

## **CHARACTER TRAIT: Priorities. A person of right priorities**

**Definition of Priorities:** Having a sense of what is most important so that most important things do not get crowded out of our lives by less important ones.

### **Word Study:**

#### **Other forms of the word—**

N. pl. She has wise priorities in her life. She is a person a right priorities.

N. s. I have many things to do, but what should be my priority?

V. Think about what you need to do and then prioritize your activities.

#### **What other word do you see in “Priorities”?**

Prior (Before)- Adj. In the prior game, their football team scored ten points.

(So, the word “priorities” carries the idea of choosing to put one activity before another.)

**Bible Story:** Haggai calls the people to rebuild the temple of God. The Bible book of Haggai

**Visuals:** If the suggested student participation is included, visuals will not be absolutely needed. Pictures of Haggai or the rebuilding of the temple itself will probably be hard to find. If pictures are available, we suggest you look for these:

Solomon’s temple (the one that was destroyed & they were to rebuild in Haggai’s time) Use it whenever the original temple or Solomon’s temple is mentioned.

Pictures of Jesus in the temple (use at the end of the lesson when we learn that they were to rebuild the temple where Jesus would one day teach). See page 10.

Remember that pictures of many Bible stories can be found on the internet if you are able to print them.

One powerful visual would be to make a simple cloth bag and cut holes in the bottom. Use this when teaching Haggai 1:6 (see page 5).

### **Memory Verse:**

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Matthew 6:33

Suggestions for teaching the memory verse: When you say “first”, thrust forward one finger. When you say “kingdom of God”, point above. When you say “all these things”, make swooping motions all around you. When you say “added”, put both hands forward, palms up, as if giving someone a gift.

The words of this verse have been made into a popular Gospel song. If you know it, you can sing the verse with the children.

### **Beginning the Lesson (Introduction):**

Kwame was told he had a rare disease and there was no cure. He would die, probably within six months. He began to pray for healing, but it did not happen. As he prayed, instead, God gave him a peace about dying. Then Kwame’s doctor told him that he had about three months left. When Kwame went home, he took out a paper and pen and began to make a list. What did he want to do in the four months that were left to him? What was most important? Kwame began to make a list of all the things he wanted to do and to accomplish before God called him. Then he began to write numbers in front of each item. As he tried to decide what was most important, he put a 1, 2, or 3 in front of each item. Some items he actually crossed off his list, deciding they were not so important when compared to the others.

When Kwame began to do the different activities on his list, do you suppose he began with the things he crossed off the list? Did he begin with the number 3’s? Why not? (Teacher, let a student respond.)

What was Kwame doing with his list? He was prioritizing—deciding what was most important to do so that he could be sure to spend his limited time on the things that were most important to him.

### **Transition to the Lesson:**

Does God care about our priorities? Yes, He does. Matthew 6:33 tells us we should seek FIRST His Kingdom and His righteousness. In this verse, God is asking us to prioritize, and to make God number one on our list of priorities.

In the little Bible book of Haggai, we learn of a time when God punished the children of Israel for having wrong priorities.

*A little information about the book:* Haggai is toward the end of the Old Testament. The last four books of the Bible are (say rhythmically): Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. It has only two chapters—one of the shortest books in the Bible. Only the New Testament book of Jude is shorter.


But Haggai has a very big message—a message about the bad things that can happen when people get their priorities mixed up, and a message about the wonderful things that can happen when we get our priorities right once again. Let's see what Haggai has to tell us.

### **Main Points of the Lesson, with suggested student participation:**

*Background information the students need to know:*

Haggai was a prophet—a man who heard from God and spoke to others on His behalf. He lived about 400 years before Jesus was born. Seventy some years before, God had allowed enemies to come into Jerusalem and destroy the city and the beautiful temple. This was because the people had disobeyed God and worshiped idols. In Haggai's time, God had called them to return to rebuild what had been destroyed. They had made a good start, rebuilding first an altar where they worshiped God. Then they had begun to build houses for themselves. They were supposed to rebuild the temple, the house of worship to God, but somehow they never seemed to get around to it. Then God spoke to Haggai about this.

## 1. God showed Haggai that people had wrong priorities (Haggai 1:1-5).

 **Read Haggai 1:2** slowly & with expression. (In older classes, you might pre-arrange for a student to read it. If so, have the student practice ahead and mark the verse so as to be ready.)

**? Ask questions about the verse.** (Call on a student quickly, without wasting time.)

- Who is speaking in this verse?
- What were the people saying, at least in their hearts?
- How do you think God knew about what they were saying?
- The people had come back to Jerusalem for the purpose of rebuilding. So why do you think they thought it was not yet time to rebuild the temple? (Answers may vary. The main purpose in asking is to get the students to think possible motives.)

