Haggai Study Guide

By Joshua Bremerman

1 The Bible Project, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juPvv_xcX-U.
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Welcome to Our Haggai Bible Study

Welcome to this five week Bible study through the book of Haggai! I am excited for you as you embark on this journey with me. Why? Well, I have three major reasons for joy.

First, our God has spoken to us through his prophets, and we get to sit at their feet through God’s grace in recording all of his words for us in the Bible. I look forward to unpacking Haggai together: the lows of spiritual unfaithfulness, the grace of repentance, and the power of God’s presence. This 2,500 year old message still resonates powerfully today!

Second, we will approach the next five weeks through the method of text-based Bible study. If you’ve ever watched a child taste ice cream for the first time, you know the pure joy we can have in seeing someone else find the joy of discovery. Text-based study does not mean reading someone else’s comments on the Bible, it means jumping into the elevator, descending into the mine shaft, and digging out those diamonds yourselves. I can’t wait to see the precious jewels you uncover as you slowly process and digest the book of Haggai. Don’t worry, though, you will have a guide and some tools to help along the way!

Finally, I love how God relates to his people as we study his words for us. Christians work hard to handle God’s word rightly using our God-given capacities to reason. As 2 Timothy 2:15 says, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” We work hard, and we do this confidently because we trust the Holy Spirit to illuminate our minds and hearts to understand, adopt, and apply the Scriptures well. As Paul encouraged Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:7, “Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.”

Brothers and sisters, joy awaits you as you jump into these pages. Take a moment before you continue to ask God for help over the next five weeks to study his word, to feel what he would have you feel as you understand it, and to act appropriately in light of it. Here are some passages to kick-start your time with the Lord:

- Psalm 119:18 “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”
- Psalm 119:34 “Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.”
- Luke 24:44–45 “Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”

I am excited for you and praying these same requests to God on your behalf.

Josh Bremerman
Text-Based Bible Study

So how exactly will the study work. Let’s take a look at how each week of study will work. We want our time in groups to be as helpful as possible, so each person should strive their hardest to come to group time prepared and ready to engage.

Before beginning week #1, please read the book of Haggai five times. I suggest doing so in multiple English translations by accessing them from a website like Biblegateway.com or Biblearc.com. Here are five to try out (in this order): NASB, ESV, NIV, CSB, NLT. If possible, read it without the headings or the verse numbers (you can change the settings on either of the suggested websites). We will use the NLT for our study.

Next, each week we will work through a different section of Scripture. I suggest following these study steps each week:

1. Read the assigned passage five times using the five versions with which you began the study group.
2. Pray for God’s help as you study to help you understand, adopt, and apply his word.
3. Work through the passage in the notebook using the assigned prompts.
4. Sum up the message of each section in one summary sentence.
5. Answer the study questions.
6. Adjust your summary as needed.
7. Share what you have been studying with a friend (someone in or even outside the group) before the group meets.

Remember, you will be tempted at times to go to someone else for the “correct” answers before wrestling with the passage yourself. When you feel that way, remember that no runner wins a gold medal by skipping out on training three months before the race. It might be hard at times, but it will be worth it!
Week 1: Haggai 1:1–2

Read the assigned passage five times using the five versions with which you began the study group (Suggested: NASB, ESV, NIV, CSB, NLT).

Pray for God’s help as you study to help you understand, adopt, and apply his word.

1 On August 29 of the second year of King Darius’s reign, the Lord gave a message through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

2 “This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: The people are saying, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.’”

Work through the passage in the notebook.²

1. Draw a lightbulb over anything that stood out to you from this section.
2. Draw a question mark over anything that leaves you wondering.
3. Draw an arrow over anything you can apply to your life.
4. Draw a cross anywhere you see a connection to Jesus (the need for Jesus, a promise of Jesus’s coming, forgiveness, etc.).
5. Draw a dialogue bubble over anything you could share with a friend.
6. Put a clock over any references to time.
7. Put a triangle around any references to God.
8. Double underline any commands.
9. Circle the conjunctions.
10. Underline any statements of fact (e.g. the word of the LORD came).
11. Check for cross-references (Ezra 1:1–11; Ezra 3:8–5:2; Ezra 6:13–18; Psalm 132:3–5).

² These prompts are modified from several different study methods. You can check some of them out if you’d like to use them in your own study: The Swedish Bible Study Method (https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/six-questions-to-ask-when-studying-the-bible-in-a-group); Inductive Bible Study Method (https://www.navigators.org/resource/inductive-bible-study/); Precepts Bible Study (https://www.precept.org/about/); COMA (https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/one-to-one-bible-reading/).
Study Questions

1. What stuck out to you most from this section of Haggai?

2. How do the cross-references better help you understand the history behind the book of Haggai? How does the book of Haggai fit into the rest of the Bible?

3. What is Zerubbabel's job among the people? What is Joshua's job among the people? What is Haggai's job among the people? How does Haggai's role influence the genre of this book?

