

How to Use Sermon Resources

- **READ AHEAD TOGETHER** - MCG's should use the Devotional at the end of this resource as a reading plan for the week leading up to your meeting.
- **SIT UNDER THE WORD** - This resource is filled with scripture references. Read them aloud, together before you answer any questions.
- **APPLY TRUTH** - The goal is deep discussion and application, not necessarily to complete this resource. Don't squash a good discussion. If you get into something important along the way that's fine.

Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer [2 mins]

Use the Overview [5 mins]

- Cover any key points for people who missed parts or all of the sermon

Scripture Deep Dive [30-40 mins]

- Opening Question
- Read the scripture for each question then ask the question. Some have multiple scriptures.

Close in Prayer

- In this extended prayer time, ask others to pray as they feel led, pray in a circle, pray over one another, pray to your left, or pray for someone specific. Whatever seems best.

Split Time (if applicable)

- Men with men, women with women
- Share in a circle. "What's one thing you want to celebrate? What do you need prayer and accountability for?"
- After everyone shares, pray in a circle for the person to your left/right.

SERMON OVERVIEW

Return: Haggai

Sermon Summary:

Drawing from the book of Haggai, this sermon examines the story of the Jewish remnant who returned from Babylonian exile, laid the foundation of the temple, and then stopped building for 16 years. Through the prophet Haggai's message to Zerubbabel and the people, the sermon challenges believers to examine their own lives and identify what hinders them from walking in obedience to God. Three primary hindrances are explored: grief over the past, discouragement and fear, and discontentment.

Key Points:

- The people of Judah laid the foundation of the rebuilt temple but stopped construction for 16 years, and Haggai's message was a call to finish what they started
- God twice commands his people through Haggai to "think carefully about your ways," urging honest self-examination of whether one's life is characterized by obedience or disobedience
- Grief over the past can hinder present obedience, when people are so focused on what God once did that they cannot participate in what God is doing now
- Discouragement and fear from outside opposition can derail obedience, and a believer must ask how easily their faithfulness to God can be disrupted by external pressure
- True motivation for obedience is not a pep talk but a gospel motivation, rooted in the remembrance of God's faithfulness in salvation and his promised presence

Scripture Reference:

- Haggai 1:1-13 and Haggai 2:1-5, the primary passage addressing God's call to rebuild the temple and his promise of presence

Stories:

- Pastor Matt's personal experience with 5K races, loving the excitement at the start but losing motivation around the mile-and-a-half mark, used to illustrate how enthusiasm for a task can fade before completion
- Pastor Matt's personal struggle with worship at youth camps, being distracted by comparisons to how things were done 26 years ago rather than entering into present worship
- A classroom illustration involving a blindfolded student navigating a desk obstacle course while competing voices gave right and wrong directions, used to illustrate the stakes of listening to the wrong voice and the danger of treating disobedience lightly
- John D. Rockefeller's famous response that enough money is "just a little bit more," used to illustrate the nature of discontentment
- The story of Adoniram Judson in Burma in 1821, eight years into his mission with little fruit, his wife gone home due to illness, writing a letter expressing his desire to give up, but ultimately declaring "I fled to Jesus," used as a powerful example of gospel motivation sustaining obedience in isolation and hardship

Scripture Deep Dive

Opening Question

1. **Read Haggai 1:1-4** - Share a time when you started something enthusiastically but found it difficult to sustain. Why is this such a normal human experience? What causes the fall off?

Point 1: Examine obedience

2. **Read Haggai 1:5-8** — Twice God says, “Think carefully about your ways,” then connects Israel’s dissatisfaction with their failure to prioritize his house. How does this passage distinguish legitimate stewardship of personal responsibilities from self-centered priorities that continually postpone obedience? (Read Matthew 6:31–33 alongside it.)

3. **Read Haggai 1:12–15** — Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the remnant heard God’s word, feared the Lord, and began the work. What specific sequence does this text show—from receiving God’s word to changed action—and which step most often breaks down when a believer recognizes disobedience but does not change course? (Compare James 1:22–25.)

Point 2: Identify hindrances

4. **Read Ezra 3:10–13; Haggai 2:3–5** — Some who remembered Solomon’s temple wept when they saw the new foundation, while others rejoiced; God later calls the people to be strong and work despite the comparison. *How can nostalgia for a past season of ministry, church life, or personal spiritual growth keep someone from recognizing and joining what God is doing now?* (Consider Isaiah 43:18–19.)

5. **Read Ezra 4:4–5; Haggai 2:4–5** — Outside opposition discouraged Judah and made them afraid, yet God’s answer is, “Work, for I am with you... Do not be afraid.” *When obedience becomes costly or receives criticism, what makes fear a poor guide for decision-making, and how should God’s promised presence reshape the next faithful step?* (Use Joshua 1:5–9 and 2 Timothy 1:7.)

Point 3: Obey through gospel strength

6. **Read Haggai 2:4–5; Philippians 4:11–13** — God grounds Israel’s call to work in his past rescue, covenant promise, and present Spirit; Paul describes contentment in both abundance and need through Christ’s strength. *How does remembering God’s saving work and presence expose the lie that you must first gain more security, comfort, or resources before obeying him, and what concrete act of obedience follows from that truth?* (Also read 1 Timothy 6:6–8.)