

# Open in prayer

## Read Haggai 1:1-15

<sup>1</sup> In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest:

<sup>2</sup> ‘The Lord of Armies says this: These people say: The time has not come for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.’ <sup>3</sup> The word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: <sup>4</sup> ‘Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your panelled houses, while this house lies in ruins?’

<sup>5</sup> Now, the Lord of Armies says this: ‘Think carefully about your ways:

<sup>6</sup> You have planted much  
but harvested little.  
You eat  
but never have enough to be satisfied.  
You drink  
but never have enough to be happy.  
You put on clothes  
but never have enough to get warm.  
The wage earner puts his wages  
into a bag with a hole in it.’

<sup>7</sup> The Lord of Armies says this: ‘Think carefully about your ways. <sup>8</sup> Go up into the hills, bring down timber, and build the house; and I will be pleased with it and be glorified,’ says the Lord. <sup>9</sup> ‘You expected much, but then it amounted to little. When you brought the harvest to your house, I ruined it. Why?’ This is the declaration of the Lord of Armies. ‘Because my house still lies in ruins, while each of you is busy with his own house.

<sup>10</sup> So on your account,  
the skies have withheld the dew  
and the land its crops.

<sup>11</sup> I have summoned a drought  
on the fields and the hills,  
on the grain, new wine, fresh oil,  
and whatever the ground yields,  
on people and animals,  
and on all that your hands produce.’

<sup>12</sup> Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak, and the entire remnant of the people obeyed the Lord their God and the words of the prophet Haggai, because the Lord their God had sent him. So the people feared the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Then Haggai, the Lord’s messenger, delivered the Lord’s message to the people: ‘I am with you – this is the Lord’s declaration.’

<sup>14</sup> The Lord roused the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, the spirit of the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. They began work on the house of the Lord of Armies, their God, <sup>15</sup> on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.

# Introduction

What does God have to do to get your attention? ••• A notice of retrenchment? • A bank repossession? • An illness your medical aid won't cover? •• Sometimes pain is the only voice we listen to. And sometimes pain is God's megaphone. •••

In the days of Haggai, the remnant had stopped listening altogether. They built their own homes with energy and skill while God's house lay in rubble. •• So the Lord of Armies summoned a drought. He put holes in their wages. Not as a tantrum. As a mercy. •

That same mercy reaches us today. • And it finds its deepest answer in the gospel. Here is the central burden of this sermon. P Because Jesus bore your curse, He is with you, empowering your obedience. •••

Haggai 1:1-15 has three clear movements. First, God sends calamity to expose spiritual lethargy. • Second, God demands obedience that moves a nation. • Third, God promises His presence that never departs. ••

Let's enter the first movement. The calamity which exposes spiritual lethargy. •

## 1) God sends calamity (Haggai 1:1-11)

<sup>1</sup> In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the Lord stamps His word into history. He dates it. The word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to real men. Zerubbabel, the governor. And to Joshua, the high priest. Civil and spiritual leadership. Both addressed. Both accountable. • <sup>3</sup> But the word is not for them alone. It is for whole remnant. An entire community is in the Lord of Armies' crosshairs. • <sup>4</sup> And He is not happy. •

<sup>2</sup> These people say: The time has not come for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt. • The excuse sounds reasonable. Sixteen years of opposition. A decree from Persia halted the work. So they waited. And while they waited, they built. Not the Lord's house. Their own houses. Panelled houses. Finished houses. Comfortable houses. • <sup>3</sup> But the Lord does not accept their excuse. He sees what they have built. He sees what they have not built. • <sup>4</sup> And He asks a question that cuts. <sup>4</sup> Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your panelled houses, while this house lies in ruins? ••

Å The question is a scalpel. You say the time has not come. But there is plenty of time for your ceilings. Your renovations. Your ease. There seems to be time for everything except My house. • The ruin of God's house does not trouble your heart. Only your own comfort stirs you to action. • This is not a scattered individualism. This is a shared, spiritual lethargy. A whole people who learned to live with rubble. They stopped noticing. They stopped caring. A corporate slumber has settled over them. •••

