

# PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path"  
Psalm 119:104*

July 15, 2018

## Small Things

by Frank Himmel

When Naaman the leper went to Elisha to be healed, he thought he knew how things ought to go. But the prophet's instructions were not according to Naaman's preconceived plan, so he went away in a rage. "Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, 'My Father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash and be clean?'" (2 Kings 5:13). Naaman changed his mind, obeyed, and was cleansed.

When the remnant of Israel returned and laid the foundation of the temple, some cried (Ezra 3:12), evidently because this house paled in comparison to Solomon's temple. Even the prophet Haggai acknowledged that it "seemed like nothing" (2:3). But God asked through Zechariah, "Who has despised the day of small things?" (4:10).

And so it goes. We tend to think big, equating bigger with better. Bigger corporations occupy bigger buildings in bigger cities. We want to live in bigger houses and drive bigger cars.

This concept of bigness has also affected our religion, even beyond building bigger meeting houses. Some people act as though truth is determined by the number of adherents a doctrine has. "Surely that many people could not be wrong!"

Even among our brethren this concept has taken its toll. Many of the organizational problems of the past two centuries have been the result of too much focus on bigness. Some have argued that organizational ties between congregations such as the "sponsoring church" arrangement are necessary if we are to "compete" with sectarian churches. Whatever program or gimmick that will attract a crowd is welcomed. We have been duped into measuring success by numbers, thus falling prey to every innovation that promises "more" or "better."

Even in our personal service we sometimes undervalue the small things: a "cup of cold water" (Matthew 10:42), a visit to the sick, a word of encouragement, a good example, etc. Yet these are the things we are to be busy doing. They will accumulate to bring about the result God intends. Souls are saved one at a time. Plant the seed when and where you can, water it when and where you can, and give it time to grow.

Jesus taught this important lesson in a "small" parable (Matthew 13:31-32).

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. ▶



# Sacrificing Children

by Frank Himmel

God's indictments of the ancient Israelites included offering their children to idols (Ezekiel 16:20).

This abominable practice is mentioned numerous times in the Old Testament. God said such a thing never even entered His mind (Jeremiah 32:35), and we, too, often wonder how a parent could ever do such a thing. Were they total barbarians?



Before we offer too much pious protest, perhaps we should do some soul searching.

In our nation well over a thousand babies per day are sacrificed to the idol of selfishness. I am speaking of abortion. And a sizeable portion of our "advanced" culture is determined to defend this practice at all costs—just watch any Supreme Court nomination process.

But the problem is even closer to home than that. In the Lord's church there are fathers and mothers who shudder when reading those Old Testament accounts, yet at the same time they allow their own children to run to Satan's modern idols, in some cases even pushing them along.

Is that not the case when mothers encourage their daughters to draw attention to themselves by means of immodest dress and dancing; when fathers teach their sons to put the Lord second to sports; when parents by their example put more emphasis on material things than spiritual things; when work takes priority over worship; when parents stress their children's secular education while doing little to teach them the Bible; when they let children have their way instead of disciplining them; when families are half-heartedly involved at church but fully engaged elsewhere; when most of the family's associations are with people who are not Christians? Idols are not all made of metal and stone!

"...Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). ■

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Strictly speaking the mustard seed is not the smallest of seeds, but it is proverbially so. From this tiny beginning grows a plant that reaches ten or twelve feet tall.

God's kingdom had a small beginning, compared to those of the world. 3,000 followers made up the initial group. But it grew. Jesus' kingdom in any locality will do the same thing when its citizens do the small things He has commanded. Do not underestimate what you can contribute to the cause. Do not be discouraged with less than spectacular results. Do not despise the day of small things. ■

## Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Howard Moore	Greg Winget
SONG LEADER	Bruce Williams	John Baucom
OPENING PRAYER	Steven Turner	
LORD'S SUPPER		
BREAD	Mark Clifton	
CUP	Josh Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	David Gray	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Sam Walters
CLOSING PRAYER	Chris Brooks	Albert Harrison Sr