

## The Time is Now – Week 2

The message this morning is specially designed for those who are discouraged. If you're hurting in your life right now, it's my prayer that this will speak to you, and I know so many people are. If you're just joining with us, we're actually in the second part of a three-part message series on the Old Testament minor prophet, Haggai. If you missed last week, I want to give you the back story, just so you will understand the main story, and we'll dive into part two of the series called The Time is Now.

God raised up the prophet Haggai to call the people back to the task. Don't just focus on your houses, focus on God's house. Let's put God first, and we'll pick up the story with that context in mind.

### Haggai 1:13-14

"What did God do? God stirred up the spirit of the governor, the high priest, and all the people.

What does God often do in your life? God will often stir up your spirit. God gives you hope to accomplish something that God puts on your mind. God did this for the people. He gave them a sense of faith. We're supposed to rebuild the temple. He stirred up their spirits, and this will happen for those of you that are followers of Jesus. There will be those times, like out of the blue, like I think we're supposed to do this. You have faith for something, and you want to attack it, and that's because God has stirred up your spirit.

The story goes this way. "They came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty." We can do this. We're going to build God an amazing temple. We can do this. One month goes by, and guess what happened? They quit again. One month goes by. We can do this. A month later, they fizzle out. They had one of their big religious festivals. All the people gathered around the temple construction site. They're like, "Is this all there is? This this pathetic. This isn't much progress." All of a sudden, everybody was discouraged. They were embarrassed, "We're trying to do our best, and you don't like it," and so they just quit.

We're all like that to some degree. **We're going to get out of debt...** Oh, Christmas. We forgot about that. It's in December again, so we can't do that. **I'm going to go on a diet...** Oh, double stuffed Oreo cookies at half price. I'll do that later. **We're going to go to the gym...** Every year, every January, you're all there at the gym, every January. By February, where are you? I don't know what happened to you. We're going to do this, and then when we don't make the progress we think that we should make, we get incredibly discouraged.

That's exactly what happened to the people of God. We're going to do this for God. It's going to be amazing. One month in, when it didn't go like what they expected, they got incredibly discouraged.

God had Haggai ask them this question, and, to me, it's loving. It's almost like God is trying to get to the root of their discouragement.

### Haggai 2:3

There are **Two causes of discouragement** I want to talk about today. If you're taking notes, the first one is **comparisons**, and the second is a **lack of progress**. Comparisons and a lack of progress. Very certainly, these people are doing the same thing we often do. They were comparing their start with someone else's finish. We just started. Our temple doesn't look very good, and their finish was so much better. In fact, Bible scholars estimate that Haggai was probably around seventy, maybe in his mid-seventies when he wrote this book. He's probably around seventy, seventy-five years of age, which means fifty years before they were in captivity, he would have been a teenager, certainly old enough to remember the former temple. Wow, Solomon's temple is amazing. This one isn't amazing at all, and there's this sense of comparison.

I don't know about you, but I get incredibly discouraged a lot of time when I compare where other people are that I'm not.... **If you're a guy, you're like**, "Well, he's got a great job. He's got an amazing car and a fantastic house. I hate my job. My car barely runs, and I'm renting in a bad neighborhood." You might be a lady and you're comparing, maybe not with some other lady, but maybe with her kids versus your kids. Her kids go to school in the perfect matching outfits. They go with baked goodies every single day, and they have college credit in the fifth grade. My kids are barely dressed. I think they had pants on today. They forgot their lunch money, and they're flunking PE. You feel so bad.

Then if you want to be a massive loser, you just go look on Instagram, and you're like, "Well, she was invited. No one invited me," and, "He's traveling again for the third time this year, and I can't even afford to go to the grocery store," and, "She got more likes on her sunset picture. My sunset picture was better," and you're comparing all these different things, and suddenly you feel incredibly discouraged. What's wrong with me? What's wrong with me? You compared, and just like they did, our little pathetic attempt to build this new temple pales in comparison to the glory of Solomon's temple. We're a failure. We feel so discouraged.

