



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V26 N43 October 27, 2024

UNDISTRACTED

“Wake Up Call”

Haggai 1:1-11

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Single-Mindedness

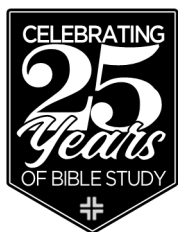
I focus on God and his priorities for my life.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Matthew 6:33



What about right priorities?



Priorities—everyone has them, even if they go unrecognized. Priorities are important things that Merriam-Webster defines as something “given or meriting attention before competing alternatives” ([merriam-webster.com/dictionary/priority](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/priority)). Here are some common examples of priorities in no particular order: family, friends, faith, education, work, wealth, wellness, recreation, personal improvement, parenting, mentoring, volunteering, and so on. Dozens of other examples could be offered. Stephen Covey coined a phrase many are familiar with: “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing” (*Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*). Put differently, don’t prioritize what’s on your schedule, but schedule your priorities. He coined others as well. Another related to priorities is worth citing: “You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage—pleasantly, smilingly, nonapologetically, to say ‘no’ to other things. And the way you do that is by having a bigger ‘yes’ burning inside. The enemy of the ‘best’ is often the ‘good.’” And if you are familiar with Stephen Covey, you are likely familiar with Charles Hummel, who recognized that *urgencies* are the enemy of *priorities*. In the 1960s, he published a little booklet called *Tyranny of the Urgent*, and it quickly became a business classic. In it, Hummel argues that there is a regular tension between things that are urgent and things that are important—and far too often, the urgent wins.

Talk of *priorities* leads to the observation that busyness is an enemy of godliness. Growing spiritually requires living intentionally—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. However, only the seed that fell on good soil ultimately produced a lasting crop. In his interpretation Jesus explained, “The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seeds 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 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 to 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, namely, misplaced priorities, 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.

1

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read Haggai 1:1-11

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

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

3 Then 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?"

5 Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. 6 You have planted much, but 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."

7 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. 8 Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my 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 your own house.

10 Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. 11 I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the olive oil and everything else the ground produces, on people and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands."

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "King Darius" in v. 1.
- Underline "the high priest" in v. 1.
- Circle the names of the prophet and the two Jewish 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.
- Circle "paneled houses" in v. 3 and "your own house" in v. 9.
- Circle "this house" in v. 4 and "my house" in vv. 8, 9.
- 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.
- Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 10.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. The word of the LORD came through Haggai to *Zerubbabel and Joshua*. How come?
2. What do you infer, if anything, from the fact that the LORD called the returnees “these people” in verse 2?
3. Put the excuse “these people” offered for not rebuilding the temple in your own words.
4. State the point of the *rhetorical* question in verse 4—i.e., its meaning—in a *declarative* sentence.
5. Twice the LORD told the people, “Give careful thought to your ways” (vv. 5, 7). Why?
6. Explain the use of *contrast* (cf. “but” and “only”) in verse 6.
7. Identify the twofold *purpose* (cf. “so that”) behind rebuilding the temple (v. 8).
8. According to verse 9, *what* did the LORD do and *why*?
9. Misplaced priorities had consequences for the returnees. Summarize them.
10. **Discussion:** Do you think God “blows away” his people’s stuff now when they’re disobedient to him like he did then? Talk about it.

Commentary On The Text

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 to 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. One 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" (McComiskey, 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 à la Deuteronomy 28. The section on curses for disobedience to the covenant of Moses opens with these words:

"However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you:

"You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed. The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out" (vv. 15-19).

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.

Fortunately, Christians are not party to the covenant of Moses. In other words, Christians are not under the law, so obedience to it is not a priority for them, and the promise of blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience does not apply to them. Nevertheless, believers are obligated to obey the law of Christ, which entails focusing on him and his priorities for their lives—something which will also bring blessings.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 **Darius** Darius I Hystaspes ruled Persia from 522-486 B.C. About him one historian writes, "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. Suffice it to say that, under Darius, Persia reached her zenith. Only in one venture, and that his most ambitious, could Darius be said to have failed. This was his attempt to conquer Greece" (John Bright, *A History of Israel*, rev. ed., 375). Opponents to the rebuilding of the temple, who hoped to capitalize on Darius's newness to office, sent a letter warning him about the Jewish rebellion (Ezra 5:6-17). "Darius immediately made a search of the archivers of Cyrus at Ecbatana and verified that the Jewish claims that reconstruction of the temple and city was authorized by Cyrus himself were true. Without further ado the work was resumed and completed by 151 B.C. (6:15)" (Eugene H. Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 14).

v. 1 **the high priest** "The typical translation 'Joshua (the) son of Jehozadak, the high priest' (cf. ASV, NASB, NIV, NRSV) can be understood to mean that Jehozadak was high priest. However, Zech 3:1, 8 clearly indicates that Joshua was high priest (see also Ezra 5:1-2; cf. NAB). The same potential misunderstanding occurs in Hag 1:12, 14 and 2:2, where the same solution has been employed in the translation" (*The NET Bible*, 4tn on Hag 1:1).

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. The experience of Exile under Babylonia and the continuing subservience to Persia made it crystal clear that tiny Judah was inextricably involved in the affairs of the surrounding world, no matter how distasteful that might be" (Merrill, 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" (Bright, 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. . . . 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' 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. 4 **paneled houses** "The Hebrew term for 'ceiled' occurs only in connection with the building of the Temple (1 Kings 6:9; 7:3, 7, 'covered'; 6:15, 'ceiling') and of Jehoiakim's magnificent palace (Jer 22:14, 'ceiled') and here. Such expensive homes were naturally furnished with every conceivable convenience, comfort, and luxury. Such people could not plead poverty!" (Theo. Laetsch, *Bible Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 388).

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."

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Rather than become a spiritual victim of your misplaced priorities,
focus on the Lord and his will for your life.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

We all have 742 things to do and everything must be done today. Our list is long and arduous and oftentimes causes stress and anxiety. We need to do the work stuff because we've got to put food on the table and pay the ever-increasing electricity bill. We need to do the home stuff because if we don't our mess of a house will implode around us. We need to do the carpooling and running around because education is important and if kids don't participate in all the activities they'll get involved with the wrong crowd and do drugs and go to prison. We need to do the working out and eating right to keep healthy, though we barely have time to drive through Chick-fil-A on our way to the next event. We fall into bed exhausted at the end of the day with our mind already churning and playing out the list for tomorrow. We're on the hamster wheel of life, and somewhere along the way we've forgotten the most important thing—living for God. We've forgotten do our job with excellence and work to God's glory. We've been too embarrassed about our home to show hospitality. We've traded God's glorious natural foods for drive-through burgers and wads of chicken. We've been so busy schlepping our kids around we've taken our hands off the wheel of discipleship. Get off the hamster wheel and get on your knees. Prayerfully ask God what He thinks is important for your life. Pause and listen, read His word and pursue that which brings glory to the Kingdom. We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Haggai 1:1-11

1. What did the people say about rebuilding the Lord's house?
2. What did the Lord command His people to do?
3. Why did the Lord want the temple to be rebuilt?

What Do You Think?

Why were the people focused on rebuilding their own house and not the Lord's temple?

What Do You Do?

On a piece of paper draw a line down the middle from top to bottom. On one side, list things that distract you from God. On the other, list things that will help you focus on God. Practice the things that bring you closer to God this week.

CORE COMPETENCY: Single-Mindedness

I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week's verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

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.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

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

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.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

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

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

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

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

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

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.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

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.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

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

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

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

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

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

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

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

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

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

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.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

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.

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.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

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

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.