

WARM-UP

- Do you use a planner? Why or why not?
- Recall a time when you disobeyed your parents or guardian and had to face the consequences. Tell us what happened.
- What's one rule you grew up with that you only understood and valued later?

WORD *⁷“Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁸Go 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.”* **HAGGAI 1:7-8**

(Read also **HAGGAI 1:1-6, 9-15.**)

When the book of Haggai was written, it had been eighteen years since the Israelites had returned from their exile to Babylon. During this time, they prioritized rebuilding their lives and what was left of Jerusalem. However, God's temple remained in ruins. Through Haggai, one of the prophets, God called His people to prioritize instead the rebuilding of His temple over their own homes. Today, we'll look at three lessons we can learn from Haggai about putting God first.

1 | When God speaks to His people, they are to respond to Him.

¹In 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: ²“Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.” **HAGGAI 1:1-2**

The Israelites had returned to their land and were busy building their homes. When God’s word came to Haggai, it came as a warning. The Israelites were not simply raising shelters; they were going beyond the basic needs for shelter and spending effort and money on their *paneled houses* (Haggai 1:4). They intended to build the temple of God, but they had already stopped prioritizing it in their hearts, saying, “*the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.*” Then God brought their attention to it through Haggai. Zerubbabel and Joshua, the people’s leaders, also took the right step and listened to God’s words through Haggai. In the same way, when God calls our attention, we are to respond to Him. One of the ways God speaks is through His word—the Bible. How does God speak to you through His word? Why is it important to read and study His word daily?

2 | When God’s people put their interests above God’s, their labor is in vain.

⁵“Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁶You 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.” **HAGGAI 1:5-6**

(Read also **HAGGAI 1:9-11.**)

Now that God had called His people's attention to the building of their own houses, He also showed them that on their own, no matter how hard they worked, they never got the full fruit of their labor. He explained that this was because they were putting their interests before His—interests of security and issues of priority. God was teaching His people a very foundational truth: our best is found in God's best. When we put God first, our own needs will be met. As we follow God's plans, we have His blessing and favor. How does Matthew 6:33 confirm this truth?

3 | When God's people repent and prioritize building His kingdom, His presence is experienced.

Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, "I am with you, declares the LORD." HAGGAI 1:13

As God spoke through Haggai, Zerubbabel and Joshua *obeyed the voice of the LORD and the people feared the LORD*. God affirmed this obedience and assured them of His presence, telling them, *"I am with you."* Once the people had turned to obey God, it was God who strengthened them and stirred up their spirits (Haggai 1:14) to do His work. When we obey according to God's will, He empowers us to do His work. As believers, we are called to serve in God's kingdom. How can we be part of building His kingdom today?

APPLICATION

- If you have not been making yourself available to hear from God, what are some ways you can start doing that today?
- Might there be aspects of building God's kingdom that you might be saying "not yet" to? Ask God to reveal them to you this week and for the grace to obey His voice.
- Are there times that you place your own interests over building God's kingdom? What will your response be to this? How can you serve God's kingdom purpose every day?

PRAYER

- Thank God for speaking to you personally, through His word, and through other people. Pray that your heart will be open to clearly hear and obey His will.
- Ask for His grace to place His kingdom first, above your own interests.
- Pray for God to reveal specific ways you can continue to build God's kingdom where He has placed you and has called you to serve.



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