

### **Consider Your Ways (Haggai 1:1-11)**

The book of Haggai was written to a people who had returned from Babylonian captivity with great enthusiasm and good intentions. They had begun rebuilding the temple, but over time their priorities changed. While they devoted time, effort, and resources to their own homes and personal affairs, God's house remained unfinished. Through the prophet Haggai, God challenged His people to stop making excuses, examine their priorities, and consider the consequences of their choices. This lesson examines the timeless command, "Consider your ways," and challenges us to evaluate our own priorities before God.

#### **Introduction:**

1. The Message Of Haggai Was Delivered During A Time Of Spiritual Neglect (**Haggai 1:1-2**). Although the Jews had returned from captivity with the intention of rebuilding the temple, the work had largely ceased while they focused on personal concerns. Their problem was not a lack of ability or opportunity but a lack of commitment to God's priorities. Many years had passed, and the unfinished temple stood as a visible reminder of misplaced priorities. Similar dangers confront Christians whenever personal interests begin to overshadow spiritual responsibilities (**Matthew 6:33**).
2. God's People Had Become Comfortable With An Unfinished Work (**Haggai 1:2-4**). The people convinced themselves that the time had not yet come to build the Lord's house, yet they somehow found time and resources to build comfortable homes for themselves. Human nature often finds excuses for neglecting difficult spiritual responsibilities while pursuing personal goals. The danger is that excuses can become so familiar that they seem reasonable and justified. Christians today must guard against becoming comfortable with spiritual complacency (**Luke 14:16-20; James 4:17**).
3. The Phrase "Consider Your Ways" Forms The Heart Of The Chapter (**Haggai 1:5, 7**). God called His people to stop and honestly examine their lives, priorities, and actions. Genuine spiritual growth begins when people are willing to evaluate themselves in the light of God's will. Self-examination is never comfortable, but it is necessary if correction and growth are to occur. The same principle is taught throughout Scripture, calling God's people to test and examine themselves honestly (**2 Corinthians 13:5; Lamentations 3:40**).

#### **1. The Wrong Priority (Haggai 1:2-4):**

##### **a. The People Placed Their Own Comfort Above God's Work (Haggai 1:2-4):**

- 1) The people claimed that the time had not yet come to rebuild the temple. Their words suggested concern for circumstances and timing. However, God revealed that their explanation did not match their behaviour (**Haggai 1:2-4**).
- 2) While the temple remained unfinished, they were actively building and improving their own homes. Their actions revealed their true priorities more clearly than their words. What they valued most received their time, energy, and attention (**Haggai 1:3-4**).
- 3) Christians must remember that priorities are demonstrated not merely by what we claim is important but by how we invest our time, effort, and resources. Jesus taught that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also (**Matthew 6:21**). Paul likewise urged believers to set their affection on things above rather than earthly things (**Colossians 3:1-2**).

##### **b. Their Excuses Hid A Deeper Spiritual Problem (Haggai 1:2):**

- 1) The people spoke as though circumstances prevented them from doing God's work. They had developed a convenient explanation for their inactivity. Yet God exposed the reality behind their reasoning (**Haggai 1:2**).
- 2) Excuses often sound convincing because they contain elements of truth. Nevertheless, excuses can conceal spiritual indifference and a lack of commitment. The problem is not always inability but unwillingness (**Haggai 1:2; Proverbs 22:13**).
- 3) Many believers today know what they ought to be doing but continually postpone action while waiting for a more convenient season. Scripture warns against delaying obedience when God's will is already known (**Ecclesiastes 11:4; Acts 24:25**).

c. God Expected His Work To Hold First Place In Their Lives (**Haggai 1:4**):

- 1) The issue was not whether the people could build houses. The issue was whether God's work would occupy its rightful place in their hearts. Their priorities had become reversed (**Haggai 1:4**).
- 2) Throughout Scripture, God requires His people to place Him above personal ambitions and interests. He refuses to accept a position of secondary importance. Spiritual health depends upon keeping God first (**Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 6:5**).
- 3) Jesus later taught the same principle when He instructed His disciples to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (**Matthew 6:33**). Following Christ requires self-denial and the willingness to place His will above our own desires (**Luke 9:23**).

