

**The Community of St Cuthbert:
*Spiritual Growth Group Study Guide***

Feb 2023



February Sessions

These studies were prepared by Richard Briggs, Prior of the Community of St Cuthbert. They follow some of the emphases of our morning sermon series on the book of Haggai.

Week of:

6 – 10 Feb Haggai 1 = study
13 – 17 Feb Haggai 2 = study

nb 22 Feb = Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent

We are recommending some Lent study books for groups to follow – they are listed here and do check the weekly noticesheet also for these details.

Richard Briggs, Prior, CSC

Week One – Haggai 1

Bible Study

The date given in verse 1 puts us at around August 520 BC, in the early days of the Persian empire, who threw off the Babylonian empire, and thus also allowed Israel to return from exile. (The Persians allowed people to follow their own religious ways, but continued to rule and tax them. It was Cyrus, the Persian king, who allowed them back from exile - see Isaiah 45:1 and Ezra 1:1-4.)

Haggai – his name means ‘my feasts/festivals’ – see also Ezra 5:1 and 6:14

1:2-4 In the context of returning from exile, what is the contrast between the people’s houses and the LORD’s house (the temple)?

1:5-6 Haggai describes the people’s dissatisfaction. What is at the heart of it?

1:7-11 What explanation is offered here for the people’s troubles? Do we find this encouraging, challenging, or both?

1:13 ‘I am with you’ – what other Bible passages come to mind when you read this promise?

1:12-15 What is it that stirs the people up to faithful action?

Overall: what lessons does Haggai 1 have for our understanding of giving to God?

Week Two – Haggai 2

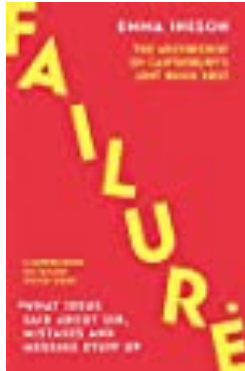
Bible Study

We have seen in Haggai 1 how a vision of God's presence with us can transform our approach to giving and what we offer to God – in terms of service, effort, money, etc. This theme continues to develop through chapter 2.

- 2:1-5 How does this passage recapture some of the ideas of chapter 1 about the link between human effort and God's presence that motivates and energises human effort?
- 2:6-9 This passage talks a lot about God 'shaking' things – what things? The language is not very specific, but what do you think God's 'shaking' might look like?
- 2:8 Is God's shake up of the world here suggesting something about financial redistribution? (Is it helpful to think about the link with the way the riches of the temple had been stolen by other nations in the exile, and here are imagined to be on their way back?)
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- 2:10-14 What is the point of the discussion with the priests about being defiled? How does it relate to Israel's prospering or not?
- 2:15-19 Again notice that what could have been prophetic condemnation ends with a note of blessing. What can we learn from this approach in the book of Haggai, where the emphasis falls on seeing God's involvement positively?
- 2:20-23 What sort of hope does this passage represent? Given that we know almost nothing of how things worked out with Zerubbabel, some have said that this hope applies to some future figure of whom Zerubbabel is a sign. In any case, more than just the rebuilding of the temple is in view here – how far-reaching is this vision of restoration?

Lent Study Guide Suggestions

We suggest that SGGs might select one of the following books and work through it over Lent this year. Perhaps buy one copy of the book and share it round week by week so that you can do a Lent course together?



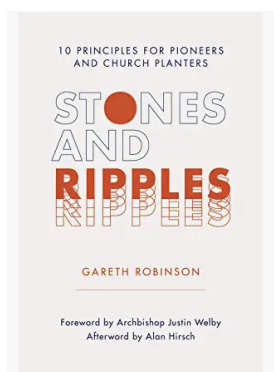
Failure: What Jesus Said About Sin, Mistakes and Messing Stuff Up
by Emma Ineson

This is the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book for 2023



Even the Sparrow
by Jill Weber

Jill's life story, told in short, easy to read chapters, with discussion questions for reflection



Stones and Ripples
by Gareth Robinson

Ideal for thinking about church planting

If any group wants to claim back the cost of one book from the church office then please get in touch with office@stnics.org.uk Note that the office will not be able to order the book(s) for you. Thank you.