



## Wednesday Prayer

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany – “What if...”

**"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the king of Israel!" Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." John 1:48-49**

In my four decades in the mental health field, I have held many positions. One common title that was inherent to my work was “mandated reporter” for any type of child abuse that occurred within our society, including sex trafficking. Any time I heard about anyone mistreating anyone else in my work, or even on my own time, I was *bound by law* to look into the incident to see if a complaint was warranted, and how to best handle the situation.

One circumstance that occurred with alarming regularity was one party reporting another person for a serious violation of law (and ethics!) and then saying to me, “I don’t want to get this person in trouble. I just wanted to tell someone about it.” My response was quick but measured, to maintain my *other* requirement of protecting data privacy for all. I call it the “What if” strategy. “*What if*,” I would say, “you are not the first to report this individual’s behavior, and *the very next time* someone registers a complaint against this same person, serious action would be taken to stop the behavior or make the person go away or both?” Many times the person would decide to move forward with an investigation, hopefully ending with a solution that helped them and made the community safer and more comfortable for all.

Raising the “What if” question can help us and those in our congregations move past our fear of speaking out about child sexual exploitation and trafficking. “I just keep my head down and don’t report anything I see,” people say, or “It’s not my business.” When people do report things and are open to getting involved, we often call those people heroes. Concerned bystanders who speak up may save someone’s life! [\[5 Ds of Bystander Intervention\]](#)

Jesus promised Nathanael that he would see “greater things” than even Jesus had demonstrated. If you are reading the Wednesday Prayers, you already know something about how to spot a young person who may have fallen victim to a nefarious operator. Have courage that God will help *you* perform “greater things” by asking, “*What if* you have been duped into doing what a dishonest person wants? Wouldn’t you want to help make that person stop what they are doing and hopefully go away?” The results might surprise you.

**Lord of Justice, you said we would do “greater things” in your name than even you did on earth. Grant us the discernment and the strength to speak up for what is right and change lives in the process. Amen.**

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