

First Things First - Haggai Part 1

by Francis Chan

Francis Chan emphasizes the importance of prioritizing God in our lives and the dangers of overcommitting to lesser things.

Duration: 20:44

Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Prioritizing God", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of prioritizing God over worldly desires and the tendency to say 'yes' to everything, crowding out time for God. It delves into the historical context leading up to the book of Haggai, highlighting God's call to rebuild His temple while the people focused on their own comfort. The message challenges the double standard of delaying service to God while pursuing personal interests.

Transcript

We had a staff day this week where Jim and I and the rest of the staff here at Cornerstone just got a way to pray for a day. And so we went up to Rocky Peak Church because their property's a little nicer. I mean, we have a nice view here of penny pinchers and the train, but we went up to Rocky Peak, just kind of overlooked the valley and just think about the majesty of God and just praying and praying for one another.

And so different staff people were asking me throughout the day, how can I pray for you? And it seemed like the same thing I kept coming back to was I was telling everyone, you know what, pray that God would help me say no more often. You know, it's like I wanna do everything. Every time someone wants something, it's like my immediate response is yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I'll do that, I wanna help, but you know what, there's only so much time in the day and you know, something that I'm learning, every time you say yes to something, you're saying no to something else.

You know, because you're crowding something else out of your schedule and while all these things may be good, you know, there's nothing sinful about saying yes to these things, but it becomes that when you're doing all these good things and yet you're neglecting the best things, the most important things. And we do this in our lives. We say yes to so much that we end up crowding out the very things that ought to be priority in our lives.

And usually the first one that gets crowded out of our lives is God, because he's not down here on earth physically, you know, screaming in your face, I need your time, give me your time, give me your resources, serve me, do this, do that. And so we fill our times with all the other things and we crowd God out. And you know, we have this problem saying no.

And so I go, you know, just pray. It doesn't sound real spiritual, but I need to learn how to say no to all these other things so I can say yes to the things that are most important. Our inability to say no, we see it when we go to Costco, you know, to pick up two or three items, right? And you end up with this whole cart of stuff, why? Because everything's like, oh yeah, I probably need that.

I probably need that. And we start saying yes, yes, yes, yes, yes to all this stuff. And you know, we do it with our time.

You know, our lives are already too busy, right? And then yet someone says, hey, can you do this? Can you do this? And we just, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, sure, sure, sure. Meanwhile, you're crowding out some pretty important things. This is why we get in debt.

You know, we just keep saying yes. We can't say no. And this idea of crowding God out, it's like when my wife and I go out to eat, a lot of times we'll just order one meal because I don't wanna overeat and also because I'm cheap.

And so we'll get the one meal. And what I do when the meal comes, the extra plate, is I'll cut off her portion and give it to her, you know? I don't go, you know what, Lisa, let me just eat until I'm happy and then I'll give you whatever's left over. Because I know if I do that, I know myself.

I can eat a lot and I would consume everything there and then I'd even want more. And the truth is that's what we do with God, though. We tend to just say, you know what, let me just take care of myself.

Let me buy the things I wanna buy. Let me do the things I wanna do. And then if there's any leftover time, I'll give it to you.

The problem is we're consumers and we say yes to everything and so pretty soon there's nothing left at the end of the day to give God, except maybe a Visa bill, you know? And pretty soon there's no time for God and he gets crowded out. And you guys, this whole series on priorities is not about, hey, how can we fit God in here a little bit? It's not about that. It's not about fitting God into your life.

When we talk about priorities, it's just that. It's saying, you know what, I want God to be priority over me. See, because everyone has time to serve God.

Everyone does. Everyone has enough time to serve God. Everyone has enough money to give to God.

Now, do we have enough time and money to where we can serve and give to God and also live the lifestyles that we wanna live? Probably not. So at that point, you make a decision. Well, who's more important? And usually it's us and then if there's anything leftover, I'll give to him and he's the one to sacrifice this.

I'm talking about the possibility, just the thought, and I know it's a crazy thought to some of you that maybe you come to a point in your life where you actually are more concerned about pleasing God than yourself. And for some of you, that's just the craziest thought in the world and yet, you guys, that's the very basics

of Christianity. That's the very core is for Jesus is for someone to deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

Making me the one that's the one to be followed, my desires and my will for your life rather than being the one that's usually crowded out. Now, the book we're gonna study the next couple of weeks is a very interesting book. I love this book and not many people have studied it from at least the last few services.

