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On March 13, 1959, in the switchyards near Olympia, Washington, a switching crew uncoupled fifteen cars from a locomotive. For some reason, no one thought to pull the hand brakes on the fifteen train cars. At 5:42 p.m., the fifteen cars slowly began to roll down the tracks at a mile a minute. Nearly two million pounds of wood and steel headed for the Fourth Avenue Station. Approximately three minutes later the runaway train crashed through the steel bumper guard at the end of the line. It then broke through the concrete platform and into the brick wall of the train station. The fifteen cars continued to move through the station where the telegrapher was working and then plowed into the street. From there one car headed into the Sta-Well Health store and finally came to a halt in a tangled mass of bricks, lumber, and health food items. Some of the cars crashed into other shops, and others stopped in the street and behind the station.

Within three minutes one man died, twenty others were injured, and thousands of dollars' worth of property was damaged. Why did this accident occur? Because of one small mistake. Someone forgot to put on the hand brakes. Even one small block beneath the wheels could have prevented the tragedy.

This incident illustrates the importance of little things. This fact is recognized in the Bible. Zechariah wrote: "For who hath despised the day of small things?" Zechariah 4:10.

Generally speaking, a person's life is mostly made up of innumerable small occurrences, transactions, and acts that help shape his character. For most of

us, big moments seldom come, great deeds are rare, and acts of valor are few. Reaching the summit of Mount Everest is noteworthy enough to be put in the newspapers. So is landing on the moon, winning a presidential election, or winning a gold medal at the Olympics. But such things happen perhaps once in a lifetime to a relatively small number of people.

It is the many little everyday happenings and how we react to them that make us happy or miserable, tranquil or anxious. Just think for a moment how it feels to be met by a warm smile as opposed to an unpleasant frown. Do you remember the last time someone had words of appreciation for you? "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Proverbs 25:11. Little words and phrases, such as, "I'm sorry," "Please," and "Thank you," have a positive effect upon both the giver and the receiver.

Let us examine some "small" incidents in a marriage. The sacredness and joy of that relationship are a foretaste of heaven. The bond of love unites a couple for a lifetime. Yet, although the expectations at the beginning are great and the couple pledge to love each other until death, so many marriages end up in divorce courts; and the vows of faithfulness are broken. Why? Could it be attributed to a great extent to the little things that disturb the harmony of the home? It is not always adultery and infidelity that divide a home. I am sure most of us have experienced a small pebble in our shoe at one time or another, or a speck of dirt in our eye that was very irritating. In marriage, it is the little pebbles of distrust, discourtesy, rudeness, jealousy, and the little granules of forgetfulness, misunderstanding, and selfishness that undermine love and confidence. On the other hand, it is the

little acts of thoughtfulness, mixed with patience and kindness, that have the opposite effect of strengthening love. Remembering a birthday or an anniversary, or just making a day "special" has a way of saying, "I love you."

Moving on to the realm of the church, one finds that often little things have helped to strengthen or weaken a soul. Although God's remnant people have the same faith, the same Lord, and the same glorious truth, difficulties may arise over little differences of opinion. Often they are trivial in nature. The apostle James related which little member of the human body is at fault in such disputes: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beast, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed. and hath been tamed



of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." James 3:5-8.

With his or her tongue the Christian can praise God and honor Him by encouraging those who are weak and have backslidden and by speaking words of hope to the lost sinner. But it is also possible to tear down one's fellow believers and the present truth (Revelation 14:6-13) by evil speaking, gossip, slander, and spreading little seeds of doubt about the three angels' messages. Then the little tongue proves to be a world of iniquity and fire.

In 1983, in Sacramento, California, an arsonist set fire to our new church that was under construction. In less than two hours, the whole structure was demolished. In the same manner, a little match of sin or a little fire of slander can quickly travel around the church—and even around the world—to destroy a person's integrity and reputation. May our words serve to glorify God rather than tear apart a believer.

Little things in character building

Song of Solomon 2:15 says: "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes."

Foxes are notoriously fond of grapevines with their blossoms or little grapes. Especially the young fox pups damage the vines. They cause endless trouble. Have you ever seen small animals destroying the crops of a farmer? Have you ever witnessed a small insect, such as a beetle or a grasshopper, destroying a garden in a relatively short time? These misfortunes do happen in our world of sin.

But there is something more devastating than a fox or a flying insect. It is called SIN. Let us consider some individuals whom the little foxes of sin attacked and whose characters were marred.

Going back in time to the days of Adam and Eve, one reads in Genesis about Satan's scheme to tempt and deceive. He came to Eve through the medium of the serpent, his intention being the ultimate destruction of the first human pair—the penalty of sin. God's explicit instructions to humanity's first parents was not to eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave

also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Genesis 3:6.

