



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V26 N46 November 17, 2024

UNDISTRACTED

“Getting Past the Past”

Haggai 2:10-19

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Peace

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

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7



How does sin create anxiety?



Anxiety can come from many different sources. We can be stressed by financial pressures, relational conflict, unmet expectations and even the weather. One of the most easily preventable forms of stress would be the anxiety we bring upon ourselves through dishonesty or a lack of integrity. When we lie, cheat, steal or behave in ways to selfishly benefit ourselves, we often overlook the leftover, stressful residue of guilt, shame or excuse making. Lying can make us anxious.

A number of psychological studies of late have analyzed the affects of lying upon brain activity, body stress and even biological change. Researchers from UC Berkeley and Harvard stated in a research review article that “lying, being selfish, cheating, and engaging in infidelity are associated with a suite of negative health outcomes such as elevated heart rate, increased blood pressure, vasoconstriction, elevated cortisol, and a significant depletion of the brain regions needed for appropriate emotional and physiological regulation. The direct downstream consequences from dishonesty on long-term damage to brain, body, and biology is unknown; however, a great deal of research exists already suggesting strongly that events causing bio-insult in the short term inevitably result in longer-term damage” (L. ten Brinke, J.J. Lee, D.R. Carney, “The Physiology of (Dis)Honesty: Does it Impact Health?,” *COPSYC* (2015)).

These same researchers suggest that not only does dishonesty produce these effects for the liar but also that merely observing dishonesty can produce negative physiological phenomena in the experience of the observers. These researchers conclude “that merely viewing someone lying about not having committed a murder (versus telling the truth) causes two distinct physiological changes: increases in arousal as evidenced by upward shifts in electrodermal activity (EDA) and decreases in cardiac efficiency as evidenced by blood flowing away from the periphery in a threat-like reaction. The adaptive utility of such a reaction is to send the blood to the heart and other vital organs because these physiological responses signal to the observer there is a danger in the environment. Both increases in EDA and vasoconstriction are associated directly and indirectly to negative health outcomes as described previously. More gener-

ally, the negative physiological reaction occurring in the dishonest actor may be contagious to observers.”

When we live with a lack of integrity, we can often feel the weight of that dishonesty deeply. David, in his confessional Psalm, pleaded for forgiveness and relief from the sin and guilt he felt in his “inward parts,” “hidden parts,” and in “the bones” that God had judged (Ps 51:6-7). David prayed for a “clean heart” and renewed, steadfast spirit within himself (Ps. 51:10). David observed about God: “For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise” (Ps. 51:16-17). When we sin we damage our spirit and can often feel anxiety and pain even in our bodies.

Researchers have also observed a rather disturbing development related to humans and persistent dishonesty. Neurologists from University College London and Duke University have concluded in their research that there is “empirical evidence for a gradual escalation of self-serving dishonesty and reveal a neural mechanism supporting it. Behaviorally, we show that the extent to which participants engage in self-serving dishonesty increases with repetition. Using fMRI we show that signal reduction in the amygdala is sensitive to the history of dishonest behavior, consistent with adaptation. Critically, the extent of amygdala BOLD reduction to dishonesty on a present decision relative to the last, predicts the magnitude of escalation of self-serving dishonesty on the next decision. The findings uncover a biological mechanism that supports a ‘slippery slope’: what begins as small acts of dishonesty can escalate into larger instances” (*Nat Neurosci*, 2016 Oct 24;19 (12): 1727-1732).

When we allow dishonesty to fester, we may be less bothered by its presence. We may not even realize that we are out of step with God as we serve him. God may actually see our service as defiled (Hg 2:14). Contemplation, confession and contrition should be regular practices for followers of Christ (1 Cor. 11:27-32). The peace that God promises (Ph 4:7) guards our hearts and minds from contaminants that would rob us of that peace. “Clean hands, pure heart, good grace, good God” should be our constant prayer and refrain.

Read Haggai 2:10-19

10 *On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Haggai: 11 "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Ask the priests what the law says: 12 If someone carries consecrated meat in the fold of their garment, and that fold touches some bread or stew, some wine, olive oil or other food, does it become consecrated?'"*

The priests answered, "No."

13 *Then Haggai said, "If a person defiled by contact with a dead body touches one of these things, does it become defiled?"*

"Yes," the priests replied, "it becomes defiled."

14 *Then Haggai said, "'So it is with this people and this nation in my sight,' declares the Lord. 'Whatever they do and whatever they offer there is defiled.*

15 *"Now give careful thought to this from this day on – consider how things were before one stone was laid on another in the Lord's temple. 16 When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty. 17 I struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew and hail, yet you did not return to me,' declares the Lord. 18 'From this day on, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, give careful thought to the day when the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid. Give careful thought: 19 Is there yet any seed left in the barn? Until now, the vine and the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have not borne fruit.*

"From this day on I will bless you."