Å Therefore. <sup>5</sup> the Lord of Armies says this: Think carefully about your ways. Set your heart upon your paths. Examine the evidence. This is a call to zeal. God will not let them remain in their drowsy introspection. He summons them to a passionate, holy energy. Look at the ground. Look at your wages. Look at your tables. The evidence is not hidden. •

Å <sup>6</sup> You have planted much but harvested little. You eat but never have enough to be satisfied. You drink but never have enough to be happy. You put on clothes but never have enough to get warm. The wage earner puts his wages into a bag with a hole in it. • Five statements. Five failures. Their labour yields nothing. Their consumption satisfies nothing. Their income secures nothing. They are working. They are spending. They are living. • And as a people, it is all slipping through their fingers. ••

Å Why? • Because my house still lies in ruins, while each of you is busy with his own house. • <sup>10</sup> So on your account, the skies have withheld the dew and the land its crops. <sup>11</sup> I

have summoned a drought on the fields and the hills, on the grain, new wine, fresh oil, and whatever the ground yields, on people and animals, and on all that your hands produce. • This is not bad luck. This is not the economy. This is the covenant. • Deuteronomy 28 promised blessing for obedience and curse for disobedience. • God is being faithful to His threats so that His people will return to His promises. • He wanted their attention. So He took their harvest. He wanted their heart. So He took their comfort. He wanted their worship. So He took their wages. • The hole in the people's pocket is the voice of God. •••

on C.S.Lewis wrote, God whispers in our joys. But He shouts in our pains. • Pain is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world. • For the exiles in Jerusalem, God did not whisper. He shouted through the very things they depended on. Not to crush them. To call them. The call to set your heart upon your paths is a call to awaken from a collective slumber. And listen to the drought's voice. • The hole has a purpose. Their inward reflection must burst into outward, God-directed passion. The time has come. Not for their houses. For His. •••

on So the main idea of this section stands clear. The Lord of Armies confronts a people who have lost their zeal for His house. • He exposes their spiritual lethargy with a covenant curse. And calls them to set their heart upon their ways. • This is the first movement. God sends calamity to wake a sleeping remnant. Because until they see the drought as His voice, they will never obey. And until they obey, they will never know His presence. •••

So, will they hear?

## 2) God demands obedience (Haggai 1:12)

P <sup>12</sup> Then Zerubbabel. Then Joshua. And the entire remnant of the people obeyed. • Notice the order. The leaders first. The people follow. • But notice something deeper. This is not a collection of individuals. This is a remnant. There is a "we-ness" here. • No one holds back to see if another will step forward. No one waits for private confirmation. • The word lands, and the whole company bends the knee together. ••

P They obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the words of the prophet Haggai. They recognised the messenger because they recognised the message. • The word cut. They did not duck. The word exposed. They did not defend. The word commanded. They obeyed. ••

P And the narrator adds a striking phrase. • So the people feared the Lord. • This is not terror. It is the fear that takes God at His word and moves. The word

Haggai preached was rouse yourself. Set your heart upon your paths. And now we see what that looks like. • Their inward reflection has burst into outward, God-directed passion. • A holy zeal has taken hold of this people. They finally took God seriously. They believed the hole in their pocket was His voice. They believed the drought was His discipline. • And a corporate courage stirred. The kind that lays down the hammer on your own house and picks the hammer up for His. Not alone. Together. ••

P Imagine a father who has called his sons three times. The boys keep playing. Each in his own room. Each with his own screen. The father calls again. This time, one boy comes. Then another. They find one another in the hallway. They look at each other. They hear the love in their father's voice. They drop their toys. Together, they run. • That is the remnant. They heard. They came. They feared. Not the dread of slaves. The awe of sinners who have met a holy God and have not been consumed. ••

