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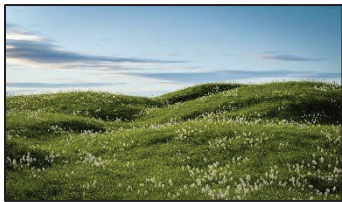
## LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT!

*“There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?” (John 6:9).*

It was a big miracle with a small beginning—when Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish. A “loaf” in Scripture was much smaller than what we call a loaf today. Not only that, but these small loaves were made of barley, which was considered inferior to wheat (Rev. 6:6; Ezek. 13:19).

The lad, a *small* boy, who had the *small* loaves, also had two *small* fish. We don’t know the details, but it could be his mother packed his lunch to send with him. Little did she realize that later that day, that small lunch would feed thousands of hungry people!

Because the Passover was near (verse 4), we know the time of this huge outdoor gathering was in the Spring. The unpleasantness of Winter (cf. Matt. 24:20), was now past, especially at the warmer elevation of the Sea of Galilee (695 feet *below* sea level). This explains why the hill was covered with *green grass* (verse 10; Mark 6:39) on which the people could comfortably sit down and eat.



When everyone had eaten, the leftovers filled *twelve* baskets (verse 13)—that was one basket for each of the twelve preachers who had doubts!

There are times when we may feel like we only have “little” faith. If so, we are not in bad company. To his own apostles, Jesus said: “O you of **little** faith” (Matt. 8:26). But as they continued their walk with Him, that “little” faith grew. One only has to read the book of Acts to see their exploits of faith as they went forth with the gospel.

On the other hand, there were two people to whom Jesus said: “**Great** is your faith”—the Syrophenician woman and the Centurion (Matt. 8:10; 15:28). In each case, a healing resulted, but whether their faith accomplished anything beyond this, we are not told.

Jesus likened faith to a *little* mustard seed which, as it grows, becomes a plant many times as large (Matt. 13:31,32; 17:20).

It is not so much whether we have “great faith” or “little faith,” it is what we **do** with the faith we have. It is believing that a little is a lot when God is in it—and putting faith into action.

As we begin to trust God for answered prayers—possibly starting with seemingly “small” answers—it will inspire our faith to believe for bigger things.

We recall the time David (who was *little* in comparison) faced the giant Goliath. The older and more experienced soldiers of Israel were *nervous in the service* and having *hysterics in the barracks!* But David said he had overcome a bear, he had overcome

a lion, and was now ready—with God’s help and by faith—to slay the giant (1 Sam. 17; Heb. 11:32,33).

It was when Saul “was *little* in his own eyes” that he was exalted by God (1 Sam. 15:17).

Zacchaeus was a man “*little* of stature” who did a *little* thing, but the results were great. He climbed up into a tree in order to see Jesus as he passed along the Jericho Road. He rose up above anything and anyone that would be in the way. He not only saw Jesus, but Jesus saw him, and salvation came to his house (Lk. 19:1-5).

Sometimes we don’t see Jesus because there are people (or things) standing between us and Him. Some say there is a hypocrite in the church. That may be; but if there is a hypocrite standing *between* you and God, *he’s closer to God than you are!*

Gideon is listed among the great heroes of faith (Heb. 11:32). But he was not always in this category. The odds were stacked against him—his family was “poor” and he was the “least” in his family (Judges 6:15). Nevertheless, heeding a Divine directive, he set out to free his people from Midianite oppression.

He assembled an army of thousands. But lest the people would suppose a victorious outcome was accomplished by their own might, the LORD said to reduce the number. Gideon, consequently, operated a draft-in-reverse program. Anyone who did not want to be in the army could go home. **Most** went home! Ending up with only 300 men—a *little* army—the enemy was defeated, despite the odds.

God chose the Israelites for a unique role in the Divine program. But Moses reminded them: “The LORD did not...choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for *you were the least of all peoples*” (Deut. 7:7).

Though they were a “*little* flock” (Luke 12:32), those original followers of Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, went forth with the gospel and accomplished much!

