

GROWTH GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

WORSHIP SERIES: MOVING FORWARD

SERMON TITLE: A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

DATE: JANUARY 1, 2023

SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 42:9-10, 43:18-19 (NIV)

The Author

The book of Isaiah takes its name from its writer. Isaiah was married to a prophetess who bore him at least two sons (Isaiah 7:3; 8:3). He prophesied under the reign of four Judean kings—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1)—and he likely met his death under a fifth, the evil King Manasseh. Christian tradition as early as the second century identifies Isaiah as one of the prophets whose death is described in Hebrews 11:37, specifically the prophet who was “sawn in two.” Isaiah likely lived in Jerusalem, given the book’s concern with the city (Isaiah 1:1) and his close proximity to at least two significant kings during the period of his prophecy (7:3; 38:1).

Key Places and People

Isaiah

Repeating Terms

new, former, past, promises

Cross Reference(s)

John 13:19

Theme

The book of Isaiah provides us with the most comprehensive prophetic picture of Jesus Christ in the entire Old Testament. It includes the full scope of His life: the announcement of His coming ([Isaiah 40:3-5](#)), His virgin birth (7:14), His proclamation of the good news (61:1), His sacrificial death (52:13-53:12), and His return to claim His own (60:2-3). Because of these and numerous other christological texts in Isaiah, the book stands as a testament of hope in the Lord, the One who saves His people from themselves.

Discussion Questions

1. Is there a way you or someone you know has been stuck in the past or have found it difficult to move forward? How does this impact us?
2. Why does God want us to look ahead and not dwell on some past issues?
3. In Isaiah 42 verse 9, why are new things declared before they come into reality? What is this saying about God's promises?
4. In verse 10, why are we to sing a new song to the Lord? What would your song of praise be?
5. Why does God want us to tell others of the new things he is doing?
6. In Isaiah 43 verse 18, what do you think the word dwell means?
7. If we hold on to our past with both hands, how will we receive God's new blessings in our lives?
8. In verse 19, why do some people miss or not see the newness God is offering?
9. What do you think holds us back?
10. What new things do you think God has in store for you and how can we pray for you?

GROWTH GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

WORSHIP SERIES: PRIORITY AND PERSPECTIVE

SERMON TITLE: START NOW EVEN IF IT'S HARD

DATE: JANUARY 8, 2023

SCRIPTURE: HAGGAI 1:1-15 (NIV)

The Author

Little is known about Haggai apart from this short prophecy. He is mentioned briefly in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14, on both occasions in conjunction with the prophet Zechariah. The lists of refugees in Ezra mention nothing of Haggai; there are no indications of his parentage or tribal ancestry. Nor does history provide any record of his occupation. He is the only person in the OT with the name.

Key Places and People

Cyrus the Persian, Babylon, Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai and Zechariah, 538 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar destroyed temple

Repeating Terms

time, Lord's house, people, Judah, build, rebuild, month

Cross Reference(s)

Heb. 12:26, Ezra 3:2, Nehemiah 4:10, Hosea 8:7, Psalm 119:59-60, 2 Chron 7:16, Isaiah 40:7

Theme

As the people of Israel return from exile, they have not worked very hard to build the new Temple. God then admonishes them to do what's right and start the building of the temple RIGHT NOW—even if it is hard. The same can be said of us. When God has put something on our hearts, that is for our benefit, it often seems too hard to even start. However, God has promised that He will be with us and give us the strength to not only start but build or overcome whatever is put before us. But the time is now.

