



reCONSTRUCTION

A study of Priorities from the prophet Haggai

TOOL KIT

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The latest is not always the greatest. In fact, the old and ancient is often better. The brief writing of the prophet Haggai is both ancient and great. Although it was written into a historical situation and to an immediate group of people that no longer exist, it remains deeply relevant to us today because of the central issue it addresses. No matter how you slice it, the prophecy of Haggai oozes this question, "What is most important?"

The ancients may not have struggled with time management in the same way that we do, but there is perhaps one social and personal tension that pervades culture and time: identifying the important. We all necessarily live according to certain priorities, even if that highest priority is a self-created sense of freedom from any constraints. Many live with self as priority. For others it is financial security or social preeminence. For some it is simply day-to-day survival. For those less myopic or less fettered-in by their circumstances, various relationships can occupy top spot. The options for life priority are as numerous as individual souls. But, is there any one priority that should be above all others?

The year is 539 B.C. Thousands of men, women and children have just finished the long and difficult journey from Babylon back to the land of their heritage. The home to which they returned is almost unrecognizable. Jerusalem, their capital city is destroyed; her walls have been pulled down and burned. What is more, her temple, the center of national life, lay in utter ruin. No stone is atop another.

Under the leadership of their governor and priest, the people immediately begin to reconstruct the temple. This is the priority because it both realized and symbolized God's presence among them.

However, within a few short years opposition overwhelmed the workers. Construction comes to a halt.

Stones, wood, and tools lay still for years.

Sixteen years.

Enter Haggai, a prophet of God.

August 29, 520 B.C. *"Thus says the LORD of hosts, "You people say that the time has not yet come...the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt."*

You can almost see it.

Foreground: Haggai the impassioned prophet is pleading with his kinsmen.

Background: the dusty stones and tools of the temple precinct lay still and silent.

The point is clear: the priorities of the people were misplaced. Cobwebs covered the most important.

But the prophecy of Haggai asks the same question today. The background has changed, but Haggai's impassioned plea is the same.

He asks, *"Where are your priorities? You say that the time has not come...the time to reconstruct. But it is here. The time is now."*

How to Use the Reconstruction Tool Kit

Instead of merely about knowledge, studying the Bible is primarily about knowing God and allowing Him to change our hearts and lives, thereby becoming tools for influence and change in the world. This is also one of the primary goals and core values of Faith Bible Church. To quote, “we value relevant biblical teaching that penetrates our hearts, renews our minds and transforms our lives. (**2 Timothy 3:16-17; Colossians 3:16-17**).”

The following pages aim to support and apply this core value. They contain a host of resources. You may use one of them or you may use all of them, depending on your specific need. That is why we have called them a “tool kit.” As we study Haggai’s prophecy of reconstruction in our corporate worship service on Sunday mornings, we want to equip you to enjoy the greatest amount of renewal and transformation from Haggai in other areas of your personal lives and church community. In order to help facilitate this, we offer the following tools.

Among the tools are two appendices that will be valuable to keep for future study in other areas. The first is simply a visual chart of the Old Testament writing prophets. It presents their chronology, audience, message, themes and other elements in an organizational and memorable way. The second is extensive notes on the spiritual disciplines written by Dr. Bill Yarger. We include this as a tool because each of the sermons and discussion sessions will include a spiritual discipline as a primary application.

Tools:

- Introduction to the book of Haggai
 - Relevant Historical Background
 - Theological Context
 - Author
 - Recipients
 - Important People and Terms
- Date and Chronology
- Outline of the book of Haggai
- Discussion Questions
- *Appendix – Resource: Spiritual Disciplines*
- *Appendix – Application: Scripture Memory Verses*
- *Appendix – Resource: Chart of Old Testament Writing Prophets*

Introduction

As with every piece of literature, the historical background for the book of Haggai is extremely important. The book cannot be properly understood apart from its historical context. This section will quickly review this context including the recipients of the prophecy, the theological context, the date of writing and the wider Old Testament historical setting. All of these are essential elements of a proper understanding of Haggai’s prophecy.

Historical Background – It is difficult to overstate the effect of being forcefully removed from the land of your heritage and national identity to a foreign land under an oppressive ruler. This is exactly the situation in which hundreds of thousands of Jews found themselves in the early sixth century B.C. under the Babylonians.

Exile – From the beginning, God warned the nation of Israel that although their relationship was everlasting and based on His sovereign choice of them by grace, their fellowship could experience tremendous distance based on their obedience to His revealed will, most specifically the Mosaic Law. If they disobeyed and rebelled, God would remove them from the land. (See **2 Kings 17:6-20**) In 722 B.C. the Northern kingdom, then simply called “Israel,” was captured by the Assyrians. A large majority of its inhabitants were removed from their land and taken back to Assyria in “exile,” which was a typical war tactic of that time. Later, in the sixth century B.C., the Babylonians rose to power, conquered the Assyrians and then moved further into the land of Israel. In 605 and 597 B.C. the Babylonians took thousands of the inhabitants of the southern kingdom called “Judah” away into exile in Babylon. In 586 B.C. the city of Jerusalem finally fell to its siege and the city, its walls and the temple were completely destroyed. The third and final deportation to Babylon for “exile” ensued thereafter. Although Jeremiah prophesied that this exile would only last 70 years (**Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10**), many of those who were deported into these exiles either died there or voluntarily chose to stay, reorganizing their life according to the new pagan culture, compromising their Jewish religious beliefs, or struggling to maintain Jewish practices in a land that was oppressive. This time period produced many important writings, including translations and interpretations of the Old Testament, that prove useful for Biblical study even today. Almost 20 years before Haggai’s ministry, King Cyrus allowed Jews to return to Jerusalem (539 B.C.) and about 50,000 made the long trip home (**Ezra 1-2**). These returnees, largely laymen volunteers instead of skilled craftsmen, immediately began reconstruction of the temple.

The altar, which was essentially a very large wood grill in the temple court, was rebuilt by September 537 (**Ezra 3:3-4**). The foundation of the temple was repaired about two years later (**Ezra 3:8-10**). An interesting side note here: this work on the temple began in the same month that Solomon began building the temple 430 years earlier (**1 Kings 6:1**). This success, accompanied by great rejoicing, aroused the Samaritans and other enemies of the Jews who feared that a renewal of the Jewish state would compromise some of their local interests. Their opposition and politics caused the reconstruction to come to a halt. Although the lethargy of the Jews was an even greater factor than this opposition (**Ezra 5:1-2**), their efforts of reconstruction lay dormant for almost 16 years.

