

Bible Study
The Study of Haggai

TAP INTO OTHER'S
STRENGTH

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That's when you need a boost – a pat on the back, a card in the mail, a flower on your desk, a cheerleader to give you some good old-fashioned encouragement. **One of the most obvious antidotes for discouragement is just that, encouragement.** Yet, when we receive those words and actions meant to build us up, we need to recognize them and take courage from them.

The Jews in Haggai's day surely took courage from Haggai's and Zechariah's words and, of course, from God's presence (**Hag. 1:13**). Perhaps they were also able to recall the practical, tangible sources of encouragement that moved them forward when they first returned from Babylon years earlier.

That's what we'll talk about today (and tomorrow), and good old Ezra will help us. Turn to **Ezra 1**. Read through the chapter and put yourself in the Jew's shoes. Keep in mind they had been exiled in Babylon for decades. Their homeland and temple were in ruins. So while they surely were excited about returning home, the Jews must have also felt some anxiety about the destruction they would find and the rebuilding challenge they would face.

Read **Ezra 1** and pick out some things in the chapter that could have been sources of encouragement to these returning exiles (I found two).

1. Silver/Gold
2. Goods
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Read **Ezra 1:6** again.

What action is described in this verse?

The Jew's neighbors helped the returning exiles by supplying all sorts of stuff – silver, gold, livestock, and more – to the rebuilding project. Whether they were motivated by a desire to get in good with Cyrus, or out of their own good will, the Assyrians helped supply the Jews' needs. Bottom line, they were_____.

When others offer them time, concern, help, money, thoughtfulness, or any other expression of generosity, it encourages us, right?

Go to your favorite Bible resource and read **Ezra 1:6** in the King James Version. Jot down the result of the neighbors' willing gifts.

“And all they that were about them _____
_____.”

When you and I experience genuine_____, our hands are
_____.

In **Nehemiah 2:18** and **Jeremiah 23:14**, the phrase “strengthen their hands” implies _____ or _____. But in **Ezra 1:6** a teeny-weeny preposition is added in the Hebrew that slightly changes the shape of the metaphor. The image is that of grasping, laying firm hold on the hand with the view of _____ or _____.

How does that refined image give a true picture of encouragement?

To me, that kind of encouragement is not just someone _____ to you; it’s someone _____ *for* you.

Can you think of a time or example when you’ve experienced that kind of encouragement? If so, describe how someone “strengthened your hands.”

GO DEEPER

Who has been strength for you? Take a minute to send them a text, call, or even send a card letting them know how much they've encouraged you. Hearing from you just might be the encouragement they need today!

You may be in a hard season right now. Like the Jews, you may be facing rubble and ruin of what once was. You may be experiencing opposition, trying to do the next right thing but feeling helpless and hopeless. You may be in desperate need of encouragement. You just need somebody to strengthen your hands. Look around. You probably have people surrounding you who can become strength for you. But guess what? They can't be that if they don't know your need. So, right now, you are one of two people – either you are like the returning Jews and need strengthening encouragement, or you are like their nice neighbors, and you need to give strengthening encouragement.

Pause here and consider which one you are. (It's also possible you are both at the same time.

Pray right now about your next step. Do you need to reach out for help? Or do you need to reach out to help?

What actions will you take?

I will tell

I will be honest with

I will offer help to

God is the One who ultimately strengthens your hands. He is with you. He has a grasp on you and your situation. He has a firm hold on your life wherever you are and whatever you're doing. He won't let go of you. His grip will support you when you're weak. His presence is your strengthening encouragement. He won't just give you strength; He will be your strength.

Thank You, Lord, from the bottom of our grateful hearts!

“Still Our Time”