4. Who is “the Lord of heaven’s armies” in verse 2 (preview Haggai 2:4 and check out Psalm 24:10)?

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5. What does God accuse the people of doing in verse 2?

6. How does Psalm 132:3–5 help us understand the seriousness of God’s accusation?

7. In what ways have you found laziness or inaction creeping into your spiritual life? How have you experienced a lack of zeal for honoring God?

Adjust your summary as needed.

Challenge: Share what you have been studying with a friend (someone in or even outside the group) before the group meets.
Read the assigned passage five times using the five versions with which you began the study group (Suggested: NASB, ESV, NIV, CSB, NLT).

Pray for God's help as you study to help you understand, adopt, and apply his word.

3 Then the Lord sent this message through the prophet Haggai: 4 “Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins? 5 This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: Look at what’s happening to you! 6 You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!

7 “This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: Look at what’s happening to you! 8 Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored, says the Lord. 9 You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. Why? Because my house lies in ruins, says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, while all of you are busy building your own fine houses. 10 It’s because of you that the heavens withhold the dew and the earth produces no crops. 11 I have called for a drought on your fields and hills—a drought to wither the grain and grapes and olive trees and all your other crops, a drought to starve you and your livestock and to ruin everything you have worked so hard to get.”

12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of God’s people began to obey the message from the Lord their God. When they heard the words of the prophet Haggai, whom the Lord their God had sent, the people
feared the Lord. 13 Then Haggai, the Lord’s messenger, gave the people this message from the Lord: “I am with you, says the Lord!”

14 So the Lord sparked the enthusiasm of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the enthusiasm of Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the enthusiasm of the whole remnant of God’s people. They began to work on the house of their God, the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, 15 on September 21 of the second year of King Darius’s reign.

Work through the passage in the notebook.

1. Draw a lightbulb over anything that stood out to you from this section.
2. Draw a question mark over anything that leaves you wondering.
3. Draw an arrow over anything you can apply to your life.
4. Draw a cross anywhere you see a connection to Jesus (the need for Jesus, a promise of Jesus’s coming, forgiveness, etc.).
5. Draw a dialogue bubble over anything you could share with a friend.
6. Put a clock over any references to time.
7. Put a triangle around any references to God.
8. Double underline any commands.
9. Circle the conjunctions.
10. Underline any statements of fact (e.g. the word of the LORD came).
11. Check for cross-references (Isaiah 64:11; Micah 6:15; 1 Kings 8:35; Deuteronomy 28:22–40).

Sum up the message of this section in one summary sentence.

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Study Questions

1. What stuck out to you most from this section of Haggai?
2. How does God accuse the people in verse 4?

3. What are the things God tells the people to look at?

4. How does God want his people to respond in verses 7 and 8?

5. What was involved in the people’s repentance? Consider aspects of the mind, the heart, and the actions.

6. How in your life have seen a need to “fear God” more?

“The word feared, in many contexts such as this one, is best understood as wholesome respect. God does not desire that people be terrified of him, but rather that they appropriately revere him (see Exod 20:20).”

7. What sins, either active or passive, do you need to repent of after reading these verses?

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8. Does this passage give us any reason to believe that some of our hardships are due to sin (think of verse 9 in particular)? How do we process whether or not God is “disciplining” us for our actions?

“Experiences of hardship should always become opportunities for spiritual reflection, turning us heavenward to ask hard questions.... If under the searchlight of God’s Word we have need of repentance, we should turn from our sins and walk in a way consistent with this penitence.”

9. What practical actions can you take in light of this passage to move away from sin and toward righteousness?

Adjust your summary as needed.

Challenge: Share what you have been studying with a friend (someone in or even outside the group) before the group meets.

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Week 3: Haggai 2:1–9

Read the assigned passage five times using the five versions with which you began the study group (Suggested: NASB, ESV, NIV, CSB, NLT).

Pray for God's help as you study to help you understand, adopt, and apply his word.

1 Then on October 17 of that same year, the Lord sent another message through the prophet Haggai. 2 “Say this to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of God’s people there in the land: 3 ‘Does anyone remember this house—this Temple—in its former splendor? How, in comparison, does it look to you now? It must seem like nothing at all! 4 But now the Lord says: Be strong, Zerubbabel. Be strong, Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people still left in the land. And now get to work, for I am with you, says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. 5 My Spirit remains among you, just as I promised when you came out of Egypt. So do not be afraid.’

6 “For this is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: In just a little while I will again shake the heavens and the earth, the oceans and the dry land. 7 I will shake all the nations, and the treasures of all the nations will be brought to this Temple. I will fill this place with glory, says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. 8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. 9 The future glory of this Temple will be greater than its past glory, says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. And in this place I will bring peace. I, the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, have spoken!”

Work through the passage in the notebook.

