



# Church of the Small Things: The Million Little Pieces That Make Up a Life

*Melanie Shankle*

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Is my ordinary, everyday life actually significant? Is it okay to be fulfilled by the simple acts of raising kids, working in an office, and cooking chicken for dinner?

It's been said, "Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the number of moments that take our breath away." The pressure of that can be staggering as we spend our days looking for that big thing that promises to take our breath away. Meanwhile, we lose sight of the small significance of fully living with every breath we take.

Melanie Shankle, *New York Times* bestselling author and writer at The Big Mama Blog tackles these questions head on in her fourth book, *Church of the Small Things*. Easygoing and relatable, she speaks directly to the heart of women of all ages who are longing to find significance and meaning in the normal, sometimes mundane world of driving carpool to soccer practice, attending class on their college campus, cooking meals for their family, or taking care of a sick loved one.

The million little pieces that make a life aren't necessarily glamorous or far-reaching. But God uses some of the smallest, most ordinary acts of faithfulness—and sometimes they look a whole lot like packing lunch.

Through humorous stories told in her signature style, full of Frito pie, best friends, the love of her Me-Ma and Pa-Pa, the unexpected grace that comes when we quit trying to measure up, and a little of the best TV has to offer, Melanie helps women embrace what it means to live a simple, yet incredibly meaningful life and how to find all the beauty and laughter that lies right beneath the surface of every moment.

## **Church of the Small Things: The Million Little Pieces That Make Up a Life Details**

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# **From Reader Review Church of the Small Things: The Million Little Pieces That Make Up a Life for online ebook**

## **Laurie says**

I suspect it might be a personal rule of Melanie Shankle's to never use an exclamation point. And this is what I love about her! (See what I did there?) And because of that, with every book and blogpost she writes, I feel like I am having a conversation with a dry-witted friend who happens to make me laugh out loud.(see Chapter 5 - "Here is my promise to you. I will NEVER try to be the best wife.")

I was happy to be chosen to receive an advance copy of this book, and it is my favorite of Melanie's three books. Through the recounting of stories filled with nostalgia, music, movies, Netflix, family, and dogs, she conveys her ability to observe and appreciate all the things which make life meaningful and fun. She jokes, but her ability to love deeply comes through. She is breezy and fun in her writing, yet I suspect when the chips are down and loyalties are challenged, she is a wise, stable force to be reckoned with on behalf of those she loves. Melanie is the most down-to-earth, sensible, yet entertaining writer of faith I have encountered in recent years, and I look forward to her next book. I recommend this book to any woman of any age.

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## **Sarah says**

I thought this book was just ok - I listened to Melanie on Jen Hatmaker's podcast, and was interested. Her style was similar to Jen's - where it just feels like you are having a conversation with a friend, however I didn't find her quite as relatable, or quite as funny or inspiring. It left me feeling like - why did I just read this story about a person I don't know and what it's like at her grandma's house, and how her dad is special to her, etc. I think the concept of the book is great - it's not the big events in life that we will remember or that stands out - it's all the little moments and the small things we will look back on and smile. Wouldn't recommend this to a friend, or have a need to read more of her books.

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## **Jamie says**

What can I say y'all – I'm a big fan of Melanie Shankle. I mean, we both love Jesus, books, tacos and have a soft spot for Texas. That's a bond Internet. Her blog and her podcast (with Boo Mama) are some of my favorite things. I've laughed and I've cried (emphasis on the laughing). Seriously, the podcast cracks me up, even when the topics are not my normal interest (I mean, her love of Teddy's Organic Rosehip Seed Oil convinced me to purchase my first non cooking oil ever in my life). But that's what I love about story – God uses everyone's story to impact others.

Her latest, The Church of Small Things, is seriously for anyone!

“But true success and prosperity comes when you are right where God wants you to be, doing what He has called you to do.”

Shankle has such a talent of drawing you in as a reader. Even if it's a topic you don't think you need – I'm telling y'all, she's able to keep you interested (Example #234: I loved her books on marriage and

motherhood). The overarching theme of Shankle's latest is much needed. This idea of "church of the small things" is a beautiful reminder that God's beauty, grace and love aren't only found in the big moments and things in life. They are in the little pieces – whether those pieces cause you to cry from laughter or cry from hurt. The little pieces seem so simple, yet, all come together to create something beautiful.

I think you'll be inspired and hopeful in your own story after reading more of Shankle's story, so if you're looking for a perfect Fall read (or a gift for someone), be sure to consider Church of the Small Things.

