

WHITE NOISE

"BEATING THE BANE OF BUSYNESS"

HAGGAI 1:1-11

This Week's Core Competency

Single-mindedness – I focus on God and his priorities for my life. Matthew 6:33 *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Busyness is an enemy of godliness. Growing spiritually requires living intentionally; it requires single-mindedness if you will. There is a way of life that the Spirit uses to transform us; our challenge is to make that way of life our way of life.

Unfortunately, life is filled with distractions. Jesus said as much when he told the parable of the soils in Mark 4:1-20 (cf. Mt 13:1-9, 18-23; Lk 8:1-15). You know the story. It begins, "A farmer went out to sow his seed." Some seed fell on the path, some fell on rocky soil, some fell among thorns, and some fell on good soil. Only the seed that fell on good soil, however, ultimately produced a lasting crop. In his interpretation Jesus explained, "The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they

More than anything else in life I want to know God.

– Philip Yancey

quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the work, making it unfruitful" (vv. 14-19). Life is filled with worries about family, finances, and the future, is often consumed by ambition and marked by devotion to the pursuit of happiness, and is always filled with the desire have more stuff. No wonder we often find ourselves waiting for the right time to pursue God. Oh, that we would echo the cry of Philip Yancey who writes, "More than anything else in life I want to know God" (*Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference*, 8).

Everyone falls prey to the tyranny of the urgent from time to time. Consider Martha. Luke tells us: "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Had Martha had a "do over," I suspect she would have spent less time in the kitchen and more time with Jesus.

For Discussion

Every time you attend church someone encourages you to get connected to community. Right now you and your spouse attend the worship service, but you don't attend Community Group or Home Group during the week. But now's not a good time to try to get more involved; it's all you can do to get to church two or three times a month. Getting connected would mean another hour on Sunday morning for Bible study and another night a week at least a couple of times a month for biblical community. Not to mention the other commitments that would creep into your schedule if you got involved with other people in the church. Now's not a good time to get more involved. You've got young children and they're got school and outside activities. And you've got a start-up business you're trying to get on its feet. It's all you can do to put bread on the table. Time will come when things slow down, the kids get a little older, and the business gets off the ground; that will be the time to get connected. Discuss this person's thoughts about getting connected.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Haggai 1:1-11

1In 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, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest:

2This is what the LORD Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built.'"

3Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: 4"Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"

5Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. 6You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put

them in a purse with holes in it."

7This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. 8Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD.

9"You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little.

What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of my house, which

remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. 10Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. 11I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands."

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

* Circle the names of the leaders mentioned in v. 1.

* Underline the chronological references "second year," "first day," "sixth month" in v. 1.

* Bracket the repeated statement "this is what the LORD Almighty says" and the repeated statement "give careful thought to your ways" in vv. 2, 5, 7.

* Highlight what "these people say" in v. 2.

* Draw a line from "paneled houses" in v. 3 to "his own house" in v. 9.

* In the margin next to v. 6 write "Cf., Dt 28, esp. vv. 38-42."

* Box the word "but" indicating *contrast* throughout.

* Box the words "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 8.

* Box the word "because" indicating *reason* in vv. 9, 10.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. The word of the LORD came through Haggai to Zerubbabel and Joshua first. How come?
2. What do you infer from the fact that the LORD called the returnees "these people" in verse 2?
3. Put their excuse for not rebuilding the temple in your own words.
4. The question the LORD asked in verse 4 is likely *rhetorical*. What's the point of his question if it is?
5. Twice the LORD told the people, "Give careful thought to your ways." Why?
6. Explain the use of *contrast* in verses 5, 6 to describe their circumstances.
7. What do you think made the completion of the temple necessary?
8. "My house remains a ruin while each of you is busy with his own house." The LORD's indictment has a timeless quality. How so?
9. **Discussion:** Do you think God "blows away" his people's stuff now when we're disobedient to him like he did then?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

You can't understand Haggai 1:1-11 fully apart from its historical background, a great summary of which is found in *The NIV Study Bible*. "In 538 B.C. the conqueror of Babylon, Cyrus king of Persia, issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (see Ezr 1:2-4; 6:3-5). Led by Zerubbabel, about 50,000 Jews journeyed home and began work on the temple. About two years later (536) they completed the foundation amid great rejoicing (Ezr 3:8-10). Their success aroused the Samaritans and other neighbors who feared the political and religious implications of a rebuilt temple in a thriving Jewish state. They therefore opposed the project vigorously and managed to halt work until Darius the Great became king of Persia in 522 B.C. (Ezr 4:1-5, 24)" (1400). On August 29, 520 B.C. in the second full year of his rule, after about sixteen years of inactivity, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai to the two leaders of the Jewish community to rouse them and the people to resume their work.