Do not miss what lies beneath this. Their fear was not self-generated. The same Lord who commanded them was already at work within them. He does not shout from heaven and wait to see what we will do. He stirs our will. He awakens our heart. The fear of the Lord is never merely a human resolve. It is always a divine gift. ••

o So the main idea of this section stands clear. The people's united, immediate, and zealous obedience to the word and fear of the Lord. • This is what it looks like to obey the word of the Lord to rebuild His house. Excuses die. Self-priority is buried. The hammer is lifted for His dwelling, not their own. ••

But as you take that step, as you swing that hammer, you feel another hand wrap around yours. And a voice speaks. Look who meets you on the threshold. •••

### 3) God promises presence (Haggai 1:13-15)

<sup>13</sup> Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, delivered the Lord's message to the people: 'I am with you – this is the Lord's declaration.' • Four words. I am with you. • The God who summoned the drought now summons His people to courage. • o He does not say the work will be easy. He does not say the enemies will vanish. He says something better. I am with you. The presence that withdrew in judgment now returns in mercy. Not because they have finished the work. Because they have begun. ••

But the Lord does more than promise His presence. •  $\omega$  He supplies His power. • <sup>14</sup> The Lord roused the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, the spirit of the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. • Roused. A sleeper startled from slumber. A warrior awakened for battle. • The governor. The priest. The whole remnant. One body, stirred together. No one is left in the rubble of introspection. Inward reflection has burst into outward, God-directed passion. • A holy zeal has taken hold of this people, and God Himself is the flame. ••

P And they began work on the house of the Lord of Armies, their God, <sup>15</sup> on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius. • Twenty-three days since Haggai first spoke. Twenty-three days from excuse to obedience. Repentance took root. God met them. He promised His presence. He supplied His power. They did not build alone. •••

P A father teaching his son to swing an axe. The boy is small. The axe is heavy. The boy sighs. I cannot do this. The father steps behind the boy. He wraps his hands around the boy's hands. Together they swing. The blade bites deep. The boy looks up. The father smiles. •  $\omega$  But something else has happened. The boy who sighed now reaches for the axe again. Not because his arms are stronger. Because his heart is different. He wants to swing. That is the Lord of Armies. I am with you. He wraps His strength around your weakness. And He stirs your sleeping spirit awake. He did it for Zerubbabel. He did it for Joshua. He did it for the remnant, together. And the rubble began to move. ••

$\omega$  So the main idea of this section stands clear. The Lord promises His own presence. And the Lord stirs leaders and people alike, so that the work begins. • This is the pattern. Obey the word of the Lord to rebuild His house, and He will empower you to do His will. The command comes with the enabling. The summons arrives with the strength. Not by might. Not by power. By His Spirit stirring what was asleep. ••

Yet this presence, as sweet as it is, flickers. In the very next chapter, discouragement returns. Their rousing was real, but it rested on their obedience. We need a presence that abides. Which brings us to the gospel.

•••

## Connect to the gospel

Haggai's argument is clear. Obey the word of the Lord to rebuild His house, and He will empower you to do His will. • The people obey, and God draws near. I am with you. • But how does a passage about a communal building project connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ? • How does a call to zealous, corporate labour find its rest in Him? ••

Å The connection is the covenant logic itself. • In Haggai's day, the promise of God's presence came as a blessing for their obedience. They stepped back into the covenant as a people, and the Lord stepped near. • But look closer. This presence was provisional. It returned when they obeyed. Yet in the very next chapter, discouragement settles over the whole community again. The presence given at the foundation is not the presence that finally fills. It came and went because mankind keeps failing. And if that is the pattern, we are without hope. • Our zeal will cool. Our unity will fracture. Our hammers will fall silent beside another ruin. ••

P The gospel announces something better. Something wondrous. The presence promised conditionally in Haggai has come unconditionally in Christ. • Jesus did not wait for our obedience. He stepped into the covenant stream at the very moment of our rebellion. He bore the drought we deserved. The curse of the covenant, every ounce of it, fell on Him. • As Paul writes, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. • The sky over Calvary grew dark. The true temple was torn down. The Father turned His face away. Christ endured the full weight of the hole in our pocket. He spent His life and received nothing back but wrath, so that we—a people, His church—might receive the rain of God's blessing forever. ••

