

Join us in being on mission with God!

OUR VISION

To continually mature and grow as a united body of Jesus-imitators who live out God's greatest commandment to "Love" by exalting God and serving one another, and His greatest commission to "Go" by reaching into and shaping our local, regional, and global communities.

“Making the Impossible Possible”

Zechariah Chapter 4

Getting Started

After an introductory time, discuss the following questions in your group or class.

Big tasks can look very intimidating. Consider some of the challenges below and circle them according to their difficulty: **VH** = Very Hard; **SD** = somewhat difficult; **OK**= do-able.

- **VH SD OK** Lowering your personal debt to zero.
- **VH SD OK** Learning a new language.
- **VH SD OK** Losing a significant amount of weight and keeping it off.
- **VH SD OK** Delivering a series of talks to a group about a book of the Bible.
- **VH SD OK** Preparing your own taxes.
- **VH SD OK** Joining a short-term ministry team in the Czech Republic.
- **VH SD OK** Demonstrating consistent love to a spouse who is in a bad mood.
- **VH SD OK** Overhauling a transmission in a car.
- **VH SD OK** Removing a virus from an infected computer.

Q: Compare your list with others at your table. What makes some tasks more challenging than others?

Q: How do we tend to respond to tasks that we would classify as “very difficult”?

Anyone who looked at the Jews who lived in the rubble of Jerusalem would doubt that they had any chance at rebuilding the temple. Their resources were limited. They were surrounded by enemies intent on stopping them. They had to build while struggling for survival. Their morale was low.

We face a situation today that can seem parallel in some ways.

- The evangelical church is big, but it doesn't seem to influence culture much.
- Relativism in morals and ethics prevails in American politics. Those who speak against homosexual behavior are vilified. Sexual purity for young people is mocked. Ethics are reduced to whatever you can get away with. Living a principled life is regarded as old-fashioned and Puritanical
- The American family is under assault from every direction, and redefined by many. Increased taxes are forcing both partners into the work world. Cohabitation is replacing marriage as the way for couples to link together. The roles of men and women are blurred and fluid. Men are marginalized or absent in the raising of children.
- Christianity is pictured not simply as wrong, but as dangerous because it believes in absolutes.



Zechariah 4

¹ Then the angel who talked with me returned and wakened me, as a man is wakened from his sleep. ² He asked me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights." ³ Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." ⁴ I asked the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" ⁵ He answered, "Do you not know what these are?" "No, my lord," I replied. ⁶ So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. ⁷ "What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!'" ⁸ Then the word of the LORD came to me: ⁹ "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you. ¹⁰ "Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. "(These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range throughout the earth.)" ¹¹ Then I asked the angel, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?" ¹² Again I asked him, "What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?" ¹³ He replied, "Do you not know what these are?" "No, my lord," I said. ¹⁴ So he said, "These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth."

God calls us to thrive in a world that is antagonistic to holiness, purity, spiritual growth, and Christ-centered living. In some ways this divine summons seems impossible. And it is! It's not something any of us can do on our own. But God has a secret weapon that we have access to in this endeavor. We discover what it is in the context of Zechariah's 5th vision.

The secret weapon for God's people

1. Once again we encounter Zechariah's personal spiritual guide, a divine being we'll call the "interpreting angel." What does he do to the prophet in Zechariah 4:1?

2. In verse 2 the angel asks the prophet to describe what he sees. List the things Zechariah mentions in verses 2-3.



We often confuse this image with the menorah, pictured to the right. The menorah we see here was not used until the first century B.C. We do have archaeological examples of Old Testament lampstands. They looked more like a touchier lamp on the left.



Such lamps featured a long hollow tube on a broad base, and a series of wicks on the top. Some picture the wicks as coming out of the bowl at 7 places, others look at the seven

channels and see 49 lights altogether in this vision.

3. In the ancient world, the Jews used olives for many things. What do you learn about the use of olives in Exodus 25:6 and Exodus 35:28?
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4. The angel does not answer Zechariah's question. Instead, he answers with a question of his own. What is the angel's question? What does it imply?
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5. On the surface, it looks like the angel only answers Zechariah's question with one riddle after another. You can imagine the prophet being frustrated. God sometimes tell us what he wants us to hear rather than what we want to know. Why do you believe God sometimes responds to us in indirect ways?
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6. The meaning behind the vision is linked to the statement in verse 6. Describe the two negatives, and the positive in this verse.
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Making the Impossible Possible

We often confine the work of the Holy Spirit to the New Testament, where his ministry is spoken of more frequently. But God reminds us that when he places a significant task on the shoulders of his people, the Spirit is involved in their labor.

7. Why is the message intended for Zerubbabel? Who was he? Why was it important he receive this revelation? (See Haggai 1:1; Ezra 3:2; Haggai 2:21-23.)

8. Why do you think the people rebuilding the temple needed to realize that God's Spirit was ready to complete this task through them?

9. What does Jesus promise about the Spirit in John 14:16-17?

10. How does Jesus describe the ministry of the Spirit in John 15:26-27? How does his revelation *to* us relate to his revelation *through* us?

11. List some of the initiatives of the Spirit that Jesus speaks about in John 16:7-15.

12. Obviously, the Spirit did not lift bricks and build the temple. He worked invisibly in the circumstances. How do you think he empowered the people to complete the building project?

13. What does the angel say about the role of Zerubbabel in the temple construction



Reaching Up and Reaching Out

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project in verse 9?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

14. What was going in in verse 10 that some might dismiss as an insignificant step forward? What does God say about treating this as inconsequential? Why do we sometimes underestimate the importance of small things?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

16. Identify some 'small beginnings' in the life of a growing believer that don't look like much by themselves, but that can be the beginning of significant steps toward growth and maturity?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

17. In verse 11 Zechariah answers another question that the angel does not answer. What function do you think the two trees played in serving the lampstand?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

Verse 12 mentions a feature we did not see before. Two branches from the trees are linked to two pipes that lead to the lampstand. The oil flows to the lampstand from the pipes.

18. What does the angel say the two branches represent?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

Some are quick to associate the answer of the angel with the two witnesses in Revelation 11:3. But this vision is not about the last days, but about the rebuilding of the temple in the days of Zechariah. So the context gives us a better answer.

19. Who do you see in Zechariah chapters 3-4 that might qualify as the two who are anointed to serve the Lord?

Four horizontal lines for writing.

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