Haggai:
Being a Pillar in God’s House

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Haggai

Why read this book?
Read Haggai to escape—or, better yet, to avoid—the spiritual doldrums. If you’ve ever felt discouraged or complacent about your spiritual life, Haggai has encouraging words for you. Though aimed at correcting a particular situation long ago, the lessons of this prophetic book remain relevant for today. When spiritual vitality seems to be ebbing away, Haggai meets the problem head-on.

Who wrote this book?
The prophet Haggai. His name means my feast, suggesting that he may have been born during a temple feast.

When was it written?
Haggai delivered his messages in 520 B.C.

What was happening at this time?
Eighteen years before Haggai’s prophecy, the Persian king Cyrus had allowed thousands of Jews to return from Babylon to Judah (538 B.C.). Though the Jews had begun rebuilding the temple 16 years earlier, the opposition of neighboring peoples had intimidated them and caused them to abandon their work on the temple.

To whom was it written and why?
Haggai directed his messages specifically to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the high priest. But since they were the civil and religious leaders, they represented all the Jews who had returned from exile and needed Haggai’s message. His purpose was simple and direct: he wanted them to see that they had deprived themselves of God’s blessings by allowing the temple building project to lie dormant.

What to look for in Haggai:
Look for the ways in which God rebukes, challenges and encourages his people. Also note how closely connected obedience and blessing are. You will also find prophecies regarding God’s coming Messianic kingdom.

From the Quest Study Bible (Zondervan)
LEADER’S GUIDE

Consequences of Neglecting God’s Work

*If we stop working for God, he may make sure nothing works for us.*

The purpose of this study is to call us to analyze carefully whether the worship and work of God is our ultimate priority. It also urges us to consider whether we are supporting God’s saving presence in the world through being disciples, making disciples, and fully supporting the church. Finally, this study calls all of us to repentance.

Scripture:
Haggai 1:1–11

Based on:
"Being a Pillar in God’s House," Series Builder by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS
PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant’s Guide included at the end of this study.

The Book of Haggai is about how God’s prophet stirs up the Israelites to get back to work on the rebuilding of the temple. The temple built by King Solomon was destroyed decades earlier, and the Israelites went into captivity as punishment for their sins. God then brought the Israelites back from captivity and told them to rebuild the temple. They began the project, but then stopped working.

There is an analogy between temple building and the Christian focus on being disciples, making disciples, and serving the church body. The temple assured the active, saving presence of God in the world of the Israelites. God now resides within his church. His temple is his people. Therefore the condition of his temple now is the condition of his people individually and of the body of Christ as a group.

There is an analogy between the literal drought the Israelites experienced and what God’s people may experience—the dryness of dissatisfaction and disappointment—when they live as if they could care less whether or not God was present and active. Jesus Christ said he came that people might have life and have it more abundantly. Abundant life is only possible when people respond in faith and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

God commands his people to seek above all else his kingdom. That means we give our lives to being wholehearted disciples of Jesus and to making disciples of others. It also means we serve his church body. Some believers make excuses for neglecting that calling. Instead they make their own interests their first priority. God does not take that lightly. For God’s people to refuse to build his house is equal to saying they don’t want him around. God’s people can’t say that without consequence. We suffer at the hand of God’s discipline when we place our priorities above his. If we neglect God’s work, God allows us to live frustrated, dissatisfied lives.

Discussion starters:

[Q] How can we seek God’s kingdom? What does that look like?

[Q] How do you think God wants each of us to build up his church? Does that look the same for all of us? How might our differences work together?

[Q] If we ignore God, what kind of consequences can we expect?

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: If a church is desolate, it is often because God’s people aren’t actively building.

Greg Asimakoupoulos shares this observation from the classic film It’s a Wonderful Life:
George Bailey (played by James Stewart) is the proprietor of a local building and loan institution and helps countless families with their finances during the incipient stages of the Depression.

But when George’s absent-minded uncle misplaces $8,000, the Bailey Building and Loan is in jeopardy. George realizes he could go to jail for his uncle’s mistake and consequently wishes he’d never been born.

Clarence Oddbody, a rather unlikely angel, appears and shows George what the world would have been like had he never been born. His mother is a withered widow running a dilapidated boarding house; his Uncle Billy is in an insane asylum; his wife, Mary, is a spinster librarian. And Bedford Falls is called Pottersville. The once quaint and clean village is instead a dark city of bars, strip joints, and promiscuity. Even Bailey Park, the subdivision of homes he helped build for middle-class families, is a dark graveyard called Potter’s Field.

"Why am I seeing all these strange things?” George asks the angel.

The angel responds, “Don’t you understand? It’s because you were not born. You’ve been given a great gift, George: a chance to see what the world would be like without you.”

Without George Bailey’s presence to stave off the evil influence of Henry F. Potter, Bedford Falls fell into decay.

Like Bedford Falls needed George Bailey, the church needs you. It suffers when you do not do your part.

Read Haggai 1:1–11.

[Q] What does God want from his people in these verses?

[Q] Read 1 Corinthians 15:58. How does this verse fit in with what God was telling his people in the Book of Haggai?

[Q] Read Matthew 28:18–20 and Ephesians 4:11–16. The Israelites were to build a physical temple. Similarly, what are we to build according to these New Testament verses?

Teaching point two: Some believers neglect to build God’s church because they are more interested in building their own “house.”

As we’ve read in the New Testament, God wants to use us to win others to him and build them in the faith. We are commissioned to help build his church. God sees through our excuses. Deep down, the reason we are not working for God is a heart problem. Our priorities are wrong. To ignore God’s calling and neglect this work is a sin.

[Q] Read Matthew 25:14–30. Why did Jesus tell this story? What was he trying to get us to understand? What talents has he given you? How might he wish you to use those talents for his kingdom?
[Q] Read 1 Corinthians 4:2 and James 4:17. What does this say about our responsibility before God to do as he tells us to do?

[Q] Read Matthew 6:33. How had God’s people in Haggai broken their oath? How do we break ours?

**Optional Activity**

**Purpose:** To help us understand how God wants to use our lives.

**Activity:** Ask each person to list as many talents as they can think of that God has given them. These should include everyday skills, such as: ability to make a meal, carpentry skills, teaching ability, good with children, etc. Then ask them to list after each of these skills one way God can use that ability for his kingdom. Finally, ask them to circle the one they would most enjoy doing. Challenge them to look for a way to use that skill for God’s kingdom this week.

