



Finish What You Start  
Haggai

## **MEMORY VERSE**

HAGGAI 1:7,8

“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Consider you ways! Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,’ says the LORD.”

## **WHAT YOU WILL NEED:**

Rice, lentils and a small bowl.

Graham crackers, peanut butter, raisins, fruit snacks (or other creative things for decoration).

20 small paper or Styrofoam cups and a marker.

## **ATTENTION GETTER!**

### **Rice and Lentils**

In today’s lesson we are going to learn the importance of finishing what we start. Before class fill a small bowl with a mixture of rice and lentils. They are small and look similar. At the start of class choose one child as a volunteer. Tell him/ her that you have a special job for them that is real important that they finish. Then give him the bowl and tell him that you need them to separate the rice from the lentils. This will take a long time. Give the student about 5 minutes just working at it. You can even have the rest of the class work on their worksheets or another project.

After about 5 minutes get everyone’s attention. Ask the volunteering student if they felt like finishing the work. Why or why not? Was it an easy job or a hard job? Did he/she feel like giving up? Explain that the Israelites were given a very important job to do (much more important than separating rice and lentils!). But they did not feel like finishing their job of building the temple. They began to do what they wanted to do and build houses for

themselves. They neglected the work of the Lord. Now have all of the children work together and see how fast they can separate the rice from the lentils. We are going to see what a prophet by the name of Haggai has to share with God's people about finishing what they start.

## LESSON TIME!

Haggai is one of the Minor Prophets who preached during an exciting time of Israel's history. He was probably born in Babylon, but Jerusalem was his main place of ministry. He was the first prophet to speak to the Israelites after they returned from captivity in Babylon. The Israelites were very happy to be back in their own land, and began to rebuild the Temple of God, which had been destroyed.

As time went on, they lost interest and became occupied with other things that they thought were more important than God's house, so they did not finish rebuilding the Temple. Haggai rebuked them for not finishing God's house, and working on their own houses instead. He told them God wants you to finish the temple even if the work is discouraging at times.

For the full account of the rebuilding of the temple, you can read the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Zechariah, Malachi, and Haggai. **God wants us to finish what He has called us to do.**

### HAGGAI 1:1-6

In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying,

"Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built."' "

Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying,

"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"

Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!

"You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes."

Although the people had come back to the land to rebuild the temple of God, they faced some opposition to the rebuilding process. Several years had gone by in which nothing had been accomplished with the temple. A time of neglect with the things of the Lord began to set in. They stopped the work on the Lord's house and began, instead, to build houses for themselves (verse 4).

In verse 2, the people used an excuse saying, "The time is not come that the Lord's house should be built." It was not God who said that, but the people. It is very easy for us to make excuses for not doing something we know we should do. The children of Israel did that. It is easy for people to take circumstances and make them become what we want them to be. Sadly, we often exert more energy and excitement in the things we want to do, than in things that have to do with the Lord's work. Many times we find the time to go to a movie, but we are just too busy to take time to read our Bible.

God reveals their hearts to them in verse 4 by saying, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" The prophet has cut off all excuses with this question. How? The people were living in houses with the inside walls covered or inlaid with costly woodwork, being a sign of luxury and comfort. Thus, if the circumstances of the times, and the oppression under which they suffered, did not allow the rebuilding of the temple, and they lived in nice houses, then their political condition could not be so bad that they could not rebuild their temple.

This showed their heart, and the lack of caring for what should have first place in their hearts, namely the Lord God. Now, even if the building of the temple had been prohibited by an edict of a king, his reign was short-lived, and a change had taken place in the government, which might have caused the Jewish leaders to seek again the building of the temple. Yet it did not seem to be in their hearts to finish the work that they had begun.

How does God respond to them? He says, "Consider your ways" or as the Hebrew reads, "Set our heart on our ways" or to consider one's conduct, and lay it to heart. The ways are the conduct with its results. God was going to show them what was really going on in their lives.

Because of their neglect of the things of the Lord, they have reaped no blessings. They have sowed much, but brought only a little into their barns (the harvest of many years that had turned out badly). What they ate and drank was not enough to satisfy them; the clothes that they had did not warm them, and the wages, which the laborer earned, vanished just as fast as if it had been put into a bag full of holes. Because they did not seek the Lord first, their needs were not being met. Matthew 6:33 tells us, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." This is God's promise for us. **God wants us to finish what He has called us to do.**

## HAGGAI 1:7-11

Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!

"Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD.

"You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the LORD of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house.

"Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit.

"For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands."

Again, in verse 7, God through the prophet Haggai says to the people to take to heart their previous conduct, and choose the way that is well pleasing to God. God gives them a solution – obedience to Him. He directs them to go and get wood and build the house. If they obey him, then God will then turn His good pleasure to the people again, and along with that His blessing.

God again shows them here what has been happening to them. They turned from God and fixed their eyes on much, and what they desired turned to little. They brought into the house, what was reaped, and God blew into it, to cause it to fly away. Like chaff before the wind, so that there was soon none of it left.

Here we see a double curse as in verse 6. Instead of much, little was reaped, and the little that was brought home melted away

without doing any good. Haggai asked them why has this all taken place? He does this to impress upon them their disobedience. His answer comes from the Lord. It is because God's house lay in ruins, while their houses did not.

Ironside says, "Aroused from the deadening effects of self-seeking, judge ourselves and your past loose ways in God's presence; then 'Put first things first,' as one has said, and give the Lord the supreme place in heart and life." As God was neglected, so was His house. He further tells them, that because of their care for only their own houses, that "the heaven withholds the dew, and the earth its' fruit." Drought and barrenness come to them in place of blessing and sustenance. **God wants us to finish what He has called us to do.**

## Memory Verse Tower

To help the children remember their memory verse for this week have the children make a "memory verse tower." You will need 20 small paper or Styrofoam cups and a marker. Before class write the following portion of the memory verse for this week, "Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Consider your ways!'" IMPORTANT - You will want to write it on the cups in a certain way so that a tower can be made. You should write, "Now, therefore" on the first cup right side up. On cup two, turn it upside down and write, "thus says," the third cup should be right side up and say, "the LORD," the fourth cup is upside down and should say "of hosts:" and finally the last cup will be right side up and say "consider your ways!" Make four sets of these five cups.

In class, separate your students into four groups. Tell them the verse once or write it on the board and then after reviewing it erase it. Then when you say "go!" it will be up to each team to stack a tower (in order from top to bottom) of the memory verse. The first team with a tower standing with the verse in the correct order wins. Continue playing until the children tire of the game.



## HAGGAI 1:12-15

Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the LORD.

Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, spoke the Lord's message to the people, saying, "I am with you, says the LORD."

So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,

on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.

The response of the people was obedience and they went back to work! The first fruit of their hearing God's Word was that they again had the fear of the Lord in their lives; and secondly they resumed the neglected building of the temple. Their fearing the Lord revealed their sin against God, and saw in the drought, a judgment from God.

In verse 13, we have a beautiful promise of God, for all of us. Remember, when God calls us to do something, He says, "I am with you". Remember that Haggai was a prophet, speaking by command of God, and not in his own name or by his own desires. So we see, that when God said, "I am with you," He was. He gave to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people, a willingness to carry out the work. **God wants us to finish what He has called us to do.**



The people now filled with joy and courage and strength began the work on the 24th day of the 6th month in the second year of king Darius. It was 24 days after Haggai had first spoken to them God's word.

### HAGGAI 2:1-9

In the seventh month, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying:

"Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying:

'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?

'Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the LORD; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the LORD, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the LORD of hosts.

'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'

"For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land;

'and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.

'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts.

'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts."

The rebuilding had been going on now for less than a month when the word of the Lord came a second time to the people through Haggai, the prophet. Although the last message was one of rebuke, this was a message of encouragement both to the rulers and the people.

Verse one tells us it was on the 21st day of the seventh month, which was the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This was the great festival of rejoicing, on which Israel was to give thanks for the gracious guidance that they had received through the wilderness, as well as for the blessing of the ingathering of all the fruits of the ground.

In verse three, three questions are asked: "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" The first question is addressed to the old men, who had seen Solomon's temple in all its glory. The second question goes with the first, in what condition do you see it now? And then reminding them that the first temple was much greater than this one.

The Lord then encourages them to be strong and to work, for He was with them. When we get weary and tired, Jesus will encourage us. Why did the Lord tell them to be strong and to get the work done? They were probably getting tired or discouraged in some

way, just as we do. God was there to encourage them, and He always encourages us. **God wants us to finish what He has called us to do.**

Ironside says, "Ruin and desolation may have come in; division and scattering may have taken place; but those who are gathered back around Jehovah's center have the joy of knowing, on the authority of His own Word, that He is in the midst, and His Spirit remain among them. May they be strong and fear not."