Darius the Great (explored below) came to power in 522 B.C. His powerful reign was marked by an interest in the religions of his many subjects. Thus the temple reconstruction in Jerusalem enjoyed a greater support under Darius. Haggai and Zechariah began to preach in the second year of his reign.

Theological Context – While the promises of God were accompanied with a list of blessings and curses in **Deuteronomy 28**, chapter **30** of this same book records a promise of restoration. Haggai, as does Zechariah and Malachi, focuses largely on this hope of restoration.

This hope is nurtured by realizing both the providential care of God's people during their exile and their restoration. This can be physically seen in the reconstruction of the temple, but it has invisible corollaries in people's hearts.

In addition to these central Deuteronomy texts, Haggai seems to allude to and echo several other key Old Testament texts including **Genesis 3:15; Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 4:6-8; Joshua 1:6-18; 2 Samuel 7:13-16; and Isaiah 11:1-10.**

The divine name YHWH (the LORD) occurs thirty-four times in the only thirty-eight verses of his book. Fourteen of these uses stress a specific aspect of the LORD's character and power with the epithet "LORD of hosts." These two related factors become major tools in Haggai's theological polemic.

Author – We actually know very little about the prophet Haggai. He is only mentioned outside the compilation of his prophecies in the book of Ezra. See **Ezra 5:1; 6:14.** J. Alec Motyer, a commentarian on Haggai, states that "Haggai left for us all he felt we needed to know – that he enjoyed the highest honor known to humankind: he was the Lord's prophet (**1:1**), the Lord's messenger with the Lord's commission (**1:13**)." His name is derived from the Hebrew word for "festival," and is therefore understood as "festal" or "my feast," or perhaps "festival of Yahweh." It may indicate that the prophet was born during one of the three important Jewish festivals (Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, or Tabernacles). It may be relevant that Haggai's second oracle takes place during the feast of Tabernacles (**2:1**). Nothing else is known about Haggai's background or family lineage. This non-specification is likely due to his well-known status among the Jews of his time. Based on the comment of **2:3**, Haggai may have been among those that witnessed the destruction of Solomon's temple in 586 B.C. If so, he must have been, at the least, in his late 70's during his prophetic ministry. But this is only conjecture.

Recipients – The text betrays that each of the four messages of Haggai had a specific audience in mind. The first verse of Haggai's prophecy names two specific recipients of **the first oracle**: Zerubbabel the governor of Judah, and Joshua the high priest. These two men were the political and religious leaders of the remnant that returned from Babylon. But it would seem that the following oracles had a wider audience in mind.

Haggai 2:2 names a third recipient in addition to Zerubbabel and Joshua for **the second oracle**, namely "the remnant of the people." This oracle, as did the full compilation, had a wider audience in mind.

The third oracle had special relevance to the priests that served with and under Joshua (**Haggai 2:11**). This relevance also had implications for "this people" and "this nation" (**2:14**).

The fourth and final oracle was addressed specifically to Zerubbabel (**2:21, 23**), but was recorded for the posterity of a wider audience.

Important People and Terms – There are several characters and terms that need to be explored in the background of Haggai.

Darius – Darius I Hystaspes, or “the Great,” was a prosperous king of the Medo-Persian Empire (522-486 B.C.). The Persians under Cyrus conquered the Babylonians to rule the Ancient Near East. Darius’ rule stretched into the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. The books Ezra and Daniel have much to say about both Darius and Cyrus his predecessor; see **Ezra 4-6** and **Daniel 5:31; 6:1-28; 9:1; 11:1**.

Zerubbabel – The Governor of Judah (the Southern Kingdom) at this time was Zerubbabel, who was appointed by Cyrus, King of Persia (**Ezra 2:2-5:2; Nehemiah 7:7; 12:1-47; Zechariah 4**). It is difficult to ascertain exactly what freedoms and powers Zerubbabel enjoyed at this time, but it is clear that his office was one of honor and authority. He is named as a descendent of Shealtiel, but whether he was his father, or uncle or grandfather is unclear (**Ezra 3:2**). In the New Testament, Shealtiel is listed in the genealogy of Jesus as a descendent of David through his son Nathan (**Luke 3:27; Matthew 1:12-13**).

Joshua – The high priest of the temple precinct (still almost wholly in ruins at this time) was Joshua. The high priest was the most important religious and spiritual office in Israel. He was considered the supreme religious head of Israel, distinguished by different clothing, duties and requirements from regular priests. Joshua was of the line of Zadok, the high priest whom David appointed, a descendent of Elieazar (**1 Chronicles 16:39**). Because there was no king installed, Joshua would have had some political power as well.

Prophet – It need only be stated here that the office of prophet in the Old Testament was one of extremely high honor. The Old Testament prophets were God’s chosen messengers and received their call directly from God (See **Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:13-16**). They declared God’s words to both common people and kings. The messages of the so-called “writing prophets” were later compiled and written down for circulation and posterity. Quite a few other prophets such as Gad, Nathan, Ahijah, Shemaiah, Azariah, Elijah, Elisha and John the Baptist (actually the last Old Testament prophet) spoke messages that were most likely not written down or circulated in written form. There are also several female prophets called “prophetesses” mentioned including Miriam and Deborah. Perhaps other women such as Hannah, Elizabeth, Mary and Anna functioned in a prophetic role (see **Exodus 15:20; Judges 5:2-31; 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Luke 1:41-55; 2:36-38; Acts 21:9**). Other men such as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Joshua are often not thought of as prophets but are called such in the Scriptures (see **2 Peter 2:5; Genesis 20:7; Psalm 105:9-15; Genesis 49; Deuteronomy 34:10-12; 34:9; Joshua 1:1-5**). For more information on Haggai, see *Author* above. For a chronological and organizational chart of all of the writing prophets, see the Appendix.

Oracle – While this term may conjure negative or pagan thoughts, it need not. “Oracle” is a neutral term referring to a message that was written, spoken or sung. In many cases, prophets of the Ancient Near East sung their prophetic messages. Old Testament prophets did the same (see **1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Chronicles 25:3**; etc.). “Oracle,” therefore, is a term synonymous with “prophesy” or “message.”