**2. The Frustration Of Misplaced Priorities (Haggai 1:5-6, 9-11):**

a. The People Worked Hard But Found Little Satisfaction (**Haggai 1:5-6**):

- 1) God pointed to the disappointing results of their labour. They sowed much seed but harvested little. Their efforts never produced the satisfaction they expected (**Haggai 1:5-6; 1:9**).
- 2) They ate and drank but remained unsatisfied. Material blessings alone could not fill the emptiness created by spiritual neglect. Something important was missing from their lives (**Haggai 1:6; Ecclesiastes 5:10**).
- 3) Jesus later taught the same principle when He instructed His disciples to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Following Christ requires self-denial and the willingness to place His will above our own desires (**Matthew 6:33; Luke 9:23**).

b. God Allowed Their Efforts To Be Frustrated (**Haggai 1:9-11**):

- 1) The disappointing harvests were not merely unfortunate events. God explained that He was actively involved in the situation. Their circumstances carried a spiritual message (**Haggai 1:9-11**).
- 2) God was opposing their misplaced priorities in order to awaken them spiritually. His purpose was corrective rather than merely punitive. He desired their restoration rather than their destruction (**Haggai 1:9-11; Hebrews 12:5-11**).
- 3) While Christians today are not under the same covenant, God still disciplines His people for their good. The writer of Hebrews explains that divine chastening is evidence of God's love (**Hebrews 12:5-11**). Jesus also warned and corrected those whom He loved (**Revelation 3:19**).

c. Neglecting God Never Produces Lasting Fulfilment (**Haggai 1:6, 9**):

- 1) The people sought security and happiness through personal advancement. They assumed that concentrating on their own affairs would improve their lives. Yet their efforts continually left them disappointed (**Haggai 1:6, 9**).
- 2) Many people today pursue wealth, pleasure, careers, possessions, or recreation while neglecting spiritual matters. They hope that success will satisfy the deepest longings of the heart. Experience repeatedly proves otherwise (**Ecclesiastes 2:10-11; 5:10**).
- 3) Jesus warned against gaining the whole world while losing one's soul (**Mark 8:36**). He also cautioned against measuring life by material abundance (**Luke 12:15**). True fulfilment comes only when God occupies His rightful place in our lives.

**3. The Call To Reorder Their Lives (Haggai 1:7-8):**

a. God Called Them To Honest Self-Examination (**Haggai 1:5, 7**):

- 1) Twice God commanded the people to "consider your ways." This repetition highlights the importance of the command. God wanted them to stop and think seriously about their conduct (**Haggai 1:5, 7**).
- 2) Before meaningful change can occur, people must honestly evaluate their priorities and attitudes. Problems that are ignored rarely disappear. Honest examination is the first step toward correction (**Lamentations 3:40; 2 Corinthians 13:5**).

- 3) Scripture repeatedly calls God's people to examine themselves. Jeremiah urges God's people to search and try their ways (**Lamentations 3:40**). Paul instructed Christians to examine themselves spiritually (**2 Corinthians 13:5**).
- b. God Called Them To Immediate Obedience (**Haggai 1:8**):
- 1) The solution was straightforward. God instructed them to go to the mountain, gather wood, and build the house. They already knew what needed to be done (**Haggai 1:8**).
  - 2) God did not ask them merely to admit their failure. He required action. Genuine repentance always results in changed behaviour (**Haggai 1:8; Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20**).
  - 3) Christians today face the same challenge. James taught that believers must be doers of the word and not hearers only (**James 1:22**). Jesus asked why people called Him Lord while refusing to do what He commanded (**Luke 6:46**).
- c. God Promised His Pleasure And Glory Through Obedience (**Haggai 1:8**):
- 1) The rebuilding of the temple would please God. Their obedience would demonstrate respect for His authority. God delights in faithful service from His people (**Haggai 1:8; 1 Samuel 15:22; Hebrews 13:16**).
  - 2) The completion of the temple would also bring glory to God's name. Others would see the evidence of obedience and reverence. God's reputation among the nations would be strengthened (**Haggai 1:8; Matthew 5:16; Ezekiel 36:23**).
  - 3) Christians today honour God through faithful worship, service, and obedience. Jesus taught that believers should let their light shine before others so that God may be glorified (**Matthew 5:16**). Paul likewise instructed Christians to do all things to the glory of God (**1 Corinthians 10:31**).

