

PHASED

WHAT'S YOUR NEW NORMAL?



vGROUP STUDY



PHASED: Sermon Notes

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NOT ALONE

We've all experienced discouragement—a loss of confidence or optimism. For many of us, the spring of this year led to optimism, only for our hopes to be dashed by the Delta variant late this summer. Right when we felt like we were taking a step forward, we are now taking two steps backward. And the reality of it all is that not all of us agree over how to navigate this future. We are divided over the steps to take, and tensions are high due to the spirit of our public discourse. Social media is just one place where we are often confronted with dismissed fears, suspicion, and gaslighting. We've experienced more than a loss of confidence over how to navigate the virus—we've experienced a loss of confidence in our neighbors, our community.

God is speaking to us in this hour, and he can use the voice of his prophet, Haggai, to reorient our hopes. While we may be discouraged today, God has a word for us about the future. While Haggai's circumstances may not be our own, what God spoke to him has relevance for us and has the potential to encourage us as we navigate discouraging times.

- How are you doing right now, and in this season? Feel free to express where you're at.
- Are you discouraged, and what is the biggest source of that discouragement?

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

To gain some perspective, one has to understand how important the temple was. The glory of the temple was a visual testament to God's glory, and its splendor symbolized God's glorious presence with his people. God had promised that he would restore Israel's majesty after the exile, and the temple was a token of such restoration. But after they rebuilt the temple, they were discouraged by the results (see illustrations of Solomon's temple versus Zerubbabel's temple below). God had promised something great, and if the temple was an indication of anything, it indicated less than a majestic comeback.

- When was the last time your expectations were met with discouraging results?

- When you feel discouraged, how do you respond? When you lose confidence, what do you replace it with?

⁴Yet 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

Discouragement has the potential to mislead us. When we lose confidence and optimism, we can easily replace it with things that provide a temporary salve. But our perspective is often limited. God's plans are much bigger than what we can imagine.

- In verse 4, what are the three commands that Haggai gives to the people and their leaders?
- How are these three commands related?

Haggai tells Israel to be strong, to work, and to not fear. First, Israel needed strength to overcome despair.

- When people are in distress, they often try to fill the void. Name some things that people go to when they are in distress (When people are angry, what do they often do? When people are tired, how does this affect their decisions? When people need to 'check out,' what temptations do they succumb to?)
- What should be your source of strength? In what ways can Jesus promote strength in you?

Haggai tells Israel to work because there is a mission. There is a mission statement attached to every idol we serve. When we are discouraged, whatever takes the place of our previous hope and confidence becomes the focus of our life.

- Think about the various things we idolize, and think about how that idol is shaping your mission (e.g., if it's facebook, what can easily become your mission? If it's sports, how does this shape what you prioritize? etc.)

When we get discouraged, we can forget our mission.

*⁸He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

Micah 6:8

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18–20

⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5–11

- From these verses, how would you summarize the mission of the church in your own words?

Haggai tells Israel not to fear.

⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

2 Timothy 1:7

⁵according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.

Haggai 2:5

- What did God say to encourage Israel to overcome fear?

- Fear can lead us further into despair and discouragement. How can focusing on Jesus help you to overcome fear?

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. ⁸The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. ⁹The 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 2:6–9

Even though the new temple wasn't what they were hoping for, God had a bigger future in mind. According to the New Testament, God's covenant promises were ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, the God who is with us.

- Jesus is "God with us."

²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

*²³"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"*

(which means, God with us).

Matthew 1:22–23

- Jesus takes the place of the Old Testament temple.

⁶I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.

Matthew 12:6

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

¹⁸So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" ¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

John 2:18–21

- Just as the temple brought glory to Israel, Jesus brings glory to his people, the church.

²⁹*"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;
³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation
³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel."*

Luke 2:29–32

Finally, the author of Hebrews quotes Haggai 2:6; "At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.'" This phrase, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:26–28). To return to Haggai's context, the people of Israel saw only a building that was greatly inferior to what preceded it. For God, he saw a future where the people themselves were a building, and he would dwell within them, restoring them to a great glory they never imagined.

- Think again about your current situation. What are you discouraged about?
- How can Jesus help you to overcome discouragement?
- In light of the church's mission, how can Jesus shape your priorities today?
- What does obedience look like in this new normal?
- Since the church is where God dwells, how does Jesus shape the way you work with and treat your church community?

ILLUSTRATIONS

- Solomon's Temple



- Zerubbabel's Temple

