

- **If I ask you, What do you want in life? – People will say a ‘Better Future’ – Next 6 weeks; We review how to have a ‘Better future’- series**
- **Part I – Set the right priority: Build a Holy Huddle- Haggai Chapter 1:1-11**

Emperor penguins have a priority to mate, and have young, reproduce after their kind. Everything they do revolves around this priority. For eg. they are exposed to countless dangers of predators in the sea, then they march 700 miles in a marching line one after the other, to get to the mating ground despite different conditions each time; once laid the egg is balanced on their feet for months on end slightest lengthy exposure results in the egg dying; but, greatest thing I witnessed was the importance they placed on huddling together. They experience three fierce storms during their mating; down to as low as -80 degrees; the only way to survive is to huddle together. Face to face, back to back they take it in turns to weave a huge body of penguins so they are warm. Actually, what made this amazing was that they don't like each other. They are very competitive since they all want a mate; they often fight! But, without huddling they die! So they huddle and they live!

I believe God is speaking to us about huddling, not for mating, but to be a holy huddle; that's the church. He is giving us afresh, this priority that will make the difference for 2007! Priorities determine where I go and what I do, Help us to arrive at our destination, and achieve a certain result. What happened this year resulted from priorities we set last year. New year tomorrow; without priority I could do a lot; but miss the most important goal or target! Priorities are important; bad ones are costly.

Today we God has priorities that will lead his people to a better future. A better future starts with setting right priorities according to God's way

- Lets read Haggai 1:1- 11; Haggai was basically asking them have you got the right priorities?
- **Part I – Set the right priority: Build a Holy Huddle- Chapter 1:1-11**
- Back ground: They had forsaken their God given priority to build the temple; the place for God's people to worship; they suffered as a result; God wanted to get them back on track; it's a timeless message for us! Church is like a huddle as well; but a holy huddle. We too go astray from this priority so easily.
- 3 things we learn about this priority
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3 things we learn about setting the right priority:

1. We must know the incorrect priority-Why we Stop building the Holy Huddle

Gods word came to all; God said build the temple; they were saying 'not yet' Lord, it was a ruin, neglected for 15 years! It can be like us too, many years in church, but it's still not running properly, smoothly and established because people have had the wrong priorities; God called all to account here; community leaders and all people. So God had to deal with their priorities. Help them to see why its important; & why they need to obey

They said not yet; not no, but not yet! Do you sometimes get someone asking you something; you say yes, but you delay, you don't do it! What happens; they get frustrated. God was upset!

Not yet...the truth was they were selfishly building their own homes; with paneling(you see home improvement for stylish finishes), and were afraid of opposition from their enemies, lost heart, especially since they were small. Like us today, we are called to build his spiritual temple the church, but we often can say 'not yet' too! Like them we can start well after becoming a Christian, got time for activities, like prayer meetings, mission days, discipleship etc...but afterward without realizing, we become preoccupied with our own priorities and our own home affairs, our new job, over time, work demands, pressure packed schedule, we feel we need to get established, get ahead. All these are seeking to swallow our heart so there is nothing left! We become inward looking. Deep down its okay to come to church, but we are afraid to give

our all to seriously build the church. We end up in survival mode, feeling like God is distant! Their sin, like ours is to stop trusting God! They stopped to huddle together for God's purpose.

Friends Church, building the temple, the church is God's number one priority! Why? The temple was the place where people gathered or huddled to know their God, got their hearts right with God, found forgiveness for sin, were taught God's ways so they could be used to bless others so they joined. The new testament temple is a spiritual one. We too are called to huddle together in worship! We are building a holy huddle: Jesus said: "For where ever two or three gather together because they are mine, I am there among them" Matthew 18:20"

We must be convinced that any other way is incorrect and not God's will. This is vital for setting the right priority in 2007. God is saying build this huddle, and establish many more in this city despite our hardships and tough economic conditions looming in Melbourne. Here some reasons why we should huddle no matter what:

Some people say I can manage alone just fine
Huddling keeps us close to God, and protects us from our own sinful desires. He 'inhabits the praises of his people'. When we huddle, we feel his presence more, its harder for Satan to tempt us and drag us away. One time I wanted a bigger house. I felt the pressure inside. I got an idea, how I can extend my house cheap! I came to my neighbor demanding; He said no! I don't know what came over me. I was really pushy, forceful; I was the same with the council and then I worshiped God at church; realized I was being tempted. I returned safe to God!

Some people say but what's the point of going to church?

Huddling together is church is God's command. We will never be blessed except we do what God said! He said huddle. Some people say you don't need to huddle at church; they never attend; they feel it doesn't work. I admit, I have had times when I really questioned whether I bother with people again; felt disappointed; but I have learned if I depart; a hole appears in my heart! There's far more encourag. things than badHeb10:25 And let us not neglect our meeting together,as some people do"

Some people say I need time for myself.