Temple – The Jewish Temple has a rich history. Moses originally received instructions from God to construct a temporary and portable tent complex in the wilderness of Sinai (Exodus 25-27). This tent or “Tabernacle” was moved regularly throughout the wilderness for 40 years and then brought into the land of Canaan under Joshua. It was pitched at Shiloh (**Joshua 18:1**) and remained there until the time of David and Solomon (**2 Samuel 7:1-3**). Solomon finally

constructed the great and permanent temple in Jerusalem as a replacement of the Tabernacle (**1 Kings 6-8**). This temple stood until its destruction in 586 B.C. under the Babylonians. It remained in ruins for the 70 years that the Jews remained in exile. In 539 B.C., Cyrus allowed 50,000 Jews to return and they quickly began reconstruction. **Ezra 4** records the initial attempt to rebuild the destroyed temple, the halt in construction due to opposition, and the revival of construction some sixteen years later under Darius. This brings us to the ministry of Haggai.

Signet Ring – This ring was used by an official much like a personal signature to give authority to a message or document. (See **Genesis 41:42; Esther 3:10; 8:2; Daniel 6:17**) Moreover, it was a symbol of *royal* authority. Zerubbabel's comparison to a signet ring in **Haggai 2:23** signified that God had honored him with authority. This comparison also looked to the future for a fuller fulfillment of God's design for a ruler endowed with His authority.

Date

There is perhaps no other single background feature more important than the date of Haggai's ministry and writing. The essential historical and theological background above is also pertinent here.

Contemporaries – Besides the historical books **Ezra** and **Nehemiah**, the ministry of the prophet Zechariah overlapped with that of Haggai. However, his prophecies continue later into the reign of King Darius. (See **Zechariah 1:1, 7; 7:1**) While Haggai focused on the outward task of reconstruction, Zechariah focused on the inward task of spiritual reconstruction. And while Haggai focused primarily on the local situation in Jerusalem, Zechariah preached a more universal and end-time related message.

Malachi, also recorded last in our modern Old Testament canon, prophesied last in chronology. This final prophetic word from an Old Testament writing prophet was originally given after the wall was reconstructed under Nehemiah.

For the wider context we must expand our understanding of Old Testament with a specific focus on the end of the Old Testament canon, particularly the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which are the last books of the Old Testament chronologically. They record those events that happened last in time. The next event in time recorded in our Bible after Nehemiah is the ministry of John the Baptist.

Modern Calendar Dating for the book of Haggai

Haggai Reference	King Darius' Year	Month	Day	Calendar Date
1:1	2	6	1	August 29, 520 B.C.
1:15 (<i>reconstruction resumed</i>)	2	6	24	September 21, 520 B.C.
2:1	2	7	21	October 17, 520 B.C.
2:10	2	9	24	December 18, 520 B.C.
2:20	2	9	24	December 18, 520 B.C.

Wider Chronology of Israel's History

- c. 1446 B.C. Exodus from Egypt under Moses
- c. 1406 B.C. Entrance into the Promised Land under Joshua

Period of the Judges

- 1011-971 B.C. Reign of King David
- 971-931 B.C. Reign of King Solomon
- 930 B.C. The Jewish kingdom is divided into North and South – **1 Kings 12:16-24**

Period of the Kings

- 722 B.C. The northern Kingdom ("Israel") is taken into exile by the Assyrians
- 597 B.C. First deportation into exile of the southern K ("Judah") to Babylon
- 605 B.C. Second deportation (Daniel is among these exiles)
- 586 B.C. Jerusalem and Temple destroyed/Third deportation
- 538/539 B.C. Cyrus' decree to return/Temple reconstruction begins – **Ezra 1:2-4; 6:3-5**
- 536 B.C. Temple Reconstruction stopped
- 520 B.C. Prophecy of Haggai/Beginning of Zechariah/reconstruction resumed
- 516 B.C. Temple reconstruction completed
- 444 B.C. The wall of Jerusalem completed under Nehemiah

Outline

The book of Haggai is extremely easy to outline because of its organization. It is also the most precisely dated book in the Bible, each specific oracle beginning with a date relative to Darius' reign as seen above. The following outline recognizes these dates as the major divisions.

1:1-15 – Oracle One (August 29, 520 B.C.)

- 1:1 – Introduction
- 1:2-4 – Excuses and Rebuke
- 1:5-6 – Evidence of Covenant Curses
- 1:7-11 – Command for Reconstruction
- 1:12-15 – Obedience

2:1-9 – Oracle Two (October 17, 520 B.C.)

- 2:1-2 – Introduction
- 2:3-5 – Glory Comparison
- 2:6-9 – Promise of Future Glory and Peace

2:10-19 – Oracle Three (December 18, 520 B.C.)

- 2:10 – Introduction
- 2:11-14 – Moral Impurity

2:15-17 – Curses
2:18-19 – Blessings

2:20-23 – Oracle Four (December 18, 520 B.C.)

2:20 – Introduction
2:21-22 – God’s Promise
2:23 – God’s Signet Ring

Appendix – Resource: Spiritual Disciplines

This material has been largely gleaned from the teaching notes of Dr. Bill Yarger. Other helpful resources include books by Fil Anderson (*Running on Empty*), Richard Foster (*Celebration of Discipline*), Dallas Willard (*The Spirit of the Disciplines*), and Henri Nouwen (*The Way of the Heart* etc.).

Appendix – Application: Scripture Memory verses

This one-page list of verses contains central passages from the book of Haggai and important connecting verses. These can easily be transferred to note cards or can be printed and placed in several places in your routine such as the bathroom mirror, the car (for reference in PARK only!), the office, or your nightstand. This is just one more way to facilitate constant meditation on God’s Word.

Appendix – Resource: Chart of Old Testament Writing Prophets

This chart organizes every writing prophet in the Old Testament into a format designed for quick reference. They are arranged chronologically according to writing date. Obadiah and Joel are placed up front because their date is debated. The chart also includes the theme of each prophetic book according to Gary V. Smith and Norman Geisler.

Feedback

We would love your feedback. After you complete this entire study, either as an individual or in a group setting, we would love to hear your thoughts on this material. You can email Scot Pollok at spollok@faithbibleonline.org with any comments regarding the general format, introductory material, specific elements, missing elements, discussion questions, etc. Please put “tool kit” in the subject line.

We plan to refine this format of material and use it for future teaching series in the hope that it promotes and encourages integrated study material that is available church-wide. In this progressive experiment, we value your feedback.

Discussion Questions

The following pages have been divided into groups of verses that correspond to those verses taught in the Sunday morning corporate worship time. They also follow the outline above.

These questions have also been purposely organized for three distinct uses: *group discussion*, *personal study*, and *family devotions*. The main text is directed for use in small group Bible study and discussion. It is divided into three sections of questions: starter questions, a section that walks through the passage, and application. The footnotes are intended to foster deeper personal or devotional study (or provide more information for deeper group discussion). The boxed questions are intended for family discussion.