Also, C.S. Lewis and Tolkien are quoted, so yep.

Have you had a chance to read any of Melanie's books?

Originally posted at <https://musingsofjamie.wordpress.com/...>

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## **Lauren DuPrez says**

Church of The Small Things is the latest book from blogger and author Melanie Shankle. I've read two out of three of Shankle's previous books (Sparkly Green Earrings and The Antelope in the Living Room) and have found them to be delightful, hilarious and very relatable. Like her other books, Church of the Small Things is autobiographical and unlike her other books, it largely contains more of her personal life philosophy, which is from whence she derives the title of the book.

Philosophically, Church of the Small Things is about being faithful in the little things and how much good can come from the small moments even though we often think, and long for, what comes of big ones. It's also about how it is the small moments that, when strung together, form a life, rather than the big ones.

Shankle is a Christian so her philosophy is shaped by her beliefs, but as you will read in Church of the Small Things, not all of these beliefs are Biblically accurate. In this book I also noticed that she mentions some of the female Christian teachers she knows and has learned from which was a minor concern for me (minor because the book isn't a theological expose at heart, but still worth mentioning because wrong theology is dangerous). I'm not about throwing out the baby with the bath water but I desire for women to really know who God is and that simply can't happen apart from His Word.

Here are some of the minor concerns I have with Church of the Small Things:

- There are many pages in the book in which Shankle mentions receiving direct revelation from God by feeling and hearing His voice. We know from Scripture that God doesn't speak to us outside of the Bible (Deuteronomy 4:2, Deuteronomy 12:32, Proverbs 30:6, Revelation 22:18). Additionally, nowhere in Scripture are believers instructed to learn how to hear God's voice.
- Pg. 25, "He used those jobs to get me to San Antonio, which is where I learned to hear his voice when I was all alone, met my husband, figured out I loved to write, and am now raising my family. "
- Pg. 146, in reference to listening to the song Oceans, by Hillsong United, Shankle stated, "As I listened - really listened - I felt God say to me, 'You feel like this is too much because you're trying to figure out how to do it in your own power, and none of this is about you.'"
- Pg. 213, "At that moment, I felt God speak to my heart, saying, 'You need to quit asking 'Why?' and start asking me 'Where?' I knew immediately it was God because I wouldn't have come up with anything that

profound."

- Shankle uses The Message paraphrase of the Bible (Pgs. 53, 106) along with other versions (Check out Time Challies' blog post titled Eugene Peterson's Philosophy of Bible Translation for the reasons as to why I don't prefer the method). Typically, when I see The Message used it is often because the paraphrase fits well with whatever is being communicated but doesn't actually remain true to the context the verses were originally written in, or the author's intended meaning of those verses.

- On page 143, Shankle mentions she taught a workshop on blogging at the Proverbs 31 She Speaks Conference. Proverbs 31 Ministries is headed up by Lysa Terkeurst who has authority teaching over men in her church, which is unbiblical, and she also claims to receive direct revelation from God (see more here). This was a concern to me because what I've seen produced by Proverbs 31 Ministries and Lysa Terkeurst has been, thus far, unbiblical.

- On page 216, Shankle uses the unbiblical means of Scripture translation known as eisegesis to explain Zechariah 2:4-5. Reflecting on the passage, she states, "I believe God wants to make our city - our lives - so big that walls can't contain it. His idea of big is so different from ours." When reading Zechariah 2:4-5 in context of all of Zechariah Chapter Two, it is clear that the verses aren't referring to the greatness of the lives of individual believers but God's care for His people, specifically Jerusalem. We can know from this verse, God's character in that He cares for those who have turned from their sin and trust in Christ alone for salvation. The term "walls" isn't a metaphor for our lives, it is referencing actual city walls.

The bulk of Church of the Small things is the retelling of small moments in Shankle's life that left a big impression and have shaped her into who she is today. As I read these, I laughed, I (almost) cried and often thought, "Me too!" If you are looking for a book that is clean, relatable and laugh out loud funny, look no further than Church of The Small Things (as well as Shankle's other works). Overall, I truly enjoyed Church of the Small Things and apart from the theological inaccuracies, I look forward to reading more from Melanie in the future.

I received Church of the Small Things compliments of Zondervan in exchange for my honest review.

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## **Mandy says**

4.5 stars

Baloney sandwiches on white bread with Miracle Whip (with chips crushed in between), Aussie Sprunch Spray, Olivia Newton John's Let's Get Physical, perms, and much more...it was like she was writing about me growing up as a kid! I laughed so hard and related to most of this book...the author is also a mother to one daughter (only child) so when she talked about her experiences as a mother, I felt like I was sitting down with an old friend.