P What could never be achieved by our building, Christ achieved by dying. • He took a conditional promise and made it our permanent possession. The I am with you that once trembled on the edge of their failure now stands unshaken at the centre of ours. • He is not the presence that comes and goes. He is the presence that came and stayed. The tomb is empty. The curse is broken. The restless promise finally rests in Him. ••

Behold, the drought is over. The rain has come. Because Jesus bore your curse, He is with you, empowering your obedience. Not you alone. Us. Together. A new temple, built with living stones. That changes everything. How we live. How we hope. How we now apply this word. •

## Believers

P The same Spirit who stirred the remnant dwells in you. • Not provisionally. Permanently. He has gifted you for this purpose. To step into God-glorifying work. Not your own panelled kingdom. His house. His people. His name. ••

P So stop waiting. • The we-ness of Haggai confronts our private, drowsy religion. A whole community stirred. A corporate courage. They laid down their own hammers and lifted them together for the Lord. And the Spirit who roused them rouses us. Not for individual projects. For one temple. One body. ••

Ø Therefore, think now. How has the Spirit gifted you? • Not someone else. You. • And what one concrete act of service can you lock in for this local church? • Do not dream of the perfect work, and do nothing. Do not wait for a better season, and plant nothing. The time has come. • Pick up a stone in your hand—teaching a child, mending something broken, hospitality that knits the lonely in, a phone call to the weary, prayer with a suffering saint—and lay it down where it belongs. •

Ø This is not guilt-driven sweat. This is zeal. The glad, holy energy of a people who finally take God seriously. • The fear of the Lord is not dread. It is the awe of sinners who have met His grace and now move, together, toward His purpose. • The Spirit does not waste His provisions. The gift He placed in you is the very stone He means for you to set. So lock it in. Name it. Then swing the hammer. Not alone. With the whole company of the roused. The rubble begins to move. And a voice speaks over our shared labour, *I am with you.* ••

## Unbelievers

Å Your wages fall through a hole. Your comforts do not satisfy. • This is not misfortune. It is mercy. • God is shouting to wake you. And here is the sharp edge of the truth, you are not merely neglecting God's house. You are under His curse. • Your sin has separated you from Him. And the obedience He requires is not a project you can build. Not effort. Not reformation. Faith alone in Jesus Christ, who became the curse for you. ••

Å On the cross, He bore your drought. He took your punishment. The sky grew dark, and the Father turned His face so that you might receive the rain of blessing forever. ••

P Do not leave today undecided. The time has come. Come and speak with me after the service. Swing the hammer of faith. He is with you. •••

## Conclusion

What does God have to do to get your attention? •• ๓ For the remnant, it took a drought. Empty wages. A megaphone of pain. • But they heard. They feared. They obeyed. • And God met them with four words, *I am with you*. ••

P That presence, conditional then, is now secured forever. Because Jesus bore your curse, He is with you, empowering your obedience. • The drought fell on Him at Calvary. The sky grew dark. He became the curse so that the rain of blessing might be yours—permanently. The megaphone of judgment has become the whisper of grace. ••

So we have seen it together. • First, God sends calamity to expose spiritual lethargy. • Second, God demands obedience that moves as one body. • Third, God promises His presence that never departs. • The pattern stands. He wakes you. He calls you. He stays with you. ••

Now what? Do not leave here drowsy. • Ask yourself, *What has God sent into my life to turn my hammer from my own panelled kingdom to His house?* • Name it. Then lock in one concrete act of service for this local church before the month ends. • Not a vague intention. A stone in your hand—teaching a child, mending a broken relationship, steadfast prayer—laid down where it belongs. • Together. Not alone. The Spirit who roused them rouses you. ••

And if you have never bowed the knee, hear this. Your empty wages, your hollow comforts—they are mercy. • The time has come. Believe on Jesus Christ, who became the curse for you. Swing the hammer of faith. He is with you. ••

The megaphone has sounded. We're stirred. And over our shared labour, the voice speaks, *I am with you*. ••