**Teaching point three: God may discipline those who neglect his church.**

Reread Haggai 1:5–9. God did not take lightly that the Israelites disobeyed him. He sent a drought. God may dry up our lives, too, causing us to lack or find no satisfaction in the things of this world. If we stop working for God, he may make sure nothing works for us.

The purpose of God’s discipline is to stir us up to fulfill our calling and to support his saving work in the world. This is a loving purpose because it brings us, and others, the highest eternal good. God’s discipline is always in love and for our highest good. Read Hebrews 12:5–6.

We should carefully examine our lives to see if our life has been “dried up.” If you have sinned in this way, Jesus died on the cross to redeem and rescue you. He will restore you as you turn to him in repentance.

[Q] Why do you think God wanted the Israelites to build a house for him? Why would he “take pleasure in it and be honored” (v.9)?

[Q] According to the verses in Hebrews, how does God’s discipline of us show he loves us? If you are a parent, can you find any parallel to that thought concerning your own children?

**Teaching point four: If you have neglected God’s work, the answer is to submit yourself fully to Jesus Christ and plan diligently and prayerfully how to build his church.**

Reread Haggai 1:7–8. Notice in these verses that we are to “give careful thought” to how we involve ourselves in God’s work. It is a priority. We are to be deliberate and committed to getting it done. Those who approach this casually or when it is convenient are not likely to follow through.

We must also ask God in his grace to empower us to understand what he wants us to do and to do it. We cannot depend on ourselves as we involve ourselves in God’s work; we must depend wholly on God.
What are some practical ways you can give careful thought to how you are to be involved in God’s work?

How can we submit ourselves to God and make sure we are following his plan rather than our own?

How do we gain God’s power for what he asks us to do, rather than simply relying on our own power? How does this affect the results and our attitude?

**PART 3**

**Apply Your Findings**

Notice in Haggai 1:8 the result of giving yourself to God’s work: God is honored and pleased. A desolate church saddens God. A strong church filled with strong disciples who are reaching outsiders for Christ brings glory and pleasure to God.

With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

1) I’m confident that I am giving myself to God’s work.

2) I’m not sure what God wants me to do.

3) I’m not sure I want to do things God’s way. I don’t know what to expect.

Explain why you chose the statement you did. If you answered #2 or #3, how can you move to answer #1?

Ask the other Bible study members to pray for you in one area in which you would like to become a more faithful disciple. Spend time in prayer for each other now.

—Study by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson with JoHannah Reardon
Consequences of Neglecting God’s Work

If we stop working for God, he may make sure nothing works for us.

The purpose of this study is to call us to analyze carefully whether the worship and work of God is our ultimate priority. It also urges us to consider whether we are supporting God’s saving presence in the world through being disciples, making disciples, and fully supporting the church. Finally, this study calls all of us to repentance.

Scripture:
Haggai 1:1–11

Based on:
"Being a Pillar in God’s House," Series Builder by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS
PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

God commands his people to seek above all else his kingdom. That means we give our lives to being wholehearted disciples of Jesus and to making disciples of others. It also means we serve his church body. Some believers make excuses for neglecting that calling. Instead they make their own interests their first priority. God does not take that lightly. For God’s people to refuse to build his house is equal to saying they don’t want him around. God’s people can’t say that without consequence. We suffer at the hand of God’s discipline when we place our priorities above his. If we neglect God’s work, God allows us to live frustrated, dissatisfied lives.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: If a church is desolate, it is often because God’s people aren’t actively building.

Teaching point two: Some believers neglect to build God’s church because they are more interested in building their own “house.”

Teaching point three: God may discipline those who neglect his church.

Teaching point four: If you have neglected God’s work, the answer is to submit yourself fully to Jesus Christ and plan diligently and prayerfully how to build his church.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

[Q] With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

1) I’m confident that I am giving myself to God’s work.
2) I’m not sure what God wants me to do.
3) I’m not sure I want to do things God’s way. I don’t know what to expect.

—Study by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson with JoHannah Reardon
Haggai: Being a Pillar in God’s House - Study 2

LEADER’S GUIDE

The Reward of Doing God’s Work

If we work for God, he will be with us.

This study will challenge us to be disciples and make disciples. It will encourage those of us who are disciples that God will be with us to help, equip, and stir us up to work for him.

Scripture:
Haggai 1:12–15

Based on:
“Being a Pillar in God’s House,” Series Builder by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS
PART 1
Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant’s Guide included at the end of this study.

Throughout this series on Haggai, the primary relevance of God’s Old Testament people working on God’s house is compared to God’s New Testament people working on building Christ’s body, the church. In this study, the promise of God’s presence in Haggai 1:13 is continued and deepened by the presence of Jesus of Nazareth (Immanuel, God with us), and also Jesus’ promised presence through the Holy Spirit with his disciples, who were commissioned to make disciples in Matthew 28:18–20.

When we commit ourselves to being disciples and making disciples, God promises his presence will be with us. We must have God’s presence, for only as God stirs our hearts to respond to his Word can we fully obey. We must have the presence of Almighty God as we attempt the supernatural in this world.

God calls all his people to be involved in his kingdom work of being a disciple, making disciples, and building his church body. This is God’s great purpose for every Christian. But that brings us to a problem: Even if we get our priorities straight, what if we don’t have any interest in the work of God? What if we can’t get ourselves motivated? If we have failed in the past to do God’s work, what makes us think we can do better in the future?

Discussion starters:

[Q] Have you ever heard a sermon or read a book that challenged you to be more involved in the work of God, but then as you tried to follow through you ran out of steam? Tell us about it.

[Q] What did that experience teach you? Were you discouraged enough to quit, or did you find another approach?

[Q] How can we maintain enthusiasm for God’s work over the long haul?

PART 2
Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: If we fear God, we will seek to obey him.

