

Prioritizing = Success
2/17/2019 Sunday AM

Introduction

- Last week we discussed **Marriage?**
- We were able to see that marriage is defined clearly in the Bible along with parameters for breaking the covenant.
- Marriage is the basic building block of the home, and the home is the basic building block of society.
- We can see a direct correlation between the downward trend of the home to that of society.
- This morning we are going to look at **Prioritizing = Success.**
- In a world where everything seems to be #1, our success depends a lot of how we manage to prioritize.
- **Definition:** Prioritize – to designate or treat something as more important than other things. To determine the order for dealing with a series of items or tasks according to their relative importance.
- Albert E. N. Gray wrote an essay entitled “The Common Denominator of Success” and it revealed that successful people’s common characteristic was not hard work, good luck, or astute human relations. Although these are all important, the one factor that rose above them all was the habit of putting first things first.
- He wrote, “The successful person has the habit of doing the things failures don’t like to do. They don’t like doing them either, necessarily. But their dislike is subordinate to the strength of their purpose.”
- Our Scripture passage this morning communicates the same message of putting first things first.

Haggai 1:1-11

¹In 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 Jehozadak, the high priest:
²This is what the LORD Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built.' " ³Then 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?" ⁵Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. ⁶ You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." ⁷This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. ⁸ Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD . ⁹"You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. ¹¹I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands."

- **Context:** Haggai was speaking here to Jews who had returned to Jerusalem after living in Babylonian captivity.
- The Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple around 70 years prior to this.
- The Jews that returned faced the incredible task of rebuilding the Temple.
- Due to resistance, after 15 years of being back in Jerusalem they had done little more than clear the debris and work on the foundation.
- Haggai had been leading the way on encouraging the people to rebuild the Temple.
- **V. 1** – Reading **Ezra 4:24** it says, “Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.” **Haggai 1:1** here picks up in this second year of King Darius.
- **V. 2** – It seems though that the people are saying, “The time has not yet come for the LORD’s house to be built.”
- The people had been discouraged from rebuilding the Temple because of all that happened 15 years prior.
- However, just like us today, we should not allow anything to hinder us from doing what God has called us to do.
- **Vv. 3-4** - Through Haggai, God asked the people, “Is it time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains in ruin?”
- Paneled houses probably had walls and ceilings covered with cedar wood.

- Such decoration was a sign of prosperity in a land where wood was scarce.
- The point that is being made is that the people were spending freely on their own homes while neglecting the rebuilding of the temple.
- **Vv.5-6** – In these verses God issues a strong warning, “⁵Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. ⁶ You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”
- **The harder the people worked for themselves, the less they had. Do you ever feel that way?**
- Often times we toil and labor until we have nothing left to give, only to find we have nothing to show for it.
- God is employing the people to think about their actions and to get their PRIORITIES in order.
- The Temple was the focal point of their relationship with God, it was where they worshipped.
- Neglecting the Temple and living without it for so long, reflected their willingness to neglect God and their spiritual lives.
- **When we do not put God first in our life, nothing we do in this life will truly be fruitful.**
- **Vv. 7-11** – God implores the people to go and do what it necessary to get the Temple build so that he “may take pleasure in it and be honored.”
- He then goes on to reiterate what he has done over the years to ensure that their actions did not bear fruit because of their wrong priorities.
- They worked tirelessly only to find that there was no fruit of their labor.

- Just like the people of Judah, we too “expect much.”
- We are living in a world where materialism, self-preservation, and self-promotion are rampant.
- The blessings that God bestows upon us are simply hoarded and used to “fill our barns.”
- John Piper wrote about the rich fool,
 “Does not the OT promise that God will prosper the faithful? Indeed! God increases our yield so that by giving we can prove that our yield is not our God. God does not prosper a man’s business so that man can move from a Buick to a BMW. God prospers a business so that hundreds of unreached peoples can be reached with the gospel. He prospers a business so that 20 percent of the worlds’ population can move a step back from the [brink] of starvation... Too many people are shaped by the consumer culture than by the economics of Christ. They still operate on the simple rule: If you earned it, you deserve it. It’s yours; use it for your own material comfort.”
 “The evidence that many of our people are not rich toward God is how little they give and how much they own. Over the years God has prospered them. And by an almost irresistible law of consumer culture, they have bought bigger (and more) houses, newer (and more) cars, fancier (and more) clothes, and all manner of trinkets and gadgets and containers and devices and equipment to make life more fun”.
 “The problem is not earning a lot. The problem is the constant accumulation of luxuries that are soon felt to be needs. If you want to be a conduit of God’s grace, you don’t have to be lined with gold. Copper will do.”
- If we truly want to be successful in this life both physically and spiritually, we must learn to prioritize.
- **Mark 8:36**, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”
- People ask, well how do I prioritize? Well start with putting God first in everything.
- **Matthew 6:33**, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”
- God should be first in our lives, that means he holds the place of preeminence. Everything else follows.
- Absolutely! There is a proper way to prioritize the rest of your life after God. That’s for another week.

Wednesday Night Bible Study

Romans 8:31-36