It's the book of Haggai. How many of you have studied the book of Haggai? Okay, two, three, four. Okay, it's a great book in the Bible.

Okay, you'll have to turn to the table of contents, which Julie's doing right now, because it's just one page. You can't flip over and go, oh, there's Haggai. It's just like, you'll miss it.

So just open the table of contents, turn to the book of Haggai. Oh, you're gonna love this book. You are, trust me.

I've never even heard of him. Oh, it's the best. Haggai chapter one, verse one.

Just this verse itself. Listen to Haggai chapter one, verse one. It says this.

Listen closely. In 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 Jehoshaddak, the high priest. Isn't that powerful? You guys are going, oh, that's all I needed.

I can leave now. Now, okay, let me, now most of you are going, ah, what's that all about? So let me give you a quick, as quick as I can, history lesson, okay? I'm gonna take you back so that you understand the context of Haggai's time. I'm gonna go back to when God created the world.

So we're going back pretty far. Actually, we're going back before that, okay? You're like, what do you mean before that? No, there was a before that. But I was just, in the beginning, God.

In the beginning, God. Or John says, in the beginning was the word. I want you to think about something.

There was a time when all there was was God. Think about this. There were no angels, there was no earth.

Nothing else but God. There was no one, no angels going, oh, you're God, but he's still God. There were no people on the earth praising him as God, yet he was still God.

That's his name, I am. When Moses says, hey, who are you? He goes, my name is I am. It was talking about his eternity.

He just always is. Unlike us, you and I became. We came into existence at a certain point.

God just says, I am. And I'm the same yesterday, today, forever. It's just, that's just who I am, I am.

And there was a time when there was just God. Think about that. All there was was God.

The earth was just a thought in his mind. There was no earth, just the thought of creating an earth was in his mind. And think to yourself, what if God never thought to create an earth? See, you and I were just a thought in his head.

I think I'll create, I think I'll create Rob, I think I'll create Morgan. That was just a thought. That was my only existence.

That's this whole earth. That was his only, the only existence was in God's head, in his mind. What if God never thought to create you? What if the creator never thought to even create this whole earth? It's just him, he's still God.

I mean, seriously, dwell on that sometime. Sometimes you walk around like everything revolves around us, and then you just stop and you think, wait a second, this earth didn't even exist. It was just in the thought of God, in the mind of God, and God thinks to create a world, so he creates this world, he creates these people, he creates Adam and Eve, they populate the earth, thousands and thousands of people, and God gives them some commands and says, this is the way I want you to live.

God says, okay, look, here's this earth, I made it, I made you, here's how I want you to live. The people hear God's laws and they don't like it because we don't like restrictions, we don't like to be under anyone's authority, so they began to rebel against this God, and they do all the things that he hates, so God floods the earth. Genesis six is, ah, look at these people.

I mean, look at the way they treat me and my laws, they're just trampling me. No, forget it, and he floods the earth, floods, kills everyone, except for Noah, because there's this one guy who was trying to pursue God, he goes, you know what, I'm gonna keep him alive, keep his family alive. They repopulate the earth, and God promises that he won't do that again, and he gives us that sign of the rainbow, saying I'll never flood the earth again like that.

So he repopulates through Noah. Noah, you know, he says, all these kids, all these kids have kids, kids, kids, kids. Everyone starts, you know, developing, all these people and all these people on the earth again seek to rebel against God.

Collectively, they go, let's just go against God, let's just, and God frustrates them, gives them a bunch of different languages. Genesis chapter 11, we gotta hurry here. And he's, they're going everywhere, you know, their own languages, their own places, and all of them separately start rebelling against God again.

We don't wanna follow this God and his laws. So they start making up their own religions, and they start making up their own gods, saying, well, you know, the way I picture God is he'd probably let me do whatever I want, and most of those religions back then, if you study them, a lot of them were built upon worshipping phallic symbols and things because it was all to please whatever desire they had. They just wanted to make God their own creation, whatever would make them happy.

And so you've got this going on all around the world, and all these people are saying, oh no, God's like this, God's like this, and they had this freedom in their mind to make God however they wanted him to be, whatever they thought he should be like. And so God says, okay, that's enough of that. Here's what I'm gonna, here's how I'm gonna show myself to the world now.