Randal Pelton shares, “I remember as a young boy going to the Civic Center in Augusta, Maine, to watch a professional wrestling match. That night Andre the Giant was wrestling. Andre was over 7 feet tall and weighed around 500 pounds. When the Giant emerged out of the dressing room, the crowd gasped at the sight of such a huge man. I was able to go to a spot on the floor close to where he would walk down the aisle toward the ring. When he passed by, I couldn’t believe how huge that man was. I stood there half scared and half in awe.”
God is infinitely awesome. When God makes his will clear, the only right response is to obey. Anything less shows a lack of reverence for God as our Father. Fear of God and obedience to God go hand in hand. Read Haggai 1:12.

**[Q]** What does it mean to fear God? How does the fear of God lead to obedience? Read 2 Corinthians 5:9–11. How do these verses further explain what it means to fear God?

_Leader’s Note:_ This is the kind of fear we had for our earthly parents when as children we disobeyed. However, it’s also different than that kind of fear, because God is never selfish or unreasonable. Therefore, it’s a fear of displeasing God because we want to delight him, since he shows us constant love and affection.

**[Q]** Read Deuteronomy 5:29 and 6:24. Why do we need to obey God’s commands in order to have things go well with us and with our children? Does that mean we won’t have any problems? What does it mean?

_Leader’s Note:_ It’s clear from the rest of Scripture that obedience to God does not mean that all goes smoothly. It does, however, guarantee that God will go with us no matter what we face.

**Teaching point two: As we seek to obey God, we should experience his enabling presence.**

Don Aycock shared this story in LEADERSHIP JOURNAL (Vol. 6, no. 3):

A fellow who had been reared in the city bought a farm and several milk cows. In the feed store one day he complained his best cow had gone dry.

"Aren’t you feeding her right?” asked the storeowner.

"I’m feeding her what you’ve been selling me,” said the man.

"Are you milking her everyday?"

"Just about. If I need six or eight ounces of milk for breakfast, I go out and get it. If I don’t need any, I don’t get it—I just let her save it up."

The storeowner had to explain it doesn’t work that way. With cow's milk, like God’s presence, you take all that’s there, or you eventually have nothing. Asking for God’s power in six-ounce doses, or asking sporadically only at our convenience, may mean that for us, the source dries up.

We need the Lord’s presence in order to obey him. Read Haggai 1:13.

**[Q]** What does it mean that “God is with us”?

**[Q]** Read Luke 11:13. What does it mean that God promises us his Holy Spirit? What difference does that make in our lives?

_Leader’s Note:_ The Holy Spirit is God’s own spirit, who comes to dwell in us when we accept Christ into our lives (Acts 1:4–5).
Read John 15:4–8. Who is the vine in these verses? How much can we do apart from the vine? How much can we do connected to the vine?

Teaching point three: As we experience God’s enabling presence, he stirs us up to work for him.

Read Haggai 1:14. We can count on God to stir us up to work for him, if we are living for him. Richard Mylander illustrated this in LEADERSHIP JOURNAL (Vol. 15, no. 2):

On my way to a conference in Colorado, I was driving uphill along a major interstate when I overtook a freight train going the same direction at a slower speed. The train was being pushed uphill by two locomotives that sounded as if they were straining at full power. I’m a flatlander from the Midwest. Is this how trains move in mountainous terrain? I wondered.

A few minutes later, I gradually came alongside the front of the nearly mile-long string of cars. There I found five more locomotives pulling the train. Seven engines in all! Where I come from, I rarely see more than three. That train was a lesson for me. I had been under serious strain for some time. I was feeling tired and was wondering whether I could persevere under the pressure. How like God, I thought. When I am pushing a load uphill with all the strength I have and feel like my energy level is depleted, he wants me to know that he is in the lead pulling with power far greater than mine.

Even the desire to do God’s work must come from God. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, he gives us zeal for his work where we once had none.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:10. How did Paul manage to persevere in the midst of hardship?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:16–17. According to this verse, where did Titus’s concern for the Corinthians come from? How can we apply this verse to our lives?

Optional Activity

Purpose: To help us understand how God can produce enthusiasm in us.

Activity: On a whiteboard or large poster board, ask the group to list anything they’ve ever dreamed of accomplishing for Christ. After the list is complete, make two columns to the right. One column should be labeled “Obstacles” and the other “Solutions.” Ask the group to list one obstacle after each task and one solution. Make sure the solutions involve our relationship with God and not just our own efforts.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

In the booklet “How to Be Filled with the Spirit,” Dr. Bill Bright tells this story of a famous oil field called Yates Pool:

During the Depression, this field was a sheep ranch owned by a man named Yates. Mr. Yates wasn’t able to make enough on his ranching operation to pay the principal and
interest on the mortgage, so he was in danger of losing his ranch. With little money for clothes or food, his family (like many others) had to live on government subsidy.

Day after day, as he grazed his sheep over those rolling West Texas hills, he was no doubt greatly troubled about how he would pay his bills. Then a seismographic crew from an oil company came into the area and told him there might be oil on his land. They asked permission to drill a wildcat well, and he signed a lease contract.

At 1,115 feet they struck a huge oil reserve. The first well came in at 80,000 barrels a day. Many subsequent wells were more than twice as large. In fact, 30 years after the discovery, a government test of one of the wells showed it still had the potential flow of 125,000 barrels of oil a day.

And Mr. Yates owned it all. The day he purchased the land he had received the oil and mineral rights. Yet, he’d been living on relief. A multimillionaire living in poverty. The problem? He didn’t know the oil was there even though he owned it.

Many Christians live in spiritual poverty. They are entitled to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and his energizing power, but they are not aware of their birthright.

In God, every Christian can find the power to work for him. God’s love for you is unchanging, grounded in grace, secured at the cross, but you cannot take his power for granted. As you seek the Lord with faith and persistence to help you in any of these areas of weakness, he will change you.

**[Q]** If you have been unmotivated to work for God in the building of his church, where has the breakdown been?

- Do you need to grow in the fear of the Lord?
- Do you need to choose obedience to the call of working for God?
- Do you need to spend more time in prayer to come into the sense of God’s presence and ask for the infilling of the Holy Spirit?

Determine which of the above represents you and ask the other members of the group to pray for you.

—Study by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson with JoHannah Reardon
This study will challenge us to be disciples and make disciples. It will encourage those of us who are disciples that God will be with us to help, equip, and stir us up to work for him.

