

Series - First Things First: We Build More Than We See

Date/s - 20 January 2019

Scripture - Haggai 2:1-9

Speaker/s - SP Lionel Goh

Welcome [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

Worship [15 min]

You may select songs like “The Lion And The Lamb”, “Lord Most High”, “How Great You Are” or “Jesus I Come”.

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will:

1. Make God the centre of their lives
2. Step out in faith to do God's work knowing that He will be with them!

Word [45 min]

Senior Pastor Lionel expounded on why the people stopped the rebuilding and concentrated on building their own houses instead. In the process of rebuilding, the people got discouraged and disappointed, started to lose faith, which then developed into apathy towards God. It was at this moment that God gave His second encouragement – see Haggai 2:1-9.

Before diving into the sermon, Senior Pastor Lionel highlighted Haggai 1:7-8: “... build my [God's] house, so that I [God] may take pleasure in it and be honoured...” God wants the people to know that He is at the centre of their lives. When they do His work and honour Him, He will be with them all the way.

Why were God's people so discouraged?

1. Poor harvest (Haggai 1:10-11): The people did not give God priority, so He withdrew His blessings (as a form of discipline) and brought about a drought resulting in poor harvest.
2. Chronic frustration with lack (Haggai 1:5-6): For years the people never have enough no matter what they do. This frustration caused them to lose faith and they distanced themselves from God.
3. Continued opposition (Ezra 5:3-4): When rebuilding God's Temple, they faced opposition. This also discouraged the people.
4. Wrong comparison of worth (Haggai 2:3): In Ezra 3:11-12, the older “priests, Levites, and other leaders” who have seen the splendour of Solomon's Temple compared it with Zerubbabel's Temple, and they were grieved (“wept aloud”). This discouraged the younger ones.

The people looked at their circumstances and got discouraged. Then, they looked back at their once prosperous and comfortable lives and they got even more discouraged. God's encouragement:

- From Haggai 2:4-5, Senior Pastor Lionel emphasised on three phrases found in these verses: “be strong”, “work” and “do not fear”. God was reassuring His people that He is with them because they were doing His work. If God assigns you to do something, He will be with you to see it through.
- In tough times, we should not look around or look back lest we get discouraged. We should look up and keep our eyes on God because He promises to be with us! (Matthew 28:18-20).

The importance of knowing God is with us:

- God has been faithful in the past (Haggai 2:4-5): God who brought the Israelites out of Egypt, was with them in the wilderness for 40 years and they suffered no lack. When we are down, recall how God took care of us and brought us out of difficult situations.
- God is in full control of the future (Haggai 2:6-7): God gives the people confidence and security in the future. If we are interested in taking care of God's business, God will take care of our business. We continue to serve God despite the setbacks.
- God owns all the silver and gold (Haggai 2:8, Ezra 6:8-9): We can always serve God confident that He will provide for you. God provided the means for the people to rebuild the Temple even though they were going through a period of drought and poor harvest.

We must not simply know in our minds that God is with us, but to internalise that truth daily.

God's promise for the second Temple:

- Its glory will be greater than Solomon's Temple (Haggai 2:7 & 9). What is "desired by all nations will come" and God "will fill this house with glory" (Haggai 2:7 NIV).
- God's promise for the second temple was fulfilled 500 years later, when Jesus (being the glory of God) was brought into the temple to be blessed (Luke 2:28-32, Matthew 21:14).

The big picture: When we serve God's purposes, we will always build more than we see!

Senior Pastor Lionel closed the sermon with John 6, in which Jesus fed 20,000 people with only 5 loaves and 2 fishes. It is a reminder that what we give to God may seem small, but He will multiply them. What we built for God may seem small, but He will multiply your works.

Discussion Questions

1. **Read through Haggai 2:1-3. We faced disappointments once in a while and get discouraged when serving God. What are some of the disappointments you faced when doing God's work and briefly speak on how you responded to it?** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: This is a recap question for members to share on their personal experiences serving God. Senior Pastor mentioned four reasons for the discouragement of God's people in Haggai: (a) poor harvest, (b) chronic frustration with lack, (c) opposition and (d) wrongful comparison. Leaders to also encourage members to dig deeper and think of factors that caused them to feel discouraged and their subsequent response. This allows for a more fruitful discussion.

2. **Read through Haggai 2:4-9. God is faithful in strengthening His people to bring about His glory.**
 - a) **How has God been faithful to you in the past?**
 - b) **How does this faithfulness motivate you to press on in trusting God?** [20 min]

Leader's Notes: This is a reflect and relate question. Leaders to encourage members to reflect on how good and faithful God has been in their lives. This ties in to the second question; members can use these reflections to continually internalise the truth that God is with them always. One way to guard themselves is to also make God the centre of their lives, remembering that God has been faithful in the past, He is in full control of the future and that He owns all the silver and the gold.

3. **Has God assigned you something to do but you have avoided it or stopped doing it to focus on other areas in your life? How can you take the first step to do/continue doing what He called you to do?** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: A response question for members to think about what God has called them to do and why they have avoided or stopped doing it. Then think of practical ways to start/continue doing God's work despite the circumstances. Leaders can also use this session to get members to step out in faith and commit to serving God in 2019 and make them be accountable to one another. Members should entrust these in prayers and support one another in these faith goals.

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. Thank God for His faithfulness and provision, and His sovereignty over our future.
2. Every RiverLifer to make God the centre of their lives and to step out in faith to do His work.

Announcements

1. Chinese New Year Service | 3 Feb

In view of Chinese New Year, there will only be one English Adults service at 9am on 3 Feb (Sun). Cafe@Atrium, Guest Welcome Lounge, Information Counter and Volunteers Corner at Rooftop Terrace will be closed. SuperLife will be running a combined programme for children in Nursery to Primary 6 at Grace Chapel. Cradle Roll will be open but there is no volunteer on duty.

Church Vision Statement:

"A vibrant family where sons and daughters mature and reveal the Father's glory from generation to generation."