



FOCUS ON FAITH

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SMALL BEGINNINGS

Over the past few weeks I've been struck by a comment that a friend of mine made recently. He didn't quite use these words but the gist of what he said was, ***"We sometimes look for the big things in our lives that will make a difference, but we fail to realise that it's often a series of little things that become the big thing which changes our perspective."***

Isn't that so true? Many of us would love to win millions – or even thousands – on the lottery and of course that would change our way of life. Or perhaps, it's a better job or bigger home, a newer car or some other latest *'must have'*. It could be a different relationship, or possibly marriage partner, that we hanker for believing that with a little more encouragement from someone who really loves us our luck will change for the better.

I guess it was brought into sharp contrast for me too this week when my daughter found a job – of course on the minimum wage. When I was her age and starting out in working life, I was offered the princely sum of £4 per week instead of £5.35 per hour. The organisation who offered me the job also told me that after 6 months I would be eligible to use one of the company cars for private motoring – provided of course that I paid for my own petrol! Thankfully I found another company who was prepared to offer me better terms - £20 per week plus the equivalent of 75 pence worth of luncheon vouchers (remember them anyone?). However it wasn't long before

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the luncheon vouchers became a benefit in kind and the Chancellor of the Exchequer got his hands on another source of income!

But from that inauspicious start I haven't done too badly. I have a lovely home and a very comfortable existence unlike many people in the world. And to be honest over the years I have earned many thousands of

pounds. The problem is, I've spent most of it living.

So what's the point here?

The Bible gives us a graphic illustration of this concept from a fairly obscure Old Testament prophet – a guy called Zechariah. The Temple in Jerusalem – the most sacred worship place for Jews – had been destroyed by a foreign army but now was being rebuilt again. It was along old job and work had fallen behind schedule and was no doubt over budget. People were beginning to wonder whether it would ever be built – a bit like Wembley Stadium perhaps.

The King, together with some of the religious leaders of the day, was determined and had decided construction would happen even though there was opposition and a fair amount of ridicule. Zechariah brings God into the picture and in effect challenges the critics and doubters by telling them not to ***"despise the day of small beginnings"***. It

may have looked like a mess but God was going to give them the ability to make this project a success – not by their strength and abilities but by His power.

The little things in life do count. The smile you give to someone you don't even know but who may be experiencing a deep trauma or loss. The small acts of kindness and courtesy you demonstrate or the way you handle the problems that come along without losing your cool. The *'thank you's'* and appreciation you give to people who help you, each make an impact – even if it's not always obvious.

We sometimes talk about the *'whole being greater than the sum of its constituent parts'* – you know two and two make five. Well I believe that happens when we allow God to work in our lives. With Him on our side even our humble beginnings can turn out to be more beneficial than we can even dream about – and not just for us but for other people.

My wife Rosalyn and I had a dream for a Children's Festival in Bridgnorth to provide a weekend of fun and to celebrate the young people of this area. Thankfully a whole team of dedicated, enthusiastic and totally committed people have picked up the dream and begun to run with it. In its present form it's far more adventurous than Rosalyn and I ever thought. From small beginnings an activity that is destined to impact this community has grown.

This column is called *'Focus on Faith'* but the Apostle James tells us that faith without action is dead – meaningless. Each day I have to decide how I live my life and you do too.

Don't despise the *'little things'* or look down and deride the minor events in your life. That little acorn of hope or unwarranted kindness you plant in someone's life today may just be the solid oak tree that lasts them for the rest of their lives.

If you are interested in finding out more about God's purposes for your life, log on to **www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk** which provides information on local Churches together with contact details, plus other Christian resources and activities.