1. Draw a lightbulb over anything that stood out to you from this section.
2. Draw a question mark over anything that leaves you wondering.
3. Draw an arrow over anything you can apply to your life.
4. Draw a cross anywhere you see a connection to Jesus (the need for Jesus, a promise of Jesus’s coming, forgiveness, etc.).
5. Draw a dialogue bubble over anything you could share with a friend.
6. Put a clock over any references to time.
7. Put a triangle around any references to God.
8. Double underline any commands.
9. Circle the conjunctions.
10. Underline any statements of fact (e.g. the word of the LORD came).

**Sum up the message of this section in one summary sentence.**

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**Study Questions**
1. What stuck out to you most from this section of Haggai?

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2. How much time has passed since the people started work on the temple?

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3. How does the state of the new temple compare with the old? How do the people respond?

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4. What is the significance of God’s presence in verses 4 and 5?
5. Compare the reference to “fear” in verse 5 to the reference in chapter 1? What significant differences are there between the two references?

“As a result of his presence, God stirred the hearts of his people enabling them to do his work in this world. Obedience and the empowering presence of God go hand in hand.”

6. What does God promise in verses 7 to 9?

"Abiding divine presence and universal acknowledgment of Yahweh will grace this temple."


8. How should we feel about being made in the image of God, who is Jesus Christ, and how we reflect his image by embodying the Holy Spirit just like the temple did in the Old Testament?

9. How should we be encouraged by the message of this passage?

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7 Braaten and Edlin, 240.
10. How should this passage challenge us to live? What are areas where we don’t expect the glory of the Lord and compare it to a past “greater” glory? How does our part in the “greater glory” motivate us to preach the gospel?

Adjust your summary as needed.

Challenge: Share what you have been studying with a friend (someone in or even outside the group) before the group meets.
Week 4: Haggai 2:10–19

Read the assigned passage five times using the five versions with which you began the study group (Suggested: NASB, ESV, NIV, CSB, NLT).

Pray for God's help as you study to help you understand, adopt, and apply his word.

10 On December 18 of the second year of King Darius's reign, the Lord sent this message to the prophet Haggai: 11 “This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says. Ask the priests this question about the law: 12 ‘If one of you is carrying some meat from a holy sacrifice in his robes and his robe happens to brush against some bread or stew, wine or olive oil, or any other kind of food, will it also become holy?’”

The priests replied, “No.”

13 Then Haggai asked, “If someone becomes ceremonially unclean by touching a dead person and then touches any of these foods, will the food be defiled?”

And the priests answered, “Yes.”

14 Then Haggai responded, “That is how it is with this people and this nation, says the Lord. Everything they do and everything they offer is defiled by their sin. 15 Look at what was happening to you before you began to lay the foundation of the Lord’s Temple. 16 When you hoped for a twenty-bushel crop, you harvested only ten. When you expected to draw fifty gallons from the winepress, you found only twenty. 17 I sent blight and mildew and hail to destroy everything you worked so hard to produce. Even so, you refused to return to me, says the Lord.

18 “Think about this eighteenth day of December, the day when the foundation of the Lord’s Temple was laid. Think carefully. 19 I am giving you a promise now while the seed is
still in the barn. You have not yet harvested your grain, and your grapevines, fig trees, pomegranates, and olive trees have not yet produced their crops. But from this day onward I will bless you.”

Work through the passage in the notebook.
1. Draw a lightbulb over anything that stood out to you from this section.
2. Draw a question mark over anything that leaves you wondering.
3. Draw an arrow over anything you can apply to your life.
4. Draw a lightbulb over anything you see a connection to Jesus (the need for Jesus, a promise of Jesus’s coming, forgiveness, etc.).
5. Draw a dialogue bubble over anything you could share with a friend.
6. Put a clock over any references to time.
7. Put a triangle around any references to God.
8. Double underline any commands.
9. Circle the conjunctions.
10. Underline any statements of fact (e.g. the word of the LORD came).
11. Check for cross-references (Leviticus 10:10–11; Amos 4:9).

Sum up the message of this section in one summary sentence.

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Study Questions

1. What stuck out to you most from this section of Haggai?

2. Check the time! How does this passage compare to the other Haggai messages thus far in terms of timing?
3. Haggai gives an extended illustration in verses 11–14. What is the main point of his illustration?

“Because of their defilement, they had been wasting their time offering sacrifices on the Lord’s altar: until their status was changed, nothing they brought to him could be accepted.”

4. How would you paraphrase the content of Haggai’s “look at what” statement in verse 15?

5. How would you paraphrase the content of Haggai’s “think carefully” statement in verse 18?

6. How should we feel in light of this passage? How should we feel about ourselves, and how should we feel about God?

7. We have more “light” and a new “lens” on this side of Christ’s coming. How do we understand God’s blessing for an “unclean” people in the new covenant?

“Holiness is not transmitted to us by simple contact any more than it was in Haggai’s day. Growing up in a Christian home and attending a vibrant Christian church will not make anyone a Christian any more than spending time at a marina will make someone a yacht.”

