



# YET I WILL REJOICE IN THE LORD

THE JOURNEY FROM WRESTLING TO WORSHIP

A STUDY OF HABAKKUK  
BY STACY PRITZL



YET I WILL

*rejoice*

IN THE LORD;

I WILL TAKE

*joy*

IN THE GOD OF

*my salvation.*

HABAKKUK 3:18

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## INTRODUCTION

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*Welcome* to this study of the book of Habakkuk.

If we're honest, there are three questions each of us asks at some point in our relationship with God:

*"How long, O Lord?"*

*"Where are you?"*

*"What in the world are you doing?"*

If you've ever asked these questions, you are in great company! The Old Testament book of Habakkuk is a dialogue between the prophet Habakkuk and God where Habakkuk asks God these same questions. The name Habakkuk means embrace or wrestle and is derived from the Hebrew verb **chabaq**, which means to physically embrace another, "one who strongly enfolds". In this short book we see the prophet engage in a personal psalm of lament, in effect wrestling with God and coming to Him with questions about why God is doing what He is doing. We find that not only does God listen to Habakkuk's cries, but He enters into a loving conversation which exasperates, alarms, and overwhelms the prophet but ultimately leads Habakkuk to faith-filled worship of the living God. And like Habakkuk, we, too, can learn to wait. While we wait, our faith will begin to grow as we learn to trust in our faithful and just God, who works out all things for His glory and our ultimate good.

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## A PROCESS OF DISCOVERY

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Studying God's word takes patience, but you will find rich reward in doing so. "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Psalm 119:103.

To begin any study of scripture, it's important to have an understanding of what the original text meant to its original audience: What did it mean to **THEM THEN**? It sounds daunting, especially considering that we are living thousands of years past the time of the original writing. We haven't personally experienced the culture, location, people, and languages of the original audience. But people really haven't changed. "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun." Ecclesiastes 1:9.

While we might not know what it was like to live in a city under Roman rule or how to shepherd sheep, we can understand what it is like to be human. The hopes, sorrows, joys, fears, sins, struggles, forgetfulness, and pride that plagued people in Bible times also plague us today. Not only that, we must also remember that our Lord, who is sovereign over all, never changes. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Hebrews 13:8.

So, to understand the rich truths in God's word, we must first look at what it meant to **THEM THEN**. This practice will help prevent us from the common tendency to pull a verse out of context, thus losing its meaning and twisting it to fit our purposes and notions. To be good stewards of God's word, we must not go beyond what it says. "You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you." Deuteronomy 4:2. We must remain "on the line," interpreting what the text actually says, nothing more and nothing less.

Once we grasp the original context, the **THEM THEN**, we can begin to look for the **GOSPEL CONNECTIONS** in our text, and then finally we can apply the text to **US NOW**. "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Romans 15:4.

We have an advantage living in our 21st century because we possess a wealth of knowledge, research, historical documents, archaeological finds, and commentaries available. But before you go start googling, I want to encourage you to trust your ability to understand scripture all on your own. While it may be difficult at first, don't give up. You don't have to be a trained Bible scholar to understand the truths in God's Word. Start where you are with what you know. All you need is a willing heart, an engaged mind, and the Holy Spirit. The Lord is pleased every time you seek Him in His Word! If I can learn to do it, you can do it. So, let's get started!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stacy".

Stacy Pritzl

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## SUGGESTED STUDY PRACTICES

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*Pray* for God to give you understanding of the text. We access the guidance of God's Spirit through prayer and the Word of God. The Bible tells us:

***If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. —James 1:5, NIV***

Bible study should be covered with prayer. We can pray for ourselves as Paul prayed for the Colossians:

*For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and **asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.***  
—Colossians 1:9

*Print* out a copy of the text that you can mark up as you study. Use double spacing and generous margins to allow room to write your thoughts, questions, and notes.

*Read* and reread and reread the text again. The more familiar you are with it, the more you will begin to understand it. To better comprehend the context of the text, read the entire chapter it falls in, the surrounding chapters, and even better, the whole book if you have time. Ask, "Why did the author put this passage here at this place in the book?" Try to determine where this passage fits into the big story of the Bible (creation, fall, redemption, restoration).

