

Small Group Guide: The Book of Haggai



Overview

This guide is based on a sermon through the book of Haggai, a short but powerful post-exilic prophetic book that challenges God's people to examine their priorities, return to faithful worship, and trust God's promises even when they cannot see the full picture.

Context to Know

After 70 years of Babylonian exile, roughly 50,000 Israelites returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the royal descendant of David, and Joshua, the high priest. Their mission was to rebuild the temple. They started strong, but outside pressure and personal comfort caused them to abandon the project. God raised up the prophet Haggai to call them back to the work and to faithful worship.

Key Takeaways

- Prioritizing personal comfort and security over worship of God puts us outside of alignment with his blessing and will.

- When our focus turns inward toward self-satisfaction, nothing will ever be enough. Contentment flows from a God-centered life, not a self-centered one.
- Responding to God's word with repentance and action, even imperfect action, moves us back into right relationship with him.
- God is more concerned with the posture of our hearts than the grandeur of our offerings.
- We are often called to build for a generation we will never see, trusting that God's promises are sure even when we cannot see the outcome.
- Haggai points forward to Christ. The second temple, though less ornate than Solomon's, held more glory because Jesus, the Prince of Peace, walked in it.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Think about a time when life got busy and God gradually moved from the center of your life to the edges. What did that shift look like practically, and what brought you back?

Digging In

2. The people of Haggai's day were not openly rejecting God. They were still sacrificing at the altar. They just stopped building the temple while building luxurious homes for themselves. In what subtle ways do we do something similar today, going through the motions of faith while quietly prioritizing our own comfort?
3. In Haggai 1:6, God describes a people who work hard but never seem to get ahead, who eat but are not full, who earn wages but watch them disappear. The sermon connected this to a self-focused life. Where do you see this pattern play out in your own life or in the culture around you?
4. The sermon referenced Jim Carrey, Matthew Perry, and Solomon's writings in Ecclesiastes to illustrate that no amount of success, wealth, or pleasure satisfies the human soul. Why do you think we keep pursuing those things anyway, even when we know they will not fulfill us?
5. The people responded to Haggai's message in just three weeks. The sermon called this remarkable given that prophets like Jeremiah preached for decades without the same response. What do you think made this group of returning exiles different?

What conditions in your own life make you more or less receptive to correction from God's word?

6. God told the people through Haggai that the second temple would be greater than Solomon's temple. From a purely physical standpoint, that seemed impossible. The glory came not from gold or craftsmanship but from the presence of Jesus. Have you ever experienced a situation where God's idea of "greater" looked completely different from what you expected? What happened?
7. The sermon described how the people were building glory they would never personally see, acting in faith for a future generation. The apostles did the same thing. What does it look like to build faithfully for the next generation in your own context, whether in your family, your church, or your community?
8. The sermon drew attention to the names and roles of the two leaders: Zerubbabel, from the royal messianic line of David, and Joshua, the high priest, whose name is the Hebrew equivalent of Jesus. How does seeing these Old Testament figures as foreshadowing of Christ change the way you read the Old Testament more broadly?

Personal Reflection

9. The core application of the sermon was this: "My comfort and my luxury does not supersede my worship." Where in your life right now might God be saying, "Consider your ways"? What would it look like to reorder your priorities in response?
10. God promised the returning exiles, "From this day, I will bless you," not when the temple was finished, but when their hearts moved in the right direction. What does this tell you about what God is really looking for from you?

Practical Applications

- **Conduct a priority audit.** Take an honest look at your time, money, and energy over the past month. What do they reveal about what is actually at the center of your life? Bring one specific area before God in prayer this week and ask him what needs to shift.
- **Respond quickly.** The people of Haggai's day heard the word and acted within three weeks. Identify one thing you have sensed God calling you to do that you have been delaying. Take one concrete step toward it this week.

