BUILDING THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

A STUDY THROUGH THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

A BIBLE STUDY FROM CHAPIN UMC
Over the course of the next four weeks, I invite you to join me as we study together this short (just two chapters) book of the bible. But don’t let its size fool you; Haggai is a book rich in truth and wisdom. Written over 2500 years ago, God’s message to the people of Israel was clear and compelling and life changing. It is a message we so desperately need today!

This bible study was developed by your CUMC Staff and is meant to be a companion study which will track with our four week sermon series in August. Hearing the sermons and then spending time the following week in personal bible study will enrich you in so many ways.

I hope you enjoy this study of Haggai: Building the House of The Lord, and that you are blessed to walk in even greater obedience to Jesus because of it!

Jody Flowers
Lead Pastor
Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you were trying hard to “get ahead” and instead only seemed to be “spinning your wheels?” Maybe you were working extra hours at the office, perhaps taking on additional responsibilities- trying your best to impress your boss and secure that promotion. The promotion never came, instead it went to someone else, but a sense of futility did arrive, and it washed over you like a tidal wave. Or, you were scaling your spending habits back drastically to get yourself out of debt, and instead of making progress on the debt front, all in one week the car broke down, your young child broke their arm, and your boss informed you that your annual bonus would be a spiral ham instead of a fat check? Futility and frustration can come upon us easily, and if we are living for ourselves rather than for the Lord, we may find that He is going to place us in situations where we will continue to “spin our wheels” until we turn back to Him with our whole hearts.

In a sense, this is what we see taking place in the Old Testament Book of Haggai (pronounced “Hag-Eye”). Written by the prophet Haggai in 520 BC, this short, two chapter book packs a powerful punch as the Lord, through Haggai, calls out the Jewish people for not rebuilding the temple as they were directed to do more than 13 years earlier. Haggai exhorts and encourages the people to get busy and finish the work that has been set before them. He calls them out for their focus on building themselves beautiful mansions while neglecting the house of God.
After 70 years of captivity to the Babylonians, the Jews had been released to return to their homeland and rebuild the temple. This was decreed by the Persian King Cyrus in 538 BC. A remnant returned to a desolate and destroyed Jerusalem. These were people who had made lives for themselves during the Babylonian captivity and had become soft and complacent as they built homes, raised families, and succeeded in various businesses. Life would not be the same in Jerusalem.

Zerubbabel was appointed governor and Joshua was the high priest; and along with Haggai the prophet, they were the leaders of this resettled community. Work on the temple began in 536 BC, the temple’s foundation was laid, but construction soon ceased when local opposition leaders threatened and intimidated the Jews. The temple foundation was all that stood for the next 16 years as the Jews abandoned construction of the temple and instead focused on construction of their own homes and lives. The book of Haggai begins at this point in Jewish history. What follows are four prophetic messages from Haggai, all intended to exhort and encourage the Jewish leaders and their people to get their priorities straight and finish the work that the Lord has set before them!

The message of Haggai is just as applicable to us today as it was more than 2,500 years ago! We are called by God to put “first things first”, and to move when He says move, and obey when He says obey. Whenever our personal priorities take first place in our hearts over and above God’s priorities, futility and frustration will soon invade our lives, reminding us to “consider our ways!”
INTRODUCTION:
Leaders must lead by setting the example for those that follow. The first message that Haggai proclaims is spoken directly to Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest. God calls them out for the complacency of the people and their own failure to finish the work of the temple. As the leaders go, so go the people. They are following the example of those they trust. In this case, everybody is guilty of self-interest and fear. They have abandoned the construction of the temple and have instead moved on to taking care of themselves as of first importance. God’s glory and majesty is at stake here. 

He supernaturally moved in the hearts of the Persian Kings in order that the Jews could once again return to their homeland and be an example to the world of the greatness of God. The temple was a part of that plan and the building of it had been on a sixteen year hiatus. No more!
What were the names of the two leaders that the word of the Lord addressed in v1? ____________________________________________________________

According to the Lord, what were the people saying about building the temple in v2? ____________________________________________________________

What indictment does the Lord make against the people in v3? Why is this a big deal? ____________________________________________________________

“Give careful thought to your ways”. Haggai then explains in verses 5-7 why the people cannot get ahead in their personal lives. What is the reason?

What are the people directed to do in verse 8, and what would be the results of their efforts? ____________________________________________________________

READ
HAGGAI 1:1-8
AND
EZRA 4:1-5

“THE TIME
TO BUILD
IS NOW”
What are contrasts of expectations of the people versus the reality of what God is doing in their lives in this passage?