*Ask* questions of the text throughout the entire study process. It's like being a detective who digs for clues within the text she's studying. As you begin, focus your questions on the big picture information: Who wrote this? What do I know about the author? Why did he write it? To whom was it written? What do I know about the audience? When was it written? What was going on at the time? Often you will find the answers to these questions directly in the passage. If not, try looking up other relevant passages that give clarity to these questions. Your Bible's individual book introductions and other commentaries are also helpful to establish some big picture information, like the historical context and authorship. Then throughout your study of the passage, continue asking questions - who, what, where, when, why, and how. Look for the answers within your text first, then look at other passages that might provide clues.

Once you have read the passage several times and have gotten a preliminary handle on the big picture questions, you can start marking up the text. This takes some time. You'll want to go slowly and have patience with the discovery process. You'll also want to extend extra grace toward yourself as you are learning these study skills. The more you practice, the more you'll get into a rhythm, developing your own methods of studying the text and gaining confidence in yourself. The goal here initially is comprehension: understanding what the text says.

I have included the English Standard Version of Habakkuk in this workbook for you to mark up. There is no right or wrong way to mark up a text. Make it personal and applicable to your style of learning. If this task seems overwhelming, then may I suggest starting small. If all you do is mark places in the text that tell you something about God (His attributes, character, sovereignty, and authority) you will be off to a great start! Because the only way we can truly know ourselves is to know our God. What He says about Himself and about us is the foundation for sound doctrine.

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## COMPREHENSION (THEM THEN)

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Here are some suggestions of practices I've found helpful in understanding the text.

- **Look up words in the dictionary** that you are unfamiliar with or any words that stand out to you even if they are familiar. Write down the definitions next to the word. To see how that word is used elsewhere in the Bible, **do a word search** on your Bible app, or use the concordance at the back of your Bible. This will broaden your understanding of the word and can bring a deeper meaning to your passage.
- Use colored pencils to **underline repeated words**. Often, themes of passages begin to emerge when you search for repeated words.
- **Circle transitional words** (and, but, therefore, like, then, also, similarly, furthermore, etc.). These words show shifts in thinking while connecting phrases and thoughts. Draw arrows to the words and phrases they link. Sometimes these transitions occur at the beginning of a chapter or paragraph, so you will need to look back at the previous section to see what they are referring to.
- **Note any thoughts and questions** you have as you are reading. Write them in the margin, but don't feel like you have to answer them right away. Your questions are an important part of the learning process.
- **Read the text in other translations** to bring clarity, especially with difficult passages. Bible apps and websites are great tools for this step.
- **Look up cross references** and note what you discover next to the text.
- **Highlight imperatives** in the text. These are commands and instructions, and they are important for the original audience and for us.

- **Look for attributes of God** that are communicated in the passage. Highlight or underline them and note the attribute in the margin. Put a “cross” anywhere Jesus is mentioned, directly or indirectly. Mark “HS” when you see references to the Holy Spirit.
- **Summarize sections of the passage in your own words.** This is an important step and helps you grasp the main messages the author is trying to communicate.

As you mark up the passage, you will begin to see the author’s aim emerge, giving you a better understanding of what he is communicating to his audience - **THEM THEN.**

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## COMPREHENSION: (GOSPEL CONNECTIONS)

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Now you can start looking for **GOSPEL CONNECTIONS** in your passage. Sometimes they are obvious, sometimes not. Don’t force them into your text. Allow your text to reveal any gospel connections, if they are present.

- Bracket or mark sections and phrases that connect to the gospel. Ask yourself, “How does my text relate to the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ?” Start with what you understand and can identify.
- Jesus Himself tells us that the entirety of the Bible points to Him. “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me.” John 5:39 Since the gospel message is found throughout the entire Bible, look for people, events, themes, and objects that point you to Christ. Ask, “How does my text point to Christ and contribute to the redemption story of the Bible? Do I see any major biblical themes in my text (like forgiveness, grace, mercy, sin, sacrifice, covenant, righteousness, holiness, etc.) that find fulfillment in Christ?”
- Remember that the apostles would have taught about Christ using the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament) because that is what they had. The apostles’ writings and teachings became our New Testament.