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10 Ibid., 80.
8. How does a “blessed” people respond to the God who blesses them? How can you incorporate these responses consistently into day to day life? Suggestion: As a group, sing Joy to the World in order to celebrate God’s radical provision for an unworthy people.\(^{11}\)

Adjust your summary as needed.

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Challenge: Share what you have been studying with a friend (someone in or even outside the group) before the group meets.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 79.
Week 5: Haggai 2:20–23

Read the assigned passage five times using the five versions with which you began the study group (Suggested: NASB, ESV, NIV, CSB, NLT).

Pray for God's help as you study to help you understand, adopt, and apply his word.

20 On that same day, December 18, the Lord sent this second message to Haggai: 21 “Tell Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, that I am about to shake the heavens and the earth. 22 I will overthrow royal thrones and destroy the power of foreign kingdoms. I will overturn their chariots and riders. The horses will fall, and their riders will kill each other. 23 “But when this happens, says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, I will honor you, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant. I will make you like a signet ring on my finger, says the Lord, for I have chosen you. I, the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, have spoken!”

Work through the passage in the notebook.
1. Draw a lightbulb over anything that stood out to you from this section.
2. Draw a question mark over anything that leaves you wondering.
3. Draw an arrow over anything you can apply to your life.
4. Draw a cross anywhere you see a connection to Jesus (the need for Jesus, a promise of Jesus’s coming, forgiveness, etc.).
5. Draw a dialogue bubble over anything you could share with a friend.
6. Put a clock over any references to time.
7. Put a triangle around any references to God.
8. Double underline any commands.
9. Circle the conjunctions.
10. Underline any statements of fact (e.g. the word of the LORD came).
11. Check for cross-references (Daniel 2:44; Jeremiah 2:24).

Sum up the message of this section in one summary sentence.

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Study Questions

1. What stuck out to you most from this section of Haggai?

2. You know this by now :) How does this passage compare to the others regarding timing?

3. How does the audience of this message differ from the other messages? Why does this matter?

4. Some of the words are similar to the message in 2:1–9. How does the addition of “overthrow royal thrones,” along with the Daniel 2:44 cross-reference, influence this message?

5. What do you make of the Jeremiah 2:24–25 cross-reference, and what is the significance of the signet ring?

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Signet Ring: “YHWH’s designation of Zerubbabel as “signet” demonstrates that Zerubbabel would rule as YHWH’s designated monarch.”

Fact: Zerubbabel is Jehoiachin’s grandson. Jehoiachin was the king of Judah when the Babylonians came and captured the people. “Zerubbabel of the line of David was only a Persian governor of a tiny community. But it would not always be that way. Yahweh was going to shake the nations.”

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12 Sweeney, 554.
6. If Zerubbabel never ruled as God’s king on earth, did the prophecy of Haggai fail? How does Jesus change things?

7. How should this passage encourage our hearts in God’s sovereign plan over all things?

8. How can we live with more hope in the prophecies of the second coming of Christ by reflecting on these promises of his first coming?

Adjust your summary as needed.

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Challenge: Share what you have been studying with a friend (someone in or even outside the group) before the group meets.
### Summary Outline with Main Point Sentences:

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<td>The people feel insignificant, but God promises a greater glory to come based on his presence and the riches of the nations.</td>
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<td>The people remain unclean in their sin, so they need God to take the initiative in blessing them and making them holy, which he promises to do.</td>
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<td>Haggai 2:20–23</td>
<td>Though Persia rules over God’s people for now, God will raise up an eternal king from the tribe of Judah to overthrow the nations and establish God’s kingdom.</td>
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</tbody>
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### Using your theme sentences, sum up the message of Haggai in one sentence:

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### From the Teachers:

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Here is our attempt at a one sentence summary (don’t worry if our words don’t line up the exact same, but consider the themes we draw out): *Turn back to God, for God will soon send his eternal king to rule over his glorious temple made out of his forgiven and holy people.*
Outline for the book of Haggai

Note—Refer to this after you have finished the study or on your second study through Haggai! Remember not to rob yourself of the joy of discovery.

I. Message One: Repent with your mind, heart, and actions by fearing Yahweh and building his house (Haggai 1:1–15).
   A. Setting the stage: The people do not desire to build the temple (Haggai 1:1–2).
   B. God explains that the people have been languishing because of their lack of devotion to rebuilding God’s house (Haggai 1:3–6).
   C. God calls for a repentance of mind, heart, and actions (Haggai 1:7–8).
   D. God again reminds the people of the lack of blessing they have lived under due to disobedience and spiritual malaise (Haggai 1:9–12).
   E. The people repent! God empowers the people to start working on the temple (Haggai 1:13–15).

II. Message Two: God promises a greater glory to come (Haggai 2:1–9).
   A. Those who remember the old temple weep at the present state of God’s house (Haggai 2:1–3).
   B. God calls the people to be strong (Haggai 2:4a).
      1. They can be strong because God is with them (Haggai 2:4b–5).
      2. They can be strong because God is up to something (Haggai 2:6).
      3. They can be strong because God will bring the glory of the nation into the new temple (Haggai 2:7–9).

