

WARM-UP

- Tell us about an “expectation versus reality” moment you experienced.
- What is one memorable encouragement you received recently?
- Tell us about a time when you started doing something, but didn’t finish it. What happened?

WORD *¹In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: ²“Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, ³“Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?””* **HAGGAI 2:1-3**

(Read also **HAGGAI 2:4-9**.)

A month after God had called His people to prioritize rebuilding His house, the Israelites had obeyed Him and begun to build the new temple. But they felt discouraged because it was not as grand as the temple previously built by King Solomon. God, however, reminded His people of His faithfulness. Today, we’ll look at how God encouraged His people as they did His work.

1 | Be strong, for God is with you.

4“Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, ⁵according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.” **HAGGAI 2:4-5**

God saw the doubts and fears and thoughts of His people, and He told them that He was with them. The Israelites at that time were used to thinking of the Ark of the Covenant—and later the temple—as the presence of God. So God reminded them that *“My Spirit remains in your midst.”* He was teaching them that His presence was not dependent on a physical structure. As we take the step of obedience to God, He also reminds us to be strong and continue the work, because He is with us. What is one thing you knew you couldn't have done without the strengthening presence of God?

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2 | Fear not, for God will make a way.

⁵“ . . . ‘My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. ⁶For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. ⁷And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts.”

HAGGAI 2:5-7

The Israelites were disheartened by the work of their hands just a month into the building of the temple. But God encouraged them not to be afraid. He told them what He was about to do. What you see with your physical eyes is nothing compared to what God has planned. In His providence, He is at work in our lives and in the world—preparing things, working behind the scenes, creating opportunities, closing doors, and rearranging circumstances. He makes a way for His purposes to be fulfilled. What's one time you wanted to give up on the way to a goal because your work seemed insignificant or discouraging? How did God encourage you and make a way for you?

3 | Trust God, for He is true to His promises.

“The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.” HAGGAI 2:9

God continued to encourage His people that the glory of the new temple would be even greater than the old. He reminded them that the treasure on earth was actually His (Haggai 2:8), and He could use it for His purposes. And then to His people who had finally come out of almost seventy years of exile, God promised that there would be peace. How do you think this passage encouraged God's people at that time?

APPLICATION

- What situations are you facing now that don't seem to have a resolution? Offer them to God and pray for His hope to remain alive in you.
- Are you discouraged about an area in your life right now? What are some of God's promises you are holding on to? How will you take heart this week, knowing that God is faithful to His promises?
- Identify someone among your friends, family, or community that needs encouragement. Pray for and encourage him or her this week to remain steadfast in trusting and obeying God.

PRAYER

- Thank God for encouraging and strengthening you to do His work. Thank Him for never leaving you in every moment and season of your life.
- Ask God for His power to continue His work. Pray to clearly hear His voice above the voices of the world and the enemy.
- Pray that you will be assured of the greater glory and plans that God has for you, your family, and your community. Thank God that He has everything under control.



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