He chooses this one man named Abraham at the time. He goes, Abraham, I'm gonna change your name to Abraham, which is like a plural of your name, meaning there's gonna be so many of you. You're gonna have all these descendants.

Abraham's going, one problem, I'm 100 years old, you know, and have no kids, you know, and my wife's 90, and she's not looking so hot. And God says, no, no, no, this is what I'm gonna do, this is how I'm

gonna show myself to the world. I'm gonna have you have kids, and your children, your descendants are gonna turn into this huge nation, this mighty nation, and I'm gonna bless this one nation so much, just this one nation, not all the other ones, just this one nation, because I want the whole world to look at this one nation and go, wow, their God's the real one, because you're gonna go defeating armies way bigger than yours, and I'm gonna bless and multiply, and none of this should have happened, but everyone's gonna look at this nation and go, wow, their God must be the real God, and then I'll get the worship that I deserve.

So Abraham has a kid, Isaac. Isaac has a kid, Jacob. Jacob has 12 kids, and God says, Jacob, I'm changing your name to Israel.

And that's where we get Israel. Israel had 12 kids, and those are the 12 tribes of Israel, or his 12 sons. God says, you guys are my people.

I'm gonna start blessing you. Now, his people, they start getting attacked by the Egyptians. They become enslaved by the Egyptians, and so God says, you know what, look, there's my people.

They're being enslaved by this other group, but I love them, and so let me show my power. I'm gonna send a deliverer, a leader, whose name was Moses, and Moses goes, and he goes to Egypt and goes to Pharaoh. He says, hey, God says, let his people go.

Pharaoh says, no way, and so God starts showering all these curses upon the Egyptians, and eventually, he says, you know, I'm gonna have the firstborn of every household die in Egypt, and so they all ended up dying, you know, the firstborn of all of the Egyptian homes, and Pharaoh finally goes, okay, get out of here. Get out of here. Just go, go.

Your God is too powerful for me. I don't wanna deal with this God anymore. We're all gonna die if I keep rebelling against this God, so go.

You're free, okay? So the Israelites, you know, they run. They're free. You know, God saved us, and then Pharaoh changes his mind and goes, no, no, no, wait a second.

I want those guys back. They start chasing them, and the Israelites are backed up to the Red Sea, and they're like, oh, what do we do now? And Moses touches the Red Sea, and it parts, you know, and so the Israelites are able to walk through. You know, God's people are able to walk through the Red Sea, and then once they get to the other side, Pharaoh's army's pursuing them, and God drowns them all in that sea, and the people, again, woo, we're free.

God got us through this. He really is God. He really is God, and God tells them, he goes, listen, not only that, but now I'm gonna take you to this land.

I'm gonna take you to the greatest land. I promised the Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and now you guys are gonna get to go there because you're my people, and we're gonna be this great nation, and their people are all fired up, and they send some spies out to the land that God was gonna take them to. The spies come back and go, we saw the land.

It's beautiful. It's everything God said it would be, but there's these really big guys over there. There are these giants, and I don't think we can beat them, and God's going, wait a second.

I just slayed the firstborn of all Egypt. You saw me do that, right? You saw all the plagues I put on them. You saw how I split the Red Sea wide open, and now you're thinking I can't defeat these guys for you? He goes, you know what? I'm tired of you.

I'm just sick of you, and so this is what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna have that whole generation die. That's my answer to a lot of things.

I'm gonna have that whole generation of you, I'm just gonna have you die. That's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna have you wander around the desert for 40 years.

I mean, the kids are okay because they aren't in this decision. It's you guys. You guys are the leaders.

You knew better, so I'm gonna have you die out, and your children, so after those 40 years, that next generation, they're gonna go to the promised land, and so under Joshua, they're taken to this promised land. They get to the land, and sure, it's beautiful. They conquer all the people just like God said they would, and Israel becomes just powerful.

After a while, Israel goes, this is great, but God, we'd love to have a king, and God's going, I'm your king. They're like, yeah, but we want like a man, you know, and God's like, gosh, you're driving me crazy, but okay, fine, fine. You want a man? Here's Saul.

You like him? He's nice, big, handsome, everything else. He'll be your leader. He'll be your king.

Now Saul was a terrible king, you know, just an evil king, and so God takes the blessing away from him, raises up another guy, David. Now David was a good king. Yeah, he was a murderer, an adulterer, but you know, but God still called him good, which is comforting, right, if you killed a couple people this week, and he goes, okay, but he's still mine.

