

SERMON SERIES: Responses: The Return Home
SPEAKER: Scott Beckenhauer
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Key Line

God wants me to know that my true home is with Him.

Introduction

What are some of your priorities at this season in your life?

Today's lesson will focus on how my priorities and my plan for my life may compete with God's priorities and plan for my life.

Background: after the Israelites had been conquered and sent into exile, a new empire (Persia) and king (Cyrus) come on the scene.

Seek the Word

Read Ezra 1: 1-4.

- So, the Israelites are being allowed to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.
- The temple was a visual reminder that God wanted to be with His people. To revisit today's Key Line, it was a reminder that their "true home was with God."
- They started the building process, but eventually stopped. They then focused on rebuilding their own homes, rather than finishing the temple.

Haggai was a prophet God sent to the Israelites to get them back on track to complete the work of rebuilding the temple.

Read Haggai 1:1-8.

- Verse 4: What might the "paneled houses" represent? (*Our personal, and often selfish, priorities.. including our comfort, our wants, desires and plans for our lives.*) So, what would the other house in verse 4, the one in ruins, represent? (*God's mission, His plan and kingdom and priorities, including His plan and purpose for our lives*)
- Notice the phrase "Give careful thought to your ways" stated twice. Why did God say that? (*The Israelites had gotten off track.*) When and why might God say that to us? (*When we get off track in our priorities.*) Can you share any specific times when you have gotten off track in your priorities?
- See verses 5-6: What happens when our priorities take precedence over God's? (*We will not be satisfied.*)

Talk About It

God's plan and priorities must be #1 in our lives.

To determine our priorities, we could probably look at our calendars (how we spend our time) and our financial account (how we spend our money).

- Think back over the past week or month. What have you spent your time and money on? What does that tell you about your priorities?
- If you wish, read Matthew 6:21. Now, give some examples of what a calendar and financial account might look like for a person whose #1 priority is God (whose treasure and heart are aligned with His mission).

When we try to align our priorities with God's, it's tempting to create a list of things to do. More important, however, is who we are becoming. One way to put this is: "Be, not do." Or another way, "Who you are will ultimately impact what you do." Discuss these ideas... what do they mean to you? What do they look like?

The Israelites eventually got back on track (yay!) and finished the temple. Read Ezra 6:16. When we are on track with our priorities, we too can have joy. Discuss how you've seen that happen in life... or how you would like to see that happen.

Today's Key Line: God wants me to know that my true home is with Him. What does that mean in the context of today's lesson? (*My relationship with God is more important than worldly goals and priorities. I need to focus more on His house [His plan and mission] than my house [my plans and priorities]*).

Apply It

Whose house are you more concerned about building, God's or yours? Why do you say that?

Read Matthew 6:33. So, how can you "seek His kingdom first" in practical ways today, and this week?