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

- Above the words "ninth month" (v.10), write the reference "see vv. 1-9."
- Circle all the names of God in v. 10 through v. 19.
- Underline each occurrence of the word "priests" in v. 11 through v. 13.
- Draw a box around each use of the word "consecrated" or "defiled" in v. 12 through v. 14.
- Double circle "touches" in v. 12 through v. 13.
- Double underline the word "So" in v. 14.
- Draw a double box around the phrase "give careful thought" in v. 15 and v. 18.
- Triple underline the phrase "from this day on" in v. 15 through v. 19.
- Draw a line from the word "I" in v. 19 to the identified source of that word earlier in the passage.

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. What was the message from the Lord according to Haggai 2:10-11 and when did the message come?
 2. What was the question and answer about “consecrated meat”?
 3. How is the question in v. 13 similar to or different from the one in v. 12?
 4. What is the point of the questions to the priests according to v. 14?
 5. How does the charge of defilement (Hg 2:14) compare to the warnings regarding neglect (Hg. 1:2-11; 2:15-19)?
 6. What is involved in giving “careful thought” (Hg 1:5, 7; 2:15, 18)?
 7. To what day is “from this day on” referring? What is significant about this day?
 8. What was the key problem of the people, identified in v. 17?
 9. Put in your own words what v. 19 is all about.
 10. How is it possible for God to bless (v. 19b) even when he is not fully pleased with the actions of his people (vv. 11-19a)?
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The third major message or “word of the Lord” in the book of Haggai is introduced in 2:10-19. While the first two messages from God focused on the rebuilding of the fallen temple (1:3-11) and its restoration of glory (2:1-9), this third message focused on the holiness of those building the temple. A restored temple would allow the people of Judah to follow all of the laws of Moses, including sacrifices and offerings. This restored temple would also serve as a witness to all the world of the glory of the one true God (Haggai 1:8). Those rebuilding the temple may have fostered the false notion that participating in such a great work would make them more holy and pleasing to God. Maybe some of the temple’s holiness would “rub off” on them as they built it. Or they may have thought that incorporating idolatrous items or practices they picked up from their exile in Babylon could be sanctified by their work on the temple. “The people were apparently thinking that, since they, as God’s holy and chosen people, were working on the holy temple, all that they contacted and did became holy. Another view is that the LORD sought to discourage His people from taking gifts from pagan rulers and using them to build the temple (cf. Ezra 6:8-10)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Haggai,” soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/haggai.pdf, 34).

In this third major message, the Lord Almighty instructed the prophet Haggai to ask the priests of the nation a question about the legal and ceremonial implications of clean and unclean statutes as found in the Torah, the law of Moses. It is noteworthy to consider that the returning remnant from Babylon had identifiable “priests” who served the nation without a temple. The fact that the priests spoke authoritatively and provided direction related to the way the people of God should live shows that the priests served as more than just ceremonial officiants. The priests were supposed to be voices of wisdom, judgment and righteousness among the people. “This legal function of the priests was as central to their role in Israelite society as the task of delivering the Word was for the prophet and good counsel was to the elders (Jer. 18:18). It was also crucial to the moral health of God’s people that the priests should be faithful in this task, or in many cases the people would not know which way was right and would stumble into sin. Indeed, this was Ezekiel’s central indictment of the priesthood of his day – that, instead of teaching God’s law faithfully, they ‘do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean’ (Ezek. 22:26, NIV)” (Iain M. Duguid, *A Study Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, EP Study Commentary, 48). The accusation of the prophet (2:14) may suggest the priests had faltered in their task of holding the people to the standard of God’s law.

Haggai asked two questions of the priests: first a question regarding consecration and second a question about defilement. If a piece of meat offered in a sacrifice, most likely a fellowship offering rather than a sin offering (see note on v. 12), was taken home in a garment or napkin, could that consecrated item make other foods that it might touch consecrated as well? The one-word and resounding answer of the priests was “No!” Holiness is not typically transferable from

holy things to unholy things. Case in point: when the holy Ark of the Covenant was being moved by King David on a cart and it began to slip, the well-intentioned Uzzah did not become holy by touching it but was judged as “irreverent” and suffered death as a result. The holy can be profaned or made unholy. Rarely is holiness transferable by touch or association. Defilement is easily transferred. The work we do for God can be sullied by our own hypocrisy and inattention to righteous living. “The distillation of Haggai’s exchange with the priests on the question of ritual purity is the theological truth that holiness is not transferable, while impurity is transferable. The prophet then draws the logical and disturbing conclusion that the work and the worship of the people are defiled by virtue of impurity contaminating the community (2:14). Haggai’s audience assumed that their service and sacrificial offerings were made pure and acceptable to God as a result of ‘contact’ with the ordained priesthood and YHWH’s holy temple. Here the prophet had to correct wrong thinking and bad theology” (Andrew E. Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 28, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, 88–89).

