

HAGGAI

PRIORITIES IN STRANGE TIMES

DISCUSSION GUIDE



WEEK 1: WHOSE PLAN TAKES PRIORITY?

Read the Text

Haggai 1:1-15

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.” ³Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, ⁴“Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? ⁵Now, 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.

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. ⁹You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. ¹⁰Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its

produce. ¹¹ And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.”

The People Obey the Lord

¹² Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him. And the people feared the Lord. ¹³ Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, “I am with you, declares the Lord.” ¹⁴ And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, ¹⁵ on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

Main Point

Haggai is a gritty minor prophet who plays a key role in keeping Israel on task and motivated to do God’s work. Israel had been in Babylonian captivity for decades, but with new permission to go rebuild Jerusalem, they find themselves oscillating between being motivated, apathetic, discouraged and motivated again. As modern-day followers of Jesus, we can relate to this! We are inundated with daily discouragement and distraction, but nothing is larger than God’s good plan. If we can remain on task and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, we can find our greatest purpose: playing our part to make a way for Jesus to be known in our hearts and in the hearts of others.

Haggai does not hold back in his rebuke of God’s people. He immediately calls them out on caring for their own homes before God’s temple. This calls into consideration a very important and challenging question: **Whose plan takes priority?** In our day-to-day lives, do our decisions and the places we spend our time,

thought, and money indicate a loyalty to Jesus, or a loyalty to ourselves? Haggai's challenge to his people and to us is simple but challenging: we are to turn our attention to God's priorities over our own.

As Haggai continues on in his rebuke of the Israelites, we see that despite all their striving for two decades, the people never seem to have enough and never reach a point of satisfaction. We may feel this in our own lives and it leads to another challenging question: ***why won't our plans succeed?*** Through the disordered priorities of the Israelites, we see that a plan without God in the middle will never produce the result we want. Our felt desires for pleasure, fun, and comfort will never satisfy our deepest and truest desire to be close to God. And in His kindness, God can lovingly discipline us by not blessing our faithlessness.

As the Israelites hear this word from Haggai, it leaves us with one more important question: ***how will you respond?*** The Israelites choose to respond with obedience and we see God bless that decision. In response to their obedience, God offers His presence and His blessing over them. This blessing is available to us as well. It's not always easy to make the decision to live within this blessing, but it is sure to bless us, glorify God, and further align us with Him.

Reflect Together

1. Why does God want us to prioritize Him and His plan for us? How is that a challenge for you? How has it benefited you?
2. How do your decisions and where you spend your time, thought, and money reflect your priorities of your own plan vs. God's plan for you?
3. Have you experienced a time when God withheld from blessing your unfaithfulness? Or a time when he blessed you for your obedience? What did that look like and how did you respond at the time? What do you think of it now?