

"MAJORING IN THE MINORS: EXPLORING THE MINOR PROPHETS" FOR THE WEEK OF JULY 28

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE: "FIRST THINGS FIRST"

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Almighty, you alone are worthy to receive our worship and praise. You alone deserve first place in our hearts and lives. Forgive us for putting personal comfort and earthly things ahead of you and your blueprint for our lives. Reveal our misplaced priorities through your wisdom, granting us the commitment and courage to change our direction. Help us love you with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. (Mark 12:30) With our hearts we will praise you and give glory to your name forever (Psalm 86:12). In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

CONNECTING QUESTION

Why is encouragement so valuable and why do we need it so often? Who encouraged you recently? Whom have you encouraged? Explain.

SCRIPTURE READING

Read Aloud & Meditate on God's Word: Haggai 1:1-15; 2:5-9; Luke 12:15-21

WATCH VIDEO

Video Presenter: Pastor Tim Runtsch

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Invite the Holy Spirit to lead as you work through the questions in this guide. Cover what your time allows and encourage everyone to finish the guide on his or her own.

1. The people of Judah returned home after 70 years of captivity in Babylon. They began rebuilding the Temple, a symbol of their covenant relationship with God and his presence with them. However, as time passed, they grew discouraged and distracted, so they stopped the work. To what did they give their attention in Haggai 1:2-6?
2. What did the Lord say to them through Haggai in Haggai 1:5-11? Because the people took care of their own needs and neglected God's house, what were the results? What happens to you when your priorities are misplaced? How does the Lord remind you that if he is not your top priority you are not able to be fruitful and productive?
3. Twice Haggai repeats the phrase, "Give careful thought to your ways." (Haggai 1:5 and 7) Why do you think he repeats it? The Living Bible says this: "Think it over...consider how you have acted and what has happened as a result." Where in your life do you need to evaluate your ways and consider your actions? Why is it important to do so? (Also see Lamentations 3:40; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Colossians 3:1-4.)

4. How do the words of Jesus in Luke 12:15-21 relate to priorities and getting the first things first? (Also see Matthew 6:19-21, 33; Philippians 3:7-11, 4:12-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-11)

5. Haggai 2:4 basically says, "Be strong... now get to work...I am with you." "Judah's people had returned to worshiping God, and God had promised to bless their efforts. But it was time for them to work. We must be people of prayer, Bible study and worship; eventually we must get out and do the work God has prepared for us. He wants to change the world through us, his ambassadors. God has given you a job to do in the church, at your place of employment, and at home. The time has come to take courage and get going because God is with you." What are your thoughts on this explanation from the NLT Study Bible?

6. To what events does God shaking the heavens, earth, and nations refer in Haggai 2:6-9? What hope do you discover? (Also see John 2:19-22; Hebrews 12:26-29; 2 Peter 3:8-13; Revelation 21:22-26.).

PUTTING THE FIRST THINGS FIRST

"Life can offer relentless daily pressures; we can succumb to the tyranny of the urgent, either fighting to keep our heads above water or trying to stay one step ahead. This hard work and perseverance is commendable, but it can also hinder us from focusing on the right priorities." (The Abide Bible Journal)

To what do you give most of your time: family, friends, job, leisure, health, faith, other? Where have you put the Lord on your list of priorities? What distracts you from spiritual commitments and community responsibilities?

God spoke hope and encouragement to the people to help them do their work in Haggai 1:13-15 and Haggai 2:4-5, telling them "I am with you." Reflect on the following and let God's Word energize you and bring you hope, knowing he is with you. Isaiah 41:10; 43:2; Jeremiah 1:8; Acts 18:9-10; Hebrews 13:5.

CLOSING PRAYER

Oh Lord, plant deep within us the desire to do your work, whatever it may be. Help us order our priorities according to your Word and your ways. Let us seek you above all else and trust that you will provide what we need to accomplish your work. Thank you for your Spirit who gives us courage to act! May we encourage others as well. In the one and only name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Our Father...

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