- **Practice contentment intentionally.** Choose one day this week to fast from complaint and comparison. Instead, write down three specific ways God has already provided for you. Reflect on how that shift in focus changes your outlook.
 - **Build for the next generation.** Identify one person younger in faith than you, whether a child, a new believer, or someone in your community, and invest in them this week through encouragement, mentorship, or prayer.
 - **Read the companion books.** To deepen your understanding of Haggai's context, read Ezra chapters 1 through 6 and the book of Zechariah alongside Haggai. Notice how the same historical moment is described from different vantage points.
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Closing Thought

The people who rebuilt the second temple never saw Jesus walk through its courts. They never witnessed the moment when the word became flesh and filled that place with the glory God had promised. They simply heard the word, responded with repentant hearts, and got back to work. That is the invitation for us as well. Seek first the kingdom. Trust the promise. Build faithfully. The fullness of what God is doing may be beyond what we can see, but his word is sure.

Closing Prayer Points

- Ask God to reveal any area of life where comfort or self-focus has displaced genuine worship.
- Thank God that he responds to a willing and repentant heart, not a perfect record.
- Pray for the faith to build and give and serve even when you cannot see the full outcome.
- Ask for the spirit of the returning remnant: people whose hearts are ready to hear and respond to God's word.

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Based on the Book of Haggai: Rebuilding What Matters Most



Day 1: Consider Your Ways

Reading: Haggai 1:1-11

Devotional: It is easy to build a comfortable life while neglecting the things God has called us to prioritize. The returned exiles had not abandoned faith entirely — they had simply allowed comfort and security to quietly replace wholehearted devotion. God's call to "consider your ways" is not a condemnation but an invitation to honest self-examination. Where have you allowed busyness, comfort, or fear of conflict to push genuine worship to the margins of your life? God is not asking for perfection. He is asking for priority. When he holds the center, everything else finds its proper place.

Day 2: The Emptiness of Self-Centered Living

Reading: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11; Haggai 1:6

Devotional: The image of earning wages only to place them in a bag with holes is one of the most honest pictures of a life oriented around self. Solomon discovered the same truth —

that no accumulation of pleasure, wealth, or achievement could satisfy the deep longing within the human heart. Jim Carrey and Matthew Perry are modern echoes of Solomon's ancient conclusion. The hole inside us is not shaped like success or security. It is shaped like God. When we seek first our own comfort and fulfillment, we find ourselves perpetually chasing what we can never quite hold. Reorient your pursuit today.

Day 3: When We Actually Listen

Reading: Haggai 1:12-15; James 1:22-25

Devotional: One of the most remarkable moments in the prophetic literature of Scripture is found in Haggai chapter 1 — the people heard the word of God and obeyed it. Prophets had spoken for centuries without that response. What made the difference was not a more eloquent messenger but a heart made ready through hardship and exile. Suffering has a way of softening the soil of the soul. God's immediate response to their obedience was not a lengthy list of further requirements. It was simply this: I am with you. Obedience does not earn God's presence, but it positions us to experience it fully.

Day 4: Glory You May Never See

Reading: Haggai 2:1-9; Hebrews 11:13-16

Devotional: The workers who rebuilt the second temple never saw the glory God promised it would hold. They laid foundations for a future they could not fully imagine. Yet that temple became the place where Jesus himself walked, taught, and ultimately gave himself as the final and sufficient sacrifice. Much of the kingdom work we are called to do operates the same way. We plant seeds in relationships, in communities, and in the next generation, trusting that God's purposes extend far beyond what our eyes can see. Faith is not the absence of uncertainty. It is the willingness to build anyway.

Day 5: From This Day Forward

Reading: Haggai 2:15-19; Matthew 6:33

Devotional: God's promise in Haggai 2:19 is striking in its precision — from this day, I will bless you. Not when the temple is finished. Not when everything is perfectly in order. From the moment their hearts turned and their hands moved in obedience, the blessing began. God does not wait for our complete transformation before he moves toward us. He

responds to the direction of the heart. When we seek his kingdom first, not as a transaction but as a genuine reordering of our lives, we find that what we were striving so hard to secure on our own begins to follow naturally. Begin today.