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## APPLICATION: (US NOW)

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Once you have comprehended the text and discovered the gospel connections, you are now ready to move on to the final application piece. How does this text apply to **US NOW**? It’s important not to skip straight to application without doing the comprehension work, for it’s too



easy to take Scripture out of context when we do. For our purposes, I will save these application questions for Day 5 of our homework each week, so we can have several days of comprehending the text first. To think through personal application, ask these types of questions:

- “What have I learned about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit) in this passage (His character, truths, authority, sovereignty, etc.)?”
- “How does this knowledge about God shape my view about myself, mankind, the world, and my circumstances?”
- “Are there any action steps I need to take, truths I need to hold on to, or commands I need to follow?”

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# TEXT OF HABAKKUK, ESV

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## CHAPTER 1

<sup>1</sup>The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.

### **Habakkuk's Complaint**

<sup>2</sup>O LORD, how long shall I cry for help,

and you will not hear?

Or cry to you "Violence!"

and you will not save?

<sup>3</sup> Why do you make me see iniquity,  
and why do you idly look at wrong?

Destruction and violence are before me;

strife and contention arise.

<sup>4</sup>So the law is paralyzed,  
and justice never goes forth.

For the wicked surround the righteous;  
so justice goes forth perverted.

### **The LORD's Answer**

<sup>5</sup> "Look among the nations, and see;  
wonder and be astounded.

For I am doing a work in your days  
that you would not believe if told.

<sup>6</sup>For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans,  
that bitter and hasty nation,  
who march through the breadth of the earth,  
to seize dwellings not their own.

<sup>7</sup>They are dreaded and fearsome;  
their justice and dignity go forth from themselves.

<sup>8</sup>Their horses are swifter than leopards,  
more fierce than the evening wolves;  
their horsemen press proudly on.

Their horsemen come from afar;  
they fly like an eagle swift to devour.

<sup>9</sup>They all come for violence,  
all their faces forward.  
They gather captives like sand.

<sup>10</sup> At kings they scoff,  
and at rulers they laugh.

They laugh at every fortress,  
for they pile up earth and take it.

<sup>11</sup>Then they sweep by like the wind and go on,  
guilty men, whose own might is their god!"

## **Habakkuk's Second Complaint**

- <sup>12</sup> Are you not from everlasting,  
O LORD my God, my Holy One?  
We shall not die.  
O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment,  
and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.
- <sup>13</sup> You who are of purer eyes than to see evil  
and cannot look at wrong,  
why do you idly look at traitors  
and remain silent when the wicked swallows up  
the man more righteous than he?
- <sup>14</sup> You make mankind like the fish of the sea,  
like crawling things that have no ruler.
- <sup>15</sup> He brings all of them up with a hook;  
he drags them out with his net;  
he gathers them in his dragnet;  
so he rejoices and is glad.
- <sup>16</sup> Therefore he sacrifices to his net  
and makes offerings to his dragnet;  
for by them he lives in luxury,  
and his food is rich.
- <sup>17</sup> Is he then to keep on emptying his net  
and mercilessly killing nations forever?

## **CHAPTER 2**

- <sup>1</sup> I will take my stand at my watchpost  
and station myself on the tower,  
and look out to see what he will say to me,  
and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

### **The Righteous Shall Live by His Faith**

- <sup>2</sup> And the LORD answered me:  
"Write the vision;  
make it plain on tablets,  
so he may run who reads it.
- <sup>3</sup> For still the vision awaits its appointed time;  
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.  
If it seems slow, wait for it;  
it will surely come; it will not delay.
- <sup>4</sup> "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,  
but the righteous shall live by his faith.
- <sup>5</sup> "Moreover, wine is a traitor,  
an arrogant man who is never at rest.  
His greed is as wide as Sheol;  
like death he has never enough.

He gathers for himself all nations  
and collects as his own all peoples.”

### **Woe to the Chaldeans**

<sup>6</sup>Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him, and say,

“Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own—  
for how long?—  
and loads himself with pledges!”

<sup>7</sup>Will not your debtors suddenly arise,  
and those awake who will make you tremble?  
Then you will be spoil for them.

<sup>8</sup>Because you have plundered many nations,  
all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you,  
for the blood of man and violence to the earth,  
to cities and all who dwell in them.

<sup>9</sup>“Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house,  
to set his nest on high,  
to be safe from the reach of harm!

