

Warm-up Question or Activity

Choose one and pursue it as a group.

1. Activity – keep it fun. Go around the group with each person answering one of these questions. Start with one of the less-talkative members and let them pick first.
 - My favorite restaurant in the Katy area is _____.
Why?
 - My favorite binge-watching TV or movie series has been _____.
Why?
 - My favorite musical of all time is _____.
Why?
 - My favorite movie of all time is _____.
Why?
 - My favorite fairly recent movie that you may not have seen is _____.
Why?
 - My favorite actor of all time is _____.
Why?
 - My favorite actress of all time is _____.
Why?
 - My favorite book (beyond the Bible) that I've read is _____.
Why?
2. Question – to learn a bit more about one another:
 - Has anyone been to Israel? Those of you who have, go first and please tell us about your experience and favorite moments.
 - If you've not been, do you hope to go? Talk about that a bit, please.

Can You Relate?

In this week's Scripture, God comes to his people three months into the Temple rebuilding process, highlighting the contrast between their lives when they were neglecting the work of God and promising his blessing upon their faithfulness.

1. In Chapter 1, we saw how the pioneers who returned to the Promised Land slipped into a period of prolonged neglect of God's house. Through their unfaithfulness, they inadvertently separated themselves from intimacy with God. In Chapter 2, God recalls for his people the suffering that they endured during their period of living without his blessing.

*"When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty. **I struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew, and hail, yet you did not return to me,**' declares the LORD." (Haggai 2:16-17)*

Thinking of your own faith journey – the mountain top experiences and the journeys through desert periods:

- **Let's first discuss our mountaintop moments** when you felt closest to God – when your heart seemed to be on fire with faith. **What comes to mind?** Tell us about that.
- The consequences of separation from God's favor did not seem to bother the people of Haggai's day. They numbly trudged through the barren life of fruitlessness for 16+ years. **Tell us about the deserts and valleys in your spiritual journey**, when you seemed to drift and lived without much intimacy with God.

- **How long did that last for you?** Tell us about that.
 - **Can you relate to trudging through? To becoming numb to spiritual barrenness?**
How so?
 - **Do you have any experience of snapping out of a period like that?** What happened?
2. The skeletal hulk of the long-destroyed temple was like a corpse laying exposed in the heart of Jerusalem, making unclean all who lived amid its ruins without attending to the work of God in rebuilding it.
- **What unattended work of God in your own life comes to mind?**
3. Twice in this passage, God tells the people to “give careful thought” and “consider” and twice he tells them to note “from this day on.” Called into these moments of reflection, they are effectively asked to “mark the day” (paraphrase): “From this day on I will bless you.” (v. 19b)
- **What is a date or specific event in your life that you mark as a significant turning point in your spiritual journey?** Tell us about that.
4. Every day we face the choice that the Jerusalemites faced: To live in self-led barrenness or God-led fruitfulness. Even when we think we have not chosen, we have chosen.
- **Thinking of the week or month or year ahead, what is the most significant choice, change, or challenge you could take if you hope to invite the fruitfulness of God upon your life?**
 - Does that involve work of God that he has for you? Work in your own life? Or in the world/community around you? Tell us about that.

Live It Out

Let’s go into this week resolved to connect more deeply with God. Day by day. Step by step. Moment by moment.

- What do you want to take away from this discussion? How can you apply or build upon it in the weeks or months ahead? Write down your thoughts on the paper provided.
- SOAPS quiet-time journaling is a good starting point for living with more intentionality. This week, consider pledging with one of us to each doing SOAP quiet time for seven days in a row, lifting one another up in prayer, and texting one another for accountability and support as we go through it.
- Try this experiment in starting off your day with a palpable awareness of your relentless struggle to keep God first in your life.
 - **How?** At least one day this week, **before you get out of bed** (making God your first priority of the morning), pick up your phone or tablet and start your day by playing *Different* by Micah Tyler. Absorb the lyrics. Play them back in your head throughout the day. If you do not have that song by other means, you can find it easily on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/XFT0zoKQWaM?si=GScEKHnRz1fVmDC>
 - **Report back** next time on how that went.

Encourage members of the group to commit time to praying for one another, encouraging and meeting one another’s needs, fellowshiping together, and interceding for the other members.

Contact absent group members and encourage them to continue to meet and to return together at the next scheduled gathering.