III. Message Three: God will make his unclean people holy again (Haggai 2:10–19).
   A. An illustration: holy food cannot make other things holy, but unclean people can make others unclean (Haggai 2:10–14).
   B. Consider this: because of your uncleanness and disobedience, you have been disciplined and suffering hardship (Haggai 2:15–17).
   C. Consider this: though you have experienced discipline, and though you still remain unclean, God will bless you (Haggai 2:18–19).

IV. Message Four: Take heart, Zerubbabel, I will raise you up as king over the nations (Haggai 2:20–23).
Leader’s Guide: You’ve got this!

Thank you SO much for agreeing to lead a small group through the book of Haggai with us. By God’s grace, you will play an integral role in the success of this small group. Don’t be afraid, though, because the Lord of hosts is on your side!

In this leader’s guide you will find a couple of different components. First, you will find the study questions with possible prompts for answers. This should give an insight into the types of questions or answers we hope the people will be drawing out as we have spent time studying this book.

Second, you will find an accompanying diagram of the book of Haggai in the original language, along with a formal-equivalence (mostly wooden) translation. As you observe this diagram, you will see some of the breakdowns and how the text was originally worded. We choose the NLT as a good option for young adults as it smoothes some of the rough edges of the text’s wordings, but the closer we get to the original, oftentimes the deeper insights we will find. We hope you will find this breakdown helpful.

Finally, a quick word on leading small groups. In the same way that we hope to draw out most of the insights from the text through text-based study, we also want to allow the discussion to feel less like a lecture or Q/A, and more like a true discussion. Here are some thoughts for you:

1. The questions are structured in the format of launching questions to get the conversation going, head questions related to exactly what we see in the text, heart level questions to get toward the message intended in the text, and hand questions intended to help us leave the group acting. Identify what the goal is behind each question and work for holistic discussions each week.

2. Feel free to encourage certain people to talk more or less. Within a week you will know who are your talkers, and who are not your talkers. Take a moment before the second group to individually encourage some people casually to talk more. We would wait until week 3 to confront someone who is dominating the group.

3. Learn from the rest of your group members! Don’t be surprised when someone pulls something out that you haven’t seen before. Rejoice that God gave them eyes to see something that can help you moving forward.

4. Don’t feel the need to track down every nagging question. The guide should help you move through each passage and address the most pertinent details. If a question is taking more than five minutes of discussion, defer it until after the group meeting ends. If you feel this is a big question for the entire group, then certainly use your wisdom to linger and deal with it.
5. The first question for each week is intended to launch the conversation forward in a non-threatening way. We encourage taking turns answering this question so that each member of the group will have spoken once. This could grease the wheels to get more people speaking during the discussion.

We know that small group leading can feel like a lot, and so we hope not to overwhelm you, but rather to invite you into the joy of leading a group of people into the pools of grace found in God’s word.

We are praying for you all as you embark on this journey together. Feel free to reach out by email, call, or text with ANY questions!
Leader’s Guide: Study Questions

Note: We encourage you to consult these possible question answers only after you have done the study questions yourself. You also will find your greatest insights after wrestling deeply with the text of Haggai itself.

We deliberately avoid the language of “correct answer” in the guide in order to distinguish between possible prompts you may have missed and “correct” statements that you must find like a test.

Lesson 1 (Haggai 1:1–2)

1. What stuck out to you most from this section of Haggai?
   Subjective. If someone does not answer the question from the passage, encourage them to show you where in the passage they found that insight.

2. How do the cross-references better help you understand the history behind the book of Haggai? How does the book of Haggai fit into the rest of the Bible?
   This story fits right into the context of Judah’s history. In 586 B.C. the temple was destroyed by Babylon and more people were captured by Nebuchadnezzar. The people returned in 538 B.C. after the decree of Cyrus, but they had stopped rebuilding the temple. Now, the people have grown complacent and need God to wake them up and excite them to build his house!

3. What is Zerubbabel’s job among the people? What is Joshua’s job among the people? What is Haggai’s job among the people? How does Haggai’s role influence the genre of this book?
   Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah, leading them politically. Joshua was the high priest, leading them spiritually in their relationship with God. Haggai was a prophet, enforcing the covenant by proclaiming the word of God, calling the people to repent of sin and giving them hope for the future with God. Haggai’s role as a prophet makes this book prophetic, meaning that it enforces God’s covenant with his people.

4. Who is “the Lord of heaven’s armies” in verse 2 (preview Haggai 2:4 and check out Psalm 24:10)?
   This is God. We can see in Haggai 2:4 that the Lord of heaven’s armies led the people in the Exodus, and Psalm 24:10 announces the Lord of heaven’s armies as the king of glory.
5. What does God accuse the people of doing in verse 2?
God accuses the people of saying that it is not time yet to build God’s house.