Reconstruction – Session One

Read Haggai 1:1-5

Starter Questions

If present, what was the most significant point in the message on Sunday?

Do you have any questions about the Sunday message?

What do you think was the MAIN IDEA of the sermon?

How would you rank the health of your priorities on a scale of 1 to 10? Why?

Family Questions

What is the most important thing in your life? Why?

What should be the most important thing? Why?

How do you change your priorities?

Walk Through the Passage

1. Who is the speaker and who are the immediate recipients of this oracle? Why these recipients? What is the significance of their role and authority?
2. What is significant about the title “LORD of hosts?”¹ Why do you think it is used here?
3. In verse 2, the “LORD of hosts” quotes the people. What is significant about this unexpected twist?
4. What is the quotation of the people? Why do you think they would say this? What do you suppose they were waiting for?
5. WHEN would be the “time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt?”
6. What can we tell about the role of a prophet from verse 3?² Who was understood as the ultimate speaker?
7. Does any other Old Testament situation come to mind from verse 4? (See **2 Samuel 7:1-2**)
8. What do you think God intended with “Consider your ways?”³
9. How does this statement read in different versions of the Bible? (NIV compared to NET or NLT)

Application Questions – “Consider Your Ways”

1. How do you relate to the Jews who lived daily amidst the ruins of their temple?
2. In what ways are there “temple ruins” in your life? What things are begging for more import?
3. What excuses do you most often offer to further delay your own spiritual reconstruction?
4. What are those things that capture your attention and affection the most? Why?
5. What things are you doing to nurture and positively affect your intimacy with God?

Challenge – Spiritual Discipline – Prayer

This is the central spiritual discipline. It is the language of dependence. But many of us struggle with a consistent and active prayer life. How can you experiment more deeply with prayer this week? How can you pray for yourself? For others? For our church? How can you pray for your prayer life? Try making a prayer schedule for this week, setting aside a time each day. Try keeping a note card in your pocket or purse with items to pray through. Remember, simple prayers are just as good as poetic ones.

¹ This title is used extensively throughout the OT. It carries a distinctive military context. “Hosts” in Hebrew refers to an army in war. What do you think this implies? What is it used here? For a study on the phrase see **1 Samuel 17:45; 2 Samuel 5:10-7:27; Psalm 24; 46; 80; 84; Isaiah 19; 22; Jeremiah 25-35; Amos 3-6; the whole of Zechariah and Malachi**. It is also used **14 times in the short book of Haggai**.

² Notice that the “word of the LORD” is communicated “**by** the prophet Haggai.” Thus the completely accurate truth of God is communicated through a sinful and corrupt man, in his style and vocabulary. A prophecy is not a trance-like state where a prophet’s voice changes and God uses them like a puppet. It is more personal and intimate. See **2 Samuel 24:11-13; 1 Kings 13:11-32**; etc. You can see this identification in **Haggai 1:12**.

³ This phrase can be translated literally “put your ways in your heart,” or “take to heart what you are doing.” It is a command. What does this imply? What does this statement mean in Haggai 1:5 and 1:7?

Reconstruction – Session Two

Read Haggai 1:3-15

Starter Questions

If present, what was the most significant point in the message on Sunday?
Do you have any questions about the Sunday message?
What do you think was the MAIN IDEA of the sermon?

Walk Through the Passage

1. What is the main issue in verse 4 (and verse 2)?
Do you think this was offensive?
2. “Consider your ways” literally meant to “engage your heart in your actions.” What is God asking the people to do? How would you put this command in your own words?
3. What do you think God is communicating in verse 6?⁴ What’s the message of these images?
4. What response does God want from His people in verse 8?⁵ What is His goal?
5. What does verse 9 mean in context? How does it relate to verse 6?
6. How would the people have interpreted verses 10-11 in light of **Deuteronomy 28:15-46**?⁶
Do you think it too much to say from verses 9-11: Nature obeys God but His people do not...?
7. What are the different responses of the people in verses 12-15?
8. Why do you suppose God said through Haggai, “I am with you”?⁷
9. How long did it take for God’s words through Haggai to convince the people? (cf. **1:1** and **1:15**)

Family Questions

Where does God live?

What do you think it means to “count the cost”?

How is God like a very good parent?

How does God ask us to change?
How does God help us to change?

Application Questions – “Consider Your Ways”

1. What do you “busy” yourself with in a typical week? What does that say about your priorities?
2. When will be the right time to take your personal relationship with God more seriously?
3. What direct consequences have you endured because of personal sin and disobedience?
4. How have you felt the “futility” of life like in **Haggai 1:6** (cf. **Deut 28:38**)?
5. Does God’s desire for more of your attention produce feelings of frustration, guilt, or shame?
Why? How are you comforted by God saying “I am with you”? (**1:13**; **2:4**)

Challenge – Spiritual Discipline – Fasting

Fasting is rarely understood in our culture, and it’s not just for a certain season of the year. The main idea behind the discipline of fasting is essentially that of priorities. We voluntarily go without, not in order to become worthy of God’s favor, but to reorder our understanding of what is most important. Choosing to go without food or a favorite extra for a certain period helps us to connect our physical sensation of hunger or want to a similar but unfelt spiritual hunger. While fasting one can say, “I want to hunger after God like I hunger after food.” This discipline is vitally connected to prayer. Fasting actually creates space or a void in which prayer can be magnified and clarified. Try it one day this week. Be sure to check the appendix for more information and suggestions.

⁴ See also **Micah 6:9**

⁵ What is most fascinating about the temple is that God never intended to actually “live” there. This stands in stark contrast to the pagan temples of the day which actually “housed” and “fed” the deities that lived there. See **1 Kings 8:22-53**. Mark the repetition of “hear in heaven” and note especially **8:27** and **9:3**. Where do they think God lives? Remember this is the dedicatory prayer for the grand opening of the first (and most glorious) temple. Compare the numbers of sacrifices in **8:5** and **8:63**.

⁶ **Deuteronomy 28-30** is a central passage in the history of Israel. Haggai refers or alludes to it often.

⁷ See also **Haggai 2:4-5**; **Acts 18:9-10**; **Isaiah 41:8-20**; **43:1-7**; **Jeremiah 30:10-11**; **42:11** and context.

Reconstruction – Session Three

Read Haggai 2:1-9

Starter Questions

If present, what was the most significant point in the message on Sunday?
Do you have any questions about the Sunday message?
What do you think was the MAIN IDEA of the sermon?