<sup>10</sup>You have devised shame for your house  
by cutting off many peoples;  
you have forfeited your life.

<sup>11</sup>For the stone will cry out from the wall,  
and the beam from the woodwork respond.

<sup>12</sup>“Woe to him who builds a town with blood  
and founds a city on iniquity!

<sup>13</sup>Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts  
that peoples labor merely for fire,  
and nations weary themselves for nothing?

<sup>14</sup>For the earth will be filled  
with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.

<sup>15</sup>“Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink—  
you pour out your wrath and make them drunk,  
in order to gaze at their nakedness!

<sup>16</sup>You will have your fill of shame instead of glory.  
Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision!

The cup in the LORD’s right hand  
will come around to you,  
and utter shame will come upon your glory!

<sup>17</sup>The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you,  
as will the destruction of the beasts that terrified them,  
for the blood of man and violence to the earth,  
to cities and all who dwell in them.

<sup>18</sup>“What profit is an idol  
when its maker has shaped it,  
a metal image, a teacher of lies?  
For its maker trusts in his own creation  
when he makes speechless idols!  
<sup>19</sup>Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake;  
to a silent stone, Arise!  
Can this teach?  
Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,  
and there is no breath at all in it.  
<sup>20</sup>But the LORD is in his holy temple;  
let all the earth keep silence before him.”

## CHAPTER 3

### Habakkuk's Prayer

<sup>1</sup>A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.

<sup>2</sup>O LORD, I have heard the report of you,  
and your work, O LORD, do I fear.  
In the midst of the years revive it;  
in the midst of the years make it known;  
in wrath remember mercy.

<sup>3</sup>God came from Teman,  
and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah  
His splendor covered the heavens,  
and the earth was full of his praise.

<sup>4</sup>His brightness was like the light;  
rays flashed from his hand;  
and there he veiled his power.

<sup>5</sup>Before him went pestilence,  
and plague followed at his heels.

<sup>6</sup>He stood and measured the earth;  
he looked and shook the nations;  
then the eternal mountains were scattered;  
the everlasting hills sank low.  
His were the everlasting ways.

<sup>7</sup>I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction;  
the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

<sup>8</sup>Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD?  
Was your anger against the rivers,  
or your indignation against the sea,  
when you rode on your horses,  
on your chariot of salvation?

<sup>9</sup>You stripped the sheath from your bow,  
calling for many arrows. Selah  
You split the earth with rivers.

<sup>10</sup>The mountains saw you and writhed;  
the raging waters swept on;  
the deep gave forth its voice;  
it lifted its hands on high.

<sup>11</sup>The sun and moon stood still in their place  
at the light of your arrows as they sped,  
at the flash of your glittering spear.

<sup>12</sup>You marched through the earth in fury;  
you threshed the nations in anger.

<sup>13</sup>You went out for the salvation of your people,  
for the salvation of your anointed.  
You crushed the head of the house of the wicked,  
laying him bare from thigh to neck. Selah

<sup>14</sup>You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors,  
who came like a whirlwind to scatter me,  
rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret.

<sup>15</sup>You trampled the sea with your horses,  
the surging of mighty waters.

<sup>16</sup>I hear, and my body trembles;  
my lips quiver at the sound;  
rotteness enters into my bones;  
my legs tremble beneath me.  
Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble  
to come upon people who invade us.

### **Habakkuk Rejoices in the LORD**

<sup>17</sup>Though the fig tree should not blossom,  
nor fruit be on the vines,  
the produce of the olive fail  
and the fields yield no food,  
the flock be cut off from the fold  
and there be no herd in the stalls,  
<sup>18</sup>yet I will rejoice in the LORD;  
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

<sup>19</sup>GOD, the Lord, is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the deer's;  
he makes me tread on my high places.

