A dream
WORTH BUILDING

week 8
group study guide

this week's big idea

God assured Zerubbabel the temple would be finished not by might or power but by his Spirit, working through the servants he called.

getting started

Think of a job you started that turned out to be bigger than you expected: a renovation, a degree, a project at work, raising a family. What kept you going, or what made you want to quit?

in the text

Read Zechariah 4:1–14 aloud together. If time allows, begin with 3:1–5, the vision Zechariah saw just before this one.

Observation

1. Count the questions in this chapter (vv. 2, 4, 5, 11, 12, 13). Who asks them, and what does Zechariah keep admitting he doesn't know?

2. Describe the lampstand and the two olive trees (vv. 2–3, 12). In the tabernacle, the priests had to keep the lamps supplied with oil every evening (Leviticus 24:1–4). Where does this lamp get its oil?

3. Verses 7 and 10 name two obstacles: a "mighty mountain" and people who "despise the day of small things." What does God promise about each one?

4. The Subject Question on Sunday was “What will it take to complete God’s work?” God’s first answer is verse 6: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit.” Read Haggai 2:5 and Psalm 127:1. When God’s work feels too big, what strength are you most tempted to lean on instead?

5. The capstone is the stone that completes the building (v. 7). Read Psalm 118:22–23, then Mark 12:10–11 and 1 Peter 2:4–7. Who is “the stone the builders rejected,” and what does it mean that the one who finishes God’s work is the stone they threw away?

6. “Who despises the day of small things?” (v. 10). Some had looked at the new foundation and said it seemed “like nothing” (Haggai 2:3). Where are you tempted to dismiss something small that God has started, in you, your family or your church? Read Philippians 1:6. How does it speak to that?

7. On Sunday we said the two olive trees are the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the ones the oil pours from (v.14). Zechariah had to ask three times and still didn't see himself in the vision. Why do we so often miss the part God has given us? Now read Zechariah 8:9: those who heard the prophets were told, "Let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built." Whose hands are being called on now?

8. Read Matthew 5:14–16 and Romans 12:11. Think in three circles: your own lamp, the lamps serving beside you, and the lampstand of your campus (Revelation 1:20). Where is God calling you to serve, and what is one step you will take this week?

handiwork prayer

This prayer practice reflects on relationships and gives opportunity for many prayer disciplines such as adoration, confession, intercession, and more. The time of prayer takes place in three movements, where group members contribute at each stage with brief 1-3 sentence prayers:

1. Up – directing our attention to the Lord. In this movement, we direct our attention to relationship with God. (ex. "God you are good, and your love endures forever! I am so thankful that you call me your friend, Jesus. I praise you for all your works are holy and good; nothing can thwart your plans.")

2. In – directing our attention to the relationships we have with ourselves and one another in the body of Christ. In this movement, group members take turns offering a variety of things in prayer: appreciation, love, confession of sin, renewal, thanksgiving, et al.
3. Out – directing our attention to relationships with people we know who have yet to put their trust in Jesus. In this movement, group members intercede for people by name (family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, etc.), helping orient all of us on the very important need to share the gospel and our faith stories with others.

notes on the text

1. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit" (v. 6). Together the two words cover every kind of human strength: physical, military, economic and moral (Boda). The first word often means an army, and Judah had none (Meyers & Meyers).
2. "The day of small things" (v. 10). The phrase appears only here. Boda links it to Haggai 2:3 and to the day the foundation was laid, when the old men wept while others shouted for joy (Ezra 3:12–13).
3. "The two who are anointed" (v. 14). Literally "the two sons of oil." The word for oil is never used for anointing; the trees supply the oil rather than receive it. Many read the two as Joshua and Zerubbabel. Boda and Petterson argue they are the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, who "stand by the Lord" as prophets stood in God's council to hear his word.

Background

Zechariah was a prophet working alongside Haggai; Ezra names them together (Ezra 5:1–2; 6:14). This vision came on the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month in the second year of Darius (Zechariah 1:7), in mid-February 519 BC, two months to the day after the temple's foundation was laid (Haggai 2:18). It is one of a series of night visions (Zechariah 1:7–6:8).

In the vision just before this one (chapter 3), Joshua the high priest stands in filthy clothes, and God removes them: "See, I have taken away your sin." Chapter 4 turns to Zerubbabel, the governor and a descendant of King David, who was responsible for the construction. The temple was finished about four years later (Ezra 6:14–15)