

It's Time to Be Encouraged

It's Time #4 - Pastor Gary Combs - February 2, 2025 - Haggai 2:1-5

INTERVIEW (Play intro/put 3 stools on stage): Dennis & Lynn Gurgone

IT'S TIME TALK (Remove stools/place pulpit while Gary talks): You'll notice a brochure in your seats today called "Over and Above Giving - A How to Guide to Lifestyle Stewardship." It's a guide to help you develop a lifestyle of generosity and stewardship. Stewardship is a biblical principle of how to manage the resources God has entrusted to you. **The biblical principle of stewardship** recognizes God as owner and us as His stewards, managing His resources for His kingdom and glory. Remember the word says:



Psalm 24:1 (ESV) The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.

Some of you may already have a lifestyle of stewardship and for you this will be a good reminder. For many others this little brochure can help you grow in your understanding of biblical stewardship.

I also want to direct your attention to another resource that we're offering to help you understand another biblical principle— **the principle of proportional giving**. Two Scriptures that help us understand this principle:

Deuteronomy 16:17 (NLT) All must give as they are able, according to the blessings given to them by the Lord your God.

2 Corinthians 8:12 (NLT) Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have.

The resource that we're offering to explain how we can trust God to raise \$1.5 million is our **"Giving Guide."** You'll notice that it's based on the biblical principle of proportional giving. You can find this chart on the It's Time table and also in the your **Journey Guide** in the "Commitment Guide" section. This guide also underscores another biblical principle of stewardship, the principle that decisions about giving should be made in prayer. As you look at the chart, pray "Lord, what do you want to do in me and through me." Then ask, "Lord, where do you see me on this giving chart?"



Our commitment is based on this motto: **"NOT EQUAL GIFTS BUT EQUAL SACRIFICE"**

Trans: I hope the giving testimony that you heard today from Dennis and Lynn, along with these resources will encourage you in your spiritual journey towards living a lifestyle of stewardship. And speaking of encouragement, that's the title of today's sermon...

INTRO: Today's sermon is entitled: "It's Time to Be Encouraged." We're continuing our series called "It's Time!" We're going through the book of Haggai. Our theme comes from...

Haggai 1:2; 2:4-5 (ESV) "These people say the **time** has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord... Yet now **be strong... Work**, for I am with you, declares the Lord... My Spirit remains in your midst. **Fear not.**"

It today's text, God encouraged His people to persevere in the rebuilding of His house and I believe He wants to encourage us this morning. I need His encouragement today. How about you?

Need: Discouragement is one of the greatest obstacles to faithfulness in serving God. When things don't seem to be going the way we expected, we can easily lose heart. The people in Haggai's day faced this same struggle. They had begun rebuilding the temple, but it didn't compare to the former glory of Solomon's temple. Many became disheartened, and some questioned whether their efforts were even worth it.

How are you doing today? Are you facing some obstacle or difficulty that has you feeling discouraged, even feeling like giving up, or quitting? We all have feelings of discouragement from time to time. How can we find encouragement during times like this?

Trans: That's what today's message is about. How to be encouraged in the Lord!

BODY: In Haggai 2:1-5, the people of God were encouraged to overcome their discouragement and to persevere in His work. We can be encouraged to persevere in God's work. How can we be encouraged to persevere in God's work? The text gives **three ways** we can be encouraged to persevere in God's work.

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Read text: Haggai 2:1-5 (ESV) ¹ In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: ² "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, ³ 'Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?' ⁴ Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, ⁵ according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.

HOW TO BE ENCOURAGED TO PERSEVERE IN GOD'S WORK:

1. Be strong relying on God's presence

EXP: (1-4) Notice God's command to "be strong" (4). He repeats it 3 times for emphasis to each party.

"Seventh month" (1) (*Tishrei*) - September–October on the Gregorian calendar. Nearly a month has passed between the end of Haggai chapter 1 and the start of 2. The people have been at work 27 days.

"Speak now" (2) (אָמַרְנָא, *āmar nā*) - to say, speak. Do not delay, tell them immediately.

"Who is left among you" (3) - After 16 years back in Jerusalem, the people went back to work on the Temple, but the ones who had seen Solomon's temple were discouraged. "Fifty-nine years had elapsed from the destruction of the temple in the eleventh year of Zedekiah to the first of Cyrus; so that old men of seventy years had seen the first temple, when themselves eleven years old." (*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*)

Ezra 3:12 (ESV) But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy.

"How do you see it" (3) - "God's estimate of things is very different from man's. However low their estimate of the present temple from its outward inferiority, God holds it superior." (*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown commentary*)

"Is it not as nothing" (3) - The double negative emphasizes the discouragement of the people. God could have asked, "Is it something in your eyes?"