Scripture:
Haggai 1:12–15

Based on:
“Being a Pillar in God’s House,” Series Builder by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS
PART 1
Identify the Current Issue

God calls all his people to be involved in his kingdom work of being a disciple, making disciples, and building his church body. This is God’s great purpose for every Christian. But that brings us to a problem: Even if we get our priorities straight, what if we don’t have any interest in the work of God? What if we can’t get ourselves motivated? If we have failed in the past to do God’s work, what makes us think we can do better in the future?

PART 2
Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: If we fear God, we will seek to obey him.

Teaching point two: As we seek to obey God, we should experience his enabling presence.

Teaching point three: As we experience God’s enabling presence, he stirs us up to work for him.

PART 3
Apply Your Findings

[Q] If you have been unmotivated to work for God in the building of his church, where has the breakdown been?

➢ Do you need to grow in the fear of the Lord?
➢ Do you need to choose obedience to the call of working for God?
➢ Do you need to spend more time in prayer to come into the sense of God’s presence and ask for the infilling of the Holy Spirit?

Determine which of the above represents you and ask the other members of the group to pray for you.

—Study by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson with JoHannah Reardon
LEADER’S GUIDE

God’s Work Is Always Worthwhile

We need to remember the value of God’s work in order to persevere.

The purpose of this study is to convince us that God’s presence and work among us is what makes our work significant, and to encourage us to keep doing God’s work even when it seems insignificant.

Scripture:
Haggai 2:1–5

Based on:
“Being a Pillar in God’s House,” Series Builder by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS
PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant’s Guide included at the end of this study.

Throughout this series on Haggai, the primary relevance of God’s Old Testament people working on God’s house is compared to God’s New Testament people working on building Christ’s body, the church.

It may be significant that the date given in Haggai 2:1 coincided with the same month in which Solomon’s temple was dedicated. Imagine the contrast between the memories of Solomon’s temple at its dedication ceremony and the look of the temple they were beginning to rebuild. They’d only been at the work for three or four weeks. God addressed those who were old enough to remember what Solomon’s temple used to look like. The rubble they were working to rebuild was nothing compared to the splendor of Solomon’s temple.

God addressed the negative emotional reaction of some of the older exiles because it is hard for people to work for God if they don’t feel their work measures up to the ideal. What’s the use? Are we really making any difference? Is it worth the effort? The fear, deep down, is that we’ll be working for nothing; that we’re the losers in the end. With that attitude, it’s better to stop now.

Today God’s people may become discouraged about the condition of his work when they compare their present work with a past work or with the work of other churches. But it is God’s presence that brings glory to God’s work, not the size or appearance of the work. God promised that his Spirit is among his people as they work for him. Because God is present and active, we must be active in the present.

Discussion starters:

[Q] Have you ever worked on a project that failed (in the church or otherwise)? How did you handle that failure?

[Q] What about your participation in God’s work discourages you the most? How do you deal with that discouragement?

[Q] How can we keep perspective when the results of our work are not meeting our expectations?

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: What makes God’s work significant is God’s presence in the work.

We often use human standards to measure significance: the number in attendance, the size of the offerings and buildings, the class of people who attend, the room we meet in. But all things
in creation derive their worth from God. God is infinitely important, and whatever he is doing is infinitely important.

The most significant place in all Israel was the temple, and the most significant place in the temple was the Holy of Holies—and what made it so significant was God’s unique presence.

Perhaps we feel like the fellow that Jerry De Luca describes in an early scene from the movie Antz. The main character, an ant named Z, lies on a leaf couch and tells his therapist:

“All my life I’ve lived and worked in the big city…. I always tell myself there has got to be something better out there. Maybe I, maybe I think too much. I think everything must go back to the fact that I had a very anxious childhood. My mother never had time for me. When you’re the middle child in a family of 5 million, you don’t get any attention. I mean, how is it possible? I’ve always had these abandonment issues, which plagued me. My father was basically a drone, like I’ve said. The guy flew away when I was just a larva. And, my job, don’t get me started on it because it really annoys me. I was not cut out to be a worker. I, I feel physically inadequate. My whole life I’ve never been able to lift more than ten times my own bodyweight. And, and, when you get down to it, handling dirt is not my idea of a rewarding career. ... I mean, what is it, I’m supposed to do everything for the colony? What about my needs? What about me? I mean I’ve got to believe there’s some place out there that’s better than this. Otherwise I’ll just curl up into a larva position and weep. The whole system makes me feel … insignificant.

The therapist responds, “Excellent! You’ve made a real breakthrough!”

Z says, “I have?”

“Yes, Z. You are insignificant!” replies the therapist.

The scene shifts, and millions of worker ants are shown all doing the same work. An elaborate network of tunnels is used by endless lines of ants carrying pieces of dirt. In one area, newborn ants are assigned their lot in life. In assembly-line style, one newborn ant is labeled “worker” and given a pickaxe. The next one is labeled “soldier” and given a military helmet.

As Z goes to his workstation, he says to himself, “OK, I’ve just got to keep a positive attitude. A good attitude—even though I’m utterly insignificant. I’m insignificant, but with attitude.”

Read Haggai 2:1–5.

[Q] Have you ever felt discouraged because you compared your work for God with someone else’s? According to these verses, what is God’s response to that attitude? What does God seem to care about more than the final results of what we do?

[Q] Why does God tell his people to be strong in these verses? How does being strong counteract discouragement?

[Q] What seems to be the key to success according to verse 5? How can we apply this verse to our circumstances?
Teaching point two: God promises to dwell among us as we do his work.

In verse 5, God assured the Israelites that he was still keeping the covenant he made hundreds of years earlier. This gives us assurance that God is faithful to his Word. You can’t have a negative view of God’s work without also having a negative view of God’s faithfulness.

In his great love for us, God’s timeless purpose has always been to dwell among us.

[Q] Read Exodus 29:44–46. What was God’s promise to his people from the beginning?

[Q] Read Matthew 28:18–20. How is the promise in these verses similar to God’s promise in Haggai?

[Q] Read Revelation 21:1–4. How does his promise remain the same to the very end?

Optional Activity

Purpose: To help us learn how to keep perspective when things are difficult.

Activity: Copy each of the scenarios below onto three separate sheets of paper. Ask three different people in your group to read each one aloud. After each reading, discuss as a group how the person in the scenario could deal with their discouragement.