6. How does Psalm 132:3–5 help us understand the seriousness of God’s accusation?
This Psalm gives us a picture of how much David cared about building God’s house. Why do the people no longer feel the same way about honoring God?

7. In what ways have you found laziness or inaction creeping into your spiritual life? How have you experienced a lack of zeal for honoring God?
Subjective. For me, I see this kind of laziness when I have packed my life with too much stuff to do. When I feel too busy, I often feel a lack of motivation to do much of anything, especially get into the word, pray, and serve the Lord in my actions. I also have a lack of zeal for honoring God when I simply don’t think about him because of all the responsibilities in life. This is a real call to slow down, prioritize, and focus on the Lord.

Lesson 2 (Haggai 1:3–15)

1. What stuck out to you most from this section of Haggai?
Subjective. If someone does not answer the question from the passage, encourage them to show you where in the passage they found that insight.

2. How does God accuse the people in verse 4?
He accuses the people of growing comfortable and taking care of their own houses but ignoring his house.

3. What are the things God tells the people to look at?
He wants the people to look at all of the hardships they are experiencing. They can’t grow much food, they aren’t satisfied by their food, they can’t enjoy their drink, they don’t have warm clothes, and they are losing all of their money. God is the one doing this to them. He is getting rid of their work, and he is withholding produce and bringing drought.

4. How does God want his people to respond in verses 7 and 8?
God wants the people to see the connection between their lack of care for God’s house and the hardships they are facing. He wants them to not only see it but to fix it.
5. What was involved in the people’s repentance? Consider aspects of the mind, the heart, and the actions.

The people understood the word of Haggai and the connection to covenant curses in Deuteronomy. The people feared God, honoring him with their heart. The people obeyed God by turning from their spiritual malaise and rebuilding the temple.

6. How in your life have seen a need to “fear God” more?
Subjective. I need to think more of God’s control over everything and how that plays into my day to day life. I need to honor God more in the small, negative family interactions of the week, and how seriously God takes those sins.

7. What sins, either active or passive, do you need to repent of after reading these verses?
Subjective. I need to play the victim less when hard things happen in life. Not every time, but some of the time, those hardships are a result of my wicked choices. I confess that I never blame myself for hard things in life. That is a very prideful state to live life in.

8. Does this passage give us any reason to believe that some of our hardships are due to sin (think of verse 9 in particular)? How do we process whether or not God is “disciplining” us for our actions?
God makes a clear connection between their hardships and their lack of care for building his house. We must at least consider that hardships are God’s form of calling us back to him in repentance. When we have searched our heart for any hidden sin or rebellion, we can assume that the hardship is from something else. It could be for any number of reasons (God putting the devil to shame by the strength of our faith; God strengthening our trust in him; collateral damage of living in a broken world; etc.).

9. What practical actions can you take in light of this passage to move away from sin and toward righteousness?
I need to acknowledge my sin quickly, see that God hates that sin, honor his greatness by confessing that sin, and then move quickly into a new action.

Lesson 3 (Haggai 2:1–9)

1. What stuck out to you most from this section of Haggai?
Subjective. If someone does not answer the question from the passage, encourage them to show you where in the passage they found that insight.
2. How much time has passed since the people started work on the temple?
   About a month has gone by since the people started work on the temple. This is significant because they have probably started to see more things take shape.

3. How does the state of the new temple compare with the old? How do the people respond?
   The new temple is considerably less glorious than the old temple. The people are weeping and discouraged. Haggai only emphasizes their despair more by clarifying how this new temple is nothing in their eyes.

4. What is the significance of God’s presence in verses 4 and 5?
   God’s presence is the motivating force behind them being strong and doing the work. The fact that his Spirit is in their midst is the reason the people don’t have to be afraid.

5. Compare the reference to “fear” in verse 5 to the reference in chapter 1? What significant differences are there between the two references?
   In the first chapter, they are to fear God. In this chapter, God is telling them not to fear. The significant difference between the two chapters is that God’s presence is with the people in chapter 2, and they have already repented of their sin.

6. What does God promise in verses 7 to 9?
   God is going to bring the treasures of the nations into the new temple. He is going to fill the new temple with glory. God already owns all of the treasure. He promises to make this new temple have greater glory than the old one. Finally, God promises that in this new temple he will grant peace.

   John 1 shows us how Jesus himself became the dwelling place of God on earth. The fullness of God dwells in Jesus, just how God dwelt in the temple of the Old Testament. 1 Corinthians 3 shows us how now the whole Church is a temple for the Lord. 1 Corinthians 6 emphasizes how individual Christians should live as temples for the lord.

8. How should we feel about being made in the image of God, who is Jesus Christ, and how we reflect his image by embodying the Holy Spirit just like the temple did in the Old Testament?
   God has decided for his glory to reside in us as reflections of Jesus. Wow! How sweet that the greater glory promised in this verse came in Jesus and ultimately in the Church!
9. How should we be encouraged by the message of this passage?
We should be encouraged that in God’s infinite wisdom he has decided for the glory of his Old Testament temple to reside in us as the Church. We can be encouraged that God has designed for us to bear his image and house his Spirit.