### **We should not despise the day of *small* things (Zech. 4:10).**

If we are faithful in *little* things, God can make us faithful in big things (Matt. 25:23; Lk. 16:10). Philip is an example of this. He was faithful in an early-church program of serving food to neglected widows. Not too inspiring! But the day came when he, as an evangelist, stirred an entire city for God (Acts 8:5-8).

We don’t know who lowered Paul down in a basket from the Damascus wall (2 Cor. 11:33; Acts 9:25). But this (seemingly) *little* action saved the life of one who would go on to impact the lives of millions for centuries to come.

Sometimes one *little* verse tells us something we *would not know otherwise*. Because Acts 23:16 mentions an incident in passing, we know Paul had a **sister** and that this sister had a **son**.

It was only a “*small* cake” the poor widow baked for the prophet Elijah, but the result was that her food supply never ran out, even in drought (1 Kings 17:13-17).

It was “a cloud as *small* as a man’s hand” (1 Kings 18:44) that signaled the end of the drought and the return of God’s blessings to Israel in the days of Elijah.

A young man was once asked if God had “**called**” him to preach. He replied that “called” might not be the right word—perhaps it was more like a “*whisper*”! God’s directive may not come as the thunderous sound of Sinai; it may come to us as “a still *small* voice” (1 Kings 19:12).

God’s wrath is described as “little” and for a “moment,” but his kindness and mercy are *everlasting* (Isa. 54:8).

When Jesus was born into this world, he was (like other babies) *little*. Even the town where he was born was *little*: “Bethlehem...**little** among the thousands of Judah” (Micah 5:2). Yet this little baby, born in this little town, would in time impact every town and city in the world—little or large!

In 1868 Phillips Brooks used the word “little” in what is still a very popular hymn at the Christmas season: “O *Little* Town of Bethlehem.”

Composed much later—in 1941—“Little Drummer Boy” tells of a poor *little* boy who was unable to afford a gift for the infant Jesus. So, instead, he played his drum for Him. “Come they told me...a newborn King to see...Our finest gifts we bring...to lay before the King...I have no gift to bring...Shall I play for you on my drum?”

This story is not in the Bible. But the Bible itself, on occasions, records little make-believe stories to illustrate a point (see Judges 9:8-15). A **little** thing, if done to honor Jesus, can be significant.

The *little* offering given by a poor widow, in the sight of God, was bigger than the large offerings given by the rich (Mark 12:42). “A *little* that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked” (Psa. 37:16). Even a little thing, like providing a “cup of cold water” is not without its reward (Matt. 10:42).

#### A little can be a lot when God is in it!

A single penny has little value. But I recall years ago a schoolteacher saying if we were to simply *double* a penny each day for 30 days, it would become a huge amount. That amount, according to a mathematical website, would be **\$5, 368, 709.12**.



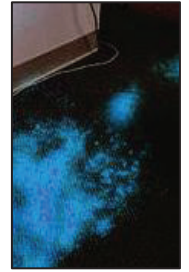
Television programs like “Forensic Files” have documented how **little things** have often provided evidence in solving a crime:

A suspect may deny ever being in the house where a murder occurred. But a *tiny* cat hair found on the suspect’s clothing can prove otherwise. Under a microscope that hair can be unmistakably linked with the family cat, placing the suspect at the scene of the crime.

Something as simple as a tire print can lead to an arrest. There may be thousands of tires with the same tread design. But a *tiny pebble* wedged at a certain place in the tire tread can distinguish it from all the rest!

Tiny scratch marks on a bullet, when magnified, can identify the gun that was used.

Sometimes evidence is so tiny it is not even **visible**. Blood stains from a stabbing may have been washed away from a floor or wall. But the chemical luminol, reacting with traces of iron in the splattered blood, will cause the invisible blood stains to emit a blue glow.



Saliva, even from an envelope sealed years before, can produce DNA evidence. DNA can convict the guilty and free the innocent.

A lot of people in this world are discouraged and hurting. Just a little kind word, a smile, a “thank you” can make a difference. Failure to do this, can have a reverse effect: an unkind word, a frown, a gesture of ingratitude, may take a person down. It might be a little thing, but—as in the proverbial saying—it could be “the straw that breaks the camel’s back.”