Amen. •••

**Close in prayer**

**Benediction**

## Homiletic indicators

- **∂** – Fear
  - **Body:** Narrow eyes, still shoulders, lift your chin slightly (exposed posture).
  - **Voice:** Breathy, higher pitch, quick shallow breaths. Speak into the back of the throat.
  - **Pacing:** Slow but with micro-tremors. Let words come out like they're being pulled.
  - **Delivery note:** Don't shout fear. Whisper it. Tension is louder than volume.
- **⓪** – Anger
  - **Body:** Jaw forward, stable feet (no shifting weight), sharp hand strikes (karate chop motion).
  - **Voice:** Hard attack on consonants. Drop pitch slightly, but increase volume on key syllables. Staccato.
  - **Pacing:** Fast to medium. No wasted space between words until the punch.
  - **Delivery note:** Controlled anger is more frightening than unleashed rage. Let the temperature rise, then hold.
- **P** – Happiness
  - **Body:** Relax shoulders, soften the brow. Open palms, wider stance.
  - **Voice:** Rise in melody at the end of phrases. Bright, forward resonance (smile while speaking).
  - **Pacing:** Natural to quick. Allow an "Aha!" breath. A visible inhale before the insight.
  - **Delivery note:** Joy is contagious only if you allow yourself to smile mid-sentence. Don't save it for the punchline.
- **Å** – Sadness
  - **Body:** Heavy eyelids, slight forward slump, hands still or clasped low.
  - **Voice:** Lower volume, monotone descent (each phrase ends lower than it started). Use mostly single-syllable words.
  - **Pacing:** Slow. Insert silence between clauses, not just after periods.
  - **Delivery note:** Let silence become the sound of grief. If you rush sadness, you betray it.
- **□** – Disgust
  - **Body:** Wrinkle nose, pull back your head, sharp turning away from the pulpit.
  - **Voice:** Nasal, sharp, with a "negation cadence" (rising then falling sharply on the sin's name). Hard glottal stops.
  - **Pacing:** Abrupt. Start a sentence normally, then cut it off with a hard stop.
  - **Delivery note:** Name the sin like it tastes bad. "Greed" (spit the word). Then pause. Then continue clean.
- **∅** – Surprise
  - **Body:** Eyebrows up, slight backward step or open-mouth inhale.
  - **Voice:** Bright, high onset. Use a sudden upward interval (a leap in pitch on the unexpected word).
  - **Pacing:** Normal to very fast on the reveal, then a hard reset.
  - **Delivery note:** Surprise only works if the preceding delivery didn't telegraph it. Keep your body neutral before the turn.
- **●** – Pause
  - **What it does:** Allows the last sentence to land, convict, or heal.
  - **Length:** 1 second (colon), 2 seconds (period), 3+ seconds (after a weighty statement or call to worship).
  - **Body:** Stop moving. Hold eye contact. Do not smile or nod. Let the silence be uncomfortable.
  - **Delivery note:** A pause feels longer to you than to them. Trust it. Hold one more beat than you think is comfortable.

The narrator sets the scene with a precise date and introduces the recipients of the word.

<sup>1</sup> In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest:

The Lord confronts the people's excuses and calls them to rebuild His house.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Lord of Armies says this:

a.) These people say: The time has not come for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.'

b.) <sup>3</sup> The word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai:

a.) <sup>4</sup> 'Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your panelled houses,

b.) while this house lies in ruins?'

1.) <sup>5</sup> Now, the Lord of Armies says this: 'Think carefully about your ways:

1.) [H] <sup>6</sup> You have planted much [ ] but harvested little.

2.) [H] You eat [ ] but never have enough to be satisfied.

3.) [H] You drink [ ] but never have enough to be happy.

4.) [H] You put on clothes [ ] but never have enough to get warm.

5.) [H] The wage earner puts his wages into a bag [ ] with a hole in it.'

2.) <sup>7</sup> The Lord of Armies says this: 'Think carefully about your ways.

