

# Together Everyone Achieves More

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[ 0 : 00 ] I think Hibs is too many letters for you. Okay, Haggai again, concluding. So this is Haggai 2 from 10.

Haggai 2, 10. On the 24th day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Haggai.

This is what the Lord Almighty says. Ask the priest what the law says. If a person carries consecrated meat in the fold of his garment, and that fold touches some bread or stew, some wine, oil, or other food, does it become consecrated?

The priests answered, no. Then Haggai said, If a person defiled by contact with a dead body touches one of these things, does it become defiled?

Yes, the priest replied. It becomes defiled. Then Haggai said, So it is with this people and this nation in my sight declares the Lord.

[ 1 : 20 ] Whatever they do and whatever they offer, there is defiled. Now give careful thought to this from this day on. Consider how things were before one stone was laid on another in the Lord's temple.

When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty.

I stuck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew, and hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the Lord. From this day on, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, give careful thought to the day when the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid.

Give careful thought. Is there yet any seed left in the barn? Until now, the vine and the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree, have not borne fruit.

From this day on, I will bless you. The word of the Lord came to Haggai a second time on the twenty-fourth day of the month. Tell Zerub Babel, governor of Judah, that I will shake the heavens and the earth.

[ 2 : 34 ] I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots with their drivers. Horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother.

On that day, declares the Lord Almighty, I will take you, my servant, Zerub Babel, son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord. And I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord Almighty.

Thank you, Lord. Just a nice, sweet reading for you. I just want to extend my thanks before I speak tonight, just again to Daniel, wherever he's gone.

I can't see him now. There we go. There you go. I can see now. I've got the glasses on. Yeah, it's all right. They're not thick enough. But yeah, thank you, Daniel.

Thank you to the elders. Thank you to you all for coming. It's been a real privilege. I also want to thank Claire at home, because the reality is she's the one that releases me to come.

[ 3 : 40 ] So although she's not here, we have been praying for this for, well, I've prayed every day since Gerald invited me. And that was a long, long time ago. In fact, even the week before Gerald invited me, I said to Claire, I think God's going to open up opportunities for me to preach elsewhere.

And within the matter of five days, I had eight invitations. So it was incredible, really, from Western Hills to Pakistan. But Pakistan is not yet.

It's not this year. But maybe in a few years' time, I'll go out and do a conference out there, God willing. So thank you. I really do appreciate it. You know, I was reminiscing again.

I've been a terrible one for reminiscing the last few days. And I was thinking about a time when I was the pastoral assistant here. And I was walking down by Haymarket Station.

And, of course, just going about your day-to-day business. And I saw someone that I knew. I'll keep the person's name anonymous. And I said, hello, how are you? Not someone that I knew particularly well.

[ 4 : 50 ] I said, hello, Gavin, how are you? And we ended up chatting. So what are you doing now? And at that point, I was the pastoral assistant here. So I told him. And he said, oh, I'm really surprised.

Imagine you're in church work. And I said, trust me, there's no one that's more shocked than me. I would have never have chose this. I would have much rather been a social worker.

It would have been far easier. And we began to talk about the state of the church. And he said to me, oh, Gavin, so what type of thing drives you?

What is it that motivates you as a church leader? So I thought about it. I said, well, actually, I long for people to come to know Jesus.

And I long for people to encounter him. And then he looked at me and said, what do you think the biggest challenge? Bear in mind, this was 10 years, over 10 years ago, 12 years ago, was what is the biggest challenge?

[ 5 : 47 ] Or what is the biggest obstacle that you see in the church? And I turned around and said, my answer was quite blunt. And I said, actually, the problem that I perceive is the lack of holiness in Christ's church.

And he looked to me, holiness? Why is it important? And actually, literally, I was mocked.

Holiness? Holiness? That's old school stuff, that. Why do we encourage holiness in the church?

Because the Bible says, be holy as I am, you can speak, holy.

And actually, the Bible even goes one step forward. It says, you know, without holiness, no one will see the Lord. Haggai's given people instructions, hasn't he?

Consider your ways. You know, rebuild the house of the Lord. I'm with you, church. But that call to consider their ways was a call to look inwards so they would be more effective outwards.