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

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## SESSION 1 NOTES: HABAKKUK OVERVIEW

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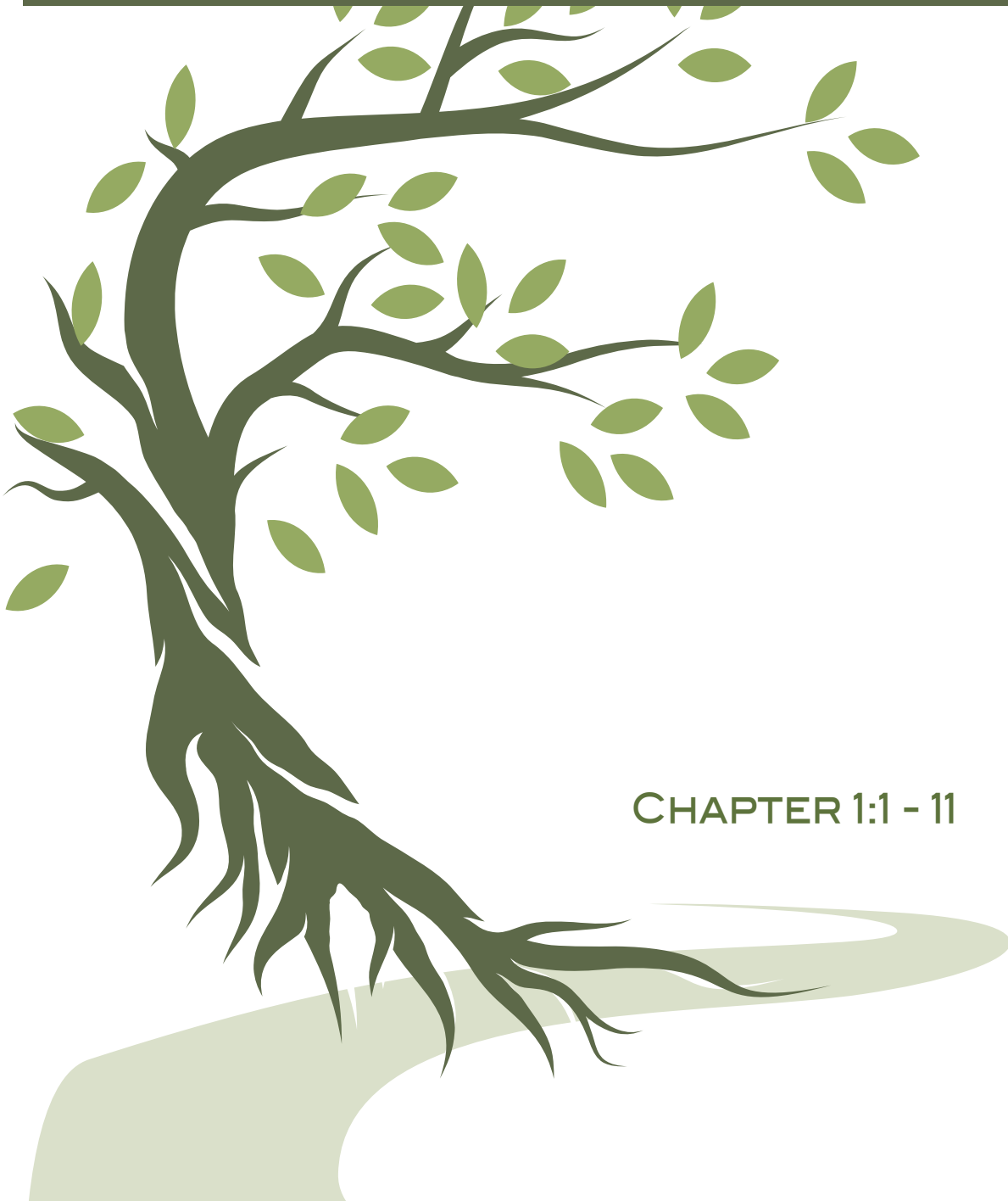
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WEEK 1

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# *Habakkuk Wrestles with God*

PART 1



CHAPTER 1:1 - 11



## WEEK ONE | DAY ONE

### Getting Acquainted

Today your assignment is to read the entire book of Habakkuk. You can read it here in the study guide or you can read it from your favorite translation of scripture. Before you read, pray “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.” (Ephesians 1:17)

## DAY TWO

### How Long

In week one of this study, we’re going to focus our attention on **Habakkuk 1:1-11**. Please read the passage, and as you read, apply some of the suggested study practices. Notice who is speaking in each section, mark key words, look up words you don’t know, read the text in multiple translations, look up cross-references, and be sure to write any questions you have in the margin or throughout the text.

