

## Pursuing God: The Word That Awakens to Greater Glory

Ezra 5:1; Haggai, Zechariah

**MPS** God speaks His Word to awaken our hearts for His greater glory in life.

**OBJ** Every person should be awakened to God because of two Words.

**INTRO** When was the last time you remember being startled by a word you heard. Generations are often identified by these kind of words; John F. Kennedy assassination (1963), President Ronald Reagan was shot (1981); Space shuttle disaster (1986); Reagan's Berlin wall speech (1987); Oklahoma City bombing of Murrah Federal building (1995); 9/11 (2001); and we could go on. **Big words have a way of awakening us to the reality that present.**

Today in "Pursuing God", we consider 'the Word that awakens'. The people had stopped working and gone about their everyday lives. They had forsaken God and his work, becoming consumed with their own lives. God sends two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to awaken them with His Word.

**READ** Ezra 5:1

*Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. **Ezra 5:1***

Approximately sixteen years had passed since the end of Ezra 4. **Can you imagine how much momentum was lost in that time?** I cannot. **Why do I say?** We stopped gathering for eight weeks, and had a greatly reduced ministry schedule for over a year. When I look at the cumulative effect of that time, and how much the church-at-large fractured, I cannot fathom the effect of sixteen years. **I am encouraged, though, because God is faithful even in these times as He is at all time.**

**God speaks His Word to awaken our hearts for His greater glory in life.**

**OBJ** God sends **Two Words** to awaken His people for His greater glory.

**Awakening Word #1** **READ** Haggai 1:1-11, 13, 2:4-9

*In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: <sup>2</sup>"Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD." <sup>3</sup>Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, <sup>4</sup>"Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? <sup>5</sup>Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. <sup>6</sup>You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.*

*<sup>7</sup>"Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. <sup>8</sup>Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD. <sup>9</sup>You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. <sup>10</sup>Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. <sup>11</sup>And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors."*

*<sup>13</sup>Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, "I am with you, declares the LORD." Haggai 1:1-11, 13*

*<sup>2:1</sup>Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, <sup>5</sup> according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. <sup>6</sup> For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. <sup>7</sup> And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house*



with glory, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>8</sup> The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. <sup>9</sup> The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.' "Haggai 2:4-9

The people had been overrun with fears, pounded by opposition and frustrated in their work, so they stopped. They let their circumstances overwhelm and they had forsaken God. God comes and speaks by Haggai. How gracious is God, that even when we forsake him, He still comes to us. **And what is this first word that awakens God's people?**

### Awakening Word #1: Consider Your ways.

**"What are you doing?" Haggai says to the people, "Forsaking God is futile and never satisfies."** The situation makes clear that the people had all of life's necessities, even an abundance. They just didn't satisfy. The most miserable people are the most self-consumed, and they are likely the most self-deceived too. **When we make life about us, nothing satisfies; not work, not food or drink, not money nor the things it can buy can satisfy the 'hunger' of our soul.**

**"Consider your ways" God says.** These Hebrew words mean to give careful consideration to the heart. We live harder and faster, filling our lives with everything we love, but after a short time we find it leaves us empty, not full. And even if it pays off, it does not satisfy. **God says the way to correct your life is 'check your heart'.**

### TRANS How do we forsake God?

**Life begins to overwhelm and the first 'consideration' we make is to 'drift' from God.** Life gets more expensive, money harder to come by and we stop giving. Life gets 'heavy' and to try and relieve the 'stress', we stop serving. Life gets busy, we stop connecting with others. Life overwhelms, we stop worshipping. **When we forsake God, we cease to live as a steward, honoring Him with the time, talent and treasure of our whole life.** We consume as a means of living, but 'being consumed by' reveals how we've molded idols. The very things that press upon us to forsake God are the things that we give ourselves to with increasing priority, as if somehow it will help if we let them consume us more. This pattern breeds spiritual confusion. **Spiritual confusion doesn't remove one's understanding of spiritual priorities, it just dilutes their importance in life by adding more of everything else.**

**Spiritual confusion produces 'self-centered pre-occupation'.** We turn to religion to try and recapture what we've lost, to do something for God so He will be happy, or to fabricate a past moment we remember. This fails, though, because while it may seem the same, it's only dead religion. This leads to further angst with God, and ultimately disillusionment. We begin to repeat 'self-salving' mantras to ourselves; "God wants me to be happy." "God wouldn't want me to be this miserable." "God wants me to rest. He wants me to be blessed." **Self-centered preoccupation only leads us to forsake God.**

**Forsaking God as our first priority frustrates because no matter how much of whatever we fill it with, our heart ends up empty and exhausted. Forsaking God never satisfies. God says, "Look at your heart. What is filling it?"**

**Q? Is there any place in your life where you have or are forsaking God? When was the last time you had a heart check-up?**

**Let God's Word awaken you today.** In the face of rising fears, beckoning opposition and confused priorities, after long stints of exhaustion and exasperation, God wants to awaken you to His greater glory. He says, *"I am with you. My Spirit remains in your midst. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former."*

*"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."*<sup>Matt6.33</sup> "These things" are the things of life that you work so hard to gain and find you only lose without God. He wants to fill your life with abundant satisfaction in all things. **God awakens you to invite you to His greater work of His glory in your heart.**

### Awakening Word #2

The second word of awakening comes from Zechariah 1:2-6.



