

Small Group Guide: EZRA & The Value of "Small" Things in God's Eyes



Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by asking God to help you see things from His eternal perspective and to value what He values, not what the world values.

Icebreaker Question

Share about a time when something you thought was insignificant turned out to be more important than you realized.

Key Scripture References

- Ezra 1:1-5
- Ezra 4:21-24
- Ezra 5:1-2
- Haggai 2:3, 9, 23

Sermon Summary

The people of Israel rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem but were discouraged because it didn't match Solomon's temple in glory. Yet God declared this "lesser" temple would be greater because Jesus would walk through it. The sermon reminds us that God's perspective on significance differs radically from the world's—what seems small or inadequate to us may be exactly what God uses for His greatest purposes.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **What discouraged the Israelites from completing the temple initially?** How did external pressure and internal disappointment work together to halt their progress?
2. **Why did the people view the rebuilt temple as "nothing" compared to Solomon's temple?** What were they measuring it against?
3. **How did God respond to their disappointment through the prophet Haggai?** What promise did He make about this "lesser" temple?

Personal Reflection

4. **When have you felt like something you did for God wasn't "good enough"?** What standards were you measuring yourself against?
5. **The sermon mentioned Ananias, Barnabas, and an unnamed usher as examples of "small" roles with huge impact.** Can you think of someone who played a seemingly small role in your faith journey but made a significant difference?

6. **What "small" or "insignificant" role or task are you currently doing (or avoiding) that God might want to use in ways you can't see?**

Applying the Message

7. **How does our culture determine what's "significant" or "successful" in ministry or Christian service? How might God's measurement differ?

8. **The sermon emphasized that Jesus often stopped to focus on one person rather than just addressing the crowd. How can we develop this same priority for individuals over impressive results?

9. **What would change in your approach to serving God if you truly believed that faithfulness in small things matters more than impressive outcomes?

Key Takeaways

1. **God's perspective on significance differs radically from the world's standards. What seems inadequate to us may be exactly what God intends to use.

2. **Faithfulness in completing what God calls us to do matters more than how impressive it looks. The Israelites needed to finish the temple, even if it seemed "shabby."

3. **We can't see the eternal impact of our obedience. The temple builders didn't know Jesus would walk through their "lesser" temple; the usher didn't know he was seating Billy Graham.

4. **Small acts of obedience can have world-changing consequences. An unnamed usher changed the course of evangelism history by simply doing his job well.

5. ****Don't discount your role because it seems insignificant.**** Ananias, Barnabas, and countless others played "supporting roles" that made history-changing ministry possible.

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of these action steps to focus on this week:

****Option 1: Faithful in the Small****

- Identify one "small" responsibility or opportunity you've been neglecting or devaluing
- Commit to doing it faithfully this week as unto the Lord
- Journal about any shift in perspective that occurs

****Option 2: Recognize the "Ushers"****

- Think of 2-3 people who served in "background" roles that impacted your faith journey
- Reach out to thank them specifically for what they did
- Ask them to share their perspective on serving in ways that aren't always recognized

****Option 3: Stop and Notice the One****

- Following Jesus's example, intentionally slow down this week
- Look for one person each day who might need attention, prayer, or encouragement
- Practice valuing the individual over the impressive

****Option 4: Reframe Your Service****

- Make a list of the ways you currently serve (church, work, family, community)
- Next to each one, write how God might see it from an eternal perspective

- Pray over this list, asking God to help you see your service through His eyes

Prayer Focus

****Pray for one another in these areas:****

- For eyes to see opportunities and roles the way God sees them, not how the world values them
- For freedom from comparison and the need to appear impressive or successful
- For faithfulness in completing what God has called us to do, even when it feels inadequate
- For courage to serve in "small" or behind-the-scenes ways without recognition
- For trust that God will use our obedience in ways we may never see

Closing Reflection

Read together: *"The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace."* (Haggai 2:9)*

****Silent Reflection:**** Spend 2-3 minutes in silence asking God, "What 'small' thing are you asking me to be faithful in? How do You see it?"