Holiness and devotion to God are a matter of the heart (2:15-19). Three times in this passage Haggai challenges the people to “give careful thought” to the matters before them. Specifically he reminds the people to pay close attention to the “day when the foundation of the Lord’s temple was laid.” This was most likely a day of dedication of the temple rebuilding. Even though the work on the temple was begun earlier (1:14), it was on this day, the “twenty-fourth day of the ninth month” that the foundation of the temple was laid. This “careful thought” was the matter of “putting one’s heart” or “focusing one’s heart” upon the significance what this foundation day meant. Haggai exhorted the people to remember with their heart their pitiful condition before the work on the temple began (2:15-17). He also challenged them to consider their current state of need (2:19a). Instead of casually assuming that their participation in temple construction sanctified them, they needed to give great, heartfelt attention to how they were coming to the work of God. Even when working for God, God is looking for us to “return” to him (2:17).

Finally, as the people gave “careful thought” with their hearts, they were to trust in God who promised to bless them “from this day” (2:19b). God was promising that with the inauguration of the temple foundation stones he would bless the people for their faith and obedience to him. According to Haggai’s message, the people should give extra attention to how they were observing God’s commands while they built the temple (2:11-14). They should also work on the temple with their hearts fully focused on God (2:15-19). Clean hands and pure hearts make the blessings of God more delectable (Ps. 24:3-4).

Although we today, as followers of Jesus, are not building temples, we are seeking God’s blessings of peace and favor. Seeking God first includes seeking God’s righteousness (Mt 6:33). Serving God with clean hands frees us from hypocrisy and the weight of guilt and shame from secret sins. Serving God with a pure heart frees us from the imbalance of incongruity. Ask God frequently for his forgiveness and strive to live and serve him in holiness to know his love and completeness (1Jn 1:8-2:6).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 11 *preists* “The request itself attests the status or influence of the priests in the community even at this time in history. It also presumes that the priests are sufficiently versed in the cultic tradition to provide a response that is at least consistent with the prophetic understanding. Thus, quite apart from the existence of the temple, the priests still had influence in the community. This authority would also be manifested in their performance of sacrifices at the altar” (Mignon R. Jacobs, *Haggai and Malachi*, New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament, 96).

v. 12 *meats* “There are several types of offerings of well-being (*šelem*): thanksgiving, votive, and free-will offerings (Lev 7:15–18). The meat of the thanksgiving offering was to be eaten the same day; however, the meat of both the votive and the free-will offerings could be eaten up to two days after the sacrifice had been made. Meyers and Meyers therefore conclude that the offering of well-being, *šelem*, is the offering alluded to in Hag 2:12. The layperson may eat of that meat and may have been allowed to take it home” (Jacobs, 97).

v. 12 *consecrated* “Haggai is asserting that sanctity is nontransferable but that defilement is. Or rather, sanctity can be transmitted only through direct contact with a sacred substance or person and not via a third party or object, whereas contamination can be transmitted both directly and indirectly. This provides an interesting distinction that says something about holiness, which is closely related to the concept of purity, and its opposite – defilement and the related state of impurity. That these categories have contrasting properties means that sanctity, which surrounds God, is much more difficult to contract than is uncleanness, which is apparently very contagious” (Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, vol. 25B, Anchor Yale Bible, 79).

v. 13 *defiled* “Persons who have become ceremonially unclean on account of a dead body are excluded from celebrating the Passover (Num. 9:6) and are sent away from the camp (Num. 5:2). To be ritually defiled disqualifies one from having part in the organized worship in all its functions and activities. The answer of the priests in the affirmative that the food would become contaminated when an unclean person touches it is in full accordance with the stipulations of the Law: the person who touches something defiled by a corpse will himself be unclean (Lev. 21:11; 22:4; Num. 5:2; 6:6–7; 9:6), and anything that an unclean person touches becomes unclean (Num. 19:22)” (Pieter A. Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, 118).

v. 13 *So* “God is drawing an analogy between the defilement in the scenario and the defilement of the people. Note the repetition of the Hebrew word *ken* (‘so,’ which looks back to the priests’ answer) three times in verse 14 before repeating the priests’ answer again at the end of the verse: (lit.) ‘So this people, and so this nation before me, declares the LORD, and so all the works of their hands, and [as a result] that which they offer there is defiled.’ ... The people’s offerings were defiled because the people were defiled” (Mark J. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, The NIV Application Commentary, 145).

