



STARTING OVER

*A Purse with
Holes In It*

Let's Go – Teach, Reach, Grow!

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SETTING THE STAGE

“Investing” is something we all practice in various ways and in various places. Look at the following list. What sort of “return” do we expect from our investments in the following areas? How are we doing today?

1. The Stock Market
2. The Education of Children
3. Our Homes or Real Estate
4. Hobbies-Sports-Recreation
5. The Ongoing Program of our Church and School
6. A Generosity Initiative at Church and School

LOOK AT THE LESSON

Starting a life of Christian Stewardship means adopting the right set of _____.

Read Haggai 1:1-3

1. The building project mentioned here began 15 years earlier. What reason did the people give for not completing it?
2. What are some reasons the Jews might have given for not building at the time of Haggai?
3. Did God agree with their evaluation of the situation? Was there ever a time when he would have? What might have been some legitimate reasons at such a time?
4. What, then was of greater concern to God than the building of the temple itself?
5. React to the following statements:
 - “The House of God in which I worship ought to be more lavishly furnished and better maintained than the house in which my family lives.”
 - “A Christian will lower his standard of living to support the work of God’s kingdom.”
 - “A Christian will sacrifice recreational opportunities to work in God’s kingdom.”

Christian Stewardship starts when we recognize that God _____ all that we have.

Read Haggai 1:5-6; 9-11

1. How do you think the people in Haggai's day would have described their economic situation?
2. How do you think God would have described the economic situation in Haggai's day?
3. How did the economic situation change the task God gave his people to fulfill? Why?
4. According to verses 9-11, what did the people gain by keeping more of their treasure at home and not using it to build the temple? What did the Lord seem to be suggesting for the future?
5. Do these verses support the televangelists promises of great wealth if you support their ministries? Do they give us the right to assume that someone who is struggling economically hasn't been giving generously to church?
6. A or D? The current economic situation in our own country is a serious disadvantage for our current generosity initiative.

When we start to live as Christian stewards, we recognize the _____ for our giving.

Read Haggai 1:7-8

1. If the people of Judah built the temple as God commanded, what two things would happen?
2. Which of the 10 Commandments would then be kept?
3. How would people benefit if these two results of building the temple occurred?
4. In ages past magnificent cathedrals were built to satisfy the pride of people in power while the people starved. Could our building project turn into such a "tower of Babel?" Does it have to? What will make the difference?
5. How does a sense of purpose change people? How does a sense of *divine* purpose change people?

We start living lives of Christian Stewardship when we are confident of God's _____ in our lives.

Read Haggai 1:12-13

1. As the people of Judah began working on the temple, what promise did God send them?
2. Under what circumstances would this promise be frightening? Why is it rather a great comfort?
3. In what ways has this promise been repeated for us today?

ROOM FOR REFLECTION

Project #1

Christians don't always make a conscious decision to live a life centered on self. They don't always make carefully reasoned decisions to reject the kind of view of life that the prophet Haggai would promote, and to adopt the approach to life shared by the people to whom the prophet wrote this book. These attitudes and behaviors can creep up on us as we are more and more influenced by the world around us, and as we take God's blessings more and more for granted.

1. List some features of our times and our culture that influence people to make their own comfort, their own interests, and their own recreation the main focus of their lives. What are some of the more subtle ways in which this can happen?
2. List some of the features of our times and our culture that influence *the next generation* to make their own comfort, their own interests, and their own recreation the purpose for their existence. Brainstorm things we can do to prevent this from happening to them.

Project #2

We don't have any direct revelation from God that we are experiencing "holes in our purses" in the same way ancient Judah did here. Still, is it possible that the Lord could deal with poor stewardship in this manner in our time?

1. List some possible modern ways in which we might suffer from "holes in our purses."
2. If we should experience something like this, what does this say about God's relationship with us? (See Hebrews 12:7-11)

WRAPPING IT UP

If investing in the ongoing work of our church and school through our generosity initiative has become an opportunity for us to straighten out our priorities, regain a sense of purpose, and grow in our confidence in God's providence and presence, have we become richer or poorer for the experience? Surely the return on our investment has been great.