****Share:**** If comfortable, briefly share what came to mind during the silence.

Additional Resources for Deeper Study

- Study the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 and Luke 3—notice how many "ordinary" people were part of God's extraordinary plan
- Research the story of Billy Graham and the role of unnamed supporters in his ministry
- Read **The Gospel According to Jesus** by John MacArthur for more on Jesus's ministry to individuals

5-Day Devotional: Seeing with Heaven's Eyes



Day 1: When God Moves Unlikely Hearts

Reading: Ezra 1:1-5; Isaiah 45:1-6

Devotional:

God moved the heart of Cyrus, a pagan king, to fulfill His purposes for Israel. This reminds us that God's sovereignty extends beyond our expectations and limitations. He can work through anyone, anywhere, to accomplish His plans. When circumstances seem impossible, remember that God specializes in moving the unmovable. The same God who stirred a foreign king's heart to rebuild His temple can move hearts today—whether it's a difficult family member, an unbelieving friend, or a closed door you're facing. Trust that God is working behind the scenes in ways you cannot see. Your role is to remain faithful and watch for His unexpected interventions.

****Reflection:**** Where do you need to trust God to move an "unlikely heart" in your life today?

Day 2: When Obstacles Stop Our Obedience

Reading: Ezra 4:1-5, 21-24; Nehemiah 4:1-6

Devotional:

The Israelites began rebuilding with enthusiasm, but opposition caused them to cease their work. How often do we start strong in obedience to God, only to stop when resistance comes? External pressure, discouragement, or fear can paralyze our forward movement. Yet God didn't abandon His people in their stagnation—He sent prophets to reignite their passion. When you face obstacles in following God's call, remember that opposition doesn't negate God's command. The enemy works hardest against what matters most. Don't let temporary setbacks become permanent stopping points. God provides encouragement, community, and renewed vision when we need it. Sometimes faithfulness means pushing through when enthusiasm has faded.

****Reflection:**** What God-given assignment have you abandoned due to opposition? How might God be calling you to resume?

Day 3: The Glory Heaven Sees

Reading: Haggai 2:1-9; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Devotional:

The rebuilt temple looked shabby compared to Solomon's glory, yet God declared its glory would be greater. Why? Because Jesus Himself would walk its courts. This reveals a profound truth: God measures glory differently than we do. What appears insignificant by worldly standards may carry eternal weight. Your small act of obedience, your quiet faithfulness, your seemingly ordinary service—God sees these through heaven's lens. The temple's true glory wasn't in gold or architecture but in God's presence and purpose. Don't despise small beginnings or compare your work to others. You don't know what God will do with your faithfulness. The "shabby" temple became the stage for humanity's redemption.

****Reflection:**** What in your life seems insignificant but might carry eternal significance?

Day 4: The Ministry of the Unnamed

Reading: Acts 9:10-19; Romans 16:1-16

Devotional:

Ananias baptized Paul. Barnabas vouched for him. An unnamed usher seated Billy Graham. History remembers the famous names, but heaven celebrates the faithful obedience of those who served behind the scenes. Your ministry may never make headlines, but it matters infinitely to God. Every act of faithfulness creates ripples in eternity. The usher didn't preach to millions—he simply didn't let two teenagers walk away. That was enough. You don't need a platform; you need obedience. You don't need recognition; you need faithfulness. God is looking for people who will take seriously the "small" assignments, knowing He determines their impact. Be faithful in what seems little; God multiplies what we offer Him.

****Reflection:**** What "small" opportunity to serve is right in front of you today?

Day 5: Pointing Beyond Ourselves

Reading: John 3:22-30; Philippians 2:1-11

Devotional:

Ezra recorded the history of Zerubbabel and Joshua more prominently than his own, though he was instrumental in Israel's restoration. Everything pointed to the coming Messiah. This is the heart of true ministry—pointing beyond ourselves to Jesus. John the Baptist understood this: "He must increase, I must decrease." When we make ourselves the focus, we obscure Christ. When we faithfully serve in our roles—whether visible or hidden—and deflect glory to Jesus, we fulfill our purpose. Your life is meant to be a signpost directing others to Christ. Don't seek to build your own kingdom; participate in building His. The greatest legacy isn't having your name remembered, but having your life point others to the Name above all names.

****Reflection:**** How can your life more clearly point others to Jesus rather than to yourself?