

"God Pushed to the Sidelines"

Haggai 1:1-4

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Background

Starting on Sunday, we'll begin a short five week series exploring the great prophetic book of Haggai from the Old Testament. Our series title is "Keeping God First". We should find this series very practical for our everyday lives, especially as we begin a new year where we often want to focus on getting our priorities in the right order. Having our relationship with God at the top of the list is pretty important! This Sunday, we'll kick off our series by exploring the opening four verses of Haggai (1:1-4). Please read and reflect on these verses prior to Sunday if you can! Let's be in prayer that God's word would transform us each time we read and reflect on its truth. See you Sunday!

Sermon Text *Haggai 1:1-4*

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?”

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?
- What is the best thing you heard on Sunday?

2. Sunday Questions:

1. The Conflict of "Me-First" Culture

The sermon suggests that we live in a "me-first" culture that can subtly displace God from our daily lives, using the example of how we quickly acclimated to "email culture". How have you seen modern conveniences or societal expectations subtly shift your priorities away from God? What are the "me-centric" choices you find most difficult to resist in your current stage of life?

2. Discerning God's Timing vs. Our Own

In Haggai 1:2, the people claimed, "The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built". The sermon notes that they had been back in the land for 18 years and had stopped rebuilding due to various pressures. How do we distinguish between a genuine "not yet" from God and a delay caused by our own indifference or fear? How can we tell if we are "pushing God to the sidelines" while waiting for a more convenient time to serve Him?

3. Understanding the "Lord Almighty"

The sermon emphasizes that the title "Lord Almighty" refers to a God who is both exceedingly good and rules over all earthly powers. Why is it necessary to have both a "cognitive" (intellectual) and "heart-experienced" understanding of God's nature before we can truly prioritize Him? If you only believed in His power but not His goodness, how would your response to His commands change?

4. Intentionality in Decisions

The speaker clarifies that changing jobs or taking vacations isn't inherently wrong, but doing so without "inviting God into our decision-making" is where we falter. What does "prayerful intentionality" look like in practical,

everyday decisions? How can a family or an individual create a habit of consulting God for things that seem "basic" or "simplistic"?

5. Seeking God in Despair and Indifference

The sermon mentions that God's people needed His presence in the midst of both "despair" (from decades of exile) and "indifference" (after 18 years of settling in) . Which of these two states—despair or indifference—do you find more dangerous to your spiritual life? Based on the character of God described in Psalm 103, how does God uniquely meet us in each of those two different seasons?