

## **A Reflection on Haggai**

By Ellen Olson

Pastor Matt and I recently watched a video in which the speaker encouraged us to take a look at Haggai in its entirety (only two chapters) in the context of building up and revitalizing your church.

In the beginning of Chapter 1, verses two thru 11, God challenges His people to take a look at where they are putting their time, money, and energy. In verse nine, He says “. . . What you brought home I blew away. Why?” The answer is that God’s house remained a ruin while each of Israelites was busy with his own house. In the time of Haggai, this was translated literally. The people were living in paneled homes (nice, trimmed out, finished) while God’s house was in ruins.

We can interpret that the same way: How do our houses compare to God’s house? Are we careful about taking care of our own house but take less or different care of God’s house? This could also apply to our spiritual house. Are we meeting our own needs for physical or emotional well-being while neglecting our spiritual well-being? Or maybe it could apply to our time. How does the time we spend on ourselves or our families compare to the time we spend on God; or even, how do we prioritize the time we spend on ourselves or our family compared to how we prioritize time we set aside for God? We would not think of missing our exercise class or Paint and Sip, but don’t think much of missing church. Finally, this passage could even challenge where our focus is. Are we spending our time focused on ourselves and our needs and wants? How does that compare to the time we spend focusing on God’s wants and desires?

I am sure there are other applications as well. The clear implication in the passage is that God’s people are not successful because God has “blown away” their success. Our rational human thought process assumes that, if we work to get ourselves ahead, that’s what will happen – and if it is not happening, we need to work harder at it. God is saying that His people were not successful because their priorities were wrong, and He would not bless them until they got their priorities right.