

WARM-UP

- Tell us about a time you stained or ruined something permanently.
- Have you ever moved homes? Tell us about a funny or memorable experience during that time.
- What is one thing that you had to spend a lot of time on before you could see results?

WORD *¹⁵“Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the LORD, ¹⁶how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. ¹⁷I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the LORD.”*

HAGGAI 2:15-17

(Read also **HAGGAI 2:10-14, 18-19.**)

God’s people had changed their ways, obeyed God, and began to build His temple rather than prioritizing their own houses. And yet we learn from God’s words through Haggai that though they had obeyed Him externally, their hearts were not fully turned to Him. That’s why, even six months into the building of the new temple, the fruit of their labor was still falling short. God called their attention once more so that they would turn their hearts to Him. Today, we will learn about the kind of obedience God desires from His people.

1 | God is not just looking for outward obedience.

12“If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?” The priests answered and said, “No.” *13*Then Haggai said, “If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?” The priests answered and said, “It does become unclean.” *14*Then Haggai answered and said, “So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the LORD, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean.” **HAGGAI 2:12-14**

Haggai asked the religious leaders about God’s law given through Moses. They confirmed—holy items will not make other things holy, but unclean things will make anything they touch unclean. The offering of unclean people is unclean; therefore, because God’s people were only obeying God externally, even the rebuilding of the temple was unclean. Sometimes we do things for God out of habit or religious duty, but our hearts are far from Him. But God is not looking for our outward obedience. Recall a time when you obeyed God only externally. How did you realize the error of your ways?

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2 | God is looking for people to turn to Him.

“I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the LORD.” **HAGGAI 2:17**

When we obey Him, God is looking at our hearts, not just our actions. The way parents discipline their children to mold them and form them, God disciplines His people. He knows

exactly what we need, even when it's painful, so that we can learn His ways and realize how much He loves us. What are some moments in your life where it was through difficult times that God caught your attention once again? What did you learn from those moments?

3 | God promises to bless His people.

¹⁸“Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid, consider: ¹⁹Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you.” HAGGAI 2:18-19

God had caused the fruit of His people’s labor to dwindle so that they would search for Him and find Him. Then He told them to take note as He turned their fortunes around on the day the foundation of His temple was laid. He made it clear that it was He who was causing their seed to produce bountiful harvests. It’s not how hard we work that brings in profits; it’s God who gives us the power to get wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18), and He can bless the work of our hands. What are some lessons you can glean from Deuteronomy 8:18 on work and earning?

APPLICATION

- What are some things you do that are only outwardly obedient to God? Ask Him for forgiveness for these and pray for His transforming power to renew your heart.
- God calls our attention because He wants us to draw near to Him. If you have not yet had an encounter with God that revealed His great love to you, would you like to pray to experience this today?
- Ask God to draw you back to Himself today and every time you somehow lose your way. Pray that you would walk in step with His Spirit and hear His voice, being aware of areas in your life where you need His transforming power.

PRAYER

- Thank God that He cares for us so much that He will draw our attention back to Him. Thank Him for His promise to bless the work of our hands as we obey Him.
- Ask God for the grace to obey Him wholeheartedly. Pray that you will never take God and His blessings for granted.
- Claim God's promises for your family, community, and nation, that people will turn to Him wholeheartedly and come to know Him personally.



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