1.) 1.) <sup>8</sup> Go up into the hills, 2.) bring down timber, 3.) [P] and build the house;

2.) and I will 1.) be pleased with it 2.) [S] and be glorified,' says the Lord.

1.) [H] <sup>9</sup> 'You expected much, [ ] but then it amounted to little.

2.) [H] When you brought the harvest to your house, [ ] I ruined it.

Why?' This is the declaration of the Lord of Armies.

[G] 'Because a.) my house still lies in ruins,

b.) while each of you is busy with his own house.

<sup>10</sup> So on your account,  
the skies have withheld the dew  
and the land its crops.

<sup>11</sup> I have summoned a drought  
on the fields and the hills,  
on the grain, new wine, fresh oil,  
and whatever the ground yields,  
on people and animals,  
and on all that your hands produce.'

*The narrator reports the people's obedient response to the word and fear of the Lord.*

<sup>12</sup> Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak, and the entire remnant of the people obeyed the Lord their God and the words of the prophet Haggai, because the Lord their God had sent him. So the people feared the Lord.

*The Lord promise's His own presence.*

<sup>13</sup> Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, delivered the Lord's message to the people:  
'I am with you – this is the Lord's declaration.'

*The narrator reports the Lord stirring the leaders and people, and the work beginning on a new date.*

<sup>14</sup> The Lord roused the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, the spirit of the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. They began work on the house of the Lord of Armies, their God, <sup>15</sup> on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.

### This is how I indicate the function of conjunctions:

- I put a letter in square brackets before a clause to indicate a logical relationship.
  - [S] - SERIES, Each proposition makes an independent contribution to the whole (and, moreover, furthermore).
  - [P] - PROGRESSION, Each proposition is a further step toward a climax (then, and, moreover, furthermore).
  - [A] - ALTERNATIVE, Each proposition expresses an opposite possibility arising from a situation (or, but while...).
  - [W] [Ed] - WAY-END (ACTION-MANNER), Statement of an action and one which tells more explicitly what is involved in carrying out this action (in that, by).
  - [I] [I] - COMPARISON, Statement that clarifies an action or idea by showing what it is like (even as, as...so).
  - [-] [+ ] - NEGATIVE-POSITIVE, The relationship between two alternatives in which one is denied so the other is enforced, implicit in contrasting statements (not...but).
  - [Gn] [Sp] - GENERAL-SPECIFIC, Statement of a whole and one or more statements which set forth parts of the whole.
  - [Ft] [In] - FACT-INTERPRETATION, Statement and clarifying statement; does not set forth a distinguishable part of the preceding whole.
  - [G] - GROUND, Statement followed by the argument or reason on which it stands; supporting proposition follows the supported proposition (for, since, because).
  - [I' ] - INFERENCE, Supporting statement followed by the conclusion drawn from it; supporting proposition precedes the supported proposition (therefore, wherefore, consequently).
  - [C] [E] - CAUSE-EFFECT (ACTION-RESULT), One action and another action which results from the first as an automatic consequence (that, so that, with the result that).
  - [C?] [E] - CONDITIONAL, Like cause-effect except existence of the cause is only potential (if...then, if, except...).
  - [M] [Ed] - MEANS-END (ACTION-PURPOSE), One action and another that is intended as the goal or purpose of the first (in order that, that, lest, to the end that).
  - [T] - TEMPORAL, Proposition and the occasion when it occurs (when, after, before).
  - [L] - LOCATIVE, Proposition and the place where it can be true (where, wherever).
  - [Adv] - ADVERSATIVE, Main clause that stands despite a contrary statement (although, yet, but, nevertheless).
  - [Q] [A] - QUESTION-ANSWER, Statement of question and answer to that question (question mark ?).
  - [S] [R] - SITUATION-RESPONSE, The relationship between a situation in one clause and a response in another.
  - [B] [L] - BILATERAL, A proposition which supports propositions in both directions, rarely used.

