

Series - First Things First #4 of 4

Date/s - 17 Feb 2019

Topic - God Honours His Faithful Servant (Haggai 2:20-23)

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 "With All I Am", "A Common Love" or "I Am Free".

Spiritual Objectives

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

1. Realise that we are all called to build God's House
2. Remember that God honours us when we honour Him
3. Recognise that God is sovereign over all our past, present and future.

Word [45 min]

In this concluding sermon on the book of Haggai, Pastor Lionel started with a summary of God's four messages to the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem from exile.

	Date	Addressee	Message
1	29 Aug	Nation	Awake and build My House
2	17 Oct	Nation	You build more than you see
3	18 Dec	Nation	Be holy as you build
4	18 Dec	Zerubbabel	I will honour you as you build

In this week's sermon, Haggai addressed God's final prophetic word directly to Zerubbabel, who was the Governor of Judah and the leader of the first batch of returnees from Babylon (Ezra 2:2). His primary task was to build the Second Temple (Ezra 1:3,5).

The challenges Zerubbabel faced:

- Big building programme with limited manpower and resources (Ezra 2:64-65)
- People were self-centered, carnal and discouraged (1:3, 2:4-5, 2:14)
- Weak economy and bad harvest (1:9-11)
- Strong opposition from enemies (Ezra 4:4-6, 5:3-4)
- Little progress after 18 years of leadership

Despite his tainted lineage (see 2 Kings 24:8-9) and difficult work environment, Zerubbabel never quit! Although he was a wounded leader, he still persevered to build God's House. And God honoured him for his commitment. He gave two sets of personal prophecies to encourage Zerubbabel to press on (Haggai 2:20-23, Zechariah 4:6-10):

1. I am the Sovereign God (vv 21,22)

- I rule over all of creation – heavens and earth
- I rule over all kings and their military might

Implication: You don't have to fear your enemies or the lack of resources.

2. I will make you My signet ring (v 23)

A signet ring is the king's treasured possession used to seal his authority over any edict, judgment or letter.

By choosing Zerubbabel as His signet ring, God was:

- Reversing His judgment on the condemned lineage of Jehoiachin (Zerubbabel's grandfather)
- Reinstating the honour of Zerubbabel's family before the Jewish people
- Restoring the inner hurt of Zerubbabel as a rejected descendant of King David

Fulfilment: Zerubbabel subsequently became the forefather of the Messiah (Matthew 1:12-16).

3. You will complete building My Temple (Zechariah 4:6-10, Ezra 6:14)

- My Spirit will help you to accomplish the task
- No obstacles can stand in your way
- You will finish the Temple's construction
- Don't despise the small beginnings of My work

Fulfilment: The Temple was finally completed four years later (Ezra 6:14-15).

Application:

We don't have to be fully whole before we serve God and build His House. As we honour and serve God, He will honour us! (1 Samuel 2:30)

Pastor Lionel called out to three groups of RiverLifers to respond to this message from the Lord:

1. Those who have yet to serve in God's House

Sign up for the immediate ministry vacancies now available. (Refer to announcements)

2. Those who are serving faithfully but feeling discouraged

Let go of the past and draw strength from the Lord for the new work ahead.

3. The younger generation

Rise up and take ownership of God's House for you will lead the church in the future.

Discussion Questions

1. **This is the last sermon in the series on the book of Haggai. We hope you have had a chance to review the four sermons before this meeting. What do you find striking or impactful in this study of the book of Haggai?** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: A recap question. Please WhatsApp or email this week's questions to your members early (at least two days before the cell meeting) so they have time to review all four sermons in response to this question. To recap, Haggai's central message is the importance of putting first things first. For God's people in Haggai's time, rebuilding the Temple is foremost on God's agenda. Likewise, in the New Testament, Jesus repeatedly takes up the theme in His teaching. In Matthew, He tells his hearers to seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Also in Matthew (and in Mark and Luke), He tells His disciples that the greatest commandment is to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27). Besides this simple but essential teaching in Haggai, members may find other important lessons specific to their individual faith journey. Do encourage everyone to share from their perspectives.

