

Forty-fifth Street Baptist Church Life-Groups
Chapter 19



Don't Make God's Big Things Small

Introduction: Sometimes life is about pig slop and fish guts. That was true for the prodigal son and for Jonah. The prodigal son (*Luke 15*) ended up squandering his father's wealth and eating pig slop. Jonah rebelled from God's command to preach to Nineveh and ended up in the guts of a big fish. In The Story we will see the Jews with an abandoned temple to God. The big question for us is this: *What does God do when we make his big thing our small thing?* The Story tells us that three generations have passed in exile in Babylon and God raises up Cyrus, a pagan king, who releases God's people to return to Jerusalem and build their temple. We begin today in *Ezra 1:1-3*.

I. God turns the heart of Cyrus, the Persian king, toward the Jews and Cyrus releases the Jews to return to Jerusalem and build their temple.

A. Why does God make such a big deal about his temple?

1. God's passion: The temple is a picture of God's passion to dwell among his people.
2. God's problem: Sin separates his people and the world from him.
3. God's solution: God requires a blood sacrifice so we can regain access to his presence.

B. The people of God return with the task of rebuilding the Temple.

Ezra 3:1-3

1. The people begin well, but lose focus. God's big thing becomes their little thing.
2. The people abandon the temple for 16 years and begin building their own fine homes
3. God's raises up the prophet Haggai to call the people back to their primary task—building God's temple.

Haggai 1:1-4

How does God respond to misplaced priorities?

II. God sends seasons of trial and suffering to call his people to their purpose.

- A. God sends severe times of testing, but not all testing is a result of sin.
- B. God sends trials to wake us up and to exhort us to examine our ways.
- C. God's people had forgotten their initial passion.

Application: Max Lucado describes the “closet of forgotten passions” in his house. In it is a neglected telescope from when he had a passion for astronomy. In it is a stepping stone kit for their garden—unopened. In it are boxes of photos that have never been arranged in albums. God can never be put into the closet of lost passion. God is either the big thing or he is nothing.

1. God will call us from the distractions that pull us from his purpose.

2. As of a result of seasons of testing, the people of Israel got back on track fulfilling the purpose of God.

3. Jesus calls us to seek FIRST his kingdom and God will take care of everything else.

⇒ *C. S. Lewis wrote, “If we put first things first, we get the second things thrown in; but if we put second things first, we lose both the first and second things.”*

4. The prodigal son repented and left the big slop. Jonah repented and got out of the fish guts. The Jews repented and finished the temple for God.

Application:

- ⇒ Do you need to repent and return to your first love, your first passion for God?
- ⇒ Is God speaking to you through a season of testing? Are you listening?
- ⇒ Are you being distracted from God's purpose for your life? How?
- ⇒ Commit to come back and make God's big things your big things.