Then there's, also, just a **lack of progress**, and this is what they did. We're a month into this, and this is not going well. We're trying so hard, but we're not getting anywhere, and this is how we often feel. You say, "I'm going to go on a diet. I'm going to get in shape" and so for a whole month, you eat nothing but kale and almonds, and you gain two pounds. You're like, "What happened? I'm trying so hard. I'm working out, and it's not working," or you start a business, whatever. You take two steps forward, and then it seems like three steps backwards, or maybe for you it's like your whole spiritual lack of progress. You think, "I've been a Christian for all this time, and, yet, I still say bad words. We're going to worship God. We're going to church today, and we cussed all the way there, because we were late."

You would think that by this time, I would be better off, and so you wake up one day incredibly discouraged. I'm not where I thought I would be. She's ahead of me. He's doing more. They've got this. I don't have it. I'm trying my best, and I'm not making progress, and so one day, you feel like these people did, "I'm not even sure it's worth it." ... Certainly, there are those of you in some category of your life right now, this is what you're thinking, "I'm giving it my all in my marriage. I'm trying to put up with this whatever person. I don't even know if I want to try anymore." So discouraged. "I'm giving it my best, but I'm not getting anything back."

Some of you, with your kids, you're praying for your kids. You're giving them good advice. You're doing everything you can to help your kids make good decisions, and you're like, "Could you be any stupider?" It's so discouraging, because you tried everything you know to try, and they continue to make decisions that are just devastating, and you can see where they're heading, and you think, "I can keep you off of this," but you don't know how to get them to listen to you, and you feel really discouraged.

It could be any number of things. Spiritually, you're trying so hard to overcome that one sin, and you look back going, "I've been walking with Jesus with for all this time, and that one sin, maybe I just can't ever overcome that. Maybe it's just not worth it." You wake up one day, and you think, "I tried, and I'm not there, and they are, and I've worked harder," and you're just discouraged, just discouraged.

**I'm going to be real, real honest with you**, and it's a little bit risky to do this, but I want you to hear my heart. I don't want letters, I don't want we love Dan. I don't want that. I'm not telling you for that. I'm just telling you because I want to be real. I have to, or none of this matters... I live with constant low grade discouragement, sometimes middle grade, sometimes high grade, but it just never goes away. I'm always discouraged. I always feel, 1 - I'm discouraged at my sinfulness, that I'm a Jesus follower and a pastor, and I'm still making ***I can't believe I do that choices***. It makes me sick. I'm discouraged because I never feel like I do good enough.

After this message today, my mind will not shut off all day long. I should have said this.. I never feel like I deliver. I feel a sense of divine responsibility for you. Jesus is a good shepherd. We're the sheep, but another metaphor is that under Jesus, a good shepherd, I am the shepherd of the flock, and it's my job to help the sheep follow Jesus faithfully, and sometimes it just doesn't feel like it's working.

I work hard on the messages. I try to bring God's word to life. I try to preach God's word faithfully. I try to keep it Christ centered, and then it's like people just like, "Football. Forget church until later on." It just happens. It really does. Then our church doesn't deliver sometimes. You're like, "Well, the church did this. They hurt my feelings." You know what? Sometimes You're right. We were wrong, and it grieves me, because we let somebody down, and someone got hurt by this, and all this kind of stuff. I just live with this constant discouragement.

You say, "Why are you telling us this?" I'm just trying to get us on a level playing field, so we can all be depressed together, and so we can hear from God.

Actually, I don't want to whine, but I just want to tell you, we all live there. We all live there at some point. They're doing this, and they're doing that, and I'm not, and I'm trying so hard, and I'm not seeing the progress that I want to see. What do you do when you find yourself just constantly discouraged?

I want to show you what God tells his people to do when this is where they are. We're building the temple, and it's just not going well. It's never going to be as good as Solomon's temple. We're trying to do the best we can, and the best just isn't good enough. God gives them the most loving and simple instructions.

Do you remember last week when they're like, "We don't know how to build a temple," and God's like, "Let me just make it really, really easy for you." If you missed last week, you just missed so much. God basically said, "It's just one, two, three. Here's what you do. You, number one, go up to the mountain. Number two, you bring down the timber, and, number three, you build the temple." Some of you weren't paying attention, so I'm going to tell it to you again, and we can go over this all day, because I actually like doing it. "Here's what you do. You go up to the mountain. You bring down the timber, and you build the temple." That's how easy it is. "You just do what I told you to do step by step." You choose the hard right over the easy wrong. It's easy not to ... I'm going to do what you told me to do.

