Session 19
The Return Home

Sometimes, when hope seems dead
and the darkness of night closes in strong against us,
God is about to do something really big.

DVD Teaching Notes

As you watch the video segment for session 19, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.

Returning home

The temple as a divine teaching aid

Sidetracked

Giving careful thoughts to your ways

DVD Discussion

1. In the DVD segment Randy pointed out that God was “pulling some strings in the Upper Story” (putting King Cyrus on the throne) so that he could make changes in the Lower Story (set the exiles free). Give an example of a time in your life when you know that God was moving in the Upper Story so that he could accomplish something in your Lower Story.

2. Randy talked about how God’s big thing can become our little thing if we are not careful. When this happens, we get off track. What are examples of how God’s big thing can become our little thing? What can we do to make sure we are really seeking to keep God’s big thing on the front burner of our heart and life?
3. When the people of Israel began working on the foundation of the temple (Ezra 4; *The Story*, p. 265) they met resistance. What kind of conflict and opposition did the people face? When we seek to follow God’s will with a passionate heart, what resistance might we face?

4. Eventually the people got sidetracked from rebuilding God’s temple. It was sixteen years before he finally got them back on track (Haggai 1; *The Story*, pp. 266-267). What slowed down their work and what got them up and moving again?

What are some of the consequences we ace when we do our own thing and forget to follow God’s plan for our lives?

5. What did God promise the people if they would move forward with his work (Haggai 2; *The Story*, pp. 267-268)? How does this bring you hope and inspiration to walk in obedience to God’s leading?

6. The end of this chapter of *The Story* offers a glimpse of the political wrangling that took place behind the scenes. The governor of the region wanted the people to stop building the temple and accused them of having no permission to build it. After communication with the king of Babylon, everything changed – and, remember, there were no phone or email (Ezra 5-6; *The Story*, pp. 270-273). How did God turn everything upside down and provide for the temple? How do you see the Upper Story breaking into the Lower Story again?
7. God called the people to action through his prophets such as Haggai, who told them to get up to the hills, gather wood, and begin building... pretty practical stuff! What is one next step you need to take to “gather wood” and start building into God’s plan for your life? How can your group members pray for you and encourage you as you take this step?

**Read Movement 5: The Story of the Church (Acts-Jude)**

*God will one day create a new earth and a new garden and once again come down to be with us. All who placed their faith in Christ in this life will be eternal residents in the life to come.*

How does God unfold his story in this fifth movement and how does this connect with your story?

**This week**

*Personal Reflections*

Haggai called the people to “give careful thought to [their] ways” and wake up to the reality that God was not blessing them because they were not following him. In the coming week give careful thought to your ways. Reflect on the following questions:

- Is God’s big thing my big thing?
- Am I building my house or God’s house?
- Are my priorities in order?
- What can I do to make sure God is first in my heart, schedule, and actions?

*Personal Action*

Haggai called the people to go up to the hills and gather timber (the supplies they needed to build the temple). Spend a few minutes listing some things you need to “gather” so that you can serve God with all your heart. It might be a new attitude, an altered schedule, a tender heart, or a generous lifestyle. Then commit to “gather” these things so that you can build a new future with God right in the center!
Reading Plan

Chapter 20: The Queen of Beauty and Courage

Key Question: What are ways God works invisibly to accomplish his purpose?

Monday: A Royal Decree, pages 275-277
Tuesday: Lives Changed, pages 277-279
Wednesday: Lives Imperiled, pages 279-282
Thursday: Circumstances Reversed, pages 282-285
Friday: More Reversals, pages 285-289

Going deeper
Saturday: Birds eye view- Re-Read chapter 20 in one sitting beginning to end

Sunday: Take a pen and a paper, spend 15 minutes in solitude with God, quiet yourself and listen to what He has to say to you.