Walk Through the Passage

1. Who are the specific recipients of this oracle? Has it changed from 1:1?
2. What do you suppose the glory of the former temple was like? ⁸
3. Who is encouraged in verse 4? ⁹ How is “take courage” interpreted in other translations?
4. In verse 4, what is the basis given for the people to “take courage” or “be strong”?
5. In verse 5, to which promises does God refer? ¹⁰ How does God treat a promise?
6. Describe some of the attributes of God envisioned in verses 6-9.
7. How many times in this passage does “the LORD of hosts” appear? Is there a pattern? ¹¹
8. What is the connection between the outer “glory” of the Temple in verse 3 and the “glory” of the Temple in verse 9? Are they proportionate?

Family Questions

What are you most afraid of?
When is God not with me?
How strong is God?
What are some things God can't do?
Where does God's Spirit live?

Application Questions – “Consider Your Ways”

1. Have you ever been awestruck by something like a mountain or a building? How did you feel?
2. Do you struggle with comparison? Do you compare your body image or gifts with others? Why?
3. God's words in **2:4-9** instruct us that external comparisons are often empty and useless. Why?
4. How is God telling you to “take courage”? How do you need to step out in faith?
5. What difference would it make if you were constantly aware that God was with you?
6. What do you fear most? How would awareness of God's abiding Spirit dispel fear in your life?

Challenge – Spiritual Discipline – Silence and Solitude

Silence and solitude seem to be on the endangered list in our culture. Some would even regard them as scary or anxiety-ridden. But the fact is that God has created us for rest and quiet. This was one of the original intentions of the commanded Sabbath law. For us today, these disciplines may be even more important. Silence and solitude are not intended as an end in themselves though. They cooperate with the other disciplines of meditation and prayer by creating space for the Holy Spirit to do the work that only He can do – spiritual reconstruction. It seems God likes to whisper. We must be quiet to hear. How can you experiment with this discipline this week? Check the appendix for more suggestions.

⁸ **1 Kings 6** describes in detail the size and extravagance of the first temple. The temple was 90 feet long, 30 feet wide and 45 feet high. It had about 2,700 square feet of floor space. Its large open front porch added 15 more feet to its length. It faced east as did the tabernacle and other ancient Near Eastern temples of this time. This is an example of God revealing Himself in a recognizable way with vastly different details (see footnote 4 above). Jewish records reveal that in the morning the rising sun shone of the golden doors in awesome blinding fashion. What do the images in **1 Kings 6:23-36** remember? Where else do we see trees, flowers and cherubim? What did the Temple commemorate?

⁹ See **Joshua 1:6, 7, 9, 18**. Haggai's “be strong” is only the first half of Joshua's formula “be strong and courageous.” But **Joshua 4:24** makes a deeper connection. What is it?

¹⁰ For starters see **Exodus 19:4-6; 29:45-46; 33:12-14; 34:8-10**.

¹¹ For more background see Session One, footnote one.

Reconstruction – Session Four

Read Haggai 2:10-19

Starter Questions

If present, what was the most significant point in the message on Sunday?
Do you have any questions about the Sunday message?
What do you think was the MAIN IDEA of the sermon?

Walk Through the Passage

1. Were the priests active in their sacrificial duties at this time? ¹²
2. What was the point in this dialogue-style prophecy?
Why was this question/answer style especially poignant here?
3. What were the social and spiritual consequences of being “unclean”? ¹³
4. What is the stated conclusion or connection in verse 14?
5. What is the stated result in the succeeding verses? What is the Old Testament background? ¹⁴
6. How many times does “consider” or “set your heart” appear in this passage? What is the reason for this placement? What is God’s purpose in this repeated command?
7. What dramatic change concludes this oracle? What is the connection of this change to the rest of the prophecy?

Application Questions – “Consider Your Ways”

1. How much disparity exists between your internal and external life? Why?
2. What does “holy” mean? How do people try to make their life or lifestyle “holy”?
3. How did Jesus reverse the normal flow of Old Testament unclean-ness? ¹⁵ What significance does this have in the bigger picture of God’s redemption?
4. How can you increase your awareness and knowledge of God’s will?
5. How can you make a more consistent habit of “considering your ways”?
6. Share of a time when you unquestionably experienced God’s blessing.

Challenge – Spiritual Discipline – Meditation

First of all, the discipline of Christian meditation is wholly different than Eastern meditation. The latter is about emptying one’s mind in order to reach some plane of understanding inherent within the individual. Christian meditation is about FILLING one’s mind with the thoughts of God expressed in His Scriptures and allowing Him to transform us into His likeness. Involved in Christian meditation is Bible study, prayer, solitude and Scripture memory. It is simply thinking the thoughts of God. How can you experiment with this discipline this week? Be sure to check the appendix for more information and helpful suggestions.

Family Questions

What does “sacrifice” mean?
What does “holy” mean?
Can we be “holy”?
How has God blessed you?
When God thinks of you, does He smile or frown?

¹² It is important to note the answer to this question. **Ezra 3:3-4** records that upon returning to Jerusalem, the altar of the temple was the very first thing repaired. This was to immediately restore the sacrificial rituals around which Jewish life centered. So although the temple was destroyed, the altar was active.

¹³ See **Numbers 19:22; Numbers 5:2; 6:7; Leviticus 5:1-13** (notice what is required for redemption).

¹⁴ Various blessings and curses are listed throughout the first five books of the Old Testament, but perhaps no where more memorably than **Deuteronomy 28**. Although lengthy, this passage is central to much of Haggai and the rest of the Old Testament writings of this period. Take time to read **Deuteronomy 28-30** and notice the disproportionate number of curses to blessings. Which curses are mentioned in **Haggai 2:10-19**?

¹⁵ Compare **Numbers 19:22** to **Matthew 8:2-3; Mark 1:40-42; Luke 9:42**; etc.

Reconstruction – Session Five

Read Haggai 2:20-23

Starter Questions

If present, what was the most significant point in the message on Sunday?
Do you have any questions about the Sunday message?
What do you think was the MAIN IDEA of the sermon?

Walk Through the Passage

1. When was this prophecy given relative to the last one (2:10-19)?
2. Who is the recipient of this message? The previous one?
3. How does the message of this prophecy relate to the previous? Is there any similar language or terms?
4. What parts of the historical background mentioned in the Introductory material seem pertinent to this message for Zerubbabel?
5. What is the purpose of the “signet ring” symbolism? ¹⁶ Does it look to the present or the future?
6. What is the main idea behind the entire book of Haggai?
7. Spend some time reviewing the central ideas of each of the four oracles.

