

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

The background is a dark blue grid with faint white architectural drawings. In the top right, there is a floor plan with a circular feature. In the bottom left, there is a circular diagram with radial lines. The main text is centered on the grid.

HAGGAI

HOW TO BUILD BACK

HAGGAI: HOW TO BUILD BACK

Have you ever felt like your life was in ruins? Perhaps bad decisions made your household crumble. Maybe mistakes shattered your friendships. It's possible that harmful habits destroyed your life and you're trapped in the rubble. Sadly, many of us see this in our spiritual lives. They were once thriving, maybe after summer camp or a powerful service, but now our Bibles collect dust and our prayer lives seems silent. I get it because I have been there too. Sometimes our spiritual lives look like wreckage, so what do we do next? We rebuild. But we must commit to building back better.

If you can relate, I am sorry. You are not alone, though. Ancient Israel found themselves in an identical situation. Their lives were in ruins and they found themselves surveying the desolation. After generations of exile, displaced Hebrews began moving back to their beloved Promised Land. The landscape looked nothing like the "land of milk and honey" their ancestors had found. It was more like a land of "mud and horror."

Their temple was a pile of rocks. Their city looked like a war zone. At first, they were excited to rebuild, but time made them grow complacent. The efforts just stopped. God sent the prophet Haggai to help them with their rebuilding efforts. Haggai had to help the Hebrews see a harsh reality. Their lack of discipline was on display in every facet of their lifestyle. Their crops died, their economy collapsed, and enemies were starting to take advantage of their vulnerability. Now, it was time for action, so what were they to do?

READ: Haggai 1:3-5

Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house [the temple] remains a ruin?" Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways."

Haggai is sadly one of the most overlooked and under-studied books in the Old Testament. That is a shame because his message is monumental. He skillfully rallied his people around one central goal. It was time to rebuild the cornerstone of Israel's reputation — the Temple. Don't think of this like one of the dozens of churches in your hometown. It's so much grander than that, not only physically but spiritually. The Temple was God's dwelling place (Exodus 25–31). It was where people gathered to

worship, offer sacrifices, and connect with their community. It was so much more significant than a basic building. The Temple was the center of their religious lives.

The book of Haggai distinguishes itself among the stories of the Old Testament Minor Prophets. How? It's one of the only Minor Prophets where the people immediately listened. Nearly every other prophet is met with pushback, backlash, threats, and rejection. Not Haggai. Flowing from his leadership, history tells us that construction kicked off immediately. We actually get to read about the foundation being formed, the walls being built, and the Temple coming together. Don't you just love a happy ending, especially in comparison to the other prophetic writings?

Haggai's prophecy is deeply practical today too. We are not being rallied to build the Temple, but we are building our own temples every single day. The "temple" in question is not a physical building. It's you and me. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) and God dwells within us. Since you are a spiritual temple, you can distill three principles from Haggai when you have to rebuild.

READ: Haggai 1:9

"You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the Lord Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house..."

Don't Get Distracted

Look at what Haggai explains. They weren't bad people; they were just distracted people. While God's house was in ruins, they were too focused on building their own homes in the suburbs. It's not bad to build your family a place to live, but it's tragic when that becomes a distraction to your ultimate purpose. Their priority should have been God first, but they got it twisted. Their Savior unified them. God rallied his people by uniting them under one single vision. All of Israel needed to push past distractions to serve on the Temple building committee.

So many of us are dangerously distracted. We allow our spiritual lives to crumble while we still stream 3-4 episodes a night, build a social media empire, and focus on secondary goals. None of those things are bad within themselves, but they're dangerous when they press pause on your rebuilding efforts. Distractions can be

dangerous. When life is in shambles, focus on building your faith. Refuse to let mindless scrolling and endless streaming get in the way of what really matters. As you rebuild, resist any distraction that comes your way.

READ: Haggai 1:14-15

So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.

Let the Spirit Lead

Why were the prophet's words so well received? The Spirit intervened. Haggai says that God revived "the spirit of the whole remnant of the people." You cannot do this on your own; you need Divine instruction to bring your project to completion. Haggai teaches that God's power moved through the people of Israel, starting with the leaders and ending with the whole population. The Spirit compelled them to complete the rebuilding project.

Any time you find yourself feeling sluggish, ask for God to energize you. The same Spirit that invigorated Israel wants to do the same in your life. Invite God to lead the way. He will show you the right strategy. He will help you build back stronger. He will fortify you, empower you, and embolden you. None of that is permanently possible without the supernatural support of the Spirit. Like Israel, let God compose your comeback story.

READ: Haggai 2:9

The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty."

Build Back Better

The nation's calling wasn't easy. They still had to make bricks, lay tile, lift heavy beams, and move furniture up the stairs. Success was on the other side of their hard work, though. It's worth acknowledging that their success didn't look like you may expect. What did God say he would give them? Peace. He didn't say prosperity. He didn't say a pizza party. God granted them peace.

Do you have a special spot? I am sure you do! It's that little slice of paradise in your home that feels extra homey. It may be your bed, a big comfy couch, or even a workshop in the shed. Whatever it looks like, you know the serenity that surrounds you when you settle into your special spot. That's one of the many blessings of our homes. They're a place to feel safe, secure, and at peace. That is a small sliver of the feeling that comes when you build your life with God's guidance. That's what I want for you -- true, unmistakable peace.

Authentic peace comes at the end of your rebuilding efforts. True peace can only come from God. So, as you put in the work, know that peace is on the horizon. Are anxious thoughts keeping you awake at night? Build back, and peace will come. Do you get discouraged when you look at the wreckage of your spiritual life? Build back, and serenity will follow. Do you feel as though God's presence somehow missed you? Start building back, and He will make His presence unmistakable.

If you need to start building back, be encouraged by the message of Haggai. God will help you build back better through the power of the Spirit and the peace that comes with His presence. Let God restore the ruins of your life. He will make something amazing rise from the ashes.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week and what was the lowest part of your week?

Q1: What's one thing that stood out to you from today's message?

Q2: What message did God call Haggai to share with the people of Israel? Why?

Q3: Why do people let secondary priorities distract them from important rebuilding seasons in life?

Q4: What distractions (good or bad) have gotten in the way of your relationship with God?

Q5: How can you begin to rely more on being led by the Spirit?

Q6: What part of your life would you like to "build back better?"

Application: What advice from Haggai is applicable to you? How can you commit to putting this into action every day this week?

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Isaiah 41:10

Luke 12:22-26

Psalms 118:6-7

Psalms 91:1-16

1 Samuel 3:7-10

Psalms 32:1-7

Philippians 1:6

Colossians 1:10

Habakkuk 3:19

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.