Discussion Questions

1. Think of something you know God wants you to do that you are putting off. What is causing you to put it off? What would happen if you accomplished it?
2. If you were an Israelite, how would you have responded to the prophet's challenge in verses 1-4?
3. Why do you think God sent Haggai and those mentioned in the passage to urge people to get on with rebuilding?
4. What were God's objectives in rebuilding the temple if He knew he (Jesus) was coming?
5. What are some of the counterproductive habits in verse 6? Can you relate to these? What is God saying to us?
6. In verses 9-11, why did God bring trouble to the land? What does this say about God's involvement in society?
7. Does God value obedience over sacrifice? What is the difference between the two?
8. How much time elapsed between the rebuke in verse 1 and the compliance in verse 15? Why are we so slow?
9. Who stands to gain the most if we put God first? Are people blessed more if they put God first?
10. What are ways we can grow in our fear (a holy sense of awe) and reverence of God?
11. What is the best sign of repentance? How are obedience and repentance related?
12. Have you ever chosen calling over comfort? How does God work in the hard decisions?

GROWTH GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

WORSHIP SERIES: PRIORITY AND PERSPECTIVE

SERMON TITLE: THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSEVERANCE

DATE: JANUARY 15, 2023

SCRIPTURE: HAGGAI 2:1-9 (NIV)

The Author

Little is known about Haggai apart from this short prophecy. He is mentioned briefly in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14, on both occasions in conjunction with the prophet Zechariah. The lists of refugees in Ezra mention nothing of Haggai; there are no indications of his parentage or tribal ancestry. Nor does history provide any record of his occupation. He is the only person in the OT with the name.

Key Places and People

King Darius, Babylon, Zerubbabel, Joshua, Judah, Haggai and Zechariah, 538 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar destroyed temple

Repeating Terms

time, strong, nations, glory, house

Cross Reference(s)

2 Peter 1:21, Ezra 3:12, Zechariah 4:9,
Deuteronomy 31:23

Theme

As the people of Israel return from exile, they have not worked very hard to build the new Temple. God then admonishes them to do what's right and start the building of the temple RIGHT NOW—even if it is hard. The same can be said of us. When God has put something on our hearts, that is for our benefit, it often seems too hard to even start. However, God has promised that He will be with us and give us the strength to not only start but build or overcome whatever is put before us. But the time is now.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever, as an adult, returned to a place of your childhood? What kinds of memories and feelings does that evoke in you? Why do we like to talk about the good old days? Is this helpful or hurtful?
2. Why do you think we like to remember something as it used to be? How did the people in verse 1-3 feel about remembering the temple?
3. Can something ever be rebuilt to its former glory? Why or why not? Do we have a tendency to compare and compete? Why do we compare our "works in progress" to the "finished products" of others?
4. In verses 4-5, people are told to be strong. Do you think they lacked dissatisfaction with things as they were? How was this the "pep talk" the people needed?
5. Why do you think some people are satisfied with how things are? What does resignation do to action and to faith?
6. In verse 5, the phrase "My Spirit" is used? If the Spirit wasn't given until Pentecost, why was it mentioned to the people here?
7. In verses 6-9, the phrase the silver is mine, the gold is mine is used? How are financial concerns used as excuses? What is God saying about his provision and our trust in him?
8. How did the rebuilt temple become greater than the first (John 2:13)? Who worshipped there?
9. In Haggai's day, God had been working on Abraham's descendants for a very long time. What was God trying to accomplish in them? What is God accomplishing in us today? Is it different?

GROWTH GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

WORSHIP SERIES: PRIORITY AND PERSPECTIVE

SERMON TITLE: THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE

DATE: JANUARY 22, 2023

SCRIPTURE: HAGGAI 2:10-23 (NIV)

The Author

Little is known about Haggai apart from this short prophecy. He is mentioned briefly in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14, on both occasions in conjunction with the prophet Zechariah. The lists of refugees in Ezra mention nothing of Haggai; there are no indications of his parentage or tribal ancestry. Nor does history provide any record of his occupation. He is the only person in the OT with the name.