Back over the years, as a lively piano solo, I have played the gospel song “Give the World a Smile Each Day.”

Smiling (typically) involves about 13 muscles, while frowning requires about 43 muscles. So, we should smile a while and give our face a rest.



Some people I knew years ago did a tour of India. At one place, they were taken into a dark room in which the ceiling and walls were *entirely* covered with little mirror tiles. The guide then lit a *little* candle. What otherwise would have been a room of total darkness, was *filled* with bright reflected light!

We need not suppose that the Reformers, like Martin Luther, had “everything” figured out perfectly. But considering the darkness of the times, *even a little light shone brightly!*

Jesus said, “I am the *light* of the world” (John 9:5). But he also said to his followers, “**You** are the *light* of the world” (Matt. 5:14). Reflecting His light, we “shine as **lights** in the world” (Phil. 2:15)

Many of us in Sunday School used to sing “This *Little* Light of Mine.”

*This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine!  
Hide it under a bushel? NO! I’m gonna let it shine.*

We may not have known exactly what a **bushel** was—we just knew we were not about to hide our light under it! “Bushel,” of course, was from the King James Version: “Men do not light a candle and put it under a **bushel**” (Matt. 5:13-16). Most translations now have “basket” instead of “bushel.”

I once read about a man whose doorbell made a buzzing sound. He grew tired of the noise and decided to install a lightbulb instead. But because a doorbell uses low voltage—10 to 24 volts (reduced from the standard 120 volts in a house)—the lightbulb failed to shine. His conclusion: It takes more power to **shine** than it does to make **noise**.

Admission prices for live entertainment and sporting events have reached outlandish levels—far beyond the budget of many Americans. But consider the abundance of things we can enjoy with little or no expense at all:

We can enjoy a sunrise or sunset—and *sunshine in general*. In a song, John Denver expressed it this way: “*Sunshine on my shoulders makes me happy...Sunshine on the water looks so lovely...Sunshine almost always makes me high.*”

We can enjoy seeing the stars or watching the Moon come up, especially around full moon.

The Lewis Amstrong song “What a Wonderful World” speaks of colors—the colors of the *rainbow*, skies of *blue*, clouds of *white*, trees of *green*, and *red* roses too. **Colors** are ours to enjoy.

Taking time to notice and appreciate one another. A friendly hug. A shared laugh. Meaningful conversations. “Being there” for someone in need. “A friend in need is a friend indeed.”

Hearing from someone we knew years ago, but had lost track of. Remembering a fond memory from the past.

Coming home after a busy day. “There’s no place like home.”

I have long remembered what a man in New Braunfels, Texas, said to me: “My dog is *always* glad to see me when I get home—whether I bring him anything or not.” Both enjoyed the wagging tail and welcoming encounter.



Years ago, my (late) wife Arlene and I took a Holland-America cruise to Alaska. The ship was scheduled to dock at Skagway, but severe winds prevented this. Instead, it was announced, we would be docking at Haines.

Having just had some correspondence with a Christian man who lived in Haines, I phoned him. He met us and drove us around, providing our own personalized tour. At one point he waved to a man in another car who pulled over. “This man has read things you have written,” he told me. “I know he would like to meet you.” The man invited us to come to his house which was only a few blocks away. As we came into his house, there on a small bookshelf was a book I had written. *A little thing*, perhaps; but I must confess: **it did give me a good feeling.**

A beautiful song written by Stuart Hamblen asks the question, “How **Big** is God?” It speaks of his greatness—this world is but a *room* within his house, the open sky a *portion* of his yard. He’s big enough to rule His mighty universe, “yet **small** enough to live within my heart”!

We can see God in big things—like the sun, moon, and stars. But we can also see Him in *little* things: a tiny snowflake, a leaf, a fingerprint, or the human eye. All are wonders of his Creation.