When studying the Bible, it’s important to understand the context and how the original audience would have understood the message. Let’s start with some valuable background information about the book of Habakkuk:

- The book of Habakkuk doesn’t begin with any historical or biographical information about the author. We know nothing about Habakkuk’s family or where he is from. We do know that Habakkuk is a prophet (1:1). You may wonder, who were Old Testament prophets? A prophet in the Old Testament was someone who was used by God to communicate His message to the world. The prophets came from a variety of backgrounds, spoke to different audiences, possessed unique styles, and used assorted methods. Most of the Old Testament prophets’ messages concerned the people of Israel; if other nations were mentioned in the oracles, it was usually in connection to those nations’ dealings with Israel. Most prophets of God were men, but the Old Testament also mentions prophetesses such as Miriam (Exodus 15:20, ESV), Deborah (Judges 4:4, ESV), and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14, ESV). All prophets shared some characteristics that made their ministries “prophetic.” A prophet was **called** by God to be a prophet and was required to deliver God’s message accurately.

- Habakkuk is one of the 12 minor prophets of the Old Testament. Minor doesn't mean insignificant! These books are named so because they are comparatively short, not because the text or the author are of lesser importance.

## HABAKKUK'S PROPHECY TIMELINE



The Near East at the Time of Habakkuk

### BC

**722:** Northern Kingdom of Israel (10 tribes) falls & is exiled to Assyria

**627:** Jeremiah begins his prophetic ministry

**621:** Rediscovery of Book of Law which had been lost in House of God! Josiah's reformation (but not lasting revival)

**612:** Fall of Nineveh, capital of Assyria

**609:** Death of godly King Josiah

### 607: HABAKKUK BEGINS HIS PROPHETIC MINISTRY

**605:** Nebuchadnezzar defeats Pharaoh Necho of Egypt at Battle of Carchemish = "the turning point of world history"

**605:** First invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon; Daniel taken captive

**597:** Second invasion of Judah by Babylon; Ezekiel and 10,000 taken captive

**592:** Ezekiel begins his prophetic ministry to Babylonian exiles

**586:** Fall of Jerusalem, Destruction of Temple

**538:** Exiles return from Babylon to Judah (relatively small number return)

Habakkuk's prophetic ministry is directed at Judah (the southern kingdom). It was carried out during the final days of the Assyrian empire and the rise of the Babylonian empire. There isn't consensus as to the exact date of the prophecy of Habakkuk. The best hypothesis is that Habakkuk's prophecy took place between the Babylonian defeat of the Egyptian army at Carchemish in 605 BC and Nebuchadnezzar's first capture of Jerusalem in 597 BC.

It will help to understand more about Judah's rulers during this time to appreciate the world Habakkuk inhabited. King Jehoiakim was the ruler during Habakkuk's time of prophecy. He became ruler shortly after his father, King Josiah, died. While Josiah's reign was marked by reforms following the rediscovery of God's Book of the Law, Jehoiakim's did not. Jehoiakim, who reigned from 609-598 B.C., abandoned the reforms begun by his father. His reign was marked by corruption, oppression, immorality and idolatry which included the sacrifice of children to the god Molech.

Scripture provides us with some details about the reign of each of these kings. Take some time to read or skim over their accounts:

### **KING JOSIAH:**

2 Kings 22 and 23:1-25

2 Chronicles 34 and 35

### **KING JEHOIAKIM:**

2 Kings 23:36-24-7

2 Chronicles 36:1-21

In a few words, how would you describe the rule of each king and the impact on Judah?

Now that we have insight into Habakkuk's cultural context, we'll turn our attention today to Habakkuk 1:1-4. **Let's read Habakkuk 1:1. What does it say Habakkuk saw?**

The Hebrew word for **Oracle** is **massa**, which means “lift up to carry or to bear.” It describes that which is carried, and thus a burden or load, focusing on the effort needed to transport something. It figuratively refers to a prophetic utterance. Massa is used literally to describe a load or burden on an animal or man.

We start off this book with the picture of a man under the weight of a heavy load. Let’s read on and find out more about that burden.

Read verses 1-4.

Habakkuk, carrying a **massa**, approached God in an intense, personal and intimate way and he had questions! Things were happening in his world that did not line up with the God He knew, the One who is good, strong and just.