Family Questions

What is “hope”?
What are you most looking forward to in the future?
What is most important in your life?
How do you best connect with God?

Application Questions – “Consider Your Ways”

1. How would you define “hope”? ¹⁷ How important is “hope” to you?
2. Describe a time when you felt hope-less. What happened to change your outlook?
3. How has your sense of priorities changed during the course of this study?
4. How has your spiritual life changed during this study?
5. Identify three practices that you would like to maintain after this study is over. Share those with a group or with a close friend.

Challenge – Spiritual Discipline – Worship

Most of us associate the word “worship” with a group of people inside a church building, often with piano, guitar or organ. But that is only one expression of “worship.” Worship can actually happen at any moment, indeed every moment, throughout your day...even when you are *alone*. Many of the Psalms are celebratory worship songs. Reading, memorizing or reciting them can be worship. Singing along with a favorite worship album can greatly impact your day. Taking a walk and simply noticing the beauty of nature and prayerfully thanking God can be worship. Worship is simply an expression of honor, gratitude, joy and pleasure in God. He is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him. Rediscover an old way or find a new way to worship God this week. Share your experience with someone. Be sure to check the appendix for more information and helpful suggestions.

¹⁶ See Introductory material, Important People and Terms for more background.

¹⁷ It is very important to understand that Biblical hope is not simply wishful thinking, as in “I hope I get a diamond ring for my birthday.” Biblical hope is an expectation of something that is promised. It is an anxious waiting for something that is assured to come. See **Psalm 71:1-5; Romans 5:1-10; 8:23-27; Galatians 5:5; Ephesians 2:11-12; Colossians 1:1-6; 1:24-27; 1 Timothy 4:10; Titus 1:1-3; Hebrews 6:11-12**; etc. A good study of these passages would note the referent of the mentioned “hope” and the temporal aspect of the context.

Appendix – Resource: Spiritual Disciplines

The following material has been gleaned from the Spiritual Discipline study of Dr. Bill Yarger and Richard Foster's book *Celebration of Discipline* (all undesignated quotes are from Foster). Other great resources include Fil Anderson's *Running on Empty*, Dallas Willard's *Spirit of the Disciplines* and various works by Henri Nouwen including *The Way of the Heart*.

This short appendix is designed to foster personal study and experimentation in the Spiritual Disciplines. These ancient practices have been used by Old Testament saints and Christians for millennia. They are simply tools to foster spiritual growth and intimacy with God, nothing more. They are not magical or weird. They are not pagan or un-Biblical. They are very old tools which allow God to do inside of you what you cannot do on your own.

As a beginning, consider the following statements from Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*.

We must not be led to believe that the disciplines are only for spiritual giants and hence beyond our reach, or only for contemplatives who devote all their time to prayer and meditation. Far from it. God intends the disciplines of the spiritual life to be for ordinary human beings...

Neither should we think of the spiritual disciplines as some dull drudgery aimed at exterminating laughter from the face of the earth. Joy is the keynote of all the disciplines. The purpose of the disciplines is liberation from stifling slavery to self-interest and fear.

The primary requirement [for the practice of the disciplines] is a longing after God.

Simply put, a **spiritual discipline is something that I can do in my own power that enables me to do what I cannot do by direct effort - deepen my connection with God.** Bill Yarger notes that **"spiritual disciplines are activities of the mind and body designed to bring our character in line with the character of Christ."**

We will now take a closer look at some individual disciplines in the order in which they appear in the discussion questions above.

Prayer

Prayer – communicating with God in the language of dependence.

"Prayer catapults us onto the frontier of the spiritual life. Of all the spiritual disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father. Meditation introduces us to the inner life, fasting is an accompanying means, study transforms our minds, but it is the discipline of prayer that brings us into the deepest and highest work of the human spirit. Read prayer is life creating and life changing."

“Prayer – secret, fervent, believing prayer – lies at the root of all personal godliness.” W. Carey

As a beginning to our study, see **John 15:7; James 4:3; Matthew 6:5-15; Mark 1:35; Luke 11:1; Psalm 63:1; Acts 6:4; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; Philippians 4:6;** etc.

Let’s first focus on a few myths about prayer. Although prayer seems basic to the Christian experience, all of us must LEARN to pray. It is not something that comes natural. Foster suggests that the very first step in learning to pray is listening. “Listening to God is the necessary prelude to intercession.” Begin by praying for the small things like a headache or clarity regarding an immediate decision. Listening to God’s voice in these small matters can bolster our prayers of faith against cancer and marital strife.

We also tend to make prayer overcomplicated. We tend to think that bigger words and archaic language makes a prayer more hear-able to God. We also think that the length of a prayer is a determining factor to its validity or sincerity. These sentiments have no Biblical footing. Jesus teaches us to pray like children. Parents and children operate on a level of intimacy that allows for both seriousness and laughter, discipline and play. Jesus also taught us to pray for daily things, common things, like bread.

We must also not wait until we *feel* like praying before we pray. Since prayer does not come natural to us, it is like any other work. Sometimes it is difficult and counter to how we feel. Many of us also feel it selfish or inappropriate to pray for ourselves. This also has no Biblical basis. Jesus prayed for Himself often, as did the apostles and prophets. Praying for yourself is important. It simply must not be the ONLY way you pray.

Here are some common forms of prayer and contemporary methods that may help to overcome some of the obstacles in your prayer life.

- *Writing* – I have often found that my mind wanders less when I write my prayers. It doesn’t have to be wordy or on any special paper. You don’t even have to keep it, although flipping back through prayer later can often be a wonderful rich and worshipful experience. Try picking up a journal or composition book and write short prayers for yourself and other needs.
- *Scheduling* – One of the main reasons many of us don’t pray is that we don’t set aside a specific time to do so. Try working 10 minutes into your schedule in the morning just for prayer. If that time doesn’t work change it. If it does work, try a second 10 minute block later in the day.
- *Walking* – Keep a list of prayer items on a note card and take a walk. As you do, whisper or speak to God as if He’s walking with you. You may find this addicting.
- *Partnering* – Set aside a time with your spouse or a close friend regularly to pray together over anything that comes up. This built-in accountability can solve overcome some obstacles.
- *Praying Scripture* – Try to link prayer needs to Scripture passages. This will combine the discipline of prayer and study in a beautiful way. There are also great written resources on this.

- Something may cross your mind that no one has ever thought of before. Try it. Connecting God’s perfect will, His revealed Word and the needs of your life can be done in a thousand ways.