"Be strong" (4, 3x) (קַזַּק, *hāzaq*) (Imperative) - to strengthen, prevail, harden, be strong, be courageous, to grow stout. Have courage and prevail! Also, "to have or take or keep hold of, retain, hold up, sustain, support." God commands His people to "be strong" roughly 34 times in the Scriptures.

"I am with you" (4) (אֲנִי אִתְּכֶם, *ānī ēt*) - this is the greatest news of all, the Almighty God is with you.

ARG: As the apostle Paul reminds us, we are to be strong, not in ourselves, but in the Lord!

Ephesians 6:10 (ESV) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Throughout Scripture, the Lord's command to "be strong" is connected to His promised presence.

Joshua 1:9 (ESV) Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

ILL: It's hard to be strong when others are not seeing the same dream that you are. I remember the early days of the church when people would get discouraged by our temporary location at FHMS. I would cast vision for what our future would look like, but all they could see was our present situation. We had to be strong.

APP: Where are you feeling discouraged in your spiritual walk or ministry? Strength comes not from what we see, but from looking to God. Lean on His Word and keep pressing forward. Be strong. How? By relying on the Lord's presence and strength.

2. Do the Work trusting in God's promises.

EXP: (4-5) Circle the word, "work" (4). God commanded the people to keep working. Do the work. Sometimes the most encouraging thing you can do is keep working at it. (Swiss cheese theory: Poke holes in it.)

"Work" (4) (עָשָׂה, *āśâ*) (Imperative) - to do, work, make, produce. "They were at work; but there was danger of their leaving off working, being discouraged at what the ancient people said; and therefore they are exhorted to go on in their work, and go through it, and finish it." (*Gill*)

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“Covenant that I made with you” (5) - God is a covenant making and covenant keeping God. “I will fulfil to you what I promised to your ancestors, namely, that I would be their God, and that it should be well with them, if they obeyed my voice; that I would keep them from evil, and moreover, bless and prosper them.” (Benson Commentary) see Exodus 20-24; Leviticus 26

ARG: **We are called to do kingdom work, understanding that only God can establish it (give success).**

Psalm 90:17 (ESV) Let the favor of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!

Remember what the word says about “sowing and reaping.”

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (ESV) ⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

ILL: A farmer who believes in a good harvest but refuses to plant any seeds will never see the fruit. God calls us not just to believe but to work in faith, trusting Him for the results.

APP: Where has God called you to work? Is there a ministry or calling you've neglected due to discouragement? Start today. Take the next step, even if it seems small. God blesses faithfulness, not perfection. Do the work and leave the results up to God. He promises to “establish the work of our hands.”

3. **Be Fearless walking in God's Spirit.**

EXP: (5) Notice the 3rd command, “Fear not.” (5). Be fearless. How?

“My Spirit remains” (5) (אָמַד, *amad*) - to stand, remain. “Not only Jehovah the Father, and his divine Logos or Word, were with them; but his Spirit also, his Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Trinity.” (Gill)

“In your midst” (5) (תָּבַע, *tavek*) - midst, middle, among. My Spirit is standing among you.

“Fear not” (5) (אַרַּר, *yare*) - to fear, revere, be afraid. Don't be afraid!

ARG: **When you walk in the fear of the Lord, you fear nothing else:**

“It is the most natural thing in the world to be scared, and the clearest evidence that God's grace is at work in our hearts is when we do not get into a panic. The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.” — Oswald Chambers

By God's Spirit we can cry out to our Father and overcome fear.

Romans 8:15-16 (ESV) ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

ILL: When I was a little boy, I sometimes had nightmares. I'd cry out for my daddy. He'd lay in the twin bed next to mine and hold my hand until I went back to sleep.

APP: What fears are holding you back from full obedience? Remember, you are not alone—God's Spirit is with you, empowering you. Replace fear with faith by calling out to your Father in heaven. He will answer you!

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CONCLUSION: The people of Haggai's time were discouraged, but God spoke words of encouragement and action telling them to...

- 1) Be Strong – Relying on God's presence.
- 2) Do the Work – Trusting in God's promises.
- 3) Be Fearless – Walking in God's Spirit.

What is God calling you to do today? Whether it's in your personal life, your stewardship, your ministry, or spiritual growth, It's time to be strong, do the work, and be fearless, for God is with us!

We're half-way through our It's Time series. Let's continue to keep our ...

IT'S TIME SPIRITUAL JOURNEY COMMITMENT?

- Attend all 8 Sundays of the series and bring your It's Time Journey Guide with you to take notes.
- Do the 6-week (M-F) devotional starting January 13th through February 21st.
- Attend a weekly Community Group to discuss the It's Time Haggai study.
- Pray our It's Time prayer: "Lord, what do You want to do in and through me?"
- Respond to God's leading on **Commitment Sunday, February 16th**, and by faith, make a sacrificial, 3-year financial commitment that is over and above your current giving.

Let's pray.