[ 6 : 57 ] Now, I talked about this morning the call to preserve the past and to build for, can anyone remember? A glorious future. But I think one of the dangers is we're so interested in building structures and building churches.

And hey, who doesn't want to see churches grow and develop? Amen? We want to see that. But my fear is sometimes that we so often put an emphasis on building structures or building churches that we forget about building godly character.

Can I tell you, I think one of the great sins of the church, and I'm honest when I say this, is we put an emphasis on gifting over character. Can I tell you, character is more important than gifting.

So I'm going to say to you, Western Hills Baptist Church, when you look for a new pastor, don't look at gifting. Look at character. That's your key. There was a theologian called, I won't say who his name was, doesn't matter, I can't remember because I know.

And he said that character really defines who you are at the heart of your being. And Haggai starts this section, and he's concerned about what happens to the one who touches the fold of his garment, wine or shoe.

[ 8 : 21 ] Does it become holy? Or what about the person that touches a dead body? Is that person clean? And he says, no, they've been defiled. Actually, Haggai's primary concern there is the holiness.

Are God's people truly set apart for a holy purpose? You know, one of my heroes in the good Presbyterian, Daniel, you'll be happy.

It was a man called Robert Murray McShane. An amazing man of God. Died at the tender age of 29. An amazing legacy.

But he said this in one of his sermons. He said, a holy minister is an awful, an awful weapon in the hands of a mighty God. And then he most famously said, my people's greatest need is my personal holiness.

And I think that's the same is true, dare I say, in the church. We live in a culture which has turned from God. In fact, we're living in a church age, dare I say it.

[ 9 : 34 ] Where the things even 10 years ago, which I just assumed, which would be a given, are no longer a given. Where, dare I say, we have denominations compromising at every centre.

Left, right and centre. Not popular to say, trust me, got the badge, got the t-shirt, got the hate mail, you name it, I've got it.

But in God's church, we need to be a people who desire to be holy. In Psalm 24, there's a question. Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? And how does he answer? He that has clean hands and a pure heart.

Well, we have to be people who desire holiness at the time of our being. And this isn't just a message from the prophet Haggai, the concern for holiness amongst God's people.

[10:42] But it's a message which Jesus ultimately talks about in his ministry often. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Do we want to see God in our churches? Do we want to see a move of God's Holy Spirit in the church? We would all say, Amen to that. But can I say to you, as God's people, we have to be concerned for holy lives.

Jesus says, Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. You know, sometimes we make excuses in the church, don't we?

And sometimes we have to be honest before God. It's the things in our lives which we know aren't quite right.

Haggai was a preacher who was unashamed to call people back to God. To call people to pursue that way of holiness, of putting God first, always.

[11:50] You know, the one thing that I miss about Scottish life is Scottish people are more direct than our English friends.

Especially in the South. And I remember one day I went to preach in a church in Glasgow. There was this wee boy, and please don't be offended, but he was playing on his Nintendo DS.

I don't blame him, the preacher was rubbish. And he came up to me at the end of the sermon, and I kid you not, he was eight years old, and he said, Your sermon was rubbish today.

I thought, Cheeky wee boy. How dare he say that? He was playing his Nintendo DS. And I was preaching on that verse, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

It might be cheeky, I said, Well, you come up, you tell everyone what the message is. Bear in mind, I was only 21 at the point, so you could get away with it.

[12:49] And this wee boy comes up to the lectern, and I kid you not, this is what he said. To be pure in heart is simple. It's to put God first, always. Amen.

And he sat down. And you know what I said? I sat down and I said, You're right. The sermon was rubbish. And it was.

But there I said, the concern for Haggai, the concern for the people of God. Remember, Haggai is written, not to those who didn't know God, but to those who profess to follow him.

We have to be people of holiness. Distinctiveness. Christlikeness. Godliness. Godliness. You know, I have a concern sometimes.

I say this as someone who struggles, right? And please hear me when I say this. I sometimes have a concern. I have a concern that we've blended in so much that people don't know the difference anymore.

[13:59] We've just blended in with culture. It's fine. It's acceptable. well, actually, at the heart of evangelical Christianity, we're called to be people who are nonconformist.