### This is how I use colour highlighting:

- **Orange**: structure indicator, conjunctions, and prepositions.
- **Yellow**: verbs, Greek, and Scripture reference.
- **Green**: keywords.
- **Red**: repeated words.
- **Pink**: imperatives.
- **Blue**: main idea.

# Sermon preparation worksheet

**Passage:** Haggai 1:1-15

**1. How has the author organised this passage?** a) *An outline*, b) *Tools*, c) *The emphasis*.

- a) 1) The narrator sets the scene with a precise date and introduces the recipients of the word (Haggai 1:1).
  - 2) The Lord confronts the people's excuses and calls them to rebuild His house (Haggai 1:2-11).
  - 3) The narrator reports the people's obedient response to the word and fear of the Lord (Haggai 1:12).
  - 4) The Lord promise's His own presence (Haggai 1:13).
  - 5) The narrator reports the Lord stirring the leaders and people, and the work beginning on a new date (Haggai 1:14-15).
- b) Haggai 1:1-15 switches between narrated sections and prophetic messages, revealing a five part structure (Haggai 1:1, 2-11, 12, 13, 14-15).
- c) Neglect of God's house brought covenant curses, whereas, when the Lord's word is obeyed, He empowers His people to do His will.

**2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?** a) *Literary*, b) *Historical*, c) *Cultural*, d) *Biblical*.

- a) In Haggai 2:1-9, the Lord encourages discouraged builders. This matters because the Lord's empowering presence (Haggai 1:13), and stirring (Haggai 1:14-15) are not the end of the story. The people's obedience leads to work, but will face discouragement (Haggai 2:1-3). The pattern established in Haggai 1, the Lord speaks, the people obey, the Lord empowers, continues throughout the book. This reinforces that obedience is not a one-time event, but an ongoing response to the Lord's word, and empowerment is not a one-time gift but a continual provision.
- b) In Ezra 1:1-4, Cyrus of Persia issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. About 50,000 exiles returned under Zerubbabel and Joshua. In Ezra 3:8-13, the temple foundation was laid. In Ezra 4:1-5, 24, opposition from local adversaries halted the work. The project lay dormant for 16 years while the people focused on their own homes and livelihoods. This matters because the 16-year delay reveals that the excuse that the time has not come (Haggai 1:2) was a mask for misplaced priorities. When they obey (Haggai 1:12) the Lord's promises His presence (Haggai 1:13) and stirs them to work (Haggai 1:14-15). This highlights that when the Lord's word is obeyed, He empowers His people to do His will. And no obstacle, not even 16 years of delay, can prevent His empowerment.
- c) In the ancient Near East, a temple was understood as the dwelling place of a deity, and the source of his agricultural and economic blessing. Planting, eating, drinking, clothing, wages (Haggai 1:6) and drought (Haggai 1:10-11) describe the daily realities of an agrarian society. This matters because this explains why the Lord's judgment matches the crime. By neglecting His house, they were denying Him as their source of blessing. The drought was not random. It was a direct removal of the very things they were trying to secure. When they obeyed and began rebuilding, the Lord's promise of presence (Haggai 1:13) returned to their midst. Obedience reopened the channel for the Lord's provision.
- d) Haggai 1:5-11 alludes to Deuteronomy 28. In Deuteronomy 28, Moses warned that disobedience would bring drought, famine, and frustrated labor (Deuteronomy 28:15-24, 38-40). While obedience would bring rain and blessing (Deuteronomy 28:1-12). The people's have neglected the Lord's house, so the covenant curses have activated. This matters because Haggai is not introducing a new idea but applying the Lord's ancient covenant to a specific people at a specific time. This explains the people's circumstances (Haggai 1:2-11). It also explains that when they obey (Haggai 1:12), they step back into the stream of covenant blessing, and the Lord responds with the promise of His presence (Haggai 1:13).

**3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?**

Obey the word of the Lord to rebuild His house, and He will empower you to do His will.