“There is a way of ordering our mental life on more than one level at once. On one level we may be thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating, meeting all the demands of external affairs. But deep within, behind the scenes, at a profounder level, we may also be in prayer and adoration, song and worship, and a gentle receptiveness to divine breathings.” Thomas Kelly

Fasting

Fasting – abstaining in some significant way from eating and/or drinking for spiritual purposes.

There may be no spiritual discipline more misunderstood than fasting. Our culture is at odds with it, as is our reaction to much of Christian history. While our immediate atmosphere constantly reminds us of the importance of three meals a day, complete with a certain number of calories, etc., the tradition of the ascetic practices of pre-Reformation times seems to warn us of any “excessive” or “fanatic” practice in any one area. None of these reasons need be an obstacle to an experience with Christian fasting.

“Throughout the Bible fasting refers to abstaining from food for spiritual purposes.” It is not a hunger strike or a health diet. It should not be motivated by the desire for power or vanity. “Biblical fasting always centers on spiritual purposes.”

As a beginning to our study, see **Leviticus 16:29-31; Matthew 4:1-11; 6:16-18; Luke 2:37; 4:1-13; Daniel 10:3; Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9; Deuteronomy 8:3-5; 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8;** etc.

Fasting is intended to remind us that we are sustained “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” instead of food. Food actually DOES NOT sustain us, God does. Fasting is therefore feasting. But our feast is on the Word of God instead of saturated fat.

As with all of the other disciplines, there is a learning curve to fasting. One must not, actually CANNOT, just jump into an extended fast. Try the following progression.

- *Partial fast* – Try breakfast to breakfast, or lunch to lunch. This means that you will skip two meals. You eat breakfast and then your next meal is breakfast the following day. Drink only water. When you begin it is hard to think about anything except the physical sensations. As you experiment, be attentive to the inner attitude of the heart. This is of course the point of fasting. Try to connect your physical hunger pangs to your unfelt spiritual hunger. The time you would normally spend eating should be transferred to prayer, study, meditation or worship.
- *Day fast* – After several partial fast, you may be ready for a full 24-hour fast. Drink only water but use healthy amounts of it. Perhaps a small amount of lemon juice will help. During a fuller fast, you must become the master of your stomach, which often acts like a spoiled child. In fact, it is trained to tell you when it is empty. But this is not real hunger. Master your stomach instead of being its slave. Devote this time to prayer and meditation.

- *Regular fast* – At this point, you might contemplate making your fast a regular ritual. Try a specific day of the week that permits it. If not weekly, then try every other week or monthly.
- *Extended fast* – For specific reasons or greater prayer needs, an extended fast of three days or more may be attempted. Some may work up to a seven day fast or even longer. The point is to set a goal and try. Rely on the Holy Spirit and God’s grace.

Solitude and Silence

Solitude – abstaining from interaction with other people for the purpose of spending time with God.

Silence – closing off our lives from sounds, whether it be noise, music or words.

“Our fear of being alone drives us to noise and crowds. Jesus calls us from loneliness to solitude. The fear of being left alone petrifies people.” But solitude is very different than loneliness. Solitude is actually a time to be intimate with someone else, namely God.

“Solitude is more a state of mind and heart than it is a place. There is a solitude of heart than can be maintained at all times. Crowds, or lack of them, have little to do with this inward attentiveness. It is quite possible to be a desert hermit and never experience solitude.”

Solitude is intimately connected to the previous discipline of silence. Without silence there is no solitude. Though silence sometimes involves the absence of speech, it always involves the act of listening. We must understand the connection between inner solitude and inner silence; they are inseparable.” The discipline of silence does not mean you don’t speak for an extended period like a monk in a vow of silence.

As a beginning to our study, see **Ecclesiastes 5:1-7; 6:11; Psalm 46:10; Luke 6:9-13; Mark 1:34-36; 6:30-32; Matthew 6:7; 14:22-23; Proverbs 10:19; Habakkuk 2:20;** etc.

St. Ignatius wrote, “It is better to keep silent and to be, than to talk and be not.”

Henri Nouwen wrote “In solitude, I get rid of all my scaffolding; not friends to talk to, no phone calls to make, no meetings to attend, no music to entertain, no books to distract, just me – naked, vulnerable, weak, sinful, deprived, broken – nothing. It is this nothingness I have to face in my solitude.”

“One reason we can hardly bear to remain silent is that it makes us feel so helpless. We are so accustomed to relying upon words to manage and control others. If we are silent, who will take control? God will take control, but we will never let him take control until we trust Him. Silence is ultimately related to trust.”

Some steps into solitude and silence:

- *Recognize the “little” solitudes* – There are “little” solitudes that fill our day. Recognizing these and transforming them is the first step. What about the first moments when you awake in the morning, a quiet morning coffee, your everyday commute to and from

work or the store, the sight of a beautiful tree or flower garden. With inner worship and quiet, wordless praise these little moments can be life-changing.

- *Develop a quiet place* – What if you were to create or find a place designed for solitude and silence? Find a nook in your home or buy a new rocking chair for your porch or locate a comfortable bench at a nearby park. This requires thought and action.
- *Use less words* – Experiment with simply talking less. Try to eliminate useless or frantic speech. Pick a day and experiment with thinking more about what you say and say things better with less words. Speak fewer and fuller words. Next try to go for a long period of designated time, maybe an entire day, without speaking. This simply helps us to slow down, observe, and listen to God’s voice.
- *Stay up later or get up earlier* – This is just another way of creating dedicated alone and quiet time in our hectic schedule. If you can’t sleep, don’t get frustrated in your bed. Get up and have a glass of water with your Bible in the kitchen. God may want your attention.
- *Exercise* – Use times of physical exercise to spend with God, praying or worshipping.
- *Schedule a “day with God”* – This might involve some vacation time or a sit-down talk with your spouse, but schedule a day when you retreat alone. Go to a nearby library or retreat center. Check into a hotel for the day and simply spend time alone with God, in the quiet and stillness of solitude and silence. During this time you can read Scripture, pray, talk a walk, nap, draw or paint, or anything that helps you connect to God in a sense of stillness.

Meditation

Meditation – saturating one’s mind, heart and life with God’s Word.

This is an important Inward Discipline. The Biblical words for meditation in the Old Testament carry the meaning of “listening to God’s word,” “reflecting on God’s works,” “rehearsing God’s deeds,” and “ruminating on God’s law.” In each use there is an underlying stress on a resultant change in behavior.

