

What If? Why Not!

Part I – What If?

I. There's something about a new year that gives us renewed optimism. I love the blank slate that's associated with a new year! All those goals I had last year or changes I was hoping to make, I've got a new shot at it starting January 1. Maybe like me, you can be a bit of a dreamer. I tend to live in my head a lot and I love to dream, and I really enjoy pondering questions that begin with:

A. [Slide]: What If?

What if I ran a marathon this year? What if I stopped eating fast food? What if I got another degree? What if.... Such a fun question! If you have a 'what if' for 2022, share it with us! That would be fun!

1. I've also been asking some 'what if's' for us as Tab Church. Some of you might be tuning in for the first time and if so, thank you!! I'm so glad you're here! I'm going to share a what if I've been praying and dreaming about as it pertains to Tab Church and it's about you and me living into the vision God has given us a church. God is doing a distinct work through Tab. There are so many great churches, but God is doing something exciting and unique through Tab and it's not about what's happening in the four walls of a building but about God empowering His people to be active in His story and participate in changing lives for Jesus Christ!
 - a. Our culture at large says to get what you can, when you can, as much as you can! On the outside that sounds pretty good, but the problem is that it's a trap. Our lives aren't intended to revolve around us and when they do, we tend to get frustrated. I've got this thing I wanted. Why am I still not happy? The Christian life flips that idea on its end and says this:

Mark 8:35 (CSB) [Slide]: 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it.

- b. Jesus says that we find life (meaning and purpose) when we give our lives away for the sake of His cause. It's a totally different view on living than what the world would say. What if we weren't just known as "Go Getters" but "Go Givers?" Our natural inclination is to pull tight, but life is found when we live our lives open handed before God.
2. As I've been talking today, you may have been asking yourself, "why is Pastor Craig and the team not in the building today?" It's a great question. Just like our individual lives, the gravitational pull of churches, even Tab Church, is to have a disproportionate focus on what happens in a building. Programs, events, worship services, bible studies, etc. The building matters and what happens in the building matters. It's a special place in which we as a people of God connect with God in a unique way. But the gravitational pull will always be in the direction of becoming unbalanced where church becomes equivalent to a building, and we compartmentalize our religion to events that happen at a given time throughout the week.

B. As I've looked toward a new year, I've asked myself the question:

[Slide]: What if we took a drastic stride in our collective vision?

1. If you're new or checking out Tab today, this is an open invitation. You can make a difference in the vision and here's what it is:

[Slide]: We exist to help the 1.7 million in Hampton Roads discover their story in the context of God's global purpose.
2. This isn't about one morning a week, but a movement of God! This is about us as a people of God leveraging what we have, not to get what we can but give what we can to make a difference in the lives of others. What we do in the building is vital, but it serves as a charging station to be empowered and "Go! Make Disciples!"
3. If we're going to take a drastic stride in our collective vision this year, we've got to be reminded that God is on the move from Norfolk to the nations and our task is to be aware of what He's doing and join Him! God is not confined to a church building and in fact often moves in miraculous ways in areas we may classify as

mundane. Or in ways that we've already written off. "God could never change that person or that situation?" Oh yes, He can! Let's consider an example in Mark 2.

Mark 2:1-5 (CSB) [Slide]: 1 When he entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 So many people gathered together that there was no more room, not even in the doorway, and he was speaking the word to them. 3 They came to him bringing a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and after digging through it, they lowered the mat on which the paralytic was lying. 5 Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

a. Mark 2 is early in Jesus's ministry. He's gone out for a time but has returned to His home base of Capernaum. There're some Pharisees mixed in the crowd but for the most part these are folks that are familiar and comfortable with Jesus. Why? Jesus is in His house and suddenly finds Himself packed in like a can of sardines. The crowd has become so comfortable with each other and so dense that they've lost awareness of what's happening beyond the circle. I don't believe these people had ill intentions of keeping a paralytic away from Jesus they've just lost their awareness because of the crowd.

b. What if we took a drastic stride in our collective vision? One of the greatest challenges we must overcome is the natural pull to lose our awareness on what's taking place beyond the circle! There are comfortable places in which we can be ourselves and that's a great thing! I hope Tab Church is a place like that for many of us, but no matter what circles we're a part of, at one time we were all on the outside looking in. An easy way to make a difference in the lives of others is simply by being aware of those who are on the outside looking in. There's a neighbor, coworker, maybe someone you've recently met at church that feels like they're on the outside looking in. Let's make it a point to get to know their story. A sense of belonging is so powerful!

3. There were four guys in Capernaum that were looking beyond the circle and they were willing to do whatever it took to get their friend to Jesus. They weren't going to let the crowd get in the way or a roof for that matter. They had focus and wouldn't be deterred. If we're going to take a drastic stride in our collective vision, we've got to go all out in our belief that the connection that matters most is one's connection with Jesus and we'll do whatever it takes to make that connection happen. We have a Core Value that says:

[Slide]: We Clear the Path to Jesus!

a. There's a whole range of things that can block the path to Jesus and one of those things can be an inwardly focused crowd that has their backs turned on those who have yet to come. It's not that the 4 friends weren't focused on Jesus too. They were! They just weren't going to leave their friend behind. God give us a passion that intense for those who are yet to come!

b. Presumably these friends were bringing the paralytic to be healed physically, but the first words out of Jesus's mouth shocked everyone in the room! Looking down at the paralytic Jesus turns and says:

[Slide]: "Son, your sins are forgiven."

4. If we're going to make drastic strides in our collective vision, we remember our greatest purpose is to simply point others to Jesus. He alone can heal the disease of:

[Slide]: Sin

a. There are some things only Jesus can fix! It's not that physical needs don't matter. Jesus demonstrated a compassion for people, especially those suffering from physical ailments, but there's something important here in the way Jesus looked upon the man and first and foremost dealt with his sin issue. Every other ailment is temporal; how we handle our sin ailment is eternal and that job has been given to Jesus Christ alone! If you've never trusted Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, please do so today! When we respond in faith the response is still the same for us: "Your sins are forgiven."

C. What if we made a drastic stride in our collective vision in 2022? I'm convinced if we remain aware of those who are beyond the circle, outside of the crowd, we clear the path to Jesus to extend His invitation for the forgiveness of sins, then we'll see many people discover their story in the context of God's global purpose. We have a big vision and praise God for that! What we do inside the walls of the church is so vital, but it can't be limited to there. God is moving from Norfolk to the nations, and we want to join Him in helping others discover their story in the context of God's global purpose.

D. I hope you have a wonderful New Year this Saturday and next Sunday I hope you'll join us online or in person. Today we've been looking at the question:

[Slide]: What If?

II. Come back next week when we'll consider the question:

A. [Slide]: Why Not?

Happy New Year! I'll see you then. Bye-Bye!