

WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKPACK?

We seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness by respecting God and His Word, keeping the faith and maintaining constant communication with Him.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ During the reign of King Darius, Zerubbabel and Joshua received a message from the Lord for the Jews who had returned from Israel's exile to Babylon. This message was delivered by the prophet, Haggai.
- ❖ Returning to Israel, they rebuilt their lives, yet shifted their focus toward the 'essentials' of life (i.e., food, water, shelter), while neglecting the rebuilding of the Temple of God.
- ❖ The people in the book of Haggai were vulnerable, tired, worried about their future – and their solution was to work hard.
- ❖ They must have wondered, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" Jesus addresses these questions in Matthew 6:32-33 (NIV): "For the pagans run after all these things, and Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."
- ❖ While preparing your workspace/classroom, meals, class schedules and tutorial or labs, take a look into your backpack. It is quite obvious that there are items we will need, practically, to get through our learning experience. But Haggai reminds us to put God's business ahead of our own plans; to build the Kingdom of God despite the challenges we face.
- ❖ The following essentials are needed for going back to school. They cannot fit in your backpack per se – they are intangible principles to truthful living.

1. Respect God

- ❖ In Hebrew, the word "fear" encompasses very positive things like honour, adoration, reverence, and respect (not condemnation, torment or being afraid). And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good? (Deuteronomy 10:12-13)
- ❖ We must respect God in everything we do. "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).
- ❖ How do we know that we respect God?
 - We take the time to listen to God's words and take notice of His goodness.
 - We honour God with our actions through obedience because He is righteous.
 - We value God's ministry and serve, giving it special attention.

KEY SCRIPTURES:

Haggai 1:5-8; Matthew 6:23-24

- ❖ When Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people heard the word of the Lord, they feared God and began to work on the house of the Lord (Hag. 1:12-14). Sincere obedience is a product of respect for God and His Kingdom.
- 2. Keep the Faith**
- ❖ We must respect God and His work in tandem with faith. God respects (honours) faith. We seek the Kingdom of God by seeking Him and His essence,(?) which is the Word of God (John 1:1). God pays attention when we devote ourselves to meditating on His Word.
- ❖ How do we know we are keeping the faith?
 - We keep God's promises in our hearts by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).
 - Our faith builds as we continue to read, meditate and mirror our lives on the Word of God (Psalm 1:1-3).
- ❖ The remnant of survivors from the exile in Babylon were encouraged by the Word of God (through another prophecy by Haggai), to be strong and to continue building a new house/temple of God. God's words of encouragement increased their faith in times of restlessness and uncertainty (Hag. 2: 7).
- 3. Maintain Constant Communication**
- ❖ Communication is the life-line of our relationship with God. God has strategically put a system in place for us to stay in constant communication with Him. As Christ imitators we are called to pray. When we stop praying, we stop communication with God.
- ❖ God is always talking to us; however, we are not always in a place where we can hear Him. The greatest sacrifice and act of submission is when we lay our agenda down and "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- ❖ In this season of 'back-to-school', let us give careful thought to our ways and honour God in faith and prayer – it's then that we are "seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." In addition, God will give us whatever is suitable for us in each season.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

- ◆ Examining your life, what do you "seek first"?
- ◆ What do you need to continue/change to be sure that you are seeking God's kingdom *first*?

PRAYER TIME

God, You are my God. Early and continually, I will seek You in all things. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.

Start-up: How would you order these three things in importance in life: food, shelter, clothing? Explain why.

WEEK OF SUNDAY, AUGUST 22, 2021

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

✓ (Reminds me/Confirms) 💡 (New idea) ☁️ (Think about)

! (Do this) ❤️ (Speaks to my heart) ↻ (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Go deeper with your Life Group family.
CONNECT-REFLECT-DISSECT THE WORD
Your Life Group ~ Your Lifeline