v. 14 *whatever they do* “‘So,’ Haggai says, ‘this nation and all of the work of their hands and their sacrifices are unclean.’ Haggai seems to be saying that just restoring the temple building is not enough. The temple was no fetish. Its presence did not guarantee God’s blessings. Jeremiah in his temple sermon made it clear that the people’s right actions and attitudes brought security and blessings (Jer 7). ‘This people’ of Haggai was rebuilding the temple, but probably had not reformed their lives” (Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, vol. 32, Word Biblical Commentary, 160).

v. 15 *consider* “This is an abbreviated form of the expression ‘put your heart on your ways’ (cf. 1:5, 7), with the meaning ‘consider the relationship between your conduct and your experiences.’ The conduct was referred to in the preceding verses, and the experiences were implied in the conclusion that this people, with all they have achieved and offered, were impure (v. 14). In this context, however, the people’s consideration is required for their new experiences, from now on and afterward” (Verhoef, 121).

v. 15 *from this day on* “These verses mark the date of the prophet’s speech as a turning point. ‘But now’ in Haggai serves a transitional function (see 1:5; 2:4). ‘From this day onward’ marks this day as a pivotal moment from which a change should be visible. With the laying of ‘stone upon stone,’ the prophet expects the situation to change for the people’s benefit. The reference to placing stone upon stone likely refers to more than merely the beginning of the construction phase. Recent studies demonstrate that Haggai presupposes an official rededication ceremony designed to purify the temple site and the altar where sacrifice was already taking place. An altar had existed at the temple ruins, and some initial construction of the temple foundations may have taken place in the time of Sheshbazzar (see Ezra 5:16), but apparently none of the prior work had been completed to the extent that a ritual cleansing of the temple area could have taken place” (James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea–Malachi*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, 790).

v. 17 *struck* “Blight and mildew may thus represent a merism referring to the effect of exposure to excess heat and moisture. The third element used by Yahweh was hail (*bārād*), which was also one of the plagues used to strike Egypt (Exod 9:18–35). The force of this form of precipitation may destroy vegetation and livestock (Exod 10:5–15; Ps 78:47–48; Isa 28:2, 17). Yahweh claims responsibility for all these agents used to strike the community (Jacobs, 112).

v. 19 *bless* “The people could take comfort in the promise of the Lord’s renewed blessing and the attendant reversal of conditions of economic hardship. Once again the Lord would work in their behalf. The final words of v. 19 are these: ‘From this day on I will bless you.’ This blessing would have temporal and tangible dimensions, since it refers primarily to renewed productivity of the land as a result of the Lord’s lifting the agricultural and economic curses that had come due to the people’s disobedience. But their future was brighter than their past. ... His blessings would accompany the obedience of his people” (Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, vol. 21A, The New American Commentary, 190).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

As you serve God, turn your whole heart toward him and pay close attention to following him, avoiding unrighteous compromises.

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

In the iconic movie *The Princess Bride*, Inigo Montoya responds to Vizzini’s constant use of, “Inconceivable,” with, “You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.” Much in the same way, there can be confusion with the word Christian. Many people think being born in the USA makes them a Christian. Or they think that because they were raised in a home with active church attendance, they’re definitely a Christian. Some even think that if they know about and believe there’s a God, they can call themselves Christian. I remember the first few times I attended church in my mid-twenties wondering what exactly it meant to be a Christian. How does one get the card to join this club? I very quickly learned that Christianity isn’t transferable by birth or proximity. It’s not how hard you work to be good or even knowing about God. Becoming a Christian is recognizing the depravity of your own sin, confessing this sin and seeking the Lord’s forgiveness through the work of Jesus Christ’s death on the cross. With this comes the unbelievable blessing of all that comes with being a follower of Christ – peace in difficult circumstances, joy in a fallen world and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the presence of our holy God with us always. Parents, please don’t assume your kids will get it because they live in a home of believers or regularly attend church. Your most important job is to share the good news of salvation through Jesus and to consistently lead your kids to the Savior in discipleship. Salvation is by faith alone. It’s “inconceivable!”

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Haggai 2:10-19

1. What question does Haggai ask in verse 12 and how do the priests respond?
2. What question does Haggai ask in verse 13 and how do the priests respond?
3. In verses 15-19, what happened before obedience?

What Do You Think?

Why is the Lord extending His blessing?

What Do You Do?

Obedience brings blessing. This week, do your very best to obey your parents. How are you blessed because of this obedience?

CORE COMPETENCY: Peace

I live without worry because things are good between God, myself and others.

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 51:10

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

KidPIX COUPON

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.

Eric Wright (B.A. Biblical Studies, Faithway College, Th.M. Pastoral Ministry, Dallas Theological Seminary). Eric served as a pastor in churches in Michigan and Texas for 15 years. He currently serves as a business administrator for a local medical practice. Eric has ministered for over 12 years internationally in Southeast Asia teaching the Gospel of Mark to seminary students and volunteers locally with International Students Inc. at UT Arlington.

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**

8001 Anderson Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76120
817-274-1315
wearecentral.org

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