

Opening: Have you ever had God call you to something and you pushed it off or completely ignored it? I have. Man, it never felt good. Let me ask you a question, if God calls you to do something and you refuse, or come up with excuses, will God let it go? Will God simply say, “Hey, that ok. Don’t worry about it.” This is where God’s people are at in this passage we will be in today. Let’s turn to Haggai 1:1–15 & see how God called them back. The fastest way there, go to Matthew then turn three books to the left.

SCENE 1: THE BACKDROP (1) (Character Intro)

In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest:

King Cyrus: This pagan king sent God’s people back with all the protections and possessions they would need to rebuild the temple. (Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall was 90 years after the finishing of the temple foundation. Let’s move into the second scene where we get a hint of conflict.

SCENE 2: THE DISCONNECT (2) (Conflict Intro)

God’s View: “*These People Say (2a)*” (Frustration)

We have a foreshadowing of a major issue going on in verse 2 but we don’t get the full picture yet. “These people”. It reminds me of when I get frustrated with my kids. In that moment of frustration, I don’t refer to them as “my kids” right? I look at my wife Braci and say, “would you handle your kids please” or “can you deal with those kids please.” (Am I the only one? Lol). I believe this is what God is feeling at this time because they are not “My people” they are “These people”. So, on God’s end, we see frustration. Let’s look at the people’s view.

The People’s View: “*It is not yet time to rebuild the house of the Lord (2b)*” (Procrastination or “delayed obedience”)

God wastes no time here using Haggai to give His people a message. God is not impressed with their excuses AND is not happy with their “delayed obedience/procrastination.” We will get into this more later in the passage but know there are two reasons why God’s people are making excuses and procrastinating: 1) self-centeredness and 2) fear.

ILLUSTRATION: The best way to illustrate the excuse of God’s people saying “It is not yet time...” is probably found in Numbers 13-14. God delivered his people from Egypt and told them to take the promised land and they made excuses out of fear as to why they shouldn’t go. “*The people are too big and strong. Their cities are fortified.*” Imagine God’s people standing at the edge of the land of plenty, that God promised to them, and they say “It’s not the right time.” This is what is going on with God’s people in Haggai. God brought them out of captivity and they stand at the edge of plenty but they hesitate out of fear and delayed obedience and they struggle because of it. This needs to serve as a wake-up call to God’s people in any generation. Any time God tells us to do something, and we refuse, God will not just drop it. Conflict starts.

Transition: You have gotten an idea of the climate so far. The 3rd scene gets into the climax of the conflict. I call this scene “the examination”.

SCENE 3: THE EXAMINATION (3-11) (Conflict Climax)

In this scene, we see the conflict exists because of misplaced priorities. Wrong priorities lead to:

Misusing God’s resources (3-4) “paneled houses”

³ The word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: ⁴ “*Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?*” The wording for “paneled houses” is the same used to describe the temple Solomon built, and one of his elaborate palaces. It suggests luxury. This leads some to believe that the wood given to build the temple in Ezra 3:7, the people starting using to build their homes, which is why in Haggai 1:8, even though they already bought wood, God tells them “God up into the hills, bring down the lumber, and build my house...” What happened to the wood? Well, the text doesn’t specifically tell us, so I don’t think the main issue is the wood; it’s their hearts & priorities. God had given them the time, the talents, and the treasures to build His house, His kingdom, but they focused on building their own kingdoms. Verse 8, is God realigning the priorities of His people.

We look at God's people in these moments and think "how could they do that?". That's crazy, right? If we are not careful, and our priorities are out of place, we can misuse God's gifts for more personal comfort and luxury, that was actually meant to build His Kingdom. (pause)

They were misusing God's gifts because their priorities were out of order, and this led them to...

Chasing the wrong goals (5-8) personal glory vs. God's glory

2 times God says "Think carefully about your ways." (5, 7).

God's people were working hard towards their personal goals: better homes, better lives, but it left them empty! Nothing seemed to satisfy or be enough. The harder they worked, the less they seemed to have & more miserable they became.

ILL: Have you ever found yourself in that situation? Working hard and saving up only to feel like it's not enough? "If I could only make \$10,000 more, and when you get it, you still live paycheck to paycheck? This is the problem they are experiencing in verse 6. let's read it and tell me if you can relate, "You have planted much but harvested little. You eat but never have enough to be satisfied. You drink but never have enough to be happy. You put on clothes but never have enough to get warm. The wage earner puts his wages into a bag with a hole in it." Ever felt like that? Working long hours trying to make more money and save up only to ask, "What happened to all our money?" Like we have holes in our pockets. It can be frustrating.