I forgive him, and he loves me, and so David is king of Israel, and Israel flourishes, and then David has a son, Solomon. Solomon takes over the kingdom, and God tells Solomon, Solomon, I want you to build a temple for me there. You're the one that's gonna build me a temple right there in Jerusalem, right there on that Temple Mount.

I got all the, you know, the specks and everything else, and he just builds the most beautiful, amazing temple, and God says, this is where I'm gonna dwell on the earth. This is gonna be like the center of the earth. This is everything.

I'm gonna put my name, I'm gonna put my glory. You put that Ark of the Covenant in the temple. You put that ark I told you to make.

Put it in there. Put the Ten Commandments in there. Put it, you know, and my glory's gonna fill that place, and everyone's gonna know you don't mess with the temple.

You don't mess with the people of God, and so that's what happens during Solomon's reign. The temple is built. Solomon has a son.

Rehoboam, you know, things kind of go on for a little bit, but then there's a division in Israel, and they start fighting, and suddenly there's a, half of the people take, you know, half of Israel, and the other half go north, you know, under this guy named Jeroboam, and so now suddenly the kingdom of Israel is divided between these two leaders, and in the midst of all that, they start wandering into their sin again. The

northern kingdom was really bad. They didn't have any good kings, it seemed like.

Everyone was just rebelling against God. They hadn't had any good going on there, and so God has this group of people called the Assyrians, this army, and you've heard of them. The Assyrians come, and they attack that northern kingdom around 722 BC.

They attack them, carry them off, and so now they take that northern kingdom out of the promised land. The southern kingdom hangs tough there, you know. The southern kingdom of Judah under a king, Hezekiah, Assyrians try to attack them, but he's a follower of God, and so he keeps them strong, and they're okay for a while, but then things happen.

Kings keep changing, and eventually the Babylonians come. About 100 years or so later, the Babylonian empire comes and takes over, gets the southern kingdom of Israel out, and so now the Jews are all out of Israel. The Babylonians, they're under captivity under them.

They're away from their land. After the Babylonian empire comes, the Persians. Now, under the Persians, there's a king named Cyrus.

King Cyrus says, you know what? I'm gonna let you guys go back to your land. I'm gonna let you guys go back to your land, so Cyrus allows the governor of the people, who was Zerubbabel, and their high priest, Joshua, lead them back into the land, and so the people are back here now, okay, and so then, after Cyrus comes at Darius, and Darius, you know, during that time, that's where we pick up the story in Haggai. Haggai comes and speaks to Joshua, Zerubbabel, and the people, and says, hey, I've got a message for you guys from God, okay? You got it? Okay, so that's where we are in Haggai 1 now.

Okay, now I left out a lot, okay, so don't go, oh, I don't have to read the Old Testament now. No, I left out a lot. Okay, so here they are.

They're in the land. The temple's been destroyed. Solomon's beautiful temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, that place, and so in verse two, God has a message for these people, and the Lord Almighty says, these people say that time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be built.

Okay, God's responding, and he's saying, you know what, you people, I put you back in the land, but you're making the statement, saying it's just not time for the Lord's house to be rebuilt right now. Okay, you got that? So they're going, it's just not time to rebuild the temple, and so God's response to that in verse three is this. He says, then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai.

Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses while this house remains a ruin? It's a bit of sarcasm there, where God goes, oh, so it's not time to build my temple, but it is time for you to build your own house, though, right, your nice little paneled houses. You know, the paneled house was the idea that in their interior was this crafty woodwork. I mean, it just basically meant they're living in luxury.

And God goes, that's really interesting that you go, it's not time to build my house, yet you knew it was time to build yours, while mine remains a ruin? He goes, interesting, you didn't hear a call to rebuild my house, but did you hear a call to rebuild yours? It's a double standard that we do to this day. I hear it all the time. Christians will come to me and say, well, I don't know if I should serve God right now.

I haven't gotten a clear calling. You know, God hasn't told me, you know, exactly where to serve Him and what to do, and so I really feel like the right thing to do is to wait upon the Lord, you know, really from my

heart, and wait upon the Lord to tell me where to serve, you know, otherwise I'm running ahead of Him. Hear that stuff all the time.

And my response to that is, did you watch TV this week? Did you hear from the Lord to watch TV? Did God say, you know what, you need to watch some TV?

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