

Warm-up Question or Activity

Choose one and pursue it as a group.

1. Activity – keep it fun. Go around the group with each person answering one of these questions. Start with one of the less-talkative members and let them pick first.
 - My best friend of all time (excluding spouses and parents) is _____. Why?
 - My best vacation of all time was _____. Why?
 - My best boss of all time was _____. Why?
 - Regarding playing the Texas Lotto, I should _____. Why?
 - To remind us of how much the world has changed, when I was a kid, I _____.
 - You're not going to believe this, but one time I _____.
 - My favorite musical of all time is _____. I've seen it _____ times.
 - The most dramatic crisis I've ever been through (that I am willing to discuss) was _____.
2. Question – This one takes a little thought. Give everyone a moment to answer.
 - Think back across the last week, month, or year and describe something that you really loved. A moment? A meal? A visit? A place?

Can You Relate?

This week's Scripture brings us face-to-face with the question of whether we value material prosperity more than spiritual prosperity.

1. Remember, the ~50,000 pioneers who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon paused for 16 years amidst their mission to rebuilding the temple of God. In that time, they instead focused their time, treasure, and toil on their own affairs – busying themselves with building up their own houses. Through the prophet Haggai, God holds them to account:

*"You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. **Why?** declares the LORD of hosts. **Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.**" (Haggai 1:9, emphasis added)*

- **With whom do you identify in this story?**
 - **Haggai:** frustrated with years of cultural "drift" that was occurring in his day? OR
 - **The people:** exhaustingly working to reach the day where they might eventually feel free to work for God?
2. Remember that the 50,000 were not secularists, nor were they the equivalent of "Christmas and Easter Only" Christians, or even nominal "Cultural Christians." Most of them would've been born in Babylon and left homes there to return to the war-torn reminder of their devastating defeat. They returned, built the altar, and laid the foundation of the temple. Yet, they drifted away from the kingdom work of God in front of them, in plain view before their eyes.
 - **What on earth draws us into drift?**

Stress?	Worry?	Insecurity?	Duty?	Duty to whom?
Vanity?	Greed?	Pride?	Peers?	Self-indulgence?
Routine?	Apathy?	Doubt?	Fear?	Fear of what?

- **What on earth draws you into drift?**

- Tell us what you can about your own experience of drift.
 - Describe, perhaps, a memorable high point and a later period of drift?
 - What was at the root of the drift for you?
- 3. The unfinished house of God was not hidden in a distant corner of Jerusalem. It lay in plain view of all the residents in the course of their daily lives. Even years of drought and fruitlessness did not turn their attention to the God who controls the rain and the harvest.
 - **What item of Christian obedience or faithfulness lies in plain view for you?**
 - What would it take to get you to attend to that? This week? This month? This year?
 - Do you think it would be loving of God to bring you drought to get that attention?
 - Why or why not?
- 4. The unfinished house of God did not draw them to obedience. Nor did the chastening drought of God. It took the voice of God through Haggai to move their hearts to obedience (v. 12).
 - **What will be said of you?**
 - *Intellectually* we know that it is foolishness to put our interests before God's. And we say that by "seeking **first** the Kingdom of God, all these things will be added unto us." (Matt 6:33)
 - However, our checkbooks and calendars often tell a different story.
 - **Be honest: if someone were preparing a eulogy for your funeral and was auditing the calendar (time) and checkbook (treasure) of your life, what would he/she say about what came *first* for you?**
 - **In what ways is God in the driver's seat of your life?**
 - **And in what ways is He not?**

Live It Out

Let's go into this week with eyes to see what godly work lies in plain view for us and seek to place God squarely in the driver's seat day by day. Step by step. Moment by moment.

- 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.
- Try this experiment in starting off your day with a palpable awareness of your relentless struggle to keep God first in your life.
 - **How?** At least one day this week, **before you get out of bed** (making God your first priority of the morning), pick up your phone or tablet and start your day by playing *Holy Water* by We the Kingdom & Tasha Cobb Leonard (Lyrics version). Absorb the lyrics. Play them back in your head throughout the day. Watch at this link (<https://youtu.be/l0xhhG1Hyos>) or scan the QR code.
 - **Report back** next time on how that went.



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