

Ducks in a Row?

Scripture and Background Information for November 12-18.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

For most of us, we live our lives trying to get things organized, to-do lists accomplished, goals set and met, tasks and schedule completed so that you are ready for the next step, the next thing on the list. If we were honest, when it comes to walking with God, it often feels like we never can get it right, never have the right perspective, the right practices, the right priorities. Haggai is about a segment of God's people who had done just that, and the message God gives to them about where to start, what to prioritize, and His promise to always be with them. Those same reminders are helpful for God's people today who are wanting our Ducks in a Row.

Background for Haggai 2:1-9:

In Haggai 1, the Israelites were called to recognize that their priorities weren't in order. After returning to the promised land after being exiled, they rebuilt every part of their lives except the temple. It was neglected and their worship of God suffered because it reflected the lack of care the Israelites put into the temple. After God pointed this out, they responded in obedience by beginning to restore the temple and prioritizing God in the way they were supposed to.

However, the rebuild wasn't going how they thought it would. Just a few weeks after starting their work, it was clear that the temple wasn't being restored to its former glory. It looked like a mere shadow of what many Israelites remembered. It would have been easy to get discouraged in a moment like this, yet the Lord offers up encouragement. He says to have courage, keep working, and promises to be with them. He tells them that the temple will be greater than it had ever been and said that he would give peace through it. God names the problem, tames their discouragement, and aims their efforts at a greater vision. A vision that would find its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus, a rabbi who worshipped in the temple who became the sacrifice that brought peace to the world.

Insights and questions to engage with the text:

1. God promises to be with the Israelites as they continue to work on the temple. What does it mean for God to be with them? How is God's presence an encouragement to those who are discouraged?
2. What situations in your life lead you to discouragement like the Israelites faced in this story? Do you believe God is with you as you go through these moments? Why or why not?
3. How can this story and the life of Jesus bring you peace as you go through discouraging times?

* Check back in with your groups about the rhythm of feasting. Ask how their feast times have been and what God has been showing them in those moments.