♦ Joe decided to plan a marriage conference for the church. After securing a speaker and doing extensive promotion in the church, only a handful of people attended.

♦ Sally took meals to her elderly neighbor for several weeks after he had surgery in an attempt to share the gospel with him. When she finally had the opportunity to tell him about Jesus, he rejected her message.

♦ Bill attempted to plant a church in a difficult neighborhood in the city. After several years, the church folded because of low attendance.

Teaching point three: Therefore we need to keep working for God.

God will do his part; we need to do ours. Notice in Haggai 2:4 the repeated command to be strong; God’s work requires strength. It taxes our bodies, our emotions, and our minds. We are tempted to quit. But be strong in the Lord!

God promises to give you strength and grace. Depend on him, and he will redeem you from weakness. Ask him for strength each time you engage in ministry and receive his strength through faith in his promises.

[Q] Read Philippians 2:12–13. How do these verses motivate us to keep working?

[Q] Read Philippians 4:13 and Colossians 1:29. What reassures you in these verses when you feel you’ve run out of steam?

[Q] Read Ephesians 6:10. What difference does it make to our work that the Lord has mighty power?
Read 1 Corinthians 15:58. How does this verse sum up what our attitude should be?

With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

1) I keep working for God so that I can earn my way into heaven.
2) I keep working for God so that I’ll have a meaningful life and an eternal reward.
3) I keep working for God so that others will think I’m a good Christian.
4) I know I’ll get to heaven because Jesus has forgiven my sins, so I’ve given up trying to work for God.

Explain why you chose the statement you did. Which one do you think should be your motivation for working for the Lord?

PART 3
Apply Your Findings

Barbara Johnson shares in He’s Gonna Toot and I’m Gonna Scoot: Waiting for Gabriel’s Horn:

In 1997, Reeve Lindbergh, daughter of aviator Charles Lindbergh, was invited to give the annual Lindbergh Address at the Smithsonian Institution’s Air and Space Museum to commemorate the 70th anniversary of her father’s historic solo flight across the Atlantic. On the day of the speech, museum officials invited her to come early, before the facility opened, so that she could have a close-up look at The Spirit of St. Louis, the little plane suspended from the museum ceiling that her father had piloted from New York to Paris in 1927.

That morning in the museum, Reeve and her young son, Ben, eagerly climbed into the bucket of a cherry picker, a long-armed crane that carried them upward until the plane was at eye level and within their reach. Seeing the machine that her father had so bravely flown across the sea was an unforgettable experience for Reeve. She had never touched the plane before, and that morning, 20 feet above the floor of the museum, she tenderly reached out to run her fingers along the door handle, which she knew her father must have grasped many times with his own hand.

Tears welled up in her eyes at the thought of what she was doing. “Oh, Ben,” she whispered, her voice trembling, "isn't this amazing?"

“Yeeaaaaah,” Ben replied, equally impressed. “I’ve never been in a cherry-picker before!”

Thank God, he has opened our eyes to see what really matters. We are not impressed with the cherry picker. We know that God is present in his church, and that makes the work of God worthwhile.

Let’s invite God’s Spirit into our lives and our church. Let’s acknowledge his presence, and let him know we welcome his leading and empowering in this work. Let’s acknowledge in prayer once again that we cannot do this work without him.
Q Share an area of God’s work that you are participating in that is not living up to your expectations, or that you feel weary in.

Pray together that God will give everyone God’s perspective.

—Study by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson with JoHannah Reardon
God’s Work Is Always Worthwhile

We need to remember the value of God’s work in order to persevere.

The purpose of this study is to convince us that God’s presence and work among us is what makes our work significant, and to encourage us to keep doing God’s work even when it seems insignificant.

Scripture:
Haggai 2:1–5

Based on:
"Being a Pillar in God’s House,” Series Builder by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS
PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Today God’s people may become discouraged about the condition of his work when they compare their present work with a past work or with the work of other churches. But it is God’s presence that brings glory to God’s work, not the size or appearance of the work itself. God promised that his Spirit is among his people as they work for him. Because God is present and active, we must be active in the present.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: What makes God’s work significant is God’s presence in the work.

Teaching point two: God promises to dwell among us as we do his work.

Teaching point three: Therefore we need to keep working for God.

[Q] With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

1) I keep working for God so that I can earn my way into heaven.
2) I keep working for God so that I’ll have a meaningful life and an eternal reward.
3) I keep working for God so that others will think I’m a good Christian.
4) I know I’ll get to heaven because Jesus has forgiven my sins, so I’ve given up trying to work for God.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

Let’s invite God’s Spirit into our lives and our church. Let’s acknowledge his presence, and let him know we welcome his leading and empowering in this work. Let’s acknowledge in prayer once again that we cannot do this work without him.

—Study by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson with JoHannah Reardon
Haggai: Being a Pillar in God’s House - Study 4

LEADER’S GUIDE

Looking Forward to God’s House
When Jesus comes again, he will remodel this church house to far outdo even the greatest mansion on earth.

The purpose of this study is to give us hope based on the promise that our current work on God’s “house” is going to be made spectacular when Christ comes again. Therefore we need to continue the work of being disciples, making disciples, and strengthening the Lord’s church.

Scripture:
Haggai 2:6–9; 20–23

Based on:
"Being a Pillar in God’s House,” Series Builder by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS
PART 1
Identify the Current Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant’s Guide included at the end of this study.

The Israelites had their hope in the coming of the Messiah to the Lord’s temple. The ultimate fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah’s coming is when Jesus returns in power at the end of the age to save and glorify his church.

God continues to encourage his people to return to work rebuilding his house so his active, saving presence can be expressed in the world. We should not lose hope in working for him because the Messiah will soon return. He will shake up and renew his entire creation and establish his “house” in full glory. At his return the nations and their wealth (either literal wealth or the figurative wealth of saved people within each nation) will contribute to God’s dwelling place. If God’s people in Haggai’s day thought that Solomon’s temple was glorious, they hadn’t seen anything yet.

Discussion starters:

[Q] How do you picture Christ’s future reign on earth? Where did you get that idea?

[Q] How does that motivate you now and put difficulties in perspective?

PART 2
Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: There is a great upheaval coming to this world order.