10. How should this passage challenge us to live? What are areas where we don’t expect the glory of the Lord and compare it to a past “greater” glory? How does our part in the “greater glory” motivate us to preach the gospel?
We should live as 1 Corinthians says, by glorifying God in our bodies, which are houses for the Spirit of God. We should desire to spread the glory of God all over the world as more and more sinners join his Church and receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 4 (Haggai 2:10–19)

1. What stuck out to you most from this section of Haggai?
Subjective. If someone does not answer the question from the passage, encourage them to show you where in the passage they found that insight.

2. Check the time! How does this passage compare to the other Haggai messages thus far in terms of timing?
About two months have passed between the last message and this one. This is significant because the people have been rebuilding the temple for some time at this point. They might start feeling a sense of righteousness as their work continues. This section will remind them of their unclean status and yet give hope for the future.

3. Haggai gives an extended illustration in verses 11–14. What is the main point of his illustration?
Holy items cannot make us holy, but unclean items can make us unclean. We have a problem: we are sinners. The temple cannot heal us any more than holy food can. We are unclean.

4. How would you paraphrase the content of Haggai’s “look at what” statement in verse 15?
Bad things were happening to the people and yet they still didn’t repent.

5. How would you paraphrase the content of Haggai’s “think carefully” statement in verse 18?
Though you haven’t seen any good yet, I will bless you.
6. How should we feel in light of this passage? How should we feel about ourselves, and how should we feel about God?
We should remember our sinfulness in light of God’s holiness. We also can feel incredibly thankful to God that he has promised blessing for even sinful, undeserving people.

7. We have more “light” and a new “lens” on this side of Christ’s coming. How do we understand God’s blessing for an “unclean” people in the new covenant?
God has blessed an unholy people by providing Christ as a sacrifice for sinners. We were undeserving and could do nothing to warrant right standing with God, but even in that state God sent Jesus for us.

8. How does a “blessed” people respond to the God who blesses them? How can you incorporate these responses consistently into day to day life? Suggestion: As a group, sing Joy to the World in order to celebrate God’s radical provision for an unworthy people.
Thankfulness and praise! We need to find a way to recognize our sinfulness more in daily life, and then we will truly be able to rejoice in God’s kindness to us in Christ.

Lesson 5 [Haggai 2:20–23]

1. What stuck out to you most from this section of Haggai?
Subjective. If someone does not answer the question from the passage, encourage them to show you where in the passage they found that insight.

2. You know this by now :) How does this passage compare to the others regarding timing?
This message is on the same exact day as the last one!

3. How does the audience of this message differ from the other messages? Why does this matter?
This message zooms in from the people as a whole specifically to Zerubbabel. This matters because it is a promise of kingship, particularly to someone in the line of David. This immediately raises the significance.
4. Some of the words are similar to the message in 2:1–9. How does the addition of “overthrow the throne of kingdoms,” along with the Daniel 2:44 cross-reference, influence this message?

This context, though a bit murky to understand, brings a Messianic context into the passage. God will raise someone up to overthrow the kingdoms and establish his kingdom on earth.

5. What do you make of the Jeremiah 2:24–25 cross-reference, and what is the significance of the signet ring?

Jehoiachin was cast off from God’s hand due to disobedience and covenant unfaithfulness. Zerubbabel on the other hand receives the promise of kingship. If you were the signet ring, you were the King’s earthly ambassador.

6. If Zerubbabel never ruled as God’s king on earth, did the prophecy of Haggai fail? How does Jesus change things?

It would seem a little bit like the prophecy failed, but we now see that Jesus, of the tribe of Judah, of the line of David, fulfilled the prophecy of Zerubbabel as a signet ring.

7. How should this passage encourage our hearts in God’s sovereign plan over all things?

Though God cast off Jehoiachin, we can still rejoice in God choosing Zerubbabel as a means of fulfilling the promise of Messiah King from the tribe of Judah. God orchestrates all things according to his plan, and nothing, not even human rebellion, can thwart his ways. What a mighty God we serve!

8. How can we live with more hope in the prophecies of the second coming of Christ by reflecting on these promises of his first coming?

If God’s promises of a king in the line of Judah were fulfilled in the first coming of Christ and his authority now seated in heaven (Eph 2:6–7), then we can have confidence in the future coming of Christ to establish his kingdom forevermore. God delivered the first time, so he will certainly deliver again. All praise be to God!
The People Neglect God, but He Draws Them Back

In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of YHWH was in the hand of Haggai the prophet, to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying,

"Thus says YHWH of hosts, "This people has said, "It is not the time to come, the time for the house of YHWH to be rebuilt.

And the word of YHWH was in the hand of Haggai the prophet, saying,

"The time is for you, you of all people, to dwell in houses having been paneled, and for this house to be desolate?"