See <https://goo.gl/58ot9J> for a noteworthy article on putting God first: "Why You Need to Stop Making God Your First Priority" on CrossWalk.com

2. **Read Haggai 2:20-23 (NASB or NIV). The words "shake," "take," and "make" were used in the passage. God shook up Zerubbabel, took him from a wounded leader with a tainted lineage, and made him a signet ring (a position of honour and authority). Do you have an example from your own life where God has shaken, taken, and made you into who you are today?** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: A relate question. This may be very personal to some, but do rally your members to share honestly in the safety of the cell. Everyone has a story of a personal encounter with God. Some may be more dramatic than others (like Saul of Tarsus*), but every story is precious and important in God's sovereign design. How we respond to God makes all the difference. As we choose to trust God and accept the grace He gives us, Christ's character will be formed in us. We can be confident that God will not allow anything to happen to us without His permission, and He will not let us experience anything that will not ultimately bring us more good. (See 1 Peter 4:12-13, Romans 9:14-24, Isaiah 55:8-9, Job 1:6-12, Genesis 50:20, and Psalm 121).

*See <https://goo.gl/yQw537> for a rich reminder of how God shook, took, and made "Five Famous Christian Conversions" on Belief.net.

3. **In Haggai 2:21,22, God says, "...I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother." To the best of your study, was this prophecy fulfilled? If not, how can we know that promises given thousands of years ago will yet be fulfilled? What assurance do we have that they are true?** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: A reflect question. There are at least two schools of thoughts on this prophecy. Both are equally fascinating and well worth the time for discussion. But if time does not permit, you may skip this question and go straight to the Response question in Q4. Nevertheless, do encourage those more "scholarly" members to study this prophecy on their own or with one other person. As the Bible contains God's messages to us, if we cannot properly interpret what they say, we may misunderstand, misinterpret

or misapply biblical content. As Paul writes to Timothy, we need to “correctly” handle “the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15-16) and rely on this correct handling of “the word of truth” to guide our speech that can lead to further ungodliness. It is important to rely on the hope of God’s redeeming power when we are faced with challenges especially when building His house. We are not to be discouraged by what we perceive as the current small beginnings of God’s work. As our elder, Andrew Goh often says, “Everything will be good in the end. If it is not good, it’s not the end.”

See <https://goo.gl/vBFtWm> for a balanced understanding of this prophetic text: “I will Shake the Earth: Reading Haggai in Canonical Context” by David Schrock.

4. **This week’s sermon application is: “We don’t have to be fully whole before we serve God and build His House.” Is there anything that stands between you and your serving God today? What steps will you take to bridge the gap in your relationship with and service to God?** [15 min]

Leader’s Notes: A response question. After hearing from your members, suggest some ministries in RiverLife where they may immediately serve in, e.g. Greeters & Ushers, Traffic Marshals, SuperLife Teachers, etc. Make copies of the list of ministry vacancies and hand them out to members to prayerfully consider. Alternatively, visit the website <http://www.riverlife.org.sg/serving> on the various ministries we can serve. Encourage the cell that none of us are “perfect”. But all of us are redeemed and sanctified, as the Bible proclaims in **1 Corinthians 6:11** “...you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” and **Colossians 3:1** “...you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”

None of us can also claim we are “fully whole” but that should not stop us from serving God. God can use anyone who is willing to trust in His leading and enabling, as God’s Word promises in **Psalms 34:4** “I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” and **Philippians 4:13** “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

See <https://goo.gl/HLQmBN> for an encouraging article by John Piper on building God’s House, based on the book of Haggai: “Take Courage: You Build More Than You See” on DesiringGod.org.

Works [10 min]

Let’s pray:

1. Every RiverLifer will be a committed Body of Christ serving in the House of God.

Announcements

1. **2019 Equipping Weekends (Season 1)**

Evangelical-Charismatic Seminar - Sat, 9 Mar | 2-6pm | Worship Centre

On 17 & 24 Mar, there are two options for you to choose from:

Option 1: The Heart of Intimacy - Sun, 17 & 24 Mar | 2-4.30pm | venue to be confirmed

Option 2: (A) Marketplace Evangelism - Sun, 17 Mar | 2-4.30pm | Worship Centre

(B) Moving Into Spiritual Conversations - Sun, 24 Mar | 2-4.30pm | Worship Centre

Register online via bit.ly/rlcequipping

2. Marriage Preparation Course

Starts Sun, 31 Mar

Register at the information Counter by Sun, 24 Mar

3. Ministries that need immediate help

Greeters & Ushers, Traffic Marshals (adults), Communion Preparers,
Guest Lounge Ambassadors, 9m (9-months) Ministers & Superlife Teachers

Sign up to serve!

Online: www.riverlife.org.sg/signup

In person: At the Information Counter on Level One

Church Vision Statement:

“A vibrant family where sons and daughters mature and reveal the Father’s glory from generation to generation.”