

HAGGAI

PRIORITIES IN STRANGE TIMES

DISCUSSION GUIDE



WEEK 3: HOW DO I STAY HOLY IN AN UNHOLY WORLD?

Read the Text

Haggai 2:10-19

¹⁰ On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, ¹¹ “Thus says the Lord of hosts: Ask the priests about the law: ¹² ‘If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?’” The priests answered and said, “No.” ¹³ Then Haggai said, “If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?” The priests answered and said, “It does become unclean.” ¹⁴ Then Haggai answered and said, “So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the Lord, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean. ¹⁵ Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the Lord, ¹⁶ how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. ¹⁷ I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the Lord. ¹⁸ Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider: ¹⁹ Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you.”

Main Point

As we continue on in chapter 2, we see that the Israelites are finally reprioritizing God and are building His temple. Although they are now obeying God's command, they are falling into a familiar pitfall: they conflate what they do with who they are. As they build God's temple, they become puffed up and arrogant. ***They believe that their obedience to God must obligate His blessing.*** They lose sight that it is God's grace that brings them into His family, and not their works. God is always more concerned with the state of our hearts than the deeds of our hands.

Haggai confronts the Israelites with a rebuke: the Israelites assume they are deemed holy based on their behavior. But the truth is that habits of holiness don't make us holy. ***Holiness doesn't move from the external to the internal but rather from the internal to external.*** It is the state of our hearts that move us to do holy acts of service.

There is a lot of hope at the end of the passage. God promises His blessing upon His people. Not because they worked their way into His good graces, but because He is good and righteous and holy. ***We can't earn God's grace, but we can put ourselves in a better position to receive it through our trust in and obedience to Him.***

Reflect Together

1. How do you sometimes conflate what you do with who you are? What is helpful in reminding you of your true identity?
2. Where are you serving right now or engaging in spiritual practices. What are your motives? Where could you be falling into the belief that your actions are what makes you holy?
3. The Israelites are invited to re-examine their hearts to consider their motives and their beliefs about the character of God. Where do you need to re-calibrate? How can you grow in your understanding of who God is?