Only huddling makes our paneled homes, and possessions worth while. God created earth to be inhabited. God didn't make it for himself! Arn't things much more enjoyable when sharing with others? We need to huddle in church, and use what God has given with others. The super wealthy often live alone. They trust no one. Life is sad! Saw one big celebrity who rented a hotel floor alone and drove hour after hour, day after day alone on a motor scooter.

Some people say I don't need church people; what's the difference with others.

Huddling keeps us out of sin and in good company. Christians intentionally live with godly values. Many a time I have felt wrong in my heart, spoke to another Christian and turned to God again. We keep each other accountable. Heb 4:12-13 says "Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from living God. You must warn each other every day, as long as it is called today, so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardening against God." So, God helps us through others as we huddle. We are in good company; with safe characters here. Non believers will tell you that too; that's why they like it. People are safe, trustworthy, good to be with, a good influence!

Some say what's the point of having big church?

By huddling we attract many more people to God. Numbers attract numbers. We are not meant to be alone. Society is dragging us apart; if we are not wise technologies can make us loners! But, church community meet our deepest needs; as we gather in one heart together. Other non-Christian minority groups understand this principle of huddling and uniting well; some stand for the wrong cause and are growing and demanding more rights with their numbers; how much more Christians should understand this. Sometimes we are the slowest to realize!

Some say the church is full of hypocrites, why go? Mistakes have been made; shouldn't I keep away? But, God forgives those who huddle. God is patient. News papers point out faults in church. Our friends talk about where the church went wrong. But, its still here and its big. And we get back to heart of it; we realize that Jesus is awesome. He died for us! God forgives so we can have another chance. I remember once, when I just got married I was striving to have my own way. One time I really upset my wife. It was horrible! I felt really bad. I got on face, and renounced idols. As I prayed I could see my pride. I thought, Have I hurt my wife too much would she forgive, give another chance? She did! So does God! We should forgive too.

So, we do great harm if we don't huddle, don't build our church, whatever our reason. Haggai is showing us there's no excuse; we need to awaken to our priority to huddle as we face a new year; is our Hope mission statement just another slogan or a compelling mandate? Jesus warned of wrong priorities too- Plant grows but was choked due to thorns. I was always challenged by this parable; want to be 100 fold!

2. What are some symptoms of incorrect priorities? What happens when we don't build the holy huddle for God?

God wanted them to know they had the wrong priority and that his favor was not upon them; before we can return to God we need to know we are out of his will. We cannot expect to move on with God until we can see what's going on. We need to understand in the spiritual realm. The prophet Haggai showed the people their real problem, by high lighting the symptoms of wrong priorities.

Their number one priority was to prosper, to have plenty, to enjoy the fruits of their labors! Yet what did they get for all their hard work and toil? Drought, poverty and more hardship! We see in general when going the wrong way we experience lack of blessings, provision, and have shortages, this will result when we have the wrong priority; when we don't value building God's house –

HAG 1:5 Now 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."
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.

So we are to Consider our ways carefully!....consider means to reflect on things, contemplate what's going on, evaluate conscientiously, examine things in detail, ask what's going on; don't just keep going on without thinking; God is in heaven; nothing happens by chance! (Good to keep a journal!)

What are some signs or indicators of God's disfavor due to wrong priorities :

Have our ways been marked by Inefficiency & ineffectiveness, in work & productivity, in spiritual growth?- Plant much, a lot, many seeds, ground is full of seed! It is wise to plant much if we are harvest much! Good to send many resumes, good to witness to many souls, good to make many friends, not a few... Plant a lot we can get more back....but, what happened? planted much but harvested? Little! Planted much but harvested little; much in many hours, many days spent in sweat and effort, but the return....little! what did they do? Kept planting much again!! Planted more! Worked harder! Remember God's charge; you are busy! In other words the more drought, the more hunger and more shortage, what did they do?? They worked harder still until it became like a vicious cycle! How many stay up later and later when you face shortage; you face lack. As things get tighter, we compromise on time to huddling together; God's time, care group time is neglected, we need the money!! So we either work ourself to death or you just get too tired and exhausted and want to give up altogether?

So what is the problem here? Thanks God, he is showing us today what our problem is. The drought is from him! The shortage is from his hand. This funny thing, work to death and yet still poor! Its from him! He is the culprit! Why; friend's shortage and lack are meant to drive us to God, and cause us to hunger for him and rely on his mercy! You see instead of relying on our problem alone and meditating on it day and night we are to turn our attention to God and look to him instead! Can I encourage you today. As we look to him and focus on him, and serve him our problems will soon be gone! We will be able to see why we are clothed but not warm, why we have a purse but with holes, why we have financial lack. He will show us where we are going wrong. He will give us wisdom as we are with him. Our church will become our home, God uses it to clear our mind!

Our true problem is that we are too busy to spend time with God! Our focus is our hard work. Our energy is consumed in worry and fear and deep distress. When you are too busy to seek God, thinking starts to focus on the problems alone! Danger is that we focus too much on our problem, not on God!

