

A Fixer-Upper Life
Haggai 2
Small Group Guide

Opening Icebreaker Question:

- Share at your own level of comfort. Answer either or both: What de-energizes or discourages you? What energizes or encourages you?

OPTIONAL BACKGROUND READING: We're doing a short series called "This Old House," where we're looking at the prophet Haggai.

We drop into the story as God's people are in the midst of some severe discouragement. We saw last week that they had recently returned from 70 years of exile in the land of Babylon. Well, recent if you consider 16 years recent. As soon as they returned, they began to re-construct the Temple, the visible sign of God's presence in their land, the place where God met them. Yet once they built the foundation, discouragement set in, and the Temple remained in ruins for years. In chapter 1, where we looked last week, God told his people, through Haggai, that it was time for them to get their priorities in order and rebuild the Temple. They needed God's presence more than anything else. We saw how all of our unfulfillment points to our need for his presence in our lives as well. They were inspired, and got right to work.

About 7 weeks have passed since Haggai's first message, and about a month since the work started, where we pick up the story in chapter 2. The date is Oct. 17, 520 BC. They're four weeks into the work, and everyone is already discouraged.

READ Haggai 2:1-3.

1. What is the reason(s) "the remnant" of Israel feels discouraged about the temple rebuilding project?¹
2. Put yourself in their shoes. After being told they could return to Israel and rebuild their temple, how might the Israelites have felt when encountering opposition, delays, and realizing that this temple might not match the former one's glory?
3. The returning Israelites must have felt like their efforts for the kingdom of God didn't amount to anything. Have you ever felt this way? Explain.
4. Pastor Josh says that God, via the prophet Haggai, provides three reasons to take heart, which apply directly to us today. **Read vv 4-5.** What is the first reason to be encouraged? Why does God call to mind the Egypt/Exodus experience?
5. Josh talked about working with all your heart in your vocation and the areas God has called you to serve him. With this in mind, what would it mean to you if you really felt God was working with you and not just rooting for you?

¹ Note that since Israel had been devastated and occupied by a foreign army and since this "remnant" had been in captivity for many years, they did not have enough money to rebuild the temple with the same amount of gold, silver, and the finest wood. Note also the opposition and delays they faced in chapter 1.

6. What difference does the presence of the Holy Spirit inside us make to our lives and our efforts? How is this different from what the people in Haggai's day experienced?

READ vv 6-9 to discover the second reason to take heart amidst discouragement.

7. According to v. 7, on what does the value of the temple depends?
- What if you live as if your value depended upon God's infilling and not your externals? Discuss.
 - What if the value of your ministry depended upon the leading and work of the Holy Spirit more than your resources? Discuss.
8. In Matthew, Jesus says of himself, "I tell you that one greater than the temple is here" (12.6). In other words, the reason that this second temple would be more glorious than the first was not because of size, or silver, or gold, but because God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, would walk there, and reveal that the Temple had always been a shadow of which he was the reality.
- The Apostle Paul writes, in his first letter to the Corinthians, "Don't you know that *you yourselves* are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Cor 3.16) **What does it feel like to know that in today's world, YOU are the temple that God has chosen to rest his glory within!?**
 - How does this bring significance to everything you do? Discuss.**
9. Pastor Josh says that this truth of God living within us leads to the third reason for encouragement: **Take heart, for you build more than you see.** How were God's people in Haggai's day building more than they could see?
10. How might you be discouraged right now? Josh listed the following ways:
- You're living Plan B in your relationships. They're not what you hoped.
 - You're uncomfortable with some aspect of your physical body.
 - You're discouraged because of your career.
 - You're discouraged because you don't see yourself having a significant positive effect on your kids.
 - You've been single much longer than you originally expected.
 - You are a ministry volunteer – small group leader, Sunday school teacher, youth leader, nursery worker—and you wonder if your work really matters.
11. God's glory is within us and God has the ability to "shake the heavens and the earth" (v6) to accomplish his goal. Knowing this fact should provide us peace and encouragement. **How can we better remember and live out these two truths on a daily basis?**
12. Prayer: Spend some time praying for these areas of discouragement. Ask the Holy Spirit if he would give a word of encouragement for each of you.