Even a tiny **ant**—one of the “four things which are *little* upon the earth” mentioned in Proverbs 30:24, 25—is amazing. An ant can wander far from its “home” in search of food and find its way back, as though it had a built-in GPS! Ants may be little in size, but their numbers are overwhelming. It has been estimated that there are 2.5 million ants for every human on Earth!



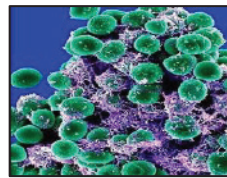
We might suppose the deadliest animal in the world is a lion or bear—or a huge stampeding elephant or rhino. But there is one that is more deadly—and *little*: a **mosquito**! In some parts of the world, it has killed millions through the spread of malaria.

Jesus was thinking of a *little* thing (compared to a big thing) when he said: “And why do you look at the **speck** in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the **plank** in your own eye?” (Luke 6:41, 42 NKJV). A speck (whether of sand or sawdust) in one’s eye—though *little* compared to a plank—can cause havoc!

James was thinking of *little* things (compared to big things) when he wrote that a little rudder can steer the course of a huge ship. Or a tiny match can set an entire forest on fire. So the tongue of man, though “little,” can cause great harm (James 3:2-5).

“The *little* foxes spoil the vines” (Song of Solomon 2:15). Whatever else may be gleaned from this verse, it seems to indicate that *little* things, if left unchecked, can cause significant damage. “A *little* leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6).

The Bible warns about “a root of **bitterness**” that can defile many (Heb.12:15; Deut. 29:18). A root—*tiny* at first—is seemingly harmless. But as it grows, it can cause significant damage: can crack concrete sidewalks and plug up water and sewer pipes. If a little root of bitterness is not dealt with, it becomes worse.



A tiny virus germ is so small, it can only be seen with a powerful electron microscope. But it can cause a wide range of illnesses: the common cold, flu, measles, chickenpox, covid, and various digestive issues like diarrhea and vomiting.

From years ago, here is a personal example of how *little* things can make a **big** difference:

A bill for our car license came in the mail. It seemed quite high, especially since Arnold Schwarzenegger, who had become Governor of California, promised to reduce license fees. But assuming the amount was what we owed; the bill was paid. Later, when looking over the paperwork, we discovered that a fine of over \$100 had been added to the license fee. This, it was claimed, was because of an unpaid *parking ticket* in the City of Oakland. The bill provided our car license number, the date when the car was over-parked, and now—because over a year had passed—severe penalties had been added!



Based on records from a trip made to Branson, Missouri (and other evidence), I could prove our car was **not** in Oakland on that date. In fact, from the time we purchased this car—in 2002—it had *never* been in Oakland!

I had some doubt the money would be refunded. But when I wrote and explained, a refund check *soon* came in the mail. Apparently an officer who ticketed an over-parked car in Oakland had read one letter or number on a license plate incorrectly—just one **little** letter caused the mistake!

Let me tell you a tale of two cities—Calexico and Mexicali. Calexico (a shortened form of California-Mexico) is on the American side of the border. Mexicali (a shortened form of Mexico-California) is on the Mexican side. A chain-link fence separates the two. In seconds one can “Walk from Calexico to Mexico.”

Years ago, while holding meetings at a church in Calexico, a pastor and I were driving along that fence. He exclaimed: “Think how different our lives would be if we had been born on the other side of that fence!”

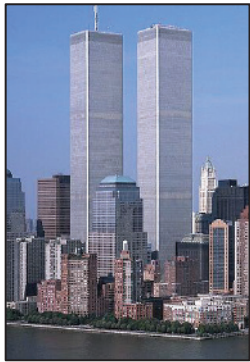
Back over the centuries, in some cultures, the **firstborn** child was considered superior, inheriting special privileges and authority (cf. Deut. 21:15-17, etc.). The firstborn son of a royal family could become famous as the King, while those born later might fade into comparative obscurity. It all is based on their *birth order*.

This seems to have been a concern when Tamar was giving birth to the twins Perez and Zerah. A midwife fastened a scarlet *thread* on a hand, saying, “This one came out **first**” (Gen. 38:27-30). A *little* thread on a *little* hand made the difference!