And what did the LORD have to say to his people? "Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored" (v. 8). For sixteen years they had been saying, "The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built" (v. 2). "Now's not the time to build the LORD's house." One commentator explains: "In Old Testament thought, the house was not desired for itself, as a sort of lucky charm (see Jer. 7:4), nor is there any suggestion that without the house any rituals performed must be defective (Petersen, *Haggai*, pp. 79-85). The house was the outward form of the real presence of the Lord among his people. To refuse to build the house was at best saying that it did not matter whether the Lord was present with them. At worst it was presuming on divine grace, that the Lord would live with his people even though they willfully refused to fulfill the condition of his indwelling that he had laid down" (Thomas E. McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 974).

But the LORD debunked that excuse by noting that the time had come for them to build their

paneled houses—read their luxurious houses—why not his house? This is not to say that everyone lived in a "paneled house" but some clearly did, and in any case, everyone became preoccupied with "his own house" (v. 9)—read his own life—and was content to leave the LORD's house in ruins. And the longer they did the more demanding and difficult their lives became, and the more convinced they became, now's not a good time rebuild the temple. One commentator describes their situation in terms easy for moderns to understand. "This was the problem: they had goods but the good life eluded them; they were not hungry but neither were they satisfied; they were dressed but they were not comfortable. According to the last phrase of 1:6, inflation was high. Once can almost hear them say, 'Money goes nowhere,' or, 'You wouldn't believe what I had to pay for this!' As Haggai put it, 'You would think there was a hole in my purse.' It was not that they had no money; it was that the money did not go far" (977).

They needed to stop and take a close look at themselves and their situation. Twice in this passage the LORD told them, "Give careful thought to your ways" (v. 5, 7) because once they did, they would recognize that their hardships amounted to the LORD's discipline for their disobedience *a la* Deuteronomy 28. God had sent drought that devastated their three major crops, grain, grapes, and olives, with a view to them mending their ways. Theirs is an example of how life's urgent things can and often do take priority over life's more important things. Here's one way to "think carefully on your ways." Make two lists. On one, list 10 things you have time for and on the other 10 things you don't have time for but would like to have time for; then compare your lists.

The Message of the Passage

Don't let "busyness" distract you, because now's the time to focus on the Lord and his priorities for your life.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **Darius** Darius I Hystaspes ruled Persia from 522-486 B.C. About him one historian writes, "Darius proved to be in every respect an able ruler and a worthy successor of the great Cyrus. . . . Darius, moreover, gave this vast domain its definitive organization, dividing it into twenty satrapies, with each satrap, usually one of the Persian or Median nobility, an appointee of the crown. The achievements of Darius were many and brilliant: his building at Persepolis and elsewhere, the canal which he cut linking the Nile and the Red Sea, the network of roads which facilitated communications from one end of the empire to the other, his extensive legal reforms, the development of a standardized system of coinage, which did much to promote banking, commerce, and industry—and much more" (John Bright, *A History of Israel*, rev. ed., 375).

v. 1 **first day of sixth month** "Prior to the exile the year began in the autumn, but by the exile the Jews adopted the Babylonian calendar, thus locating new year's day in the spring. Haggai's precise date therefore is August 29, 520 B.C. He next refers to the response of Zerubbabel and Joshua to the message of Yahweh, dating that to the twenty-fourth day of the same month, or September 21, (Hag. 1:15). The prophet then assigns his second oracle to the twenty-first day of the seventh month (i.e., Tishri), or October 17, (Hag. 2:1). Finally, he cites the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (Kislev), December 18, (2:10, 20) . . . The chronological cross-referencing by the biblical authors suggest that they were aware that they were part of an international community" (Eugene H. Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 9-10).

v. 1 **Zerubbabel, Joshua** Zerubbabel was the grandson of the last legitimate king of Judah, Jehoiachin (1Chr 3:17-19) and Joshua was a descendant of Aaron through his father Jehozadak (1Chr 6:14-1; cf., 6:1-5). "Thus the Davidic royal descent as well as that of the Aaronic priests meet in the postexilic age as common recipients of God's word of hope and promise through Haggai and Zechariah" (Merrill, 24).

