

## Taking It Home

God wanted the people of Jerusalem to overcome their discouragement. They had left the work because of opposition, but God wanted them to know that the work was worthy of their best efforts, despite whatever may have gotten in their way. Zechariah tells us not to despise the day of small things, because God can take small, imperfect things and build them into a place where he dwells. And God wants us to align our priorities properly. Too often we say things like “I’ll spend time praying and reading my Bible after I get this project done,” putting God at the tail end of our commitments rather than honoring him as Lord of our lives. God told the people to evaluate their lives so that they might realize that they had brought their misfortunes on themselves by having wrong priorities. This week try to evaluate how you spend your time, your money and your talents. Look at who you choose as friends, what you set as goals, and where your life is going. If that evaluation demonstrates that God is not first in your life, ask him to show you what corrections you need to make.



Life group lesson—Haggai & Zechariah

Week of 3/22/15

### Quick Review:

What insight, principle or observation from this weekend’s message did you find to be the most helpful, eye opening or troubling?

### My Story:

1. When you start a project, do you usually see it through to completion, or do you stop and then return to it later? Have you ever left any projects unfinished?

## Digging deeper:

Haggai and Zechariah both prophesied to the people of Jerusalem at the same time. The Israelites had returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile and had begun to rebuild the temple. They were at a very vulnerable time in their history. They had been humbled by their exile to Babylon, became hopeful in their return to the Promised Land, but then became so completely discouraged by the opposition that arose to their rebuilding that they had abandoned the work. Haggai's message pointed out their sins and their self-focus, blaming their lack of blessing on their failure to finish the work on the temple. They had forgotten their God and chose instead to focus on their own interests. Zechariah's message gave them encouragement and hope, calling them to put away their sin and motivating them to continue to rebuild the temple. And unlike the experience of so many prophets before them, this time the people listened. The prophets pointed out that nothing was more important than to show that God was at the center of their lives, and the people responded by once again taking up the work.

1. Read Ezra 4:4-5 and Haggai 1:1-5. Why, after more than 15 years of starts and stops, does the temple still remain unfinished? What does God tell them to consider?
2. Read Haggai 1:6-11 and discuss what methods God used to motivate them to restart the work on the temple.
3. Read Haggai 1:12-15 and discuss how the people responded and also how God responded to them.
4. Read Haggai 2:1-3. Why did God ask the question about how their work compares to the former temple?
5. How does God encourage the people in Haggai 2:4-9?
6. Read Haggai 2:10-23. What does God say will be different because of the people's obedience? Why is the rebuilding of the temple so important?