This was a super quick read filled with humor and real life experiences that are very relatable to a certain age group...those who grew up in the 1980's. Although I do think even those who didn't grow up during those times could relate to some of it. I love how she really hits home about letting the little things define a life and not your job title, the amount of money you make, or the material things.

*"It's our internal voice that whispers we will never be enough, so we work and worry and feel like we must do something big, something huge to prove our worth and to make sure our life matters. We have to host a conference, start a movement, adopt fifteen kids, or fight human trafficking to really matter. Which are all great things, but thinking this way can cause us to lose sight of the small things that can also change a life:*

*bringing dinner to a sick neighbor, smiling at a waitress who's having a bad day, reading to your kids before bed, and simply praying for someone going through a rough time."*

Oh, man. When she wrote about her time spent with Me-Ma and Pa-Pa, I lost it. Cried so hard because it brought so many feelings to the surface about my own grandparents. This quote really hit me:

*"I've always thought I would love to have one more day with them to ask about their hopes, their dreams, their heartbreaks and disappointments, but I think what I've realized as I've grown older is they probably didn't think much about those things. Life, for the most part, just was what it was...good and bad. They lived their lives with a faithfulness and commitment to the small, important things we tend to overlook in the quest to do something grand with our lives, somehow missing the fact that the small things are ultimately the biggest things."*

I gave this 4.5 stars because there were a few times when the humor felt forced and didn't quite flow as naturally as the rest of the book....also the chapter dedicated to her dogs felt a little overkill...don't get me wrong, I'm a HUGE animal lover and couldn't imagine a home/life without them, but it just felt a tad out of place. Overall I would highly recommend to most of my friends!

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### **Alice Teets says**

I received this book from the author and publisher in exchange for an honest review.

I love this book. I promise you I am not just saying that because I got it for free. I think the author and I could be friends if we both could get past our introvert tendencies and actually make and keep plans. Her stories resonate with me, make me laugh, and make me think. She opens her life and invites you in. I feel like you could look in her medicine cabinet, and she wouldn't even complain.

I also love the concept of this book. That if we do the small things, or what feels like small things, with love and grace, then that can be our legacy. We are not all going to cure cancer, but we can all be a good friend.

Basically, Mlanie Shankle is a new age, faith-based Erma Bombeck.

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### **Michelle says**

My friends rave about Melanie, but this book was my introduction to her writing. I heard her on a podcast and loved what she had to say, so I was excited to read her book. And now that I've read it, I'm...confused. Maybe it's because I'm not in my mid-forties raising a teenager, obsessed with dogs, and buying Lululemon leggings by the dozen, but I related to almost nothing. I know this book was to glorify the small things in life (and I'm all about that), but she literally wrote an entire chapter about having dogs. The only reason I pushed through is because she's a clever writer and we share the same sense of humor. I find her genuinely entertaining, but this book felt like a well-written journal and not a book for the masses. She would occasionally throw in some serious moments about loving our grandparents before they die or some such thing, and I appreciate that, but it was all so disconnected and just kind of a strange book. Once again, maybe it's just because I don't relate very much. She spent half the book talking about life as a kid in the 70s and

80s. I'm waiting for the day these sorts of books have memories of Lisa Frank and tamagotchis.

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### **Chris Mara says**

“The true joy of life is found in the every day.”

Nowadays we are all moving too fast and have many distractions in our lives that we forget to reflect on the small everyday accomplishments. Yet they are so very important. It's the true basis of who we are.

This little handbook is written in a light hearted style, so it will definitely resonate with the young and middle age crowd who get caught up in the roller coaster of life. It takes a lot (as I remember from my younger days) to occasionally try and step off the train of madness and regain inner peace. For example, To say no to calendar commitments and instead spend alone time with my husband or family. To choose to be in nature to decompress and truly see and experience perhaps a bird or a bug that came by to visit me or a bee or a butterfly. To be selfish when taught as a child that it is not a good trait to be selfish. To learn to say no instead of being a yes people pleaser. These things did not come easy and did not come overnight. But they have made me what I am today - older and wiser and confident in my choices.

The author is a young woman and I applaud her sharing her many tips and tricks with the general public. She has gleaned a lot of good sense from her experiences in life thus far and knows what to do with the lessons she learned and how important they are to her and her life.

