


INTRODUCTION

Small beginnings can have a huge impact in the Kingdom of Heaven. Pastor Joe shared this on Sunday as he looked at the parables of the mustard seed and yeast. God's Kingdom is upside-down...He chooses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise and the weak things to shame the strong (1 Corinthians 1:27). He specializes in doing big things through small beginnings – which we also see in the life of Gideon in the Book of Judges.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We live in a “bigger is better” world. Discuss with your group ways we see that displayed.
2. Read Matthew 13:31-33. The mustard plant was common in the area of Galilee, and its seed is very tiny. The Jews, Jesus' audience for this parable, had to feel fairly insignificant, as they were (unwillingly) a very tiny part of the Roman Empire. Even the disciples were ‘just’ fishermen – rough and uneducated – but God used them to change the world. Do you ever feel insignificant? What causes those feelings?
3. Jesus spoke of yeast in Matthew 16:5-12 and Luke 12:1, and Paul mentioned it in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. What does yeast represent in these passages? Do you believe this is what Jesus is referring to in Matthew 13:33? Why or why not?
4. Share with your group what you think the parable of the yeast means.
5. Pastor Joe used Gideon's army as an example of God using something small in a very big way. However, when God first shared with Gideon His intention to use him to deliver Israel, Gideon responded, “*If the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us?*” Have you ever doubted God's intentions because of your circumstances?
6. Read Judges 7:1-8. Why was having ‘too many men’ a problem? What did you think Gideon was thinking when his army was reduced from 32,000 to 300?
7. Read Judges 7:19-23. The Midianites are miraculously defeated. Since God could have easily done this Himself (see 2 Chronicles 20), why do you think He used Gideon and the army of 300?

Study Questions for Community Groups

8. Read Zechariah 4:6-10. Zerubbabel was part of the first wave of Jewish captives to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-2). He began to rebuild the temple built by Solomon, which was destroyed by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25:8-10). It took him two years to rebuild the foundation, but because of opposition, construction stalled for seventeen years. Understandably, Zerubbabel was disheartened by his “small” beginning. How did God encourage Zerubbabel in verses 6 and 10?
9. According to Strong’s Concordance, the Hebrew word “*qâṭân*”, translated “small things” in Zechariah 4:10, can also mean, “insignificant, unimportant, least”. The Greek word, “*mikrós*”, translated “smallest” in Matthew 13:32 describing the mustard seed, can also mean, “least, less, little”. Are there any aspects of your life that you could approach differently so you don’t ‘despise the small things’?
10. When doing big things for His Kingdom, why do you think God might start with ordinary (“small”, “insignificant”) people, rather than those with lots of money or political influence (see 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 and Revelation 3:8)?

APPLICATION

We are called to offer hope to the hurting, purpose to the wandering, and real life to the lost. It’s time to step into God’s upside-down Kingdom and allow a BIG God to do extraordinary things through you. Share with your group something God has been nudging you to do for His Kingdom, and ask His Spirit to guide you as you move forward into whatever He is calling you to.

SCRIPTURE

³¹He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³²Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.” ³³He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.” ³⁴Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. ³⁵So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”

Matthew 13:31-35 (NIV)