And it's going to become difficult, isn't it? Think about that there. I say, y'all, I'm not going to name any particular, highlight particular issues, but I'll give a couple. The issue of marriage.

You know, I'm branded opinionated if I say that a marriage is for believers if they should marry unbelievers. That's how I recognize it. Whoa! You're old school, Gav.

It's not about old school. Can I say if you are married to an unbeliever, not standing in judgment over you, all right? I want to stress that. But can I say to you, if you are a believer, I would encourage you that the Bible's teaching is that believers should marry believers, all right?

I recognize it's not easy. I recognize it's difficult. I recognize it's a pastoral journey. Hear that. But can I say to you, as God's people, dare I say, the issues of sexuality, it's difficult, isn't it?

[15:13] We are debating at the moment in the baptism of Great Britain. You have people like me who stick their neck above the parapet, and can I tell you, the guns are loaded. I'm getting it.

I'm getting it tight. But can I say, by and large, I don't think it'll go through, but certainly they're debating it down south. Can I say to you, the baptism of Scotland, totally get different goldfish bowl. They're not even close to that type of discussion. England are. Okay, so please hear that. You're part of another Baptist church in Scotland. You do not need to worry about that.

I know that you're part of the FIEC, so you definitely don't need to worry about that. But that's a real issue in our network of thinking. How do God's people respond to these things?

As God's people, Haggai would say, look, remember what happened, not just as a call to examine their motives before God, not just as a call to examine holiness, but remember what you were like before you laid a stone, before you'd gone about that act of rebuilding.

[16:18] How did you fare? When one came to heap 20 measures, there were but 10. When one came to the wine press to draw 50 measures, there were but 20.

I shook you with all the products of your toil and blight and mildewing, yet you did not turn to me. Haggai's concern was that I actually dare say, look, why is there a lack of fruitfulness in the church? Why? Why? Perhaps because there's a lack of godliness in the church. I read a stat this a couple of months ago.

How long do you think the average pastor reads the Bible every day? How long? Anyone with a hazard of a guess, shout out. Three hours. Three hours? Oh, come on.

Ten minutes. Higher or more than ten. Daniel? Daniel? I hope you said more than ten minutes. I want to be clear.

[17:23] What question are you actually asking me? No. How long do you think? Higher or more than ten minutes. You know the role of pastoral ministry. You know the demands. Yeah. Well, I know that the dropout rate of pastors is high.

Yeah. So high that I would probably anchor for maybe 20 to 30 minutes a week. Right. Right. The answer was five minutes a day.

Five minutes a day. All right? And people think, why is the church in the United Kingdom growing? There's your answer.

If you're a leader, you've got to set an example. High guy. Message of holiness. He's confronting God's people.

Oh, before we were too hard on pastors, we're going to have a bit of pastor solidarity here, Daniel. How much time have you read the Bible this week? Do you spend longer than five minutes?

[18:28] I hope so. When all seriousness, it's easy to point the finger at the pastors and go, hey, that's shocking. But dare I say, I've been a pastor long enough now that I know the reality is, and this might shock you, but 80% of our churches aren't people who aren't reading their Bibles every day.

It's just a fact. It's not a criticism on you. It's not. Please hear that. But the reality is, most Christians are not living in the rhythm of intentional time with God.

We've been too busy, and I say this to someone who is, I'm a hard grafter. Right, I know that. But can I say, there's a real danger that we can be so busy doing things for God, but we forget to spend time with God.

There's a so tension in the church that we're so busy doing ministry that we forget to be ministered to. Can I say to you, the closeness, the power, the intimacy, the fruitfulness comes.

Remember, what happened before you went about that act of rebuilding. Remember, we will, as God's people, God calls us to a higher standard, friends.

[19:44] And I'm going to, sound like I'm giving a bit of rebuke on pastors again. I'm not talking about Daniel here at all. I'm talking about these statistics.

But for those who are leaders, and for those who are teachers like myself, it says that leaders will be judged more strictly. And I'm going to be honest, that's a verse I want to tip, exit my Bible. Because I find that really hard. And I find that really uncomfortable. Haggai's concern. And Haggai, remember, be a people who pursue holiness.

The people of God were defiled, they turned from God. And you're saying, oh, God, what a depressing way, 10 to 50th anniversary weekend. Thanks very much. Hope he never comes back again.

