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The Roads Best Travelled Part Thirty-five

The Road from Olive Mountain(Based on Acts 1:12-26)

How often have you found yourself saying "Now what?"

It is a question that signifies a variety of circumstances. Just after a major project or event, the room has been cleared, the equipment has been put away and the participants have gone home - "Now what?"

A deal has been done, the contracts have been signed, the lawyers have finished and the parties are satisfied -"Now what?"

A contract has ended, the clients brief has been met, the deliverables have been delivered - "Now what?"

Your contract has been terminated, your redundancy payment has been agreed, and you've cleared your desk - "Now what?"

This question can follow a great high or a depressing low. It can occur after the valley or the mountain. It is particularly common for those who are sole traders, self-employed or contract workers.

Such was the question on the road from Olive Mountain . A group of fifteen or so are walking very slowly along a three quarter mile road. Eleven of the original disciples and a number of others including the faithful and courageous women are now reflecting on the most mind-blowing three years of their lives. Their reflections would include calmed storms, one hundred and eighty gallons of wine, eyes opened, ears unplugged, dead people walking and paralysed people freed. Words with extreme power, coupled with an authority that no one could match, were still ringing in their ears. A hideous death, a return and now a disappearance from the mountain top.

But I suspect that most would remember the secret moments, the small things and the fact that they had been friends with Him when God walked on the Earth. No one knew Him longer or had more memories than Mary. So with exhilaration and deflation they all share the "Now what?" moment.

It would be nearly two weeks before anything spectacular happened again, but they did not know that. They were in the in between, the becalmed, confusing and perplexing state which characterizes so many.

It might be worth observing what they did. They no doubt carried on eating, drinking, fishing a little, and talking a lot. But there are only three things which are considered worthy of recording for our benefit.

First, they joined together. When you are in a "Now what?" moment,

it is not good to stay alone. Of course there are times for solitude and reflection but these people deliberately joined together with each other because the truth of the matter is that only this group could understand this particular experience. So consider asking yourself who you should join together with. Who really understands my experiences because they share them? Who should I reconnect with?

Second, they prayed. They will have walked and talked and eaten, but their constant activity was prayer. This was one default reaction they had learnt from their now absent leader. Many have observed that there are two great miracles surrounding prayer. The first miracle is that through prayer ordinary people can connect with the power of the universe Himself. The second and greater miracle is that knowing this we don't do it. How do you handle a "Now what?" – direct the question to the I AM.

The third thing they did was to replace their lost team member. They had figured that Jesus wanted a team of twelve, so they decided to put the team back together to prepare for whatever lay ahead even though they didn't know what. In doing so they did their best to prepare themselves for the next stage.

This preparation involved study, discussion, further prayer and some decision making. If you are in a "Now what?" moment, it is well worth asking what you could do to prepare yourself, complete yourself, or develop yourself. You may well need to study, to retreat, to fast, to plan, to discuss and pray. But preparing for nothing is not generally wise.

In all these ways this small group waited for whatever the promised baptism of fire was going to be. They were as ready as possible but I doubt even they, in their wildest dreams, or most daring visions had anticipated what actually happened. God's "Now whats?" are always worth waiting for – but don't expect a quiet life.

Work well,

Geoff Shattock

If you would like some help reviewing your life, work or career path, we offer one-to-one coaching sessions for just such purposes. Please email comms@worknetuk.org for details.

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Here is some Biblical background for this week's Wake Up Call

Acts 1:12-26 Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

12Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk[a] from the city. 13When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

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15In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) 16and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus— 17he was one of our number and shared in this ministry."

18(With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. 19Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

20"For," said Peter, "it is written in the book of Psalms, " 'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' and, " 'May another take his place of leadership.' 21Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

23So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. 24Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen 25to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." 26Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

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Also remember to have a look at the Bible sections for the biblical background to your Wake Up Call

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