

What Now?

Have You Ever Faced a Crisis Where You Asked, “What Now?”

Several years ago Mary Jo and I were suddenly awakened in the middle of the night. Our son Ben, who was much younger, slept in a small bed in our room. He was writhing violently and his eyeballs were rolled up into his head. In a panic, we called 9-11 because we did not know what to do. It turned out that he had a seizure and when I met with the emergency room doctor after he told me what Ben had suffered, I wondered, “What now?” What do we do now? It was the most frightening time in my life, and I had no answers on how to move forward. Perhaps you have had a “what now” moment. You have lost your job. You studied hard for a test in a class you desperately needed to do well in but you didn’t pass it. A relationship ended suddenly and you didn’t know how you would go on with your life. You found out you have cancer or glaucoma. Your child was acting out at school, and no one knew what to do. You wrecked your car and you didn’t know how you would get to work. Some “what now” moments are life changing because of how dramatically they affect you and others are not quite so big but still leave you dumbfounded. You burn the dinner, you catch COVID, you are paycheck to paycheck and get an unexpected bill, your car breaks down, you are late for a job interview. What now moments arrive without warning and some of them can be devastating, others perplexing and disturbing. A what now moment is when you don’t know what to do and Google search or ChatGPT don’t have what it takes to get the answer you need. The disciples faced what now moments just like you have and they discovered the key to rising above them. We shall look at what the Bible offers as a way of overcoming the certain defeat those moments seem to present. Our big idea today is, At your what now moment, with your “all I’ve got” faith, go to God and He will work it out for you.

Early in Jesus’ ministry, the disciples were still getting used to Jesus and what He was capable of accomplishing. They had witnessed several signs that revealed He was the Messiah, but they still did not see the complete picture of His power or what He had come to do. Here is a what now moment Philip, a disciple of Jesus, faced. **Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Feast was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?”** (John 6: 1-5 NIV) What would you have said if you were Philip? Philip was stumped. **Philip answered him, “Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”** (John 6: 7 NIV) Philip clearly did not have a clue what to do. It was then that Andrew jumped into the conversation and what he said gives us deep insight into the dilemma of what now. **Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”** (John 6: 8-9 NIV) Notice the perplexity in Andrew. It is of course a very odd attempt at solving the problem of feeding a great crowd of thousands. But it illustrates perfectly a frequently seen phenomenon. It is “all I’ve got” faith. Philip’s faith was certainly pretty small and Andrew’s was not much either but a bit more than Philip’s. Both were about to witness a miracle, an answer to the “what now” dilemma. Philip had nothing to offer Jesus in response to the problem, not even a simple comment about Jesus doing something miraculous. Andrew had the information about the boy and his barley loaves and fish but not much confidence Jesus could do anything with it. Yet with just “all I’ve got” faith, both disciples experienced a great miracle. All four Gospels describe this miracle, as Jesus took those five small barley loaves and two fish and miraculously fed the great crowd of over 4,000 people. It was not the size of the “all I’ve got” faith of the disciples that fueled this work of God, it was the generosity and power of God that generated an answer to “what now”.

Sometimes we fly through the account of the crucifixion and resurrection as if they were just one event. They are very much not and for the disciples in the midst of each, the psychological effect was stunningly different. Just days before Jesus was arrested and then crucified, the disciples had an idea in mind how things would go for them. At least James and John, and maybe all the disciples were dreaming of the power they would wield when Jesus became King of kings. They were by this point convinced Jesus was the Messiah, and as such, would usher in God’s kingdom. No more Roman rule. No more begging for food or scrounging for clothes. They would be rulers and each one dreamed he would be second in command to Christ. Then it all collapsed. Every dream they had was crushed as they watched Jesus get beaten unmercifully and then stripped and in terrible humiliation hung up on the cross. The Bible tells us that after Jesus died, the disciples scattered and went into hiding. It was the most devastating “what now” moment in their lives. They certainly had no answers at that point. Each disciple had given up what he had to follow Jesus so what

now? The women too who had followed Jesus sacrificially and helped fund His work were left weeping and wrecked psychologically. What now? Friday and then on to Saturday were the hours when faith became meaningless, when hope in God slipped away and when there were no answers to what now. It was the end of the world as they knew it and Jesus' followers were in shambles. We know now what was coming but on that Saturday afternoon after Jesus' body was taken down from the cross there were no answers, no directions, no promises they were claiming. Despite the fact that they all knew about resurrection and the raising of the dead, resurrection theology was far from them then. "What now?" is a universally asked question and even the disciples and the faithful women who followed Jesus were in despair as they asked it over and over.

If you have not faced it, it is not pessimism to note that you will. You will, or most likely already have asked, "what now?" just as Peter and James and John and Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus did, Just as Philip did and so did Andrew. The Bible provides a step to take when you ask, "what now?" and it is so simple that it can be completely missed. In the book of wisdom we call Proverbs, there is a direction to take. **Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.** (Proverbs 3: 5-6 NIV) We have here the Bible's answer to the question, "What now?" These two verses are often misunderstood though for this reason. Many see it as a Bible promise for super spiritual Christians. It is because they don't get the point of it. Trust in the Lord with all your heart means this. Whatever faith you have, bring it to the Lord and he will figure out things for you. The disciples before the resurrection had almost no faith but that was what they were to bring to God then as they mourned the loss of Jesus. Philip and Andrew had almost no faith when the great crowd needed food but that was the faith they were to bring to God. "All I've got" faith is the faith you need to see your life changed.

When you have a "what now?" moment, God says He will make your path straight if you trust Him and not yourself. That means He will guide you in what is next. He will take the circumstances you face and make them work out for your good. Notice something about the situation of both the disciples before the resurrection and Andrew and Philip before Jesus fed the crowd. They did not do anything to solve the problem they faced. Jesus multiplied the fish and the loaves and fed the crowd. Jesus was raised from the dead, and He came to them in Jerusalem. None of these people who asked "what now" solved the problem. It was God who made their paths straight. It was God who figured it out for them. You may not have much faith, you may not even have any faith but with whatever faith you have or don't have, go to God and He will make your path straight. He will give you a direction to take, a way to solve the problem, the resources you need, the relationship that will turn your life around, the plan. Here is the instant response when you come to a "what now moment". It may in fact be right now. Take the "all I've got" faith and speak this prayer to the God who will figure out things for you. "Lord my problem is too big for me. I give it to you. You know what to do." Say this the moment you realize your problem is too big, at your "what now" moment. Our big idea today is, At your what now moment, with your "all I've got" faith, go to God and He will work it out for you. Imagine how much peace and contentment there would be if each person you know prays this simple prayer when they have their what now moment. Imagine what peace you can have if you take your problems and your "all I've got" faith to Christ and He makes your path straight.