But to a defiled, broken, unholy people, God extends grace and mercy and peace.

[21:00] Oh, look at what you were. You were defiled. You were unclean. I brought judgment on you. Yeah, but from this one day on, I'll bless you.

That makes me cry, friends. What? The God of the Bible still blesses us even when we drastically fall short of his glorious standard.

Isn't grace amazing? You know, I remember a friend who used to come to this church, someone in the youth fellowship, and he said to me one day, and I've never forgotten this, he said to me, he

said, why do Christians talk about grace but don't appreciate grace so much?

We talk a lot about it, don't we? Grace is simply amazing grace. How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was, but now I'm, was blind, but now I. You know, as God's people, to a people who were defiled, God says, I'm going to bless you.

[ 22 : 26 ] You know, actually, yeah, there's a day of judgment where God is going to come and God will judge not just the church, God will judge the nations, but to people who fell short of the glory of God.

He said, he's going to put a sign that ring on them. Do you remember Lizzie? I loved Lizzie because she was so straight.

I like people like that, they're straightforward. And I remember one day, Lizzie came and it was at the 55 plus club and I did a gospel message and Lizzie nudged me to the side and said, move over! And I thought, oh no, what's she going to do now? And she looked and she said this and I've never forgot this. She said, although we walk away from God, God's never walked away from me. Amen. Never forgot that. I can take you to another point in a Lizzie service on the prodigal son. She was sitting exactly where Linda is this now.

[ 23 : 41 ] And Steve was preaching his heart out on the followers of and you know what she did? She kicked the chair in front of her as hard as she could. I don't know if you remember that.

Do you remember it? And she fell flat on her face and I was right behind her. And she did it three times. And me and Elaine, your mum, Paul, ran out to get her.

And we thought, oh no. And we thought, we'll have to try and calm her down. And I went to bring a subtle word of correction to her. And you know what she said to me?

She said, don't worry, Gab. Jesus is just telling how much he loves me, even though I mess up. Never forgot that.

Isn't it wonderful? Even when we so often fall short of the glory of God, God brings the blessing of grace.

[ 24 : 38 ] Grace at the start of the journey, grace in the middle of the journey, grace at the end of the journey. But where else do we read about a signet ring in scripture? Anyone know of where in our accounts we see a ring given to someone in scripture?

Anyone think of an example? Prodigal son. To those who are wayward, to those who have turned from God, who turned back to God in repentance and faith, God wants to bring that ring, that seal, that approval of his love, even to broken people.

And that's good news, isn't it? That God so loved the world, even when they've turned their back on him, even though they don't want to know him, God still loves the world.

God still loves the people of Westerhailes. God so loves the people of Baverton Maines. God so loves the people of Livingston. God loves English people.

God loves the Pakistani. God loves the Afghani. God loves the people of Ukraine. God loves the people of Turkey tonight. God loves them. That's good news.

[ 25 : 54 ] To a broken, defiled people, God wants to bring that sign that ring to show them again his love for creation.

God loves them. God loves them. God loves them. We have to be a people who love because he first loved us. Amen? We have to be a people of holiness.

We have to be people who are set apart for God. But so often in our lives, sometimes, speaking honestly, people think, oh, bone it.

Too many times now. I remember someone said that to me. I've just done it, blown it too many times. I turned around, put my arm around the shoulder, cried, and I said, join the club.

Join the club. You know, so often I think that people have this image, and I've met this in every location that I've been, whether it's West or Hales or all, it's only, look at me.

[ 26 : 57 ] Does Jesus really love me? Will Jesus ever accept me? The Bible says, yes, to a broken, defiled people, God reminds them and wants to remind you, he's chosen you.

You're special to him. I'm going to conclude, and this sounds like a strange way to end this anniversary weekend. I hope this is encouragement to finish.

I talked about building God with character, recognizing the goodness and the love of God for you, that God has chosen you. Can I tell you, my life was changed forever in a half night of prayer in this church.

Not just was I called into ministry a half night of prayer. I remember it well, we were praying as young people, and really sometimes used to get us to share what God had laid on our hearts. And someone said, you know, I've got something real that I want to share. And it was someone who would naturally put themselves forward. It was clear. You're clear. And she said this.