Read Haggai 2:6–9 and 20–23. These verses make clear that nations will be shaken. Imagine what that shaking might be like. Creation itself will be shaken. Armies will be shaken. What many people are giving their whole lives to will not endure forever. Many will lose everything they have lived for: possessions, money, status, safety.

Read 2 Peter 3:7–10. Both the Old and the New Testament agree that this day is coming.

It’s foolish to put something that will be shaken as a higher priority than the building of Christ’s church, which is eternal.

[Q] Imagine what it will be like when the nations are shaken. Describe how you picture it. Describe what it will be like for creation to be shaken.

[Q] If only people are eternal, how should that affect the way we treat those around us?

[Q] If only people are eternal, what should be the focus of the work we do everyday, no matter what it is?
Teaching point two: God intends to make his church more beautiful than anything we can imagine.

Although the world has little regard for the church, God does. The church is the most important organization in the world, enduring forever, while corporations and governments large and small will go the way of Enron and the Aztecs! If people knew and believed what God was planning, they would give everything they have to become a member of the church. If you really believe God’s promises, you will give your life to building his eternal church by being a disciple, making disciples, and supporting the church.

Read Haggai 2: 8–9.

[Q] According to these verses, God will bring wealth and peace. How do you picture that? What does that mean for the way we live now?

[Q] Read Ephesians 5:25–27. How does this picture of Christ’s love for his church encourage you?

Optional Activity

Purpose: To give us a vision for the future.

Activity: Provide everyone with an unlined piece of paper and a pencil. Ask a good reader to read Revelation 21:1–22:5 aloud for the group. Ask those who are listening to make sketches of the images that come to mind as they hear this passage. Discuss their drawings when the reader has finished.

Teaching point three: All this will occur at the final return of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Haggai 2:7 says “the desired of all nations will come,” which conveys the ultimate sense of this passage, that the coming of the Messiah is what will transform the temple into the full glory intended in this prophecy. This phrase describes the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The New King James version of the Bible indicates this with capital letters.

Haggai 2:23 also points to God’s plan to work through a unique person whom the Bible elsewhere calls the Messiah. In this verse the Messiah is referred to as “my signet ring,” which was a ring containing a king’s seal or name, which he used to authorize documents, symbolizing the king’s authority.

Also in verse 23 regarding Zerubbabel, the New International Version Bible Commentary says, “Notice that he was called ‘my servant.’ This was Isaiah’s favorite designation of the Messiah. Also, ‘chosen’ recalls references to the chosen people and the chosen one from among those people. This promise to Zerubbabel must be understood messianically.... Zerubbabel was in the genealogy of Christ and pointed forward to him.”

Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament promises concerning the Messiah. Jesus will be the “signet ring” of the Lord. Jesus will come again to overthrow this world order and rule over the earth as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Read Revelation 19:11–16.
[Q] What do you find most exciting about Christ’s return to earth? What do you find most frightening? Do you think those fears are valid? Should the excitement outweigh the fear? Why or why not?

[Q] How do you think the Israelites took the news that Haggai gave them? Do you think they were encouraged or discouraged? Why?

Teaching point four: Your current building of the church adds to the future glory of what Christ will establish.

Michael Herman shares this story from ESPN.com (6-6-01):

On June 4, 2001, 12-year-old Little League pitcher Robert Knight pitched the game of his life. As batter after batter came to the plate for the opposing team in suburban Detroit, each player did his best to make his parents proud. Each tried, and failed, again and again, to hit a pitch off the 5-foot-3-inch, 100-pound Robert Knight.

Knight threw a perfect game—no, a PERFECT game. All 18 batters he faced in the six-inning game struck out! The final batter to face Knight had worked the count to 3 and 0, but Knight came back to strike him out as well.

“I could tell the other team didn’t really want to come up to bat anymore after a while,” said Mr. Perfect.

As the last strike was called, everyone from Knight’s team ran out and celebrated with him. Parents clapped and yelled, but not Knight’s parents. They were not at the game.

It’s not that they didn’t care. Robert’s dad had driven his other son to another game, and his mom was at a softball game of her own down the street. When Mrs. Knight did arrive to pick up her son, Robert’s coach told her, “Oh, this wasn’t the game for you to miss.”

Don’t you hate it when you are so busy that you miss something really good?

In his great love, God has something really good that he does not want you to miss out on: the opportunity to be involved in the building of his perfect church. But like this baseball mom and dad, we all have competing priorities. There are many, many things to which we can give our time and energy. Why should we make God’s kingdom work a priority?

Our verses in Haggai tell us that we will have all the reason we need to prioritize the Lord’s work if we consider the end of the story. The only way to fully appreciate (or understand) the importance of the work you are doing for God is to see what it will look like in the end. Fortunately, unlike the baseball mom and dad, God has let us in on what is to come so that we won’t miss a “perfect game.”

[Q] What are some practical ways you can make God’s kingdom work a priority? What priorities of yours need to change in order to do this?

[Q] How can we keep from getting discouraged in our kingdom work?

[Q] How can this group help you to make God’s kingdom your priority?
PART 3
Apply Your Findings

Each person makes the church what it is today. Picture in your mind the people whom God used to bring you to faith and then to disciple you. Picture also the people who have worked hard to make your church what it is today. Each one of these persons was necessary for the building of God’s church. In the same way, you are necessary for the building that will go on in the years ahead. Will you give yourself to this eternal work?

M. Craig Barnes, pastor of National Presbyterian Church, Washington, D.C., told this story in a sermon delivered at Christianity Today International (9-19-00):

I was asked to conduct the funeral for a man who had helped develop the famous Boeing 747 aircraft. After the service, I spoke with the widow and commented on how remarkable it was that her late husband had helped build that marvelous machine. She said, “The truth is, he worked on one little switchbox smaller than a loaf of bread. That’s all he worked on for 15 years. But when that 747 lifted off the ground for the first time, it was the happiest day of his life.”

He worked on one small switchbox for more than a decade. Yet the huge plane couldn’t have lifted off without this man’s contribution. Often we see only our seemingly small efforts and feel we aren’t very important. But when the great kingdom of God “lifts off,” we’ll be thrilled to find out that all of our efforts were essential.

