

Going Deeper

Your weekly guide to understanding God with others

Return from Exile

Mark Purser

Introduction

The Israelites spent 70 years of exile in Babylon and then returned to Jerusalem. God's temple was in ruins, yet the people used their resources to build their own homes, neglecting the temple. The prophet Haggai implored them to give careful thought to their ways, reminding them that God's purpose for their return from exile was to rebuild His temple.

During the days of our own (covid) exile in 2020, some of us slowed down and spent more time with God, cared for our neighbours and gave willingly to those in need. Now that we have returned from covid exile and are enjoying our freedoms again, we risk falling back into our old pursuit of material comfort at the expense of God's calling. In this season, God is calling us to continue building His temple and to stay focused on the work and purposes He has planned for us today.

Read

Haggai 1:1-9, Matthew 28:19-20

Discuss

1. We have been on a journey of "covid exile" in our own homes. What has the return from exile looked like for you in the past six months?
2. Many of us found creative ways to fill our days in covid exile, such as DIY home renovations. What are some activities you undertook? Do you think you will continue to do them as we return to a new normal? Compared to last year, what has changed in your priorities with time and resources?
3. Read Haggai 1:5-6. The prophet Haggai asked the Israelites to give careful thought to their ways as they were building their own homes instead of God's temple after their return from exile. Do you think his message is relevant to our generation? What is a barrier for you at present that is preventing you from building God's kingdom?

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4. Pastor Mark Purser mentioned that there is a scale of apathy, from modest to extreme. Do you agree that this exists? Which part of the scale are you on right now? What would you need to change to reset where you are at on the scale for God?
5. We read in Haggai 2:5-9 God promises the Israelites that He will be with them, so they do not need to fear, and He will bring glory and peace. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus gives the same promise as we partner with Him in our daily walk. How does this promise make you feel? Is there anything hindering you from partnering with Jesus in making disciples?
6. God's purpose for us after our return from covid exile is to continue to use His gifts in our lives for His work. What are some of the gifts that God may have placed in your hands? How can you use them for God today?

Respond

This week, pray that the Holy Spirit will show you someone you can help to disciple, perhaps by reading the Bible with them. Is there one thing God has gifted you to use for His purpose? Commit this to the Lord and let Him re-align the resources He has placed in your hands for His purpose and plan. Commit to doing one thing this week for God, using the gifts and resources that He has given to you.