What’s the first question Habakkuk asked God in 1:2?

Habakkuk is not the first biblical author to ask God, "**How Long.**" Look up at least one of these passages and note your thoughts:

Psalm 13:1

Psalm 79:5-7

The call of “how long” tells us that Habakkuk had been raising this issue in prayer for some time. This passage uses the word **cry** to describe how Habakkuk expressed his distress at the injustice and wickedness that surrounds him. The Hebrew word used here for cry is “Za’aq” which means shriek, a distress call. His cry is intense and it is pleading!

Have you ever gone to God, crying, **Za’aqing**, and asking “**How long**”? If so, what was the issue for you?

Verses 2-4 use powerful nouns for the things Habakkuk witnessed. Write them down here:

Habakkuk **saw** “violence, iniquity, strife, destruction.” The Hebrew word for “violence” is ḥāmās and denotes flagrant violation of moral law by which a person injures primarily a fellow human. And who did Habakkuk call violent? Who perverted justice? He was talking about his own people. Habakkuk’s words depict a society that is characterized by malicious wickedness, deceitful iniquity—both moral and spiritual—oppressive behavior toward others, and the general spiritual and ethical chaos that exists where sin is rampant. Because sin was the norm, injustice was also the norm.

We can see from the questions Habakkuk posed to God that he was a man who feared the Lord. He knew and believed God was holy. Habakkuk was angered by the sin and dishonor brought to God by God’s own covenant people.

A question we should ask ourselves is whether we see sin the same way Habakkuk did. Take some time to think about how you respond when you see the sin around you and talk to the Lord about it.

We'll end today with a bit of a cliff-hanger. Habakkuk appealed to God with strong words and a heart-felt lament about the disgraceful state of Judah and her people. How will God respond?? Stay tuned! **In the meantime, let's consider these questions:**

What lessons we can learn from Habakkuk about prayer?

What big questions do you have for God? I invite you to write them down.

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

## PRAY:

Thank the Lord that He is the one to whom we can come with all of our complaints, our fears, our pain. Follow His loving imperative to **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matt 11:28-30**

## DAY THREE

### *Be Astonished*

**Read Chapter 1:1-11 again.** If any questions come to mind, please note them here.

Today we are going to focus on verses 5-6. We read that another character entered the conversation to give Habakkuk a response to his complaint. **Who spoke to Habakkuk in these passages?**

What did He tell Habakkuk to do?

**Look... see! Be astonished! Wonder!** – These are not suggestions. The words used here are in the form of commands. They are all in the **plural form**, indicating that God desired not only Habakkuk, but all of Judah, to obey these commands.

Read verse 6. God told Habakkuk He was going to do something so astonishing that Habakkuk wouldn't believe it.

What did God tell Habakkuk He was going to do?

Why do you think it was so astonishing?

God told Habakkuk, **“I am raising up the Chaldeans.”** What is another name for Chaldeans? Look up Ezra 5:12 or Ezekiel 23:15 for help with your answer.

The Chaldeans, or Babylonians, appear frequently throughout scripture. Here are some helpful facts to help acquaint us with Babylon and the Babylonian people:

- Babylon was an important city-state on the banks of the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia (the southern part of modern Iraq). It developed into a prosperous center of trade and religion (1895-539 BC).
- The name, Babylon, arises from the narrative in Genesis 11:1-10. Take a moment to read this passage.
- Noah's great-grandson, Nimrod, was the first mighty man of the Bible (Genesis 10:8-10), and the Bible says Babel was one of the towns that encompassed the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom in the land of Shinar.

About 800 years before Habakkuk, Moses spoke prophetic words to the second generation of Israel as they prepared to enter the land of Canaan. He said that the Israelite people would fall to an enemy nation and be carried away. **Read Deuteronomy 28:36-37, 47-51 and answer the following questions:**

Why will God incite the Babylonians (the enemy nation) to take the Israelites into captivity?



What would the Israelites experience during their captivity?