 **Guide the students in singing about what they have heard.**

Divide the students into two groups, down the middle of the room. The first group stands and sings rhythmically: “God heard the people say...”. They sit down and quickly the second group rises and sings, “The time has not yet come.” (Repeat 3 or 4 times.)

 **Read Haggai 1:3-5.**

**? Ask questions about the verses you have read.**

- Why did God not accept their reason for not rebuilding the temple?  
(Bring out the point that it had to do with their priorities. They were concerned out with building nice houses for themselves, but neglecting God’s house of worship. This did not show that God was a priority in their lives. It was as if their own comfort was more important than God.)

☺ **Guide the students in singing about what they have heard.**

The students may speak or sing rhythmically: (Syllables that are boldfaced are to be emphasized and elongated. Others are short and quick.)

“**What** is **more** im-**por**-tant? --What **God** wants, or what **I** want?  
(Repeat several times)

Then add this:

The **thing** that’s **most** im-**por**-tant, **that** is **my** pri-**or**-i-ty!

▶!◀ **Summarize the first point.**

God told the prophet Haggai to tell the people He was not happy with them because they were making their own homes & comfort a higher priority than Him. This was seen in their failure to rebuild the temple, the house of worship.

**2. Wrong priorities brought damaging results (Haggai 1:6, 11).**

📖 **Read Haggai 1:6, stopping briefly after each point.**

? **Ask questions about this verse.**

Their wrong priorities had some terrible consequences. I’ll begin a statement, and you finish it.

- They sowed much seed, but they brought in \_\_\_\_\_.
- They ate, but they did not have \_\_\_\_\_.
- They drank, but they were not \_\_\_\_\_.
- They put on clothes, but they could not keep \_\_\_\_\_.
- They earned wages, and put it into a bag with \_\_\_\_\_.

● **Guide the students to act out what they have read.**

Ask for five volunteers. Give one a big handful of seeds. He will sow them,

talking about the big crop he expects. Then he will go back, to find only a couple pitiful plants. (Just pretend the plants are there.)

Then ask one to act very hungry. You give him a tiny bit of food, but it is not enough and he is still hungry.

Ask the third student to act thirsty. You give him a drink, but there is only a tiny bit in the glass, and he is still thirsty.

Ask the fourth student to act cold. You give him a lightweight shirt, but it is not enough, so he is still cold.

Give the fifth student a cloth bag that has big holes cut in the bottom. He works hard to earn wages. He gets several coins as wages, but he puts it into the cloth bag, and the coins fall out as he walks home.

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**Read Haggai 1:11.**

**? Ask questions about this verse.**

- **What did God call for?**
- **What is a drought?**
- **How extensive was this drought? What was affected by it?**
- **Why was God doing this? What did He want to draw their attention to?**

☺ Chant rhythmically: (Syllables to be accented are boldfaced. Hesitate where the X is marked.)

**Wrong X** pri-or-i-ties

Lead to **sad X** con-se-quen-ces. (Repeat four times.)

▶!◀ **Summarize point two.**

God loved these people, but they were headed on the wrong course and He needed to get their attention. Their priorities were wrong. They were putting their own comfort above honoring God. These wrong priorities

were causing them much unneeded suffering.

**3. God used Haggai to show them how to make their priorities right. (Haggai 1:7-10).**

 **Read Haggai 1:7.**

**? Ask questions about the verse.**

- What did God ask them to do?
- What were their ways saying about what was most important to them?

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 **Read Haggai 1:8.**

**? Ask questions about the verse.**

- What did God ask them to do?
- When they rebuilt the house of worship, how would God respond?
- How does it make you feel to know that we people can do something that actually brings pleasure and honor to God? (Let them think about this.)

 **Guide the students in acting out the verses they have heard.**

Guide the whole group of students to follow you in making gestures to show: Going up to the mountain, Bringing wood back to the city, Rebuilding the house.

**►!◀ Summarize the teaching of point 3.**

God did not leave the people guessing about what the problem was, or how to make it right. Their priorities were wrong, so they were spending their time on the wrong activities. They needed to straighten out their priorities and put God first. They needed to show this by getting the wood that would be needed and then rebuilding God's house of worship.

#### **4. God turned cursing to blessing when they put their priorities in order (Haggai 1:12-13 & 2:19).**

 **Teacher, summarize these verses rather than reading them.**

- The people obeyed the voice of the Lord that was spoken to them through Haggai the prophet.
- So God assured them that He was with them.
- God promised that from that day forward, He would bless them.