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### **Melissa says**

This is another book destined for my special keeper shelf beside Melanie's previous three books. I love to read Mel's stories. I laugh till I cry and there's usually at least one moment or more that just make me cry in her books and "Church of the Small Things" was no exception. This book has plenty of laugh out loud moments, the chapter on exercise and Perry's desire to to be certified to shoot out of a helicopter made me laugh so much that I read them to my husband who also got a huge kick out of them and a doggie version of Camp Granada plus many, many more. It had sad moments such as her friend's battle with breast cancer and it had several nuggets of truths that made me think and spoke to my heart and soul. This book has it all and I can not recommend it enough!

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### **Heather says**

3.5/4 stars

While the book was a fast read, it wasn't the best I've read from Shankle. She wrote each chapter almost as a stand alone vignette (the million little pieces). Lots of laugh out loud stories, especially if you were a product of the 70s and 80s. The chapter wrap up lists may have been my favorite because they were so relatable

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## **Celeste says**

Rating: 3.5 out of 5 stars, rounded up.

Melanie Spankle is such an entertaining storyteller. I'm not the biggest fan of nonfiction in general or memoirs in particular, but she has a way of spinning a tale that makes me laugh and think. This book was her thoughts on a variety of different aspects of her life, from childhood to marriage to parenthood to friendship and spirituality.

I was entertained, but it honestly didn't feel very original. I know there's nothing new under the sun, but I felt like I had read this book before when I read another book of hers (*The Antelope in the Living Room*), just with slightly more variance. I love her voice, and feel like we would be friends. There were even times when she would tell a story that I swear up and down happened to me in exactly the same way. She makes me laugh. However, she tends to retell the same story, just in different ways. After a while, even the funniest stories stop eliciting the same response.

In spite of this, there were chapters that moved me. One chapter in particular, where Melanie was talking about a friend who had been diagnosed with breast cancer and how their group of friends rallied around her, moved me to tears. Melanie was a way of bringing you into the moment with her.

Honestly, I feel like my problems with this book were just that: mine. As I said, I'm not the biggest fan of nonfiction or memoirs, which I'm pretty sure is the main reason I didn't love this book. I did like it, though! If you're a fan of memoirs, especially those that are mostly light but have moments of depth, you should give this one a try.

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## **Julie McComas says**

Pick up this book! Seriously, I felt like I was spending time with a good friend listening (or reading) her stories about everyday life. The simple acts, she calls them, of life are actually significant. I love reading a book where the author doesn't try to sugar coat things, and Melanie certainly doesn't sugar coat things. I felt like I could really relate to everything in the *Small Things I Wish I'd Known in High School* chapter since I am approximately, if not, the same age as Melanie. One of the small things is "Tucking your jeans into your socks just makes you look like an ice cream cone. An ice cream cone with a big, crispy perm on top." Oh good grief, I think I have photos of myself impersonating an ice cream cone!

There are so many funny things in this book. If you don't laugh reading the *Bangs, Bangs You're Dead* chapter then you might need to check your pulse!

What is great about this book is that every woman will be able to relate to something. *Church of the Small Things* is written like a memoir, and Melanie shares memories from childhood to present day. There are memories with her grandparents, sister, dogs, friends and family. This is why I feel like every woman will be able to relate to this book in some form or fashion.

The small things sometimes turn out to be bigger than we thought, and they are significant. You'll find this lovely, reflective, funny memoir hard to finish. Why? Because it is so lovely you won't want it to end. After reading this I have determined to pay attention to the small things a little more. I hope you will get this book,

read it, and learn to look for the small things too.

I received an advanced eARC from Netgalley in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Debbie says**

Wow, what an amazing book. I've never read any of Melanie's books before. I'm so glad I was chosen to receive an advanced copy. (Thanks Julie for entering me!!!) I got tears in my eyes and I also laughed OUTLOUD! Melanie is beyond witty and humorous! Being a fitness instructor had me rolling on the floor reading Chapter 13!! It's such an easy-read but yet says soooo much. Thanks Melanie for reminding me about how important all the SMALL things we do, truly do matter. I can't wait to read your other books.

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### **Rebecca Jo says**

I absolutely loved this book. Someone who has stories that involve Xanadu & roller skating, & hair & style from the 80's & references of TV shows & music from the same time I grew up? Yep... I love Melanie. One of those people that I know I'd be best friends with.

The book is just filled with each chapter being little stories of her life & they have subtle little life lessons in all of them. I'm all about books like this. They are easy to read - touch the heart, make me cry & totally make me laugh. Another book I'd buy all my girlfriends!

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### **Maddie Dumas says**

I laughed and I cried- sometimes all at once. I highly recommend the audio book.

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