

Warm-up Question or Activity

Choose one and pursue it as a group.

1. Activity – keep it fun.
 - Everyone grab a sheet of paper and a pen.
 - Write your name and three short things about yourself, two that are true and one that is not.
 - Hand the sheet to another person (not your spouse or someone else you know well).
 - Go around the group with each person reading the sheet that was handed to them and develop group consensus on which one of the three listed facts is made up (*i.e.*, not true).
2. Question – How many different employers have you had over the course of your life? Tell us a little about a job that was particularly fun, unique, or impactful.

Can You Relate?

This week's Scriptures bring us face-to-face with the heart-piercing reality that busyness with our own affairs causes us to lose sight of God's priorities in plain view before us.

1. After a joyous celebration commemorating the building of the new temple's *foundation* (~536 BC – see Ezra 3:11), the ~50,000 pioneers who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon began what became a 16 year "pause" in their mission to rebuild the temple. Now (in 520 BC, God says to them:

*"This people says, 'The **time has not come**, the time that the Lord's house should be built.'" (Hag. 1:2)*

We all need at least one Haggai in our life—a person who will provide accountability—calling us out when we are in denial about rejecting the call of God or the Word of God by saying we merely are putting obedience off until later.

- **Have you ever had a "Haggai" in your life---someone who would help you see the truth about issues you were facing?** Perhaps a sibling, a parent, friend, or mentor?
 - If so, tell us a little about that relationship.
 - If you've never had a Haggai in your life, do you need one?
 - If so, what ideas do you have about working toward finding one?
 - **Have you ever been in a "Haggai" role for someone else?**
 - Tell us a little about that relationship.
2. In case the procrastination-focused question of verse 2 did not cut deep enough, God follows up in verse 4 by unveiling the cause of the procrastination, using the Israelites' excuse of **time**:

"Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" (Hag. 1:4)

Ouch. We all struggle with "paneled houses" that distract us from—or crowd out—the things of God.

- **What is the biggest "paneled house" of your life?** Work? Debt? Kids? Parents? Cars? Investments? Travel? Sports/Recreation/Hobbies?
 - Tell us what you can about that struggle.
- **What is the biggest "house in ruin" in your spiritual life?** A calling or prompting or desire to serve or minister in some way? Being disciplined or discipling someone else? Spending time reading and meditating on God's Word? Using your spiritual gifts for strengthening the church? SOAPS time

- journaling your spiritual discoveries? Participating in choir, band, or another role in worship?
- Involvement in Children or Student ministry? Ministering to someone through FriendSpeak or Alpha?
- Taking a course in the Bible Seminary? Tithing or growing in generosity?
- Tell us what you can about that hope or desire.

3. In verse 5, God points his people back in the right direction. Five times in the Book of Haggai, God calls the people to “give careful thought.”


“... Give careful thought to your ways?” (Hag. 1:5)

God calls his people to heart-level reflection about the course or path of their lives and the choices they have made.

- **How do you find the time and the quiet and the self-honesty to do that?**
 - Can you do that by yourself? If not, then to whom can you turn?
- **If someone younger than you asked for advice on how best to “give careful thought to their ways,” what would you tell them? Or what has worked for you?**
 - Christian community? Bible Study? Devotional time? Prayer? Worship? Counseling?
 - Christian accountability or mentoring? Where would you start?
 - Christian retreats for getting away? Where else?

Live It Out

Go into this week with hearts tuned to the perspective and priorities of God in our daily lives.

- What do you want to take away from this discussion? How can you apply or build upon it in the weeks or months ahead? Write down your thoughts on the paper provided.
- SOAPS quiet-time journaling is a good starting point for living with more intentionality. This week, consider pledging with one of us to each doing SOAPS quiet time for seven days in a row, lifting one another up in prayer, and texting one another for accountability and support as we go through it. If you need a SOAPS journal, you can pick one up for free at the Grace Fellowship Welcome Desk in the worship center lobby.
- Try this experiment in starting every day with a mental and spiritual context that faithfully shapes how we speak throughout the day.
 - **How?** At least one day this week, before you get out of bed, pick up your tablet and play *Open My Eyes, Lord* by Steffany Gretzinger to start your those lyrics into your prayer. You can access the song at <https://youtu.be/XXyfNG6WoqE> or scan the QR code here:
 - **Report back** next time on how that went.

phone or
day. Turn

Encourage group members to commit time to praying for one another, encouraging and meeting one another's needs, fellowshiping together, interceding for the other members. Contact absent members and encourage them to continue to meet and to return together at the next scheduled gathering.