**4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?**

The connection is the covenant logic itself. Haggai 1:13 promises God's presence as blessing for obedience (Deuteronomy 28). But this presence is provisional. It returns when they obey, yet in the next passage of Scripture they are discouraged again. The presence given at the foundation is not the presence that finally fills. It comes and goes because mankind keeps failing. The gospel announces that the presence promised conditionally in Haggai has come unconditionally in Christ. Jesus stepped into the covenant stream. Not at the moment of our obedience, but at the moment of our rebellion. He bore the drought we deserved, the curse fully spent on Him (Galatians 3:13). What could never be achieved by building, Christ achieved by dying, turning a conditional promise into our permanent possession. The I am with you that once trembled on the edge of their failure now stands unshaken at the centre of ours. He is not the presence that comes and goes. He is the presence that came and stayed. The restless promise finally rests in Him.

**5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?**

Because Jesus bore your curse, He is with you, empowering your obedience.

**6. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline?** a) *Sermon outline*, b) *Sermon title*.

b) The hole in your pocket

- a) 1) God sends calamity (Haggai 1:1-11)
- 2) God demands obedience (Haggai 1:12)
- 3) God promises presence (Haggai 1:13-15)

**7. What applications will you make?** a) *To believers*, b) *To unbelievers*.

- a) Step into God-glorifying work, for the Spirit who permanently dwells in you has gifted you for this very purpose. Think through how God has gifted you and lock in one concrete act of service in this local church before the month ends.
- b) You are under an eternal curse, and the obedience God requires is not effort but faith in Jesus Christ, who became the curse for you. Do not leave today undecided. Come and speak with me after the service, or take the Gospel of John from the back table, and believe on Him.

**On my sermon preparation sheet, these are the questions and an explanation:**

**1. How has the author organised this passage?**

- a) An outline: The author's organization (or structure) is a way of talking about the shape or form of a biblical passage. Beneath the surface of each passage is an underlying arrangement of material and a logic that the author has used to organize the passage. And each part of the passage has a role to play in that structure.
- b) Tools: Identify the text type, and any grammatical tools used to identify the structure.
- c) The emphasis: The structure will reveal an emphasis that the author is making.

**2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?**

- a) Literary context: How do the passage that comes before and the passage that comes after relate to your passage?
- b) Historical context: The historical situation or circumstances experienced by the first audience at the time when the book was written.
- c) Cultural context: The setting in the daily life of the people/characters in the book and how that will have been understood by the first audience. This is distinct from historical context in that it does not relate to a particular audience in a particular place at a particular time, but the details of life that the people/characters in the text had in common. Anything that requires extra-biblical knowledge should be treated skeptically.
- d) Biblical context: Is the author citing or alluding to some previously written Biblical passage? What connections could the author have reasonably expected his first audience to make.

**3. What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?**

The author's main point is a way of talking about the aim of a passage as a whole. It can be descriptive or prescriptive. It is not simply a summary statement. But rather, it is the idea of which the author is trying to persuade his audience. As you work on articulating the author's argument, please keep in mind that it needs to be specific enough to the passage that it clearly comes from the particular passage (and not any other passage), it is for the first audience, it should be one single sentence that is both short and clear, and captures the argument of the passage.

**4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?** a) The connection itself, b) How it functions in relation to the author's main point, c) Why it matters for your audience.

**5. What is the main point you will argue to your audience?**

**6. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline?** a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.

**7. What applications will you make?** a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.

The main point of a sermon is the fundamental statement of what you, as a speaker today, are trying to convince your audience today. It will certainly be intimately related to the author's main point for his original audience and it will consider the gospel connection. It should be well reasoned and, perhaps, articulated as the result of proof (so depending on premises and building arguments).

**On my sermon preparation sheet, this is how questions relate to one another:**

- o 1 a) should be driven by the text.
- o 1 c) should be driven from the outline in 1 a).
- o 2) should be directly relevant to 1 c).
- o 3) cannot be disconnected from 1 c), and should be clarified by 2).
- o 4) must be found in the text.
- o 5) cannot be disconnected from 3), and should be driven by 4).
- o 6) should structurally relate to 1 a), and make the argument in 5).
- o 7) should flow from 5) and relate to 6).