Key Places and People

King Darius, Babylon, Zerubbabel, Joshua, Judah, Haggai and Zechariah, 538 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar destroyed temple

Repeating Terms

time, stones, temple, hands, month

Cross Reference(s)

Ezekiel 44:19, Numbers 19:11, Ezra 3:10, 1 Kings 8:37, Zechariah 8:9, Habakkuk 3:17-18, Hebrews 12:26-27, Micah 5:10, Isaiah 43:10

Theme

As the people of Israel return from exile, they have not worked very hard to build the new Temple. God then admonishes them to do what's right and start the building of the temple RIGHT NOW—even if it is hard. The same can be said of us. When God has put something on our hearts, that is for our benefit, it often seems too hard to even start. However, God has promised that He will be with us and give us the strength to not only start but build or overcome whatever is put before us. But the time is now.

Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of a time you obeyed God? What was the result? What about when you didn't? What was the result? Do we obey so we can get a blessing? Do blessings only flow from obedience?
2. How long after the last message to this message, verses 2:1 and 2:10?
3. What 2 rules were the priests asked to clarify in 11-13? What was the answer? Can holy things like a temple make us holy? Are people holy from birth? Where does holiness come from?
4. Read Galatians 5:16-21. When was the last time you let the flesh lead you into something other than the Spirit? What was the result? How do we recover from this?
5. How do verses 15-17 show us the result of our unclean lives?
6. How are experiences of God's chastening suppose to impact us? Why do some people not grow closer to God after difficult experiences? What is the difference between a trial and discipline?
7. In verse 19, people are promised a blessing. If God immediately blessed us the moment we put our priorities back in order, what would that create or produce in us? What does God want us to develop?
8. Can a person be blessed if he/she doesn't follow Christ?
9. How are people rebuked AND encouraged in verses 20-22?
10. Read Matthew 1:12. Who was Zerubbabel? What does this say about the royal line of David and Jesus?

GROWTH GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

WORSHIP SERIES: FAITH FIRST LIVING

SERMON TITLE: FAITH FIRST LIVING (SINGLE SERMON)

DATE: JANUARY 29, 2023

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:45-53 (NIV)

The Author

Several factors point to John as the author. First, the book identifies the author as the disciple whom Jesus loved, the author had to be one of the 12 because he was an eyewitness to the gospel (John 21:24); he was probably one of the inner 3 (James, John, and Peter), he was among the first Mary told of the resurrection (20:1-10); and this disciple is distinguished from Peter in the book.

Key Places and People

Cana, Galilee, Capernaum, Jesus, Judea

Repeating Terms, Ideas

Jesus, heal, signs, wonders, believe, faith

Cross Reference(s)

Deuteronomy 16:16, Matthew 17:14-15, Luke 8:41, John 20:29, Mark 5:23, Matthew 8:13,

Theme

While the other three gospels portray Jesus as the King, the Servant, and the Son of Man, John portrays Jesus as the Son of God. John stated his theme more clearly than any of the other gospel writers. He wrote so that his readers might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," so that they may have life in His name (John 20:31). To accomplish that goal, John presented a riveting and distinctive picture of Jesus Christ, one in complete unity with the portraits in the other three gospels, but one that also adds significantly to the Bible's revelation of Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. When was the last time you made someone a promise and kept it? What was the result? When was the last time someone else made you a promise and kept it? How did that impact you? What were some of the promises of Jesus?
2. Why must our trust in God extend farther than we can see him? What is the difference between asking of God and trusting in God?
3. In verse 45, how did so many "know" of Jesus? What happened in Cana?
4. Why is it important that it was a royal official in verse 49? How was he persistent? How does Jesus respond when people are persistent? How are faith and persistence related?
5. In verse 48, what point was Jesus trying to make? Do we believe what we see and not what we hear?
6. Was the father's faith lacking in any way? What was the miracle? What does this tell us about Jesus?
7. How do miracles happen if Jesus isn't physically present? Describe Jesus' authority?
8. Why do you think John recorded this miracle? Why were so many miracles not recorded? If all the miracles were recorded, would people believe then?
9. Should we have to experience a miracle firsthand to believe? Do we believe when we hear about miracles that have happened in the lives of others? Why do humans think they need proof?
10. How do we know something is a "sign"? Should we rely on signs? How do we know what to rely on or have faith in?