[ 28 : 16 ] She said, I was reading my gallery magazine. I thought, where's this going now? And you know what she said? In the magazine I read the words, God is closer than you think.

And she picked up her devotional afterwards, and guess what was in the phrase in the devotional magazine? Again, the words, God is closer than you think.

And I think for some people here tonight, they need to hold on to the fact, they might feel like their family has turned from God.

But remember, God's closer than you're thinking. God has still got his hand upon their lives. And keep praying, and keep trusting, and keep believing, keep looking to him.

Because the message of Haggai reminds us over and over and over again, I'm with you.

[ 29 : 28 ] I'm with you. I'm with you when the house of the Lord is in ruin. I'm with you in the act of rebuilding. I'm with you in the future.

But I'm with you in the present. moment. I think that's a good way to end an anniversary weekend, don't you? The assurance that God is here, that God is with us.

He's still building his church through you. God is with you. I want to say again, thank you, Daniel. I honour you, I bless you.

I want to thank God for your ministry here. We thank God for your teaching. I listen in. And that's not because I'm being nosy, all right?

It's just simply the fact that I received teaching from him, and he expounds the word of God faithfully, so thank you. It's good for my soul.

[ 30 : 35 ] I appreciate it. Also, I want to say thank you to each one of you. You know, I'm not going to cry now, again, did that this morning, got enough tears out of the way.

But what I want to say is, for this church, as you go forward from here, please hear this. don't let this become about an anniversary weekend celebration.

We thank God for it. It's been good, hasn't it? It's been a wonderful weekend. But I hope when I expose the message of Haggai, I hope it's going to propel you for the future months and years ahead.

And if there's one word I want to leave you with, this, remember this, two things, together, everyone achieves, anyone remember?

More. But this is the key thing I want to leave you with, the words of Jesus, I will build my, let's say it again, I will build my church, and the gates of hell.

[ 32 : 02 ] Praise God. Praise God. And praise God. It's all about him. It's all about Gavin Hunter. It's all about Daniel Ralph.

It's about Jesus Christ, the one who will always build his church. Amen. Let's pray. Father, if there was anything on me tonight, Lord, I pray, Lord, that you'll cast it to the sand, but if there was any nugget of truth, which I'm sure there was for some people, I want to pray that people will take that into the week, the month, the years that lie ahead.

For people to remember that maybe God is closer than they think. They might think that they've turned far from him, or they might think their families have turned from him, but Jesus is still close to those people.

Lord, I want to pray a blanket prayer over this church. I want to pray that they'll know the goodness of God in the land of the living.

I want to pray, Lord, for this local church here. I pray, Lord, that people will be born again by the Holy Spirit. I want to pray, Lord, that people will encounter you in this community, Father.

[ 33 : 17 ] I want to pray, Lord, that you'll open blind eyes, Father, people that need to know you, Father. We pray, Lord, that you'll reveal yourself to them. But, Lord, I want to pray for each one here, that they'll know that you've called them to this place, and that you'll equip them for whatever you've called them to do.

So, I pray a blessing upon Pastor Daniel, the elders, each of them. Give them real wisdom in the months that lie ahead.

and, Lord, I want to pray just a simple blessing over the people here tonight. May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord cause his face to shine upon you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon each of you, today and always. Amen.

faith, we're going to conclude by in Christ alone. Amen.

[ 34 : 26 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. In Christ alone my hope is found He is my light, my strength I saw this cornerstone This solid ground There couldn't boost this crowd and storm I can grasp how wide and long and high and deep Is the love of Christ May they know the goodness and the faithfulness of God The one who will never leave them The one who will never forsake them And Lord I want to pray in this 50th year I pray that by the time I next come into this church I want to pray that we'll see boys and girls Men and women in Western Hills won for Jesus Lord I want to pray Lord For each one that you'll empower them But Lord more than anything I want to pray that they'll know that they're loved by you So bless us as we go from here Thank you for this awesome privilege And I just want to say Thank you from the bottom of my heart For this church In Jesus name Amen Thank you all Thank you for coming I appreciate it Great times here God is for punishment Thank you for coming Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 37 : 47 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 40 : 17 ] Thank you.