Thus, now, says YHWH of hosts,

"Set your heart on your ways. You have sown much, but you came to come in little.

YHWH Calls for Repentance

Thus says YHWH of hosts,

"Set your heart on your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house. Then I will be pleased in it, and I will be made weighty,"
You stretch out after much, but pay attention: little. You cause it to come home, but I blow it away. Because of what, declares YHWH of hosts, because of my house, which is desolate, and you of all people are running each one to his own house. Therefore, from you the heavens have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called a drought on the land, and on the mountains, and on the corn, and on the fresh wine, and on the fresh oil, and on what you cause the ground to bring up, and on the ground, and on the cattle, and on all the toil of the palms of your hands.

YHWH Grants Them Repentance

And Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the rest of the people listened to the voice of YHWH their God and to the word of Haggai the prophet, just as YHWH their God had sent it. The people feared from before YHWH. And Haggai, the messenger of YHWH, spoke the message of YHWH, saying, "I am with you, declares YHWH." And YHWH caused the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the rest of the people to wake up.
And they came and did the work of the house of YHWH of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.

YHWH Promises a House of Great Glory

In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of YHWH was in the hand of Haggai the prophet, saying,

"Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the rest of the people, saying,

"Who is among the ones remaining who saw this house in its former glory? And what are you of all people seeing of it now? Is it not as it is now like nothing in your eyes?"

"So now, "be strong Zerubbabel," declares YHWH. "Be strong, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all the people of the land, declares YHWH. Do—"

"for I am with you," declares YHWH of hosts— the thing which I cut with you when you went out from Egypt. My Spirit is standing in your midst. Do not fear."

For thus says YHWH of hosts,

"Still once, in a little while, I will be shaking the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry ground." "I will shake all of the nations, and the delights of all of the nations will come in. I will fill this house with glory,"

says YHWH of hosts.

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine," declares YHWH of hosts.
“The coming glory of this house will be greater than the former glory,” says YHWH of hosts.

“In this place I will give peace,” declares YHWH of hosts.

On the twenty-fourth day, in the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of YHWH was to Haggai the prophet, saying,

“Thus says YHWH of hosts,

*Ask the priests for instruction, saying,”

And the priests responded, and they said,

“No.”

Haggai said,

“If someone who is unclean from a corpse touches any one of these, does he make it unclean?”

And the priests responded, and they said,

“It will be unclean.”

Haggai responded and said,

“So it is with this nation, and so it is with this people before me,” declares YHWH.

“So it is with the deeds of their hands, and what they bring there, it is unclean.”
And now, set now your heart to this from this day and onward:
from before stone was set to stone in the temple of YHWH,
from that time, one came to a heap of twenty,
and there were ten;
one came to a wine-vat to draw fifty presses,
and there were twenty.
I smote you and all the deeds of your hands with blight, mildew, and hail.
Yet, you did not turn to me,"
declares YHWH.

"Set now your heart on this from this day and onward—
from the twenty-fourth day and the ninth month—
from the day which the temple of YHWH was established,
set your hearts:
Is the seed yet in the storehouse?
As far as the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not brought forth.
From this day, I will bless you."

"Speak to Zerubbabel the governor of Judah, saying,
"I am shaking the heavens and the earth.
I will overthrow the thrones of the kingdoms,
and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations.
I will overthrow chariots and the ones riding them,
and the horses will go down along with the ones riding them,
each man with the sword of his brother."

"On that day,"
declares YHWH of hosts,

"I will take you, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant."
declares YHWH,

"And I will make you like a signet ring,
for I have chosen you,"
declares YHWH of hosts.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


You can only buy one resource to go along with this study? This is it. Boda unpacks the text clearly, focusing on major movements rather than getting bogged down in too many intricacies. He will cover what needs to be covered, and he won’t allow it to stay on just a study level.


A fantastic commentary for anyone! Though we disagree presuppositionally on Calvinism and Arminianism, that hardly colors the fantastic exegesis in this volume. I am consistently impressed by the work in this commentary series. Good balance between exegesis and application, and a very clear rootedness to the text.


Readable commentary and very helpful for understanding the text. They unpack the meaning clearly and have standout, catchy sentences.


His section on Haggai is brief as he moves across the whole Old Testament, but he does a fantastic job orienting the reader to the major meaning in Haggai, following a clear, easy-to-understand outline.


Very concise, and focusing primarily on the original context without much looking forward, this commentary was very clear in meaning and got to the heart in application. Though I disagree with the dispensational prophetic fulfillments, this resource was very helpful. The strength of this commentary lies in the overview at the beginning of each book.

I find this commentary to be fairly thick and muddled. A lot of depth without a lot of continuity. That being said, well worth the time to unpack difficult questions. When really stumped and the other commentaries skim over your question, head to this one. But bring your scuba gear!


This commentary excels in historical background and clear research. A high level commentary with a clear view toward understanding the meaning of the text in its original context.