

**So What's Next?**

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I'm very sure we have all been in a state of "What's Next?" However, before we develop our own conclusions of this particular phrase, which I think is simple, I know there are times that we will not all come up with the same conclusion. (Trust me, it has been proven in some of our action during these meetings!) But I would like to give my exegetical analysis of this phrase, a critical explanation or interpretation of this statement "What's Next?"

I believe "so what's next?" would refer to: After completing a certain task there is other work or other things to do. I believe there is always something next. Allow me to give a few examples from our everyday lives to help us understand this phrase. "Now that we are married... **what's next?**" "Now that we have had children, **what's next?**" "Now that we have purchased a home, **what's next?**"

Examples in our Conference: Now that we have come to the end of our 'Aha Pae'āina... **what's next?** We have done the work of the Iki... **what's next?** We've done the work of the Makua. We have allowed our roots to grow deep in God's Grace. We have learned to sing a new song in a new land. Our youth have helped us understand love. We have learned to live below the green line. We have elected new leadership for our conference. And we have elected a new conference minister. **So what's next?** We have seven strategic initiatives set in front of us and an eighth one to be developed. **So what's next?**

You see, life is full of "So what's next?" and I believe, being a church of Jesus Christ, we must always have the mindset of "So what's next?" as we build the body of Christ. There should always be a **what's next**. In the church, times are everchanging... but we serve a God that never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore. Therefore, it is my belief that there should always be a "what's next" mindset in the building up of God's kingdom. We can't live in the past even though the past gives us fond memories, because the past only gives us great comfort to stay where we are. I believe we have to **choose to live in the "what's next" or die in the "what was."**

So, my sisters and brothers, we see that we find ourselves full of "So what's next?" Even as we look throughout the Bible we can find many heroes with a *so-what's-next* attitude. Take a look at Moses when he is out tending his father-in-law's herd. He finds himself on a mountain watching a bush burn and not being consumed, hearing a voice from the bush telling him to go and tell the pharaoh to let his people go! I'm sure after Moses hears this voice he says, "So

what's next?" Abram hearing God tell him to go to a land unknown to him, just go! And God says, I will let you know when you get there. When Abram gets there, I'm sure he says to God, "So what's next?" David after he killed Goliath, I'm sure he says, "So what's next?" When he was appointed king, "So what's next?" Mary finding herself pregnant with a child by the Holy Spirit, "So what's next?"

You see, my brothers and sisters, "**what's next**" is all around us! There is no difference with the disciples and the other followers of Jesus, as they followed him witnessing the many miracles... as he turned water into wine—I'm sure some of them liked that miracle! As he healed a blind man, made the lame walk, healed Jairus' daughter, cured a woman with a medical issue for 12 long years... "So what's next?" When he goes to a graveyard and calls Lazarus to come out from the grave, I'm sure they were all in awe saying, "So what's next?"

As we look at Paul's prayer one more time before we leave this 'Aha Pae'āina, hearing this prayer, we should be asking the Holy Spirit **so what's next?!!!** Paul's prayer, from his glorious, unlimited resources, is that God will empower us with inner strength through His Holy Spirit. Then it is his prayer that Christ will make his home in our hearts as we trust in him. That our roots will grow deep down into God's love and keep us strong. And may we have the power to understand, as all of God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.

May we all experience the love of Christ, even though sometimes it is too great to understand fully. Then all of us will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. **So what's next** for us, the Hawai'i Conference of the United Church of Christ? Are we going to pick up the banner and run and see what God has for us? Or are we going to die in the "what was"?

Just know this, Church. No matter what we are facing in our tomorrow for our conference, just know that God knows where we are and what we are facing. He loves us and wants you to have peace that goes beyond understanding. If God can speak to the sea when the billows are tossing high, when the sky is shadowed with blackness, when there is no shelter or help in sight, and the winds and the waves of the storm toss the sea, just know that He can bring peace to our troubled souls! So as we enter into this newness of our Conference, each of us must put our trust in God, who allowed his son, Jesus, to overcome death and be risen from the grave. **SO WHAT'S NEXT?!!!**