Here's the point, those things will never be enough to satisfy, because God won't let them be enough. Only He truly fulfills and satisfies. They are putting other things in front of God and His work; being disobedient to God's plan. Church, listen to me, that's Idolatry! God mission on this earth is not to give us the things we want! It is to give us more of HIM! AND there is nothing better than Him. (pause)

I don't know about you but I don't want a God who thinks my plans and desires are better than His. No, I need a God whose plans and ways are better than mine because my priorities are often off. (pause) Misplaced priorities will also lead to....

Unnecessary frustration and division (9-11) (older & younger)

⁹"You expected much, but then it amounted to little. When you brought the harvest to your house, I ruined it. Why?" This is the declaration of the Lord of Armies. "Because my house still lies in ruins, while each of you is busy with his own house." So, why would they give up so easily on building the temple? Remember, in their eyes, the temple was where God resided among them. Why abandon that sacred work?

Well, Ezra 3-4, which is 16 years before Haggai 1, sheds some light on some of the reasons why... Ezra 3:12 tells us the older generations were weeping because the foundation didn't look like the temple of the "good ole" days. The younger generations that never lived with the temple were cheering. The crying was so loud that they couldn't distinguish between weeping and cheering. Then **Ezra 4:24** tells us that both the younger and older generations stopped God's work because they were threatened, and they feared people more than God so they traded obedience to God for a cushier life.

God shows us this also in **Haggai 2:3-5**, ³"Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Doesn't it seem to you like nothing by comparison? ⁴Even so, be strong, Zerubbabel—this is the Lord's declaration. Be strong, Joshua son of Jehozadak, high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land—this is the Lord's declaration. Work! For I am with you—the declaration of the Lord of Armies. ⁵This is the promise I made to you when you came out of Egypt, and my Spirit is present among you; don't be afraid."

They abandoned the work for a cushier life but found something different than they expected. (9) "They expected much, but it turned out to be little." They were working hard for all the wrong things and their hard

work amounted to very little! **WHY?** Because God made sure of it. It was God that ruined their harvest. **WHY?** Because they were more interested in building their house over God's house.

DO YOU SEE THIS HAPPENING TODAY? I see this happening in churches all over today. Younger generations and older generations choosing their own personal desires and wants over what God wants. So, when tough times come, we have different generations with different perspectives and different game plans. They don't stop and get on their face before God almighty and ask Him what He wants, and the work stops and never gets done.

*This leads to worship wars, fighting over ministry style, building aesthetics. If we are not careful, if we don't stop and **think carefully about our ways(5,7)**, we may find ourselves in a situation where we are not interested in building God's kingdom, we are more concerned about our personal kingdoms. *"Expecting much, but receiving little"*. (pause) If we as the church forget what our priorities are, if we forget to keep the main thing the main thing, we will find ourselves in conflict with God, His plans, and with each other.

ILL: This is something to keep in mind as we go into a building project.

Transition: So, how do we keep our priorities aligned with God's? How do we resolve this conflict? Let's look at what God's people did in v.12. It is in verse 12 that we find more hope.

SCENE 4: THE RESOLUTION (12) (Conflict Resolution)

12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak, and the entire remnant of the people obeyed the Lord their God and the words of the prophet Haggai, because the Lord their God had sent him. So the people feared the Lord. 2 Key actions brought about conflict resolution here:

They repented and started living out God's word

EXPLANATION: Whenever God's people strayed from His word, He took action. When God took action it was rarely pretty. Many people look at God as only a loving God and because He loves us so much that He is ok with our sin. God is not ok with our sin. God is a loving God, but He is also a just God & a righteous judge. We need to remember that just because we are Christian does not mean we are free from the consequences of sin.

APPLICATION/EXHORTATION: Listen, God does not bless sinful actions. Yes, His grace and love still abounds, but He will not bless a lifestyle of continual disobedience. God works against that lifestyle, just like with His people by the ruining harvest, because it goes against His plan and word! He disciplines, NOT, because he hates us but because He loves us and wants to protect us church (Hebrews 12:6). God loves us too much to leave us in our sin!