Verses 7-9 give us a prophecy which can only refer to the future Kingdom Temple described by Ezekiel.

Verse seven, 'I will shake all nations,' refers to the great tribulation and is followed by the coming of Christ in glory, as in Matthew 24:29-30. 'The Desire of all Nations' is an expression that refers ultimately to Jesus, in whom all true riches culminate.

God says in verse 6 that in a little while He would shake the heavens and the earth and the oceans, and the dry land, and all nations. Everything that is moveable will be shaken that the immovable will remain. The whole earthly creation must be shaken in order that the kingdom of God may be shown to be immovably permanent. The peace that will be given in verse 9 comes from no other but the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, who is the only source of true peace.

### **HAGGAI 2:10-19**

**On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying,**

**"Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Now, ask the priests concerning the law, saying,**

"If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?" "Then the priests answered and said, "No."

And Haggai said, "If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?" So the priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean."

Then Haggai answered and said, "'So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,' says the LORD, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.

'And now, carefully consider from this day forward: from before stone was laid upon stone in the temple of the LORD;

'since those days, when one came to a heap of twenty ephahs, there were but ten; when one came to the wine vat to draw out fifty baths from the press, there were but twenty.

'I struck you with blight and mildew and hail in all the labors of your hands; yet you did not turn to Me,' says the LORD.

'Consider now from this day forward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid; consider it:

'Is the seed still in the barn? As yet the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not yielded fruit. But from this day I will bless you.'

Verses 10-19 speak of God's message of cleansing and blessing of the people. Haggai made it clear to the people that the curse, which had been upon them since the building of the temple had been neglected, had been nothing but a punishment for their neglect of the work of the Lord. The Lord was going to pour out His blessing on them again. So that the people could see that it was through their sin and that they brought upon themselves the failure of crops the prophet asks two questions concerning things holy and clean for the priests to answer, to see the moral condition of the nation.

The Law of Moses stated that moral cleanness could not be transmitted, but moral uncleanness could. The long disobedience of the nation meant their work was unprofitable before God. "They were all defiled, and all they did was unclean before God." This only gave occasion for grace to act; and so, despite their uncleanness, the Lord had taken them up in blessing, remembering that all has come from His own heart. Though defiled, yet when they turned to God and bowed in subjection to Him, He could manifest Himself strong on their behalf" Ironside.

When the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, God gave them increase and plenty. The Lord gives them a wonderful promise; "from this day will I bless you." This is also our promise as we turn away from evil and walk in the truth of God's Word and love. **God wants us to finish what He has called us to do.**

### HAGGAI 2:20-23

And again the word of the LORD came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying,

"Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying: 'I will shake heaven and earth.

I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will

overthrow the chariots And those who ride in them;  
The horses and their riders shall come down, Every  
one by the sword of his brother.

'In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'I will take you,  
Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel,' says the  
LORD, 'and will make you like a signet ring; for I  
have chosen you,' says the LORD of hosts."

On the same day on which the Lord promised to the people the return of the blessings, Haggai received a second revelation, which promised to the people the preservation and care of the line of King David. We are told that the Messianic line coming through Zerubbabel as a descendant of David. In other words, Jesus would come from the line of David and this would happen through Zerubbabel. The signet spoken of in verse 23 is a symbol of royal authority.

There are lessons to be learned from the book of Haggai.

1. God wants you to put Him and His work first (1:4,5). He promises to provide your every need if you seek Him first of all.
2. God's blessing is much more important than your own abilities or productivity. Those who think they can accomplish great things without God only find that they fall short. It's like putting money into a bag with a hole in the bottom (1:6).
3. It is important that you respond to God's message just as the Jewish people did: they obeyed and started to work on the temple right away (1:14).
4. When you are discouraged, remember that God is with you and that outward circumstances are not as important as God's presence (2:3,4).

We must always remember to finish what God has called us to do, for He is faithful to help us and equip us for the work. He loves us and delights to bless us as we walk in obedience to Him. He is a

good God! God wants us to finish what He has called us to do.

## Graham Cracker Temples

Have fun allowing the children to build their own temple with graham crackers. You will need graham crackers, peanut butter, raisins, fruit snacks (or other creative things for decoration). Review today's lesson and allow the children to make their own temple using the ingredients listed above. After they make a nice temple have a snack time and allow them to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

## PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to find out what God's will is for them and then to be faithful to finish what they start. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.