This seemingly small act of disobedience resulted in their loss of the garden of Eden and the death penalty hanging over their heads. Now, some people may consider Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit a trivial matter, a minor act of disobedience that should have been overlooked. And yet, it was sin—transgression of the moral law, for which the penalty was death. It may have appeared to be a small disregard of God's command, but the consequences were devastating to the whole human race. "Adam and Eve persuaded themselves that in so small a matter as eating of the forbidden fruit there could not result such terrible consequences as God had declared. But this small matter was the transgression of God's immutable and holy law, and it separated man from God and opened the floodgates of death and untold woe upon our world." —*Steps to Christ*, p. 33.

Another example of someone committing a "small" sin was the case of Uzzah. Again, explicit directions had been given to the people of Israel that no one but the priests were to handle the ark in its transportation. One day the ark was taken out of the house of Abinadab and loaded onto a cart drawn by oxen. As it was travelling to Jerusalem on the dusty, bumpy road, the cart shook, and apparently Uzzah thought for a second that the ark was going to fall. He reached out his hand to steady it. Here he made a grave mistake. The divine command was: "The sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall *not touch* any holy thing, lest they die." Numbers 4:15. The Bible contains the record of Uzzah's untimely death: "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God." 2 Samuel 6:7.

This is what the pen of inspiration recorded about this matter: "But the Israelites had in their hands a plain statement of the will of God in all these matters, and their neglect of these instructions was dishonoring to God. Upon Uzzah rested the great guilt of presumption. Transgression of God's law had lessened his sense of its sacredness, and with unconfessed sins upon him he had in face of the divine prohibition, presumed to touch the symbol of God's presence." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 706.

Another similar incident occurred in the time of Lot. God's command to Lot and his family was not to turn around and look at the city of Sodom as they fled from it. "But his wife looked back

from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." Genesis 19:26. It was a "little" thing, but it caused her death. Again, God had the final word when it came to obedience in little matters.

The examples cited above indicate that God is just, fair, and merciful in His dealings with mankind. Never has He poured out His judgments before giving a definite warning. In each of the above examples, He was very specific. The people who sinned acted against God's direct command, carelessly thinking that a small transgression was not all that important in their relationship with God.

Little things count. Often a ruined life began with a little drink, a slightly impious thought, one impure act, one lie told, or a small piece of jewelry dangling from the ear. It is not the size of the steps taken, but the directions in which they lead that count.

That seemingly little sin is the symptom of a much more serious problem—the failure to surrender fully to Christ. Like the slow, steady work of termites, the process of degeneration and decay of the spiritual house is generally slow and hardly noticeable at first. Little sins will lead one to ruin unless they are acknowledged and overcome in the name of Christ. It is not in the course of just a few short weeks that a soul is separated from God and the unpardonable sin is committed. "The work of the enemy is not abrupt. It begins in apparently small things." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 718.

"Those who do not overcome in little things will have no moral power to withstand greater temptations." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 574. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." Luke 16:10. If we are faithful in the smallest details of the present truth, we will be able to carry heavier burdens and crosses when the tests and crises come.

Faithful in little things

During a severe famine in Israel, God told Elijah to go to Zarephath to be sustained by a Phoenician widow who was a believer in the true God. As Elijah approached the gate of the city, he found a woman gathering sticks. He asked a favor of her: "... Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." 1 Kings 17:10, 11.

"In this poverty-stricken home the famine pressed sore, and the pitifully meager fare seemed about to fail. The coming of Elijah on the very day when the widow feared that she must give up the struggle to sustain life tested to the utmost her faith in the power of the living God to provide for her necessities." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 130.

She responded to Elijah's request with kindness and liberality. She shared with him the little bit of food that she had. Because of her generosity toward the servant of God with that small amount, her life was miraculously sustained all during the famine.

In Daniel, chapter 3, the story is told of three young men who refused to bow down to a golden image that was erected by the king of Babylon. Being Hebrews and faithful to the true God, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah could not bow down to a lifeless, metallic image. Although all of the officers of the kingdom were there, invited by King Nebuchadnezzar for the dedication of the image, when the decree was given that all were to fall down and bow before the image at the sound of the music, the three faithful youth remembered the command of the Lord: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them...." Exodus 20:4, 5.

It took great courage to continue standing as the vast multitude fell down in adoration and worship of the imposing image. The faithful young men did not reason that it would be better to go along with the crowd, rather than stand out as odd and different and lose their lives. And because of their unflinching fidelity, God saved them miraculously in the fiery furnace and caused His name to be magnified gloriously among the heathen.

In Daniel, chapter 6, the aged prophet Daniel was accused of disobeying the Medo-Persian decree signed by Darius himself that no man was to ask any petition of any god or man except of the king for 30 days. Envy and jealousy were behind the well-planned plot that was devised by the leading men of the realm to get rid of Daniel. They knew that they could find nothing wrong in Daniel's conduct of his business affairs, so they had to "find it against him concerning the law of his God." Fully aware of the king's decree, which included the worship of God, he nevertheless continued to pray, as was his custom. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed,

and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Daniel 6:5, 10. Here we see the fidelity of God's servant, even at the risk of death. The decree could not hinder Daniel from humbly bowing before his God three times a day. And it was his steadfast homage to God in the little acts of kneeling in prayer that paved the way for his wonderful protection, blessing, and deliverance. Read the fascinating account in Daniel 6. May Daniel's example inspire us to give loving, steadfast service.