Have we been experiencing Leakage & loss? I remember once in my life I experienced Haggai 1; God dealt with me. I had continual bills, harsh conditions that humbled me mid-summer heat was unbearable; there was drought; boss didn't pay me sometimes; things were stolen and one day really hot summers day, and air conditioning in my care broke down; one pipe was needed to be replaced for about a 1000 dollars! I was really angry! God what's going on? Had clothes but I was not warm, had cover but my heart was cold; had drink, but not filled; was looking for comfort from videos and books etc...but struggling to go to God!-I remember I was leaking like a bucket emotionally; all my joy was gone; excessive anger, all my peace was gone; excessive frustration; One day at sermon time; God spoke; I turned back fully to him. Things were still tough, but I began to thank him, began to enjoy time in prayer; could pray till late....joy came back- my prayer went like this- Lord use me in your house; I am sorry for all my complaining etc..give me another chance; the sting was removed from all my disappointment! God had been blowing things away until I came to him

Friends consider your ways; consider your emotions; they are linked to what you are thinking! Like a dash board on the car; what are they saying? Have you got the symptoms of disappointment and lack; is God calling your attention to holy huddle again? Is it time to return to him?

3. How do we establish correct priorities? –By faith make God's holy huddle our priority again.

HAG 1:7 This 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

God says the same thing a second time. "give careful thought to your ways" He wanted them to take it to heart. He wanted them to think twice about what's going on-this is mentioned twice because it's so important for us to realize! So easy to miss; my circumstances may be God challenging my priority for him.

God showed them what to do to readjust their priority. Go to the mountains. In other words get what's needed to build my house; get that quality cedar form the mountain. That will bring honor. Its not enough to just come to church and do things. What is really powerful when we know what we do is for God. We are working for his honor and glory; nothing is more satisfying. Going up to the mountains seems hard right. Mountaineering takes real effort. What a bother? But, when God's vision is in you, then its for God you are really powerful. It is not a bother; but rather it's an adventure. You get pleasure from working hard when its for God; when he takes pleasure in it; we will find satisfaction in our lives! Its not about us; our life is about living for God!

I was encouraged by a brother in Waverley church who is doing his alpha presentation throughout the holiday period with his unbelieving friends. Its holiday time, many are having parties and fun; but while he also enjoys himself he is also working hard for God. He's on an adventure for God. He is loving every minute of it. He wants to build a great church in Melbourne so the world will know about it and come to Jesus.

We have a great vision to share God's love to our friends and city out there. Times are tough and it will take much effort to do it. The devil will try to keep us in immaturity! Try to keep us relying on ourselves; staying busy without God's priority. While we rely ourselves and live for ourself and we going to church, we are no threat to the kingdom of darkness; we can be coming to church and sitting in the pew, mixing a little with people is no problem; a little even the small demons can easily put out our fire...what the devil fears is this release; this freedom that will lead to a power release from God's angelic host! When we get full determination to live for God's priority to sacrificially build the holy huddle again.

God is calling us to faith in him; faith for the future. Faith that allows us to establish his church. I was so encouraged by psPrayuth's testimony to live for God's honor. When he was established in his praise and worship ministry his wife had a child. Straight after giving birth, he was sent out to plant a new church! Not easy, but he had great faith to build the temple of God. He knew it would result in personal blessing. His priority was God's work. Praise God he went. He is well off today and serving God mightily because he had the vision to honor God.

Maybe we look at his life and say that's too hard! I believe God is calling us to move in faith. But, as I prayed I felt God say you are like a Gideon. When he was first called he was afraid and discouraged by what he faced. God said to him mighty warrior and he was shocked. He said he was a nobody and poor. He also couldn't understand where were God's miracles? Why was he defeated so badly? But, he returned to God's priority to build a holy huddle.

This year we are confronted with an awesome task of building God's church; we need to trust God to bless us here, so we can plant church communities throughout melb.

Conclusion

Set the right priority- New year- Is my thinking is divorced from this priority- Matthew 6:33 says- "seek first...."

Has fear and selfish attitudes crept in?

Because they ignored God drought and troubles came upon them. Our land is in drought.

Do we have troubles; are they from God to help us come back to the huddle? Why not rededicate yourself? Are busy but not moving in faith? Are we discouraged? God gives fresh faith today.

God's priority is building his temple; his holy huddle. Many things are competing with our priorities.

Many things compete; will we be faithful to carry this priority in 2007?

Overall topic	What do you want in life? – A 'Better Future' series-
31 st Dec 2006	Part I – Set the right priority: Build a Holy Huddle- Chapter 1:1-11
7 th Jan 2007	Part II – Commit to your priorities- Ch 1:12- 15
14 th Jan	Part III- Find Strength in God- Ch 2:1- 5
21 st jan	Part IV- Stand firm in God's vision Ch 2: 6- 9
28 th Jan	Part V – The Time for things to turn around has come! Ch 2: 10- 19
5 th Feb	Part VI- Equipped for victory Ch 2:20- 23

Emperor Penguins huddle