**►!◀ Summarize the teaching of point 4.**


God had sent them all kinds of trouble to get their attention so that they would get their priorities back in order. When they obeyed and put Him first as priority Number 1, He immediately started to bless them again from that very day on. The people showed their priorities were right by doing first the thing God had sent them there to do—rebuild the house of worship, the temple.

#### **5. God showed them why their priorities mattered in light of His big plan for the world (Haggai 2:3-9).**

 **Read Haggai 2:3.**



**? Ask questions about the verse.**

- To whom is God asking this question? (It had been well over 70 years since the temple was destroyed. So only the oldest amongst them would have remembered what it was like.)
- What two questions did God ask them?
- Would the physical glory of this temple be as magnificent as Solomon's temple that had been destroyed?
- How would this one compare to the one that had been destroyed in the outward sense?
-  **Summarize 2:4-5.**

God asked them to be strong anyway and not to fear, because He promised to be with them, just as He was when He led them out of slavery in Egypt.

 **Summarize 2:6-9.**

God said the coming was coming when He would shake the earth.

- At that time, the DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS would come. This was a beautiful title that prophesied the coming of the Messiah—not just for the Jews alone, but to be the Savior of all nations.
- God promised He would fill that house with His glory.
- God promised that in that place, He would give peace.
- He was talking about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, about 400 years before God sent Him into our world to become our Savior.
- What would make this temple so special & even greater than the former? (If time allows, you could ask the students what they know)

about Jesus and the temple, then add anything they miss. If time is short, just go over the facts:

- This would be the temple where the Lord Jesus Christ would be presented while he was still an infant. As soon as he saw him, Zechariah the priest would say, “My eyes have seen God’s salvation” (Luke 2:26-32).
- This would be the temple where Jesus would teach, when he was only 12 years old.
- This was the temple where Jesus would stand up at one of the annual festivals and say, “My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent Me” (John 7:16).
- This was the temple where Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers (Matthew 21:12).
- This was temple where God the Father tore the veil from top to bottom at the very moment of Jesus’ death, showing that the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross opened the way for us to come into His very presence & have peace with Him (Matthew 27:51).

**►!◀ Summarize point 5.**

The people had neglected to rebuild the temple just because they were too busy thinking about their own needs. Yet the thing God was asking them to do was tremendously important in His plan of salvation for the world. They were to rebuild the temple where Jesus, God’s Son, would walk! They would not see this in their lifetimes, for it was still 400 years away, but it was on God’s calendar, and as they made God’s will their priority, they were going to be privileged to be a part of it—a part of something great. They almost missed it by seeing their own comfort as more important than God and His plan.

**Application for the Saved Student:**

Who knows what big things God may allow you to be a part of in His big plan? He has something exciting in store for all of us who love Him.

What are the priorities in your life? How high does God rate on your list? What other things are also very important to you? Are there ways that you waste lots of your time that are not really very important? Are there people in your life that you should make a higher priority? How big a priority is schoolwork in your life? Will you someday wish you made it a higher priority?

Will you pray quietly right now and ask God to show you what might need to be rearranged in your sense of priorities? (Teacher, allow a time of silent prayer. Then close in prayer, asking God to help the student prioritize the things that are really most important in their lives.)

### **Closing Activity**

Chant together—Pri, pri, pri, pri-or-i-ties! (Repeat several times.)

### **Invitation for the Unsaved Student**

God's very first command is that we put Him first. If we are honest, almost all of us fall down on that point. None of us can say we have always put God first, can we? It's true, what the Bible says that "All have sinned...There is none righteous, no, not one." None of us could keep this command perfectly as God demanded, so God sent His perfect Son from Heaven. Jesus did keep God's commands. He always put His Father God first. He gave His life on the cross as the payment God demanded for our shortcomings. God showed that He accepted this sacrifice by raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus is alive today. When you are ready, you can call on Him and ask Him to save you. Just tell Him you are sorry for your sin and you believe in Him. What a wonderful day it was for me when I came to Jesus. I am praying you will come to Him, too.

Teacher, if desirable in your situation, you can encourage those who do trust in Jesus as a result of your teaching to write their name on a piece of paper with the words, "I took Jesus," and slip the paper to you whenever they see you.

Character Building Lessons from the Bible  
by Every Child Ministries. A PERSON OF RIGHT PRIORITIES

Song that could accompany this lesson:

Do the most important things first, always  
Do the most important things first.  
You'll be sure to get the important things done  
If you do the most important things first.  
FIRST!

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