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Describe what takes place. Name 3 things that the leaders and the people did.

1. ___________________________________________________________________

2. ___________________________________________________________________

3. ___________________________________________________________________
OUR GREAT GOD DISPLAYS HIS KINDNESS AND GRACE THROUGH OUR “DO OVERS.” WE CAN GET SO WRAPPED UP IN OUR OWN PRIORITIES FOR OUR LIVES THAT WE FORGET THAT THE ONE WHO SAVED US MAY VERY WELL HAVE DIFFERENT PLANS AND PRIORITIES FOR US.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT WHEN WE ARE CONVICTED OF OUR SIN AND REPENT BEFORE HIM, FORGIVENESS FLOWS FREELY AND HIS RESTORATION MAKES US NEW. EVEN IF WE BLOW IT OVER AND OVER. WHEN THE PEOPLE AGREED THAT THEY HAD MISPLACED PRIORITIES, AND THEN BEGAN WORK ON THE TEMPLE, HAGGAI 1:14 SPEAKS THE GREATEST ENCOURAGEMENT THEY OR ANYONE COULD EVER HEAR, “I AM WITH YOU” DECLARES THE LORD! WE NEED TO ALLOW OUR SPIRITS TO BE STIRRED BY OUR GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD. HE IS WITH YOU AND I IN OUR OBEDIENCE AND SURRENDER!
APPLICATION

Are there any areas of your life that God may be wanting you to reprioritize, and you are saying “Not now, this is not the time?” List them:

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APPLICATION

When you get a command from the Lord through His word, or through His servants, or through the moving of the Holy Spirit...and you sense a “stirring of your spirit,” how are you going to respond?
WEEK TWO: GREATER GLORY

Scripture Passage: Haggai 2:1-9

INTRODUCTION:
It is amazing how the past can simply paralyze our present. Humans have this crazy tendency to reminisce fondly on the past, thinking that previous days were always better than the present days. It certainly was like that for the Jews who remembered what the original temple looked like. Those who were old enough to remember the splendor of the original temple built by King Solomon were disappointed, and less than enthused by the "look" of the new temple being built. By comparison, this new temple didn’t even come close to matching the glory of the former temple (read 2 Chronicles 3-7). It did not have all the gold and silver and precious stones of the original. It looked drab by comparison. God’s prophetic word to the leadership and to the people however, was basically, “you ain’t seen nothing yet!” What will take place in the future will far exceed their human understanding of glory and majesty, because a Savior, the Desire of all Nations, will one day soon arrive on the scene, and with His coming, the glory of the present house will be far greater than the former house. So, “be strong, I am with you!”
The Lord, through Haggai, directs the people to make a comparison between the temple that existed before their Babylonian captivity and the temple currently being built. What is the rhetorical question He asks at the end of verse 3? What does it mean?

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Three times in verse 4 God says what?
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According to verse 5, why does God say that?
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These verses describe a future promise that the Lord intends to fulfill. Describe in detail what you observe in this passage.

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The Lord then makes two promises related to the temple in verse 9. What are they?

1. ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________
SOMETIMES WHAT WE SEE ON THE SURFACE DOESN’T BEGIN TO EXPLAIN ALL THAT IS HAPPENING UNDERNEATH. SOMETIMES WE FONDLY REMEMBER THE PAST AS “THE GOOD OLD DAYS”, AND WE MISS THE FACT THAT WITH GOD, EVERY DAY IS “GOOD”, BECAUSE HE IS PERFECTLY GOOD.

APPLICATION

This week, in your devotional time, reflect on Haggai 2:9-10 and list all the ways in which your life is now different because Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. Then thank Him!
APPLICATION

Meditate on 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and write out a prayer to God expressing your thoughts on the truth that you are a temple, bought with a price. Ask the Lord in that prayer to help you comprehend the full implications of this spiritual truth.
WEEK THREE: HALF-HEARTED HOLINESS

Scripture Passage: Haggai 2:10-19

INTRODUCTION: Have you ever felt like your relationship with God was “good enough?” Maybe things are going ok for you; you haven’t found your back up against a wall...no crises or difficult situations are pressing in on you, so you just figure that all is well between you and God...Or perhaps you have become complacent in evaluating the sin in your life. Maybe because the culture doesn’t see some things as sin, why should you? After all, doesn’t everybody drink a bit too much once in a while; or take a peek at porn on their smart phone every now and then? We all tell a little “white lie” once in a while, right? In our study this week, Haggai delivers a message to the priests from the Lord. That message in a nutshell is, “give careful thought.” What should they give careful thought to? To the sin that is taken lightly, because God does not take it lightly. Give careful thought to results of the sin – the way in which God responds to the sin. And give careful thought to how the Lord blesses in our obedience.
Haggai asks two rhetorical questions regarding the law. Who is he asking the questions to?