This week, we get discouraged. What do we do God? Watch how loving He is, and it's so amazing. He talks first to the governor, then to the high priest, then to all the people, and he tells them the same thing.

## Haggai 2:4

**What do you do when you are discouraged?** God says essentially two things. The first thing he says, "**Be strong**," and then he says, "**Do the work**." Let me say it again, because somebody wasn't paying attention. You are discouraged right now. What do I do? God says you, be strong, and you, do the work. When you're discouraged and you want to give up, what do you do? God says you, be strong, and you, do the work.

The great news is that we don't have to be strong on our power. We live in New Testament times, and our New Testament teaches us that when you are weak, His strength is made perfect through you. In other words, I don't just have to be strong in my own strength. I've got a supernatural strength dwelling within me. The same spirit that raised Christ from the dead, dwells within those who believe. When you are strong, you don't have to be strong. In fact, when you can't do anymore and you're about to give up, that's when you are a perfect candidate for God's strength to be strong through you. Be strong in the Lord, and do the work. Be strong and do the work.

What do you do when you're discouraged? Be strong and do the work.. Notice he didn't say, "Talk the talk," but do the work. Notice he didn't say, "Dream the dream, but do the work." Notice he didn't say, "Compare the results, but do the work." What do you do when you're discouraged? You be strong in His power and you do the work. What do you do? You be strong and you do the work. Put down another stone. I just put down a stone, and it didn't seem to make much difference. What do you do? Be strong and put down another stone. But it's not working. Consistently do the last thing God told you to do. Consistently choose the hard right over the easy wrong. Consistently do the work. Put down the stone. Put down another stone. Put down another stone. Put down another stone. Consistently do the hard thing. It would be easy to go home. It would be easy to say it's hard. It would be easy to say there's not a lot of progress, but God says, "Be strong and show back up." Be strong and keep doing this.

This leads to a principle that I live by, swear by, will die by. I tell myself all the time and you need to tell yourself this as well. Never forget it. Take it to the bank. **Successful people do consistently what normal people do occasionally.** So good I need to say it again. **Successful people do consistently what normal people do occasionally.** What do you do? Show back up and do the work. Be strong in the Lord. Put down another stone, and another stone. When you want to give up, what do you do? You be strong and do the work. You be strong and keep praying, even when you don't see results. You be strong and continue to open up God's word, and seek Him daily in His word. You be strong and continue to do the right thing, even when you're not getting anywhere. You be strong and continue to show up and exercise, even when the numbers are going the wrong way.

You be strong and continue to pay off your debt. If it's only ten dollars a month, you take a step in the right direction, and you do it month after month, week after week, year after year. You continue to do the right thing. You be strong and continue to love when other people are not loving in return. You be strong and bring your best when everyone else on your team is not bringing their best. You be strong and show honor, even when the person over you is not acting honorable. You be strong and continue to love your spouse, even when your spouse is unresponsive. You be strong and continue to reach out to that person, even when they do not hear you or let you in. You be strong and continue to love your children. Pray for your children. Stand for your children, even when they don't stand for anything that you believe is right.

You be strong and you show back up. You be strong and you stay in the game. You be strong and you never, ever give up, and that's exactly what I do. When I live with that constant discouragement, I continue to say in the strength of God, I will be strong and I will show up and do the work. Every single week, here's what I'll do, I'll continue to pray. I'll continue to seek God, on your behalf. I'll continue to study His word. I'll continue to lead with every fiber in my body, and I will preach Christ crucified, risen, and here to transform lives, and we will continue to do it stone after stone, stone after stone, stone after stone.

There's somebody here, and you're comparing! I'm not there. I wish I was. I'm discouraged. I don't have the progress... Show back up. Consistently do what other people just do occasionally. Put another stone down. Then another and another. Successful people do consistently what normal people do occasionally. Just show back up and do what God called you to do. Be strong in the Lord and do the work, and that's why God's word is so powerful to us.

I want close with this...In [Galatians 6:9](#),

In other words, don't become weary in doing the work. Why? Because, at the proper time, we will reap a harvest, if what? If we do not give up. If we do not give up. If we do not give up. Be strong and do the work.