Psalms 119 is an excellent song for the discipline of meditation. It is entirely a celebration and meditation of God’s law. See **Psalm 119:97, 101, 102** and **Psalm 1:2; Psalm 63:6; Genesis 24:63; Joshua 1:8**; etc.

Jesus also made a habit of withdrawing to a lonely place. He did not do this simply to depart from the crowd, but to be alone with God. See **Matthew 4:1-11; 14:13; 14:23; 17:1-9; 26:36-46; Mark 1:35; 6:31; Luke 5:16; 6:12**; etc.

Thomas a Kempis regards meditation as growing into “a familiar friendship with Jesus.”

In the words of Richard Foster, “Christian meditation, very simply, is the ability to hear God’s voice and obey His word. It is that simple.” At this point in time, the Scripture is the primary means by which God speaks to His people. That means that meditation and God’s Word go hand in hand. Again, pagan and Eastern meditation is about emptying the mind. Christian Biblical meditation is about FILLING the mind with God’s Word.

Various forms of meditation have been tried and repeated throughout the generations.

- *Meditatio Scripturarum*, the meditation upon Scripture, is the central reference point for all forms of Christian meditation. Meditation is not study. Study involves exegesis and cross referencing etc. Meditation is about internalizing and personalizing the passage.
- *Re-collection* was a meditation practice of Christians in the Middle Ages. It was simply a time of being still and quiet. Instead of thinking on or reading a specific text, the Christian allows his mind the time necessary to rest, reflecting on all that is happening in our lives and filtering it through our developed knowledge of Scripture. This practice offers the same product as do Solitude and Silence, which will be covered later.
- *Meditation on Creation* is yet another form. This is most definitely NOT pagan pantheism in any form, instead it is a wonderful worship of the one and only Creator God. If the heavens declare God's glory (Psalm 19), then meditating on His creation – through a developed filter of Scripture knowledge – can be a deeply meaningful practice.
- *Set aside time for holy leisure* – This means to rest and relax with the intention of simply reflecting on what God has done and is doing. You don't need to read or do anything in particular for this one. Just be. Relax.
- *Choose a place and posture* – Meditation must be thought through. Find a quiet place for reflection and experiment with different physical postures like kneeling, bowing, walking, sitting, or even holding your hands up in a posture of receptivity.

Again, these forms are simply tools. You may connect with one or two, or you may find a better way to meditate on God's Word. The point is to try. God will meet you with His grace.

Worship

Worship –seeing God as worthy and ascribing great worth to Him.

Worship is both a corporate and private discipline. “To worship is to experience Reality, to touch Life. It is to know, to feel, to experience the resurrected Christ in the midst of the gathered community. It is a breaking of the *Shekinah* of God, or better yet, being invaded by the *Shekinah* of God.” *Shekinah* is the Hebrew term for the glory or radiance of God dwelling among His people. It denotes the immediate presence of God instead of a god who is afar.

As a beginning to our study, see **Psalm 100; John 4:23; 12:32; Matthew 4:10; Exodus 20:3; Isaiah 6:5; Romans 12:1-2; Mark 12:30; 1 Peter 2:5-9; Acts 5:41; 16:25; Revelation 4:11; 5:12-13; Isaiah 6:1-5**; etc.

Because many of us may not sing especially well, we may consider ourselves outside of the realm of worship. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, very little of worship is singing. Worship is an attitude of the heart, not the mouth. Worship can happen for those unable to speak, those unable to sing, those embarrassed to sing, or the tone-deaf. It has almost nothing to do with musical notes.

Music and singing is a form of worship, but only one of many. You may connect with other forms of worship that you haven't thought of or experienced yet.

- *Still the flesh* – This is an ancient avenue of worship that involves living in a perpetual, inward listening silence so that God is the source of our words and actions. The first reason why many would not think this is possible is “that we do not understand Jesus as our present teacher. When we have been under his tutelage for a time, we see how it is possible for every motion of our live to have its root in God.” This is a life-style of worship, not simply a worship event.
- *Praise* – While you may immediately associate praise with music that does not have to be the case. Many of the psalms were written as praise songs, so simply reading or memorizing selected psalms can be worship. Singing in my car to worship music is one of my favorite practices, and it often lifts my spirit in astonishing ways.
- *Art* – For centuries men and women have turned to drawing, painting, writing, poetry, playing instruments, etc. as a means of worship. If connected to God and His word, these practices can be greatly beneficial to one's spiritual life.
- *Physical worship* – The Bible often speaks of worship in physical terms such as prostrate, kneel, bow, lifting the hands, clapping, wearing sackcloth and even dancing. While some of these may seem out of place now, assuming a physical position while praying or singing may aid in your concentration and connection to God.
- *Corporate worship* – We must never understand the spiritual life or our intimacy with God as solely an individual endeavor. Worship should be understood the same. To worship with your small group, your family or even a close friend may open up whole new areas of your spiritual growth.
- *Serve* – In the original language of the Old Testament, “worship” carries a connotation of service, thus the “sacrifice of praise,” and “service of worship” terminology. It therefore need not be a stretch to see mowing a friend's lawn as an act of worship. Try buying a needy person a meal or paying the toll for the car behind you. Offer to babysit a friend's kids so that they can go out on a date or make twice as much lasagna and take it to your neighbor for dinner. Worship is service.

Appendix – Application: Scripture Memory

This resource is intended to facilitate the discipline of meditation, among others. It is a list of the central passages from Haggai and several important corresponding passages. They form a good basis for the understanding of Haggai's message: The priority of God. Try to memorize the passages word for word.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Colossians 3:16-17 ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Haggai 1:3-5 ³ Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet saying, ⁴ "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house *lies* desolate?" ⁵ Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways!

Ezra 1:2-3 ² "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³ 'Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem.

Ezra 4:4-5 ⁴ Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building, ⁵ and hired counselors against them to frustrate their counsel all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Haggai 1:7-8 ⁷ Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider ⁷ your ways! ⁸ "Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified," says the LORD.

Haggai 2:4-5 ⁴ 'But now take courage, Zerubbabel,' declares the LORD, 'take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage,' declares the LORD, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the LORD of hosts. ⁵ 'As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!'

Deuteronomy 28:1-2 "Now it shall be, if you will diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you will obey the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 28:15 ¹⁵ "But it shall come about, if you will not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.

Hebrews 6:11-12 ¹¹ And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Deuteronomy 29:29 ²⁹ "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

2 Peter 1:19-21 ¹⁹ And so we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. ²⁰ But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13 ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, ¹³ which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.