

## WHAT IF #12...THE FINAL EPISODE

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This is the last “What If...of Evangelism” article that will be in the newsletter. I am going to continue to write a monthly article for the newsletter, but it will vary in topic and theme and not necessarily be related to Evangelism. So this being the last “What If...” I wanted to talk about something that many people overlook and don’t talk about: doubt in evangelism.

One of my favourite passages of Scripture is Matthew 28:16-20: The Great Commission (you probably aren’t surprised that this is one of the Evangelism and Discipleship Pastor’s favourite passages). In fact, what I love most about this passage of Scripture is the half that seems to be missing in most quotations and discussions on it. Most people quote the second half, verses 18-20, all the time but few people quote verses 16-17.

“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”(Matthew 28:16-17)

It is verse 16-17 that I think give the context for verses 18-20:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”” (Matthew 28:18-20)

I was in a class recently when someone reminded me of these verses and it made me reflect again on this passage of Scripture. I love it because it is written in a context of eleven real guys with real pasts, real fears and real doubts (yes doubts), even though they had seen the risen Christ and touched his hands and feet. These were the eleven men of God that Jesus gave this commission to. I don’t know about you but that brings hope to me. Hope that in my doubts, and yes I have doubts, and in my weaknesses and frailties I am still called by God to fulfill the mission he gave us. Jesus didn’t give the Great Commission to perfect, unwavering, sinless people, but he gave it to eleven men, that after all they had seen, still struggled with doubt.

Let me take that one step further, or sideways if you will. I think that as we see in this passage, doubt and worship don’t have to be opposites, but can co-exist. Do you believe that you can doubt and worship God? Do you believe that even if you are questioning something about faith, about God or about Scriptures, you can still worship? Matthew tells us that he and his ten friends did. They were on a mountain worshipping the risen Jesus and some of them doubted. For me that brings hope that God is big enough for doubt, and in my opinion, true faith comes through struggles and questions. True faith isn’t about suppressing our doubts but about being real and honest with them – and about continuing to seek truth while doubting.

Back to evangelism...it is in this situation of doubting worshippers that Jesus gives the Great Commission: to go, and while going, to make disciples of all nations... It is in that context of doubt and worship that the disciples are given the command to make disciples. As you and I live out that commission we need to hold to the truth that even in the face and midst of doubt we are called to live out the Great Commission. In those times of doubts the last phrase of this passage comes into a whole new meaning:

**“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:20b)

*Like always, this article is meant to promote thought and discussion and if you disagree, it resonated with you, or you were challenged, please feel free to let me know. I am always open to talking - feel free to call, drop in, go for coffee or email me (bryce@devonalliancechurch.ca).*