v. 2 **time** Persia defeated Babylon in 539 B.C. "In October, 539, Gobryas took Babylon without a fight. Nabonidus, who had fled, was subsequently taken prisoner. A few weeks later Cyrus himself entered the city in triumph. According to his own inscription he was welcomed as a liberator by the Babylonians, to whom he showed the utmost consideration" (361). The inscription of the cylinder of Cyrus reads in part, "Marduk . . . scanned and looked through all the countries, searching for a righteous ruler . . . He pronounced the name of Cyrus, king of Anshan, declared him to be the ruler of all the world . . . He made him set out on the road to Babylon, going at his side like a real friend. His widespread troops—their number, like that of the water of a river, could not be established—strolled along, their weapons packed away. Without any battle, he made him enter his town Babylon, sparing Babylon any calamity. He delivered into his hands Nabunaid [Nabonidus], the king who did not worship him" (Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, 1:229). In 538 B.C. Cyrus issued a decree ordering the restoration of the Jewish community and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. He relates his general policy of so doing on the cylinder. "I returned to these [aforementioned] sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been ruins for a long time, the images which used to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I also gathered all their former inhabitants and returned to them their habitations" (230). His specific order regarding the Jews and their temple in Jerusalem can be found in Ezra 6:3-5.

After the foundation of the temple was laid in 536 B.C. following the first return of exiles from Babylon (Ezr 3:8-10), work on the temple ceased until 520 B.C. The returnees were "dogged by a succession of poor seasons and partial crop failures (Hag. 1:9-11; 2:15-17), which left many of them destitute, without adequate food and clothing (ch. 1:6). Their neighbors, especially the aristocracy of Samaria, who had regarded Judah as part of their territory and resented any limitation of their prerogatives there, were openly hostile. Nor is it likely that Jews resident in the land in every case welcomed the influx of immigrants with enthusiasm. They had regarded the land as theirs (Ezek. 33:24) and presumably still did; they would scarcely have been eager to give place to the newcomers and acquiesce in their claims to ancestral holdings. The fact that the returning exiles considered themselves the true Israel and tended to draw apart both from Samaritans and their less orthodox brethren as from men unclean (cf. Hag. 2:10-14) surely heightened the tension. As bitterness led to violence, public safety was endangered.

It is, therefore, scarcely surprising that work on the Temple, barely begun, ground to a halt. The people, preoccupied with the struggle for existence, had neither resources nor energy left over to continue the project" (Bright, 366).

v. 10 **you** Under the old covenant, God's people were promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (see Dt 28). Their indifference to rebuilding the temple displeased and dishonored the LORD (v. 8), and so he disciplined them in accord with the stipulations of the covenant. They were responsible for the drought and its devastation but didn't understand it followed from what they were saying: "The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built."

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Days like this one happen more often than I would like to admit. My day was completely scheduled to the minute. An early morning meeting, a lunch appointment, work to get out, carpool, taking dinner to a sick friend, another meeting and then a back-to-school pep rally at high school. Had everything gone completely on schedule I could have accomplished every task on my calendar but as often happens, a wrench was thrown in the plan. First, I had an unexpected phone call that took more time than I actually had. Next, my son forgot his music for the pep rally so I had to backtrack which meant a later meeting which impacted the rest of the evening's activities. By 6:30 I was frustrated and weary. The enemy knows my weakness. My joy and peace decrease as the activities on my calendar increase. We live in a fast-paced busy society. In fact, we encourage busyness. Social media provides a platform for us to compare our busy schedules. There are not many posts that say "I slept until noon and stayed in my pj's all day!" The problem with busyness is that the most important things - my relationships with God and my family - seem to suffer first. Let's hold each other accountable to unclutter our lives and leave room for what's most important.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Haggai 1:5-9

1. Now this is what the Lord

Almighty says: "Give _____

thought to your _____." (v. 7)

2. According to verse 9, why is the Lord angry with the people?

What Do You Think

The people were so busy taking care of their own homes and lives that they neglected God and His house. Do you get busy and forget to spend time with God in prayer and in His Word? If so, what can you do to remind yourself to do it?

What R U Going To Do

Create a calendar for September. Mark a time each day on the calendar when you will spend time with God praying and reading the Bible. Ask your parents to put a special family day or two on the calendar! Plan an outing and have fun!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Single-mindedness - I pay attention to the important things God has for my life.

Memory Verse

Hebrews 1:2 - *But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC _____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade _____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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