In 1982, Ernestine Schendel, a dear sister in the faith, was kidnapped at gunpoint by a desperate, dangerous man who was fleeing from a burglary. He suddenly jumped into her car and demanded that she move over and not look at him. He then drove down a ramp to the freeway, stopping to pick up his partner. Ernestine's first reaction was to lift her mind and heart to God, earnestly praying to Him to protect her and, if it was His will, to spare her life. Accepting God's decision in faith, she was ready to live or die. Her fear vanished; and she experienced peace, courage, and strength to witness to her kidnapper about the Saviour, Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord, after being driven around for almost two hours, the man with the gun said to her, "I could have harmed you; but knowing that you are a Christian, I will let you go."

Her grateful response was, "I know that God saved my life." Yes, earnest prayer is a powerful tool in the hands of a humble petitioner.

How few people avail themselves of prayer in these last days of earth's history! The Bible clearly points out that few will be saved. God's last church will be a little flock travelling on a narrow pathway. They do not have enormous churches with large memberships, nor do they have big institutions with many employees or eloquent preachers who are famous in the eyes of the world.

The church of God has today and in the future will continue to have an organization that is relatively tiny in comparison to other faiths. "It is a great mistake to trust in human wisdom or numbers in the work of God. Successful work for Christ depends not so much on numbers or talent as upon pureness of purpose, the true simplicity of earnest, dependent faith." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 370.

A Methodist preacher once said, "Give me ten men who fear nothing but God, and who hate nothing more than sin, and I shall set the world on fire."

God does not need a great number of people to turn this world upside down

and finish His work. What He needs are men like Abraham, Noah, Gideon, Elijah, and John the Baptist, who were faithful in little things. With scarce means and few numbers, God can do the impossible through the power of the Holy Spirit. Through our active faith, the Lord can and will send the showers of the latter rain so that the last message of warning will be proclaimed to the world. May God help us to realize that little things are very important and that eternal salvation depends on His people's faithfulness in such little things.

EVENTS

SOUTHEASTERN FIELD CONFERENCE

Friday, June 28,
to Sunday, June 30, 2024
Norman Park, Georgia

AMERICAN UNION YOUTH CONFERENCE

Monday, July 1,
to Sunday, July 7, 2024
Norman Park, Georgia

NORTHEASTERN FIELD CONFERENCE

Friday, August 30,
to Monday, September 2, 2024
Location to be determined

AMERICAN UNION WORKERS' SEMINAR

Tuesday, October 22,
to Sunday, October 27, 2024
Norman Park, Georgia

AMERICAN UNION CONFERENCE

Friday, December 20,
to Monday, December 23, 2024
Norman Park, Georgia

AMERICAN UNION DELEGATES' MEETINGS

Tuesday, December 24,
to Wednesday, December 25, 2024
Norman Park, Georgia

Online Courses

Offered by Norman College

Dear brothers and sisters of the American Union,

We greet you with the verse in 2 Corinthians 2:14. *“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place.”*

We are pleased to announce that Norman College has launched an online study program with two pilot courses in English only: “Introduction to Nutrition” (taught by Elder Idel Suarez, Jr.) and “Introduction to Hermeneutics” (taught by Elder Larry Watts).

These courses will run from April 15 to May 26, 2024. This program is open to all who wish to expand their knowledge in these areas. The goal of this

pilot program is to provide participants with a deeper understanding of the importance of a healthful, balanced diet, as well as the meaning and correct interpretation of the Bible.

Finally, the registration fee for the program is \$10, and the course fee is an additional \$10.

Below is detailed information about the registration process and course access:

1. First, visit the Norman College website at the following link: <https://www.normancollege.org/event-details-registration/pilot-program-registration>. Here, you will be able to select and pay for the course or courses you wish to study.
2. Once your payment has been made, go to the Norman College virtual platform at the following link: <https://normancollege.us/login/index.php>. Here, you can create your user name and password.
3. After you register, the system will automatically send you a confirmation email. It is important that you follow the instructions in the email to confirm your registration.
4. Once you have done this, you will be able to access the online learning platform. We recommend that you contact our team so that they can give you access to the course(s) you select, and you can begin your studies without any setbacks.

We are excited to have you as part of our educational community at Norman College! If you have any questions or need help during the registration process, please do not hesitate to contact us at support@normancollege.org.

—Margie Seely
American Union Secretary

“Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached. Before the student there is opened a path of continual progress.” —Education, p. 18.

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Go to the Norman College website to start the enrollment process at www.normancollege.org under Pilot Program Registration. Make the payment for the course you wish to study.

Registration

After registering in the virtual classroom, the system will automatically send a confirmation email to the address you provided. Open this email and confirm your registration by clicking on the confirmation link.

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Once your email is confirmed, log in to the platform with your username and password. After accessing the platform, contact us so that we can grant you the necessary privileges to access the course you selected.

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