



abclinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

For the sermon on December 13-14, 2008

Part Two of a Three Part Sermon Series

"Dealing With Disappointment"



this week's coreverse

*"Be strong, all you people of the land," declares the LORD, "and work. For I am with you," declares the LORD Almighty. "This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear."
Haggai 2.4-5 NIV*

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Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Personal studies explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon. They are broken down into three or four days. Some days, you will simply read, meditate or think about a passage from scripture. Other days, you'll be asked to dig into a passage through reading, studying and answering questions.

Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study. This series of questions acts as a funnel to help your group discussion flow in a purposeful point.
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members for more information on ABC Small Groups or go to adabible.org>ministries>small groups.

See adabible.org for abclinks archives.

Wreckage. Carnage. I was standing in the middle of my living room staring at my wife wondering how everything went so wrong. We were trying to sift through the rubble of our marriage. She was in tears wondering why I couldn't understand her and I was mad because she seemed so complicated! I began to wonder why this had become so difficult. Why was it so hard to understand one another? Why was it so difficult to love and care for each other? When did we become so selfish? What happened to our beautiful and life-giving marriage?

I flashed back to the day I first saw her. I was standing in the dorm of a local college several years ago and out walked this beautiful woman I had to meet. I gathered the courage to ask her out... she relented. We had dinner and talked for hours, closing down the restaurant. We both knew that night we were going to marry each other. A few months later, we were married. It started so good. We jumped at the opportunity to serve as foster care parents in a local ministry. We began our family. We started to invest our money and plan for the future. We made the dreaded move from a sedan to a minivan to accommodate our family. We were building a life together and it was so good.

Then it happened. It wasn't one thing, but a series of things. We made a job transition which paid less money. Yet, we continued to add children to our family and they began to eat more. I started graduate school which put enormous pressure on our finances and family time. Before we knew it, we had steadily placed several obstacles in the way of our marriage. We no longer knew each other. My wife was busy raising our children and I was too busy studying for school. I cared more for my professors' needs than my wife's. I cared more about getting good grades than being a dad. So, here I was standing before my loving wife wondering how we were going to get back to those good days. I was looking at the rubble of our marriage and saw no way for it to be restored. Where was God? Wasn't He going to put this back together?

This is exactly what the Israelites are struggling with in Haggai. The temple has been destroyed and all they can see is what it once was. The Israelites fear that they can never restore the temple and they are right. God can and He did. God restored glory to the temple not the Israelites.

It hit me. God doesn't work in the past. God works now and prepares us for the future. We can't go back. We needed to see God in the midst of our wrecked marriage. We needed to know that God has the resources to build our marriage and make it strong again. Today, my wife and I are walking proof that God has the resources and the ability to put the rubble back together stronger and more glorious. This July we will celebrate ten years together.



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personal bible studies

As we continue the story of Haggai, we find the Jewish people restoring their broken country after centuries of exile. God had allowed Israel to be conquered and plundered because of their habit of turning their backs on Him. Idol worship had become a common practice in Israel. This not only broke the heart of God, but it aroused His wrath. In 701 BC, Babylon continued its assault on the known world by taking the Northern Kingdom of Israel hostage. In 586 BC, Babylon destroyed the Temple, desecrating the symbol of God's presence with Israel.

World powers come and go and so was the case with Babylon. In 539 BC, Cyrus, king of Assyria, overthrew Babylon. Both kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south were now property of Assyria. The Assyrians' management of their captives, however, was more amiable to the Israelites. In 538 BC, Cyrus decreed that the Jews could return to Jerusalem and begin to rebuild their homes, city and Temple. Men like Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Haggai and later Nehemiah were important figures in Israel's rebuilding. Haggai's role was that of prophet or messenger. He was commissioned by God to help refocus the rebuilding efforts from their own stuff to God's Temple.

dayone

Read Haggai 2.1-3

The excitement of rebuilding the temple has passed. The Israelites are fully entrenched in sorting through the rubble of the former temple to prepare for the new one. The project had to seem enormous. They also knew that the Temple they would build would never be as grand as the one that was destroyed. Could they have thought, "Why even try?"

Have you ever attempted a restoration project? Take a moment to think about restoring something worn out or broken, perhaps an antique chair, a vintage car, or an old house. How important is it to have a vision of "it's former glory"? How can that vision also be discouraging and overwhelming?

Think about this concept in regards to relationships. How important is vision when you attempt to reengage an old friendship or mend a broken relationship? Think about a past relationship you've tried to rekindle.

What was your vision for how it would go?

What was the process like for you?

Did it ever become discouraging or disappointing?

Did you ever think about giving up because the task was too large? Did you ever say, "Why even try?"

daytwo

Read Haggai 2.4-5

To say the Israelites are discouraged is a massive understatement. Nothing seems to be going as it should and it is safe to wonder if this project will even be completed. The Israelites are relying on their vision and resources. How would God speak into their lives and situation?

This passage indicates God's promise "to be" with the Israelites. God reminds the Israelites that He has been with them since the Exodus when they fled Egypt and He will remain among them.

Take a moment to read and reflect on Exodus 3.17-22. How would God's promise to Moses, hundreds of years prior, be important to Haggai's audience?

Who or what do you count on in order to accomplish your restoration project?

Would it be your skill and hard work?

Maybe it is the skill of others?

Again, God says "I am with you." What does that stir up within your soul?

daythree

Read Haggai 2.6-9

God steps in and reminds the Israelites that He has their back and He has resources. It is not the Israelites who bring glory to the temple, but God and His presence. God was up to something bigger than their vision, that would not be fully completed in their lifetimes.

What does God promise regarding the Temple they are building? How will it compare to the former Temple?

In what ways might God be saying to you, "I have your back and I have resources"? Do you believe God? Why or why not?

Where in life are you discouraged, ready to give up? Could God be saying to you, "I'm done yet! Keep working. I'm with you"?

Think about this: What if your faithfulness outlives you? What if you never see the final restoration in this life? Will you trust God?

Take a few moments and consider what it means to be at peace. Are you accepting God's peace, today?



small group discussion

leanin

Share about a restoration project you have attempted. What was the process like for you? What kind of emotions did you experience throughout the project?

lookdown

Have someone read Haggai 2.1-9. Describe what is happening in these verses.

What do you think was the emotional state of the Israelites as they embarked on building the Temple? What could have been some points of concern or discouragement? In their minds, do you think they felt their best was enough?

How does God speak into their situation? What promises does He make regarding the Temple they are restoring?

lookout

What resources does our culture depend on to manage the brokenness around us? Are there any dangers in relying upon ourselves and our abilities?

Do you know of anyone in your life who models complete dependence on God especially in times that can be discouraging? What patterns have you noticed about their lifestyle even when their life seems overwhelming?

lookin

Think of a time when your best effort to restore something meaningful didn't feel like enough. You may have said, "It will never be what it was" or "It's not what I hoped it would be." Did you want to walk away? How did God speak into your situation? Did you hear Him? How did you respond?

God wants us to rely completely on Him for resources and energy to restore brokenness in our world. Is it time to give up doing things your way? Are you in a season in which God is nudging you to consider His ways?

What have been some barriers to trusting God? How can you exchange these walls for a bridge? Can you do this alone?

Being in a small group is a huge step toward relying on God's resources. How can your group encourage one another to trust that God is in control and He is able to repair the rubble?

lookup

Take a few moments as a small group and ask God to make you sensitive to His ways. Ask God to give you eyes to see His glory, ears to hear His instruction, and open hands to receive His resources. Ask Him to show you how and where to use His resources so others may be restored.