[Q] What is one way that you can begin working for God’s kingdom? Share it with the group and ask for prayer to follow through.

—Study by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson with JoHannah Reardon
Haggai: Being a Pillar in God’s House - Study 4

PARTICIPANT’S GUIDE

Looking Forward to God’s House

When Jesus comes again, he will remodel this church house to far outdo even the greatest mansion on earth.

The purpose of this study is to give us hope based on the promise that our current work on God’s “house” is going to be made spectacular when Christ comes again. Therefore we need to continue the work of being disciples, making disciples, and strengthening the Lord’s church.

Scripture:
Haggai 2:6–9; 20–23

Based on:
“Being a Pillar in God’s House,” Series Builder by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS
PART 1
Identify the Current Issue

God continues to encourage his people to return to work rebuilding his house so his active, saving presence can be expressed in the world. We should not lose hope in working for him because the Messiah will soon return. He will shake up and renew his entire creation and establish his “house” in full glory. At his return the nations and their wealth (either literal wealth or the figurative wealth of saved people within each nation) will contribute to God’s dwelling place. If God’s people in Haggai’s day thought that Solomon’s temple was glorious, they hadn’t seen anything yet.

PART 2
Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: There is a great upheaval coming to this world order.

Teaching point two: God intends to make his church more beautiful than anything we can imagine.

Teaching point three: All this will occur at the final return of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Teaching point four: Your current building of the church adds to the future glory of what Christ will establish.

PART 3
Apply Your Findings

Each one of you makes our church what it is today. Picture in your mind the people whom God used to bring you to faith and then to disciple you. Picture also the people who have worked hard to make our church what it is today. Each one of these persons was necessary for the building of God’s church. In the same way, you are necessary for the building that will go on in the years ahead. Will you give yourself to this eternal work?

—Study by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson with JoHannah Reardon

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God’s Grace Enables Us to Work for Him

When God calls us to work for him, he displays his matchless grace.

This study links God’s promise to bless the Israelites with material provision to the New Testament promise of both material provision and spiritual blessings in Christ. The purpose of this study is to instill faith in God’s promise to bless those who work on his house. We should have gratitude for the blessing of God that comes through Christ in spite of our sins. Finally, we should commit to concrete action in working for God’s house.

Scripture:
Haggai 2:10–19

Based on:
"Being a Pillar in God’s House," Series Builder by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS
PART 1
Identify the Current Issue

*Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant’s Guide included at the end of this study.*

Throughout this series on Haggai, the primary focus is to compare God’s Old Testament people working on God’s house to God’s New Testament people working on building Christ’s body, the church. We are to be disciples, make disciples, and strengthen the church body in order that God’s active, saving presence will be enlarged in this world.

When we decide we want God’s active, saving presence in our lives, God stops his discipline and graciously promises to bless his undeserving people. Notice that God’s blessing is linked to the founding of his temple. By busying ourselves with the rebuilding of God’s house, we declare that he matters most to us. As we return to making him and his work our top priority, all spiritual blessings in Christ and the material blessings of his faithful provision are ours.

**Discussion starters:**

- Q What kind of blessing were the Israelites looking for? What blessings are we promised in the New Testament?
- Q Why are we unworthy of God’s blessings? Why, then, does he bless us?
- Q What might be the consequences if we refuse to acknowledge God’s blessings?

PART 2
Discover the Eternal Principles

**Teaching point one: God uses imperfect people. God uses sinners.**

Haggai 2:4 says, “Be strong all you people of the land...and work.” Haggai is about God’s call for his people to work on his church “house”: making disciples and strengthening the church body.

Although you may long to get involved, you may have something in your life that you feel disqualifies you for the work of God. You may feel unfit to serve. You may say, “I’m a sinner. Who am I to work on God’s house?” or “My life is a wreck. I can’t keep ends together, can’t pay all my bills, can’t manage life. I have too many problems of my own.”

The good news for all who don’t feel worthy to serve the Lord and his church is that when God calls us to work for him, he displays his matchless grace.

Read Haggai 2:11–14. The point of this extended object lesson to Haggai was that the Israelites were unclean, defiled by sin. Their uncleanness came from their disobedience, unbelief, and wrong priorities regarding the temple. In this, they had been guilty of a form of idolatry. But God in his grace cleanses sinners through Christ Jesus.

In fact, the only kind of people available to work for God are sinners! We all fall short of God’s perfect righteousness. We all are clean only by the forgiveness that comes through Jesus Christ and his death on the cross that paid for our sins. We serve God by grace.
Read 1 Timothy 1:15–16. What did the apostle Paul say about himself in these verses? How much did he do to build God’s church? How was that possible?

Read 1 John 1:9. What do we do with our sin according to this verse? How does confessing our sins prepare us for service?

**Teaching point two: God uses needy people.**

God does not wait until we are completely “together” before he puts us to work. We may have significant needs. But putting us to work is one way that God puts our lives back together.

The people whom Haggai challenged to work were under God’s discipline, and so they had major needs and problems. Reread Haggai 1:9–11 and 2:16–17.

But the way to get out of their needy situation was counterintuitive. The solution was not to focus on their problems but to focus on obeying God by seeking first his kingdom. If we have major problems, we are not yet ready to be leaders, but we can always serve in some way in God’s work.

Can you think of any other examples in Scripture where God used needy people? Can you think of any modern-day examples?

How can God use our needs to make us more effective in service?

What is more important to God than our having it all together?

**Optional Activity**

**Purpose:** To help us understand that God wants to use even our weaknesses.

**Activity:** Provide each person with a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask them to list one of their weaknesses. Then pair off each person with another person. Have them exchange papers and share with the other person how God might use their weakness for his glory. For example, if the weakness is “nervous around other people,” perhaps God could use them to help put others at ease since they understand how they feel. Or if the weakness is “I have a temper,” perhaps God could teach them victory over this area so they can help others have victory too.

**Teaching point three: God uses people who have previously failed in their kingdom responsibilities.**

The people whom Haggai was challenging to get to work for God were those who had previously failed their responsibility. They were not success stories. They had not proven their faithfulness; they had proven rather their unfaithfulness!

But God is a gracious and loving redeemer. God can deliver us from our unfaithfulness. And God graciously molds us like clay to be fit for greater responsibility. God is able to take us where we are and give us responsibilities suited to us and then train us step-by-step to be faithful. God will eventually mold us to be people who are trustworthy and capable of greater leadership for him.

