.

At this time the show Vinland Saga came out, which like the Batman movie, I felt in some way I could relate to the main character. This time being Thorfinn. Who went out to war with his father, and shortly after they set sail his father was killed in a duel, in a very inhumane, unfair way. Thorfinn felt vengeful and angry. The amount of people he had killed in war to try and get his revenge on Askalad was truly evil. Which in a way, not quite to the extent of Thorfinn, was what I was doing. I was trying to hurt people(in the ring) in a very angry and vengeful manner, expecting it to somehow make me feel satisfied, like I had won in the end.

A couple months went by after my first fight, and I was getting ready for the second one. I went into that same negative mental headspace again, to get myself to just want to hurt my opponent, I didn't even care about winning, I just wanted to hurt him. I didn't even know this guy, but I wanted to take out all of my anger on him. Luckily he was a skilled adversary who had more of a gas tank than me, so after I gassed myself out just trying to hurt him, he was able to come back and win in the third. But I mention this as it lined up at the same time as Vinland

Saga's second season coming out. In this second season, Thorfinn is being haunted by all of the people he's killed in his past, and realizes that this solved nothing. The most notable quote from Thorfinn at that time was him saying "I have no enemies, no one does, no one in this world deserves to be hurt." That hit me more than anything because it was true. That Sunday after I had that fight I went to church for the first time in awhile. Which they had touched on one verse that lined up with exactly what I had been dealing with that night before Matthew 5:22 "Anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder." After that fight I felt as guilty as if I did murder somebody. I looked at him as if I wanted to.

Which really solidified that God is real for me. This is really where my self improvement began. A very big step of self improvement is to ask for help. Which was something I had never done until then. I didn't try to talk about my feelings, I just thought the best way to deal with them was to bottle them up then let them all out on someone. I had Christ in my head, but never decided to try and talk to Him. I finally did, and just felt all of the weight on my shoulders lifted off of me. I was no longer weighed down by this past self of mine, but I was a new creation in Christ. Similar to the ending of The Batman where he beats the villain and receives some character development, realizing that the people don't need this symbol of fear, what they need is hope. I began to think that way as well, becoming a beacon of hope for people. To do that is to live a lifestyle in a way that gives off a sense of hope and purpose. Which ultimately is what has improved myself more than anything.

A few months after this fight I decided to get baptized. The Bible tells us that when we get baptized we are a new creation in Christ. With being a new creation that takes lifestyle changes. There is a lot of wisdom in the Bible, which kind of touches on working hard and not being lazy. But I think a very simple framework on how to really begin this self improvement is

to wake up, and be grateful for that fact. The Bible teaches us that whatever we do, we should do it for the Glory of God. Which I think that really limits the amount of activities you should do, which for the most part are self destructive. The Bible also tells us to honor our bodies because they are the temple of the Holy Spirit, so I think that going to the gym, and taking care of yourself are very important things to prioritize. And when you begin to prioritize those things I have found not only is it fulfilling, but your overall mental, and physical health are on an incline.