

Series - First Things First: Consider your way of life

Date/s - 27 January 2019

Scripture - Haggai 2:10-19

Speaker - LP Ben KC Lee

Welcome [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

Worship [15 min]

You may select songs like “This I Believe (The Creed)”, “All Hail King Jesus”, “Reward” or “Shekinah Glory (We wait for You)”.

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will:

1. Reflect upon our ways – God sees our hearts and intentions
2. Remember that righteousness comes from being right with God and not from good deeds
3. Recognise the joys of obeying God
4. Respond by committing to live a holy life!

Word [45 min]

Lead Pastor Ben preached from the Book of Haggai 2:10-19.

The third prophecy came about two months after the first prophecy. The Israelites were previously distracted by their own matters for fifteen years and had neglected rebuilding the Temple. At that time, the Israelites had laid the foundation of the Temple and they had set up an altar for God. However, a critical error had crept in unnoticed: the people began to feel that they were made holy and entitled to God’s blessings as they were working on something holy.

Pastor Ben brought up two points from this passage:

- 1) The good in our lives cannot be used to balance the bad in our lives (vv. 10-14)

In the exchange between Haggai and the priests, he described two scenarios

- Contact with consecrated meat from a temple sacrifice does not make other things consecrated (v.12)
“Consecrated” is also translated as “holy”- separateness or set apart for the purpose of God
- One who had contact with a dead body was considered defiled and would defile other things (v.13)
“Defiled” – to be unclean, impure or corrupted

That is, filthiness is easily transferable, but holiness is not.

Through this, Haggai wanted to bring across the point that good things don’t automatically make other things good, however bad things make other things bad. He highlighted the principle that good things are no remedy for bad things (vv.11-13).

The people were unclean because they placed their own ways over God’s ways - they placed their needs above those of God. Psalm 14:5 states that “God is present in the company of the righteous”, and in 2 Corinthians 6:14, Paul mentioned that righteousness and wickedness have nothing in common. Doing good does not translate into holiness (v.14) and God desired their obedience over sacrifice. We need to return to God through repentance (Zechariah 1:3, 6). We are vulnerable to sin and require holiness to be transferred from God.

- 2) Being right with God is not about external proximity but about internal transformation (vv. 15-19).

Haggai mentioned “give careful thought” three times in the passage. God sees our hearts and the intentions within.

Pastor Ben also shared two principles:

- 1) Look back and remember the outcome of disobedience. (vv. 15-17). He shared that the work may not be blessed as there is deadness and the touching of dead things that has been transferred into the work of God. He exhorted members to reflect on our recent history and diagnose the problem. He however also mentioned that there are times where we suffer not because we have sinned. We need to grow in spiritual maturity through such experience. If we are out of God’s will, God makes an adjustment to our direction. God calls us to return to Him with our whole heart (2 Chronicles 7:14).
- 2) Look forward and anticipate the outcome of obedience (vv. 18-19). Returning to God does not immediately undo the results of past failures. True blessing does not mean that God removes our problems, but He grants us His presence in our problems and His promises for eternity (v. 19b).

Our response should be to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

Discussion Questions

1. **Read Haggai 2:10-19 and review the various principles Pastor Ben mentioned. What is in God’s heart when He highlighted the principles through the prophet Haggai? Share a part of the passage or a principle that struck you or resonate with.** [10 min]

Leader’s Notes: *This is a recap question. Leaders can get members to read through the passage and highlight the different principles Pastor Ben mentioned. It is easy to become unclean, but difficult to be holy. God wanted the people to realize that being righteous and set apart before God does not come through doing good deeds, but in returning to Him and serving Him with purity of heart. Leaders / members can also highlight that Haggai mentioned to “give careful thought” three times in these passages, and the importance of self-examination and realignment.*

2. **Share about a time where you relate to what the Israelites were experiencing – they did not experience blessing though they spent time rebuilding the Temple. How is / was your experience similar/ different to theirs? What were the lessons you learnt during the experience?** [10 min]

Leader’s Notes: *This is a relate question. Leaders can get members to first think about how “blessing” in the Bible means, before relating about their past experiences being similar or different to the Israelites. Members can share about times when they felt they were not experiencing blessings – and what lessons they learnt or realized as they reflected – there may have been unspoken expectations about being blessed when serving, serving God out of other reasons aside from obedience, or if they were reminded to come back to prioritize on serving God’s kingdom, or if it was a season of pruning, of realignment back to God etc. Leaders can deepen the facilitation by bringing out the different lessons various ones had learnt (about God or our fallen nature) and how they can continue to bring forward these lessons for the future.*

3. **God desires our obedience and see our hearts and intentions within. God disciplines us to set us apart and make us holy. From your personal experience, what are the joys and challenges of obedience?** [10 min]

Leader’s Notes: *Leaders can get members to think about the reasons why we struggle with obeying God. It often comes with an act of dying to self, of surrender and deeper reliance on God as compared to the*

sacrifices we make. After members have discussed about the challenges of obedience, leaders can ask members to share about the joys of obedience, to deepen the sharing about these joys and why the joys will ultimately outweigh the challenges of obedience.

4. **God desires that we return to Him with our whole heart, and to be consecrated and set apart for Him. Is there an area of your life the Holy Spirit is challenging you to give careful thought to, and repent and return to Him?** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: A response question. Leaders can encourage members to reflect on God's teaching and how to apply the lessons learnt. For example, the responses can be:

- a. *Personal – What is the Holy Spirit challenging me to do in this season to be set apart for God's purpose?*
- b. *Communal – What are the implications for the Cell Group and the wider church community? What changes would you commit to for building up the church community?*
- c. *Missional – What are the practical steps we can take either personally or as a Cell Group to reach out to pre-believers?*

Members can break into groups to share and pray for each other.

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. Thank God for His faithfulness and provision, and His sovereignty over our future.
2. Every RiverLifer to make God the centre of their lives and to step out in faith to do His work.

Announcements

1. **Chinese New Year Service | 3 Feb**

In view of Chinese New Year, there will only be one English Adults service at 9am on 3 Feb (Sun). Cafe@Atrium, Guest Welcome Lounge, Information Counter and Volunteers Corner at Rooftop Terrace will be closed. SuperLife will be running a combined programme for children in Nursery to Primary 6 at Grace Chapel. Cradle Roll will be open but there are no volunteers on duty.

Church Vision Statement:

"A vibrant family where sons and daughters mature and reveal the Father's glory from generation to generation."