Reread Haggai 2:14.
God always offers us another chance to start over. Why does the very fact that we are failures bring him more glory?

Can you name any persons in Scripture who failed before they did the right thing? Name them. Do you think of those people as heroes or failures?

**Teaching point four: God blesses us the moment we begin the work, not just when we finish the work.**

Though sometimes God has to discipline his people, he does so because his loving intention is ultimately to bless his people. The purpose of discipline is blessing. God blesses his servants in countless ways. The main point of the Book of Haggai is that he gives material provision for daily needs. He also gives spiritual blessings, honor, and eternal rewards.

Is this a promise of continuous material prosperity? That’s not what is guaranteed in the New Testament (for example, 2 Corinthians 6:10; Philippians 4:11–13; Matthew 8:20). The Scriptures promise the blessing of daily provision, but God promises spiritual prosperity to those who walk faithfully with him in obedience and service.

God’s blessing is both a reward and an empowerment for further service. Warren Wiersbe says, “God doesn’t bless us just to make us happy; He blesses us to make us a blessing.”

God blesses us the moment we begin the work, not just when we finish the work. He goes to great lengths (he repeats “Give careful thought” three times in vv. 15, 18, 19) to show the link between the moment they started working for God and the time when he began to bless and provide for them. Clearly God wants us to see the link between serving God and the blessing of God on our lives.

Few employers pay their workers at the beginning of the pay period. They get paid when their work is done. In his grace, God begins to bless us the moment we begin to serve him. This again shows the heart of God to bless his children. He can’t wait to bless us! The moment we get our hearts right, he starts to shower his blessings upon us.

The church father Augustine said, “God is more anxious to bestow his blessings on us than we are to receive them.” The heart of God is to bless his children.

**Q** Read Matthew 6:33 and Philippians 4:19. What do these verses say about the way God takes care of us? What do we need to do in order to receive his care?

**Q** Read Luke 12:29–33. What does Jesus want us to understand in these verses? How should it affect the way we live?

**Q** Read Matthew 10:38–42. What opposites do you see in these verses? What kind of faith must we have to live according to these verses?

**Q** Read Ephesians 6:8. What reason is given here for serving the Lord?
PART 3
Apply Your Findings

Curtis Buthe, of Portland, Oregon, writes:

Soccer season was starting once again. This year my tiny, 35-pound, 5-year-old daughter would be playing Micro-League for the Bombers. As we walked to the first practice on a cool summer day, I was anxious to see who the coach would be. Would his focus be on making the game fun and a team experience, or would he focus on goals and winning? As practice began I met the coach, Ray. My first impression was that Ray was a good man. Any lingering doubt about him vanished when an odd incident occurred during a practice game: the white shirts versus the blue shirts.

As they began, an olive skinned little boy who (we later learned) spoke no English wandered from the playground equipment over to the sidelines of the game. He watched. He waited. Moments later, I looked for him again, but he was gone. Then I noticed there were now 13 Bombers running up and down the field. The boy, perfectly camouflaged in blue shorts and a white t-shirt, had joined the white team. He ran, he passed, he kicked. He smiled.

No one seemed to notice that he wasn't a part of the team. No one yet said, "He hasn't paid the fees! The proper forms and releases have not been signed!" Soon, however, a ball rolled into a mother's lap, and as the new boy ran to fetch it, the mom innocently said to the coach, "He's not on the team." The kids, who had not even noticed that a new friend was on the field, stopped. The coach looked down at the now very dirty boy, saying, "He's not? Hmm."

There was a pause as the boy looked up at Ray, who held his soccer fate, at least this day. Finally Ray made his judgment. He put his hand on the boy's small back and said, "Come on! Let's play soccer!" And off all 13 Bombers ran.

None of us deserve to be on God's team. We haven't earned it. Nor have we paid the price ourselves. Yet, in his grace, Jesus chooses us to be on the best team in the universe. He blesses us by letting us be involved, not just spectators.

In his amazing grace and lovingkindness, God promises to bless you as you serve him. Your life will be enriched in countless ways. Do you believe that? Then it is time to express that faith in obedience to his command: "Be strong and work" (Haggai 2:4).

[Q] With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

1) I know exactly what God wants me to do, and I’m committing today to doing it.
2) I have no idea what God wants me to do, but I’m willing to get my feet wet trying.
3) I know what God wants me to do, but I am not sure where to start.
4) I have some ideas of what God wants me to do, but I need help refining them.

Discuss with the group why you chose the statement you did. Ask them for help in thinking through what you should do or making yourself accountable to do it.

—Study by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson with JoHannah Reardon
God’s Grace Enables Us to Work for Him

When God calls us to work for him, he displays his matchless grace.

This study links God’s promise to bless the Israelites with material provision to the New Testament promise of both material provision and spiritual blessings in Christ. The purpose of this study is to instill faith in God’s promise to bless those who work on his house. We should have gratitude for the blessing of God that comes through Christ in spite of our sins. Finally, we should commit to concrete action in working for God’s house.

Scripture:
Haggai 2:10–19

Based on:
"Being a Pillar in God’s House,” Series Builder by Randal Pelton and Craig Brian Larson, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS
PART 1
Identify the Current Issue

When we decide we want God’s active, saving presence in our lives, God stops his discipline and graciously promises to bless his undeserving people. Notice that God’s blessing is linked to the founding of his temple. By busying ourselves with the rebuilding of God’s house, we declare that he matters most to us. As we return to making him and his work our top priority, all spiritual blessings in Christ and the material blessings of his faithful provision are ours.

PART 2
Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: God uses imperfect people. God uses sinners.

Teaching point two: God uses needy people.

Teaching point three: God uses people who have previously failed in their kingdom responsibilities.

Teaching point four: God blesses us the moment we begin the work, not just when we finish the work.

PART 3
Apply Your Findings

In his amazing grace and lovingkindness, God promises to bless you as you serve him. Your life will be enriched in countless ways. Do you believe that? Then it is time to express that faith in obedience to his command: “Be strong and work” (Haggai 2:4).

[Q] With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

1) I know exactly what God wants me to do, and I’m committing today to doing it.
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