*“The LORD was very angry with your fathers. <sup>3</sup>Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>4</sup>Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.’ But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the LORD. <sup>5</sup>Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? <sup>6</sup>But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, ‘As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us.’”*

### **“Return to Me...and I will return to you.”**

When God brings his Word by Zechariah, He begins with a call to the people to return to Him by reminding them of all He has done and is doing. This message was given to Zechariah in visions, which form God’s message to the people in which He reminds them of His greater glory in their redemption.

**Reminder #1:** [Vision #1] 1:7-17 records a man standing among myrtle trees. This vision addresses the nations that have been oppressing Judah and seem to be getting away with it. The question is posed, **“How long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem?”** The Lord responds, *“My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.”* [Vision #2] Then, 1:18-21 records a vision of four horns and craftsmen. This vision addresses the strength of the nations that have oppressed Judah and the devastation they caused. But God does not want Judah to forget His great deliverance for them.

God confronts the opposition to remind His people that He has not forgotten them. He calls the people to return to Him because He sees and remembers the person who trusts in him. **The Lord is the One who fights for us.**

*“the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.  
But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” 1 Peter 3.12*

**Reminder #2:** [Vision #3] 2:1-13 involves a man with a measuring line. He measures the size of Jerusalem and finds that it is bigger than the walls built to hold it. Her security is not in the walls, but rather God is with her and will be her wall of fire<sup>2.5</sup>. God reminds them that He is their security against every foe. There is no ‘threat’ to life that is beyond God’s knowledge or power, nor anything outside of God that will be sufficient security. **Would it surprise you, LifePoint, to know that in many ways we are a stronger church than two years ago?** It should not! **The Lord is our security, who guards us as He grows us.**

**Reminder #3:** [Vision #4] In 3:1-10, God cleanses the garments for the high priest by confronting Satan. Satan stands ready to accuse the leader of God’s people. The Lord rebukes Satan, snatches Joshua from the fire, takes off his filthy clothes and clothes him with pure vestments, restoring him to God’s service. God does not let Satan succeed but guards his people and anoints his leaders to serve his mission. He cleanses His leader of sin and clothes him in righteousness. God establishes His leaders and guards them from Satan’s destruction as they walk in His ways and serve His mission, as He completes His redeeming work, and in a single day. **God is the One who redeems His people by cleansing sin in the day of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.**<sup>John1:29</sup>

**Reminder #4:** [Vision #5] 4:1-5,10b-14 presents a golden lampstand and two olive trees. The Lord sees all the earth, nothing is hidden from his sight. He sends the light of his truth and His anointed will stand with it. He identifies Zerubbabel’s power to lead and the work that he is to accomplish. He will rebuild the temple and it will be capstoned with God’s blessing and grace. God will complete His work by His Spirit. Be confident of this, Christian, *“that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”*<sup>Phil1.6</sup> God is sending the gospel of Jesus Christ into the world by His Spirit through his people. **God will finish what he has started, and through you in all the world, all for greater glory.**

**Reminder #5:** [Vision #6] 5:1-4 presents a flying scroll that represents a judgment that God will send over sin and evil. The wicked will not go unpunished but will be consumed by their wickedness. This vision joins with the next. [Vision #7] Then in 5:5-11 there is a woman in a basket. The woman represents wickedness which will be removed from the people as a punishment for sin and a purifying of God’s people for his purposes. He will deal with sin by removing it from the people to



make them ready for Himself. Those who are not separated from their sin will be destroyed by it as it dwells in them forever. But when you trust God, He removes it forever. [God purifies His people in preparation for sending them by separating them from their sin.](#)

**Reminder #6:** [Vision #8] 6:1-8 has four chariots ride out from heaven through the earth. Whereas the 'four nations' were seemingly at peace in their wickedness in the beginning, the 'four horses have now accomplished their work and God's Spirit is at rest. In Zechariah 6.9-15 Joshua is crowned as the one who will build the temple by obedience, he will be clothed with majesty, and will sit and rule on his throne. Those far away will come and help build. God's presence, power and purpose will be made know to all. In the Gospel, God has accomplished all this through Jesus. It is finished, proclaimed and invites you to believe it and receive Jesus. [Jesus is King, He will be exalted and will rule His Kingdom in everlasting peace.](#)

**TRANS** These reminders turn our eyes off the world's situation and calls us to open our heart to hear and believe God's redemption in Jesus Christ, and follow Him.

[God's Word awakens](#) by receiving it with the honor, authority and glory of the One sending it, that we might experience a [heightened sense of His presence](#) for deeper intimacy, a [greater measure of His power](#) that builds our faith, a [deeper connection with His people](#) that encourages us, and a [deeper understanding of His purpose for life.](#)

**CLOSE** "Consider your ways" and the futility of life forsaking the Lord. Consider His ways and the abundance of life when lived by His hand. "Return to me" God says, "and I will return to you".

[God speaks His Word to awaken our hearts for His greater glory in life.](#)

[Will you hear God's call to you today, to awaken your heart to Him?](#)