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Verse 14 is a scathing indictment regarding the activity of the people. What exactly is God saying and who is He saying it to?

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“SIN IS SIN IS SIN”
How do these verses tie in with the previous ones (vv 10-14)? What is the connection between sin and its impact on the relationship between God and His people?

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Verse 18 draws a connection between the laying of the temple’s foundation and God’s promise of, “From this day on, I will bless you.” What is that connection?

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NO MATTER HOW INCONSEQUENTIAL OR INSIGNIFICANT OUR SIN MAY SEEM TO US, IT IS NEVER TAKEN LIGHTLY BY GOD. GOD TAKES OUR SIN VERY SERIOUSLY, AND SO SHOULD WE!

WE ARE TO LIVE IN A PLACE OF CONSTANT SELF-EVALUATION, LISTENING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND “GIVING CAREFUL THOUGHT” TO OUR LIVES. ARE WE WALKING IN “HALF-HEARTED HOLINESS”, LIVING INCONSISTENTLY AS CHRIST-FOLLOWERS, OR ARE WE WALKING IN “SURRENDERED OBEDIENCE” TO GOD’S WORD AND THE CONVICTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT? ANYTHING LESS THAN THAT MEANS A DISRUPTED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD.
APPLICATION

Make a list of any areas of your life where God has convicted you of being “half-hearted” in your view of sin. Then confess and repent of them!

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
APPLICATION

Take some time to meditate this week on the following verses and ask the Lord to make them come alive in your daily walk with the Lord:

1 Samuel 15:22
Mark 12:23
Psalm 51:17
Proverbs 21:3
WEEK FOUR: FAITHFUL FINISH

Scripture Passage: Haggai 2:20-23

INTRODUCTION:
Have you ever heard the old maxim, “winners never quit, and quitters never win?” The phrase is used to motivate and inspire athletes to forge ahead and never give up in on the practice field or in the game. In these final verses of Haggai, the last prophecy that Haggai speaks to the governor, Zerubbabel, is one of a future promise both in terms of what God will do when He brings deliverance and judgment to the nations (shakes the heavens and the earth), but also His promise of a deliverer through the line of Zerubbabel, who just happened to be of King David’s lineage! “Finishing well” should be the banner of every Christ-follower. Persisting and persistence in our walk with the Lord bears tremendous fruit and pleases Him greatly. We are blessed to serve a God who always keeps His promises – it is up to us to faithfully hold on to those promises!
The Lord speaks through Haggai to the governor, Zerubbabel. What is he told that the Lord is going to do?
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Why do you think this future prophecy is important?
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__________________________________________________________________
Zerubbabel is told that he will be like a signet ring. What is the significance of this statement?

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READ
HAGGAI 2:23

“MAKING A MARK!”
Followers of Jesus are called to run a race that is not a sprint, but a marathon. Perseverance is following through, day after day, week after week, even when we don’t see the expected results. God gives Zerubbabel an amazing glimpse into the future that has been both realized (the first coming of Christ) and a future we yet look forward to (His second coming). On “that day”, the Lord Jesus Himself will usher in a new age and his enemies will be made a footstool, as they declare that He is Lord. Zerubbabel was related to King David and therefore was of the lineage that Christ came from. He was indeed a signet ring, a permanent mark that noted a King’s royal decree, one which could not be turned aside. Likewise, we are beneficiaries of that promise – but we must stay the course in surrendered obedience to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!
APPLICATION

We all have hopes and dreams for our future, and the futures of our loved ones. List any future dreams you may have for yourself or loved ones (retirement, college, travel, etc.)

What will it take to achieve those dreams?
APPLICATION

What dreams do you have as a follower of Jesus Christ? If you have never imagined what your spiritual legacy could be, take some time now to reflect on that and write out a brief description of what you would love to see the Lord accomplish through your life.
If you would like to continue this study, we recommend that you continue in the Old Testament books of Ezra and Zechariah.