The state of Arizona has the death penalty; the adjoining state, New Mexico, no longer has the death penalty. Suppose a grievous murder is committed out in the open desert that spans the two states. If it could be proved that the murder happened on one side of that line—even by a few inches!—it could mean the difference between **life** (in prison) or **death**!

Suppose the fire insurance on a house expires on a given date at 12:01 a.m. If the house burns down before this—even by a few minutes—it would be insured. Otherwise, it would not.

Out in the vast Mojave Desert of California, a railroad switch at the little town of Daggett can send trains coming from Los Angeles to entirely different destinations—to Kansas City (on the Santa Fe Railroad) or to Salt Lake City (on Union Pacific). A tiny measurement of a *couple inches* makes the difference.



I have a neighbor (a winter resident of Palm Springs) who was on floor 36 in one of the Twin Towers on 9-11. Having no idea that the building would soon collapse, employees were advised to remain in place. He said to a woman associate: “Let’s get out of here!”—which they did. I sense he has an appreciation for life now, more than ever before.

Numerous stories can be told about **little** things that kept some people from being in the Twin Towers on 9/11:

The head of a company survived because his son started kindergarten that morning; another because it was his turn to pick up donuts. One woman’s alarm failed to go off, another was delayed because of an auto accident on the New Jersey Turnpike. One missed a bus, another had car trouble. One man put on a new pair of shoes, took the various means to get to work, and developed a blister on his foot. His life was spared because he stopped at a drugstore to buy a Band-Aid!

Sometimes we become annoyed at little distractions, but our *disappointments* may be God’s *appointments*!

In a complex world, it is amazing that often there is a *simple* solution that can solve a big problem.

While driving along a highway, a man suddenly had a flat tire. He pulled over and prepared to put the spare tire on. As he unscrewed the lug nuts, he carefully placed them in the hubcap he had just removed. But then he accidentally tipped the hubcap over, causing all the lug nuts to drop, irretrievably, down into a drainage grill at the side of the road!

A few miles away he could buy lug nuts at an auto parts store, but how could he get there with no way to hold the spare tire on the car? He was stuck.

As the story goes, the incident happened right in front of a home that provided care for people who were mentally challenged. One man, not considered very bright, analyzed the situation, and made this simple suggestion: “You could take one or two lug nuts off each of the other three wheels. These will hold the spare on until you get to the auto parts store.” The “bright” man had not thought of that!

Sometimes problems between husbands and wives can be complex. But often simple little changes can help a lot. A husband may drive foolishly, go too fast, and leave very little room between his car and the one in front of him. Such irresponsibility terrifies his wife and children. He may believe—and insist—he is not endangering them. But would it be asking too much for him to slow down and put the others at ease? That would only be a *little* thing on his part, but could make a big difference.

Another man was constantly saying “O God!” this, and “O God!” that. It bothered his wife. She felt it dishonored God and that it was, in a sense, taking God’s name in vain. He claimed he did not mean it that way. But if something is *perceived* a certain way, if it is hurtful to someone, why continue?

A husband and wife share life together. They should show love and appreciation to each other. If not—as a little-known verse says—*their prayers can be hindered* (1 Peter 3:7). They should be a blessing to each other. If one constantly nags, complains, is pessimistic, critical, or negative, it subtracts from their peace. Sometimes with just a **little** extra effort, life can be happier for both. They can become *encouragers*, rather than *discouragers*. Little gestures of appreciation can add a special touch.

Back in the 1950s, a popular song used these words:

**Give me a hand when I’ve lost the way,  
Give me your shoulder to cry on,  
Whether the day is bright or gray,  
Give me your heart to rely on.  
For now and forever,  
that’s always and ever,**

**LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT!**

#### PRAYER:

**Dear Heavenly Father, help us to not overlook the little things. Help us to remember that little is a lot when it is part of your plan. May we not despise the day of small beginnings. May we be faithful in little things, so you can make us faithful in greater things. May we cast aside every weight and the sin—even a little sin—that could set us back in life’s race, as we look unto Jesus the Author and the Finisher of our faith. In whose name we pray, Amen!**



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