I love that here is one of those times that God's people actually repented and obeyed God's word. The second action they took to bring about conflict resolution is...

They shifted from fearing others and gain a renewed healthy fear of the Lord.

The people obeyed God's word and shifted from fearing people to fearing the Lord. **So the people feared the Lord.** This led to...

SCENE 5: THE RESULTS (13-15)

They experienced God's presence (13) "I am with you"

They experienced God's presence even before the temple was built. What does this tell us? It was never truly about the temple! This entire chapter centers on what is said in verse 8 & 13. It was about faithfulness to God's plan and enjoying His presence. THE WESTMINSTER SHORT CATECHISM says "The chief end of mankind is to worship God and enjoy Him forever!"

When they shifted their focus and priorities, they experienced God's presence in a powerful way. and....

They experienced God's power & encouragement (14) “God roused the spirit of all the people” they got to work!

They experienced God's plan (2:6-9; 20-23) Haggai 2:9 points to a better future glory. ⁹“The final glory of this house will be greater than the first,” says the Lord of Armies. “I will provide peace in this place”—this is the declaration of the Lord of Armies.” Let me try to quickly explain what God is saying here and how He unfolded this plan in redemptive history. This promise of a “final greater glory,” and “peace,” points beyond the physical temple God told them to build. It points to a future reality where God will dwell among them in a new way, experiencing his glory in a way they never dreamed, and it started with God restoring His covenant promises through Zerubbabel’s obedience.

Haggai 2:23, ²³“On that day”—this is the declaration of the Lord of Armies—“I will take you, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant”—this is the Lord’s declaration—“and make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you.” This is the declaration of the Lord of Armies.” Let me give you some historical context, In Jeremiah 22:24, God had removed Jeconiah, Zerubbabel’s grandfather, as His “signet ring,” which led God to allow King Nebuchadnezzar to take them into captivity. But now, through Zerubbabel’s faithfulness in leading the people to obey, God reaffirms His covenant, choosing Zerubbabel as a sign of His enduring promise (his signet ring).

You may be asking. “What does this have to do with anything?” This points us to the ultimate fulfillment of God’s plan in Jesus Christ. Matthew 1:12 says, ¹²“After the exile to Babylon Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel...” follow that to the end and we get Jesus. We see Zerubbabel in the genealogy of Jesus, the true Davidic King. The “greater glory” of Haggai 2:9 finds its fulfillment in Christ, who is the true temple of God’s presence and the source of true peace. As Revelation 21:22–23 declares, ²²“I did not see a temple in it, because the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the glory of God illuminates it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Main Idea: Haggai shows us that misplaced priorities lead to conflict with God and others, but obedience to His Word and a healthy fear of the Lord restores the importance of our understanding of His presence, power, and purpose.

Closing: Imagine a life where you’re not chasing empty things, but living in the fullness of God’s presence. God’s people learned that true satisfaction and fulfillment does not come from a luxurious lifestyle or chasing personal dreams, but comes from being in God’s presence and building His kingdom. In V.13, God said, “I am with you,” He stirred their spirits in v.14, and they got to work.

Church, God is present here today, calling us to commit to Him just like in this passage. Maybe He’s asking you to step out in faith to place your faith in Jesus, join a ministry, reconcile a relationship, or surrender a personal ambition to His kingdom. Whatever it is, don’t say, “It’s not the right time.” Delayed obedience is disobedience, and it leaves us empty, chasing what can never satisfy. Right now, bow your head, and I’m going to give you a few moments of silence for you to pray and Ask God, “What is my next step?” Then I will pray over you.

Prayer: Lord, we come before your throne this day, and I pray that we have been humbled by your word. Your word has reminded us that delayed or eventual obedience is still disobedience, and how chasing after our own kingdoms will always leave us feeling empty. Please God, stir our spirits, and align our hearts to yours just like you did in Haggai’s day. Help us to put you first in all things, to better work for your glory, and to recognize and enjoy your presence. I beg you, empower us to say “yes” when you call: not someday, but today! May we always find joy in your promise that you are with us. If there is anyone here today that needs to surrender their life or surrender their plans to you, I pray today is that day. Amen!

Dismissal: Reflect on this this week: What is one way you can say “yes” to God this week? Don’t delay, and let His presence be your joy. Go, and be the church.