

“Beyond Today”

Beyond, Week #1

Introduction

As the year 2017 draws to a close, many of us will use the New Year as a time to make changes in our lives. Perhaps you have made resolutions in the past years that lasted briefly before you lapsed into former habits. If we truly want to grow spiritually in 2018 we need to intentionally press into the direction, dream or vision to which God has called us. The book of Haggai offers us a picture of how to get back on track toward our God given purposes.

Ice Breaker (Optional):

What resolutions are you planning for 2018?

Study Questions (45 MIN)

Israel Disconnected

Q1. Read Ezra 1:1-3, Haggai 1:1-6; Matthew 6:31-33

God had long ago prophesied His plans for the Israelites when He moved Cyrus to decree freedom for them to return to Israel and begin reconstruction of the temple (Ezra 1:1-3). But 20 years after the decree, what were the people saying according to Haggai 1:2? Despite confirmation of prophesy and a royal decree, the people still had failed to build more than a foundation before they disconnected from their purpose and set aside God’s plan for them. What had they been doing instead of rebuilding the temple (Haggai 1:3-6)? What do you think was motivating their actions?

It is easy for us to become distracted by seemingly important pursuits and abandon what God really has for us. How did Jesus address a similar issue in Matthew 6:33? What are some things we can forfeit spiritually when we pursue material gain rather than look to God’s provision?

Be Part of Something Bigger

Q2. Read 1 Corinthians 10:31; Haggai 1:9-11; Exodus 34:14

The Israelites were working hard to provide for themselves but were not bringing glory to God as He had planned. What attitude did Paul encourage the Corinthians to have (1 Corinthians 10:31) that appears to be missing at this time in Jerusalem? What did God do to get their focus off of themselves and back on Him (Haggai 1:9-11)? God wasn’t willing to let His people settle for less than what he had planned for them. Have you ever experienced something that at first seemed like a great loss, only to

find God had something even better in store for you? Exodus 34:14 shows us that God is jealous of anything that would come between Him and us. How is God’s determination to displace the “idols” in our lives actually a gift of love rather than an act of retribution?

Steps to return

Q3. Read Haggai 1:7-8, 12-15

God clearly defined the steps for Israel to get back on track. What was the first thing they needed to do (Haggai 1:7)? After recognizing that God was intervening in their lives, what steps of obedience did they need to take? (Haggai 1:8)? How did the people’s actions and attitude change in verse 12? As the people displayed obedience to God, what was God’s response to them (v. 13)? We may also need to follow these steps if we have veered off track and left the path God has planned for us. Take time for an earnest assessment of what’s happening in your life. Is God possibly trying to get your attention? Now if there is a step of obedience you know God is stirring in you, share that with your group and support one another as you focus your life on bringing glory to God in all you do.

Wrap-Up

God intends for us to be part of His plan, but sometimes we set His plan aside to focus on our own plans. God will do whatever it takes to get us refocused on Him, because His plan is ultimately the best plan for us. When we recognize God intervening to draw us back on course, we need to obey His calling. If we make ourselves available He will stir up His spirit in us and do abundantly more than we ever imagined.

Memory Verse

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV

Prayer (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life and other needs (see space to write on back).

Challenge:

Ask God to reveal to you where He wants you to grow. See if you can identify one area of your life that needs changing this year to move you closer to who God created you to be.