#### **Conclusion:**

1. The Problem In Haggai's Day Was Not Open Rebellion But Misplaced Priorities (**Haggai 1:2-4**). The people had not abandoned God completely, nor had they turned to idols. Instead, they had allowed personal concerns to crowd out the work God had given them to do. This made their condition particularly dangerous because they could still view themselves as faithful while neglecting what mattered most. Christians today face the same danger whenever spiritual responsibilities are continually pushed aside by the demands and distractions of daily life (**Matthew 6:33; Luke 10:38-42**).
2. God's Call To "Consider Your Ways" Remains Relevant Today (**Haggai 1:5, 7**). Self-examination is an essential part of spiritual growth because people naturally drift if they are not paying attention to their direction. It is easy to examine the faults of others while ignoring weaknesses in our own lives. The Lord calls each of us to honestly evaluate our priorities, habits, and commitments. Growth begins when we are willing to see ourselves as God sees us (**Lamentations 3:40; 2 Corinthians 13:5**).
3. The Solution Is Not Merely Conviction But Obedience (**Haggai 1:8**). The people were not simply told to acknowledge their failure; they were instructed to take action. Knowledge without obedience produces no lasting change. Many Christians already know areas in which improvement is needed, but blessing comes when truth is translated into action. The challenge before every believer is not merely to hear God's will but to do it faithfully (**James 1:22; Luke 6:46**).

#### **Applications:**

1. Examine Whether God's Work Truly Comes First In Your Life (**Haggai 1:2-4**). Most Christians would say that God is first in their lives, but priorities are revealed by actions rather than claims. Consider how much time is devoted to prayer, Bible study, worship, evangelism, and service compared with other pursuits. Honest examination may reveal areas where important things have displaced the most important things. Jesus taught that the kingdom of God must occupy first place in the believer's life (**Matthew 6:33**).

2. Examine Whether You Have Become Comfortable With Spiritual Neglect (**Haggai 1:2**). The Jews became accustomed to seeing the unfinished temple and no longer viewed it as a problem. Christians can likewise become comfortable with neglected prayer, inconsistent Bible study, weak attendance, or limited involvement in God's work. What once troubled the conscience can eventually seem normal if left uncorrected. Spiritual complacency is often gradual and therefore difficult to detect (**Hebrews 2:1; Revelation 2:4-5**).
3. Examine What God Wants You To Do Right Now (**Haggai 1:8**). The people already knew what God expected of them. Their problem was not ignorance but inaction. Many believers know specific areas where obedience is needed, yet they postpone action while waiting for a more convenient season. God calls His people to act upon the truth they already know rather than delaying until tomorrow (**James 4:17; Hebrews 3:13**).

**Questions:**

1. What excuse did the people use for neglecting the temple work (**Haggai 1:2**)?
2. What evidence showed that their priorities were misplaced (**Haggai 1:3-4**)?
3. What command does God repeat twice in this chapter (**Haggai 1:5, 7**)?
4. What specific action did God command the people to take (**Haggai 1:8**)?
5. What New Testament principle closely parallels Haggai's message (**Matthew 6:33**)?

**Summary:**

Haggai addressed a people who had returned from captivity with good intentions but had gradually lost sight of their priorities. While they remained interested in their own comfort and prosperity, God's house lay unfinished. Through the prophet, God challenged them to stop making excuses and honestly evaluate the direction of their lives.

The chapter reveals that neglecting God never brings lasting satisfaction. The people worked hard, planted crops, earned wages, and pursued personal advancement, yet their efforts continually left them disappointed. God used these frustrations to awaken them spiritually and to show them that true blessing comes when He occupies first place in their lives.

The message remains powerful for Christians today. We may not be rebuilding a physical temple, but we face the same temptation to place personal interests ahead of spiritual responsibilities. Haggai's challenge calls us to examine our priorities honestly, correct what is out of place, and obey the Lord without delay. The question still confronts every believer: Have I truly considered my ways (**Haggai 1:5, 7**)?

**Questions & Answers:**

1. What excuse did the people use for neglecting the temple work (**Haggai 1:2**)?

Answer: The people claimed that the time had not yet come to build the Lord's house, using this as an excuse for neglecting the temple work (**Haggai 1:2**).

2. What evidence showed that their priorities were misplaced (**Haggai 1:3-4**)?

Answer: Their priorities were shown to be misplaced because they devoted attention to building and improving their own houses while God's house remained unfinished (**Haggai 1:3-4**).

3. What command does God repeat twice in this chapter (**Haggai 1:5, 7**)?

Answer: God twice commanded the people to “consider your ways,” calling them to examine their conduct and priorities honestly (**Haggai 1:5, 7**).

4. What specific action did God command the people to take (**Haggai 1:8**)?

Answer: God commanded the people to go to the mountain, gather wood, and rebuild the temple (**Haggai 1:8**).

5. What New Testament principle closely parallels Haggai's message (**Matthew 6:33**)?

Answer: The New Testament principle that closely parallels Haggai's message is Jesus' command to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (**Matthew 6:33**).