Although Habakkuk was stunned by God's revelation of the coming judgment from Babylon, we should note this was not a new thing for God's people. The prophet Isaiah also dealt with this issue. **Read Isaiah 10:5-6 for more insight into Isaiah's experience and write down your observations.**

Babylon was brought against Assyria and is now being used to come against Judah. While Habakkuk longed for God to judge the guilty in Judah, he saw the Babylonians as even worse than the Assyrians or the evil doers in Judah! Habakkuk hoped for rescue and relief from the evil. Instead, God answered with a promise of coming discipline by using the Babylonians as His instrument of justice. When our difficulties drag on, our perspective may tend to be like Habakkuk's, focusing on our immediate circumstances and problems. God told Habakkuk to pause, step back, and "Look! You're going to be amazed at what I'm doing!"

I think we can relate to how Habakkuk felt. God's ways sometimes confound us, too. Let's pause here today to reflect and prayerfully consider these questions:

How have you responded when God hasn't changed your circumstances in the way you hoped?

When have you experienced what seem to be the contradictory actions of God? How did you deal with that experience before God?

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

## PRAY:

We often don't understand God's purposes. He will never fit into the finite box of our human understanding. Today let's pray the truth of the following scriptures so we can have peace and praise our trustworthy God even when we don't understand.

### **Isaiah 55:7-9**

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

### **Psalms 147:5**

Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; His understanding is beyond measure.

### **Deuteronomy 7:9**

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations.

## DAY FOUR

### *Hard Truth to Swallow*

Yesterday we were introduced to the Babylonians, the nation God told Habakkuk He would use as His instrument of justice against the wicked disobedience of the evildoers in Judah.

**Today we're going to focus on Chapter 1:7-11** to learn more about the type of people the Babylonians were. God used vivid language to describe them. **Take a few minutes and write at least five of the words/phrases used to portray the Babylonians. Include your own definition of the words/phrases you jot down.**

These are the people God is going to use. They are violent, contemptuous, cruel and conceited. Look back at the beginning of the chapter. Notice how the words that Habakkuk used to describe the actions of the evil-doers in Judah are similar to the words God used to describe the Chaldeans. Has Judah done violence? It will in turn suffer violence at the hands of a violent nation whose well-trained army will move forward with such precision that the whole striking force will march as one to achieve its objectives. And while they are at it, they will take many captives.

Imagine what it would be like if God raised up a cruel nation to conquer us. Think about the most brutal, cruel regimes in history – The Third Reich, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, ISIS – and God tells us to “Look, be astounded! I am sending them to bring My justice. They will destroy you. They will sweep across the earth and seize what does not belong to them. They will frighten and terrify you, deciding for themselves what is right. They will come fast and alert like wolves, descending on you like vultures devouring their prey. All of them are intent on violence and will take prisoners like scoops of sand.”

This is the message God delivered to Habakkuk. If you received a message like this, how would you respond to God?

Let's take a look at more examples in scripture where God sovereignly allowed evil and used it to display His glory and bring about His good purposes. **Read at least two of the following passages and note your observations.**

Genesis 50:20

Exodus 9:16

Proverbs 16:4-6

Acts 2:23-24

When God chooses to act in ways that confound us, it can leave us feeling frustrated, fearful, perhaps even frantic. But before we lose hope, let's take a look at one word in verse 11 that gives us insight into how God views the Babylonians and their actions: **Guilty**. The Hebrew word here is **Asham** and it is one of the key verbs for sin used in the Old Testament. Habakkuk may not have heard the word as he listened to the frightening description God gave of the coming punisher, but it is critical for us to see as we move into next week. Stay tuned!

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

### PRAY:

It is easy to understand how the words God spoke to Habakkuk could have shaken him to his core. Most of us can understand those feelings. God knows all about our fears. He knows how deeply our fears can affect us and how they can paralyze us. Let's spend some time today praying the words of David and taking our fears to the Lord.

#### **Psalm 56:3-4**

*When I am afraid,*

*I put my trust in you.*

*In God, whose word I praise,*

*in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.*

*What can flesh do to me?*

## DAY FIVE

### *Personal Application*

**Read Habakkuk 1:1-11 one last time** and look at all your notes and comprehension summary answers before answering these application questions.

What have I learned about God (Father, Son or Holy Spirit) in this passage (His character, truths, authority, sovereignty, etc.)?

How does this knowledge about God shape my view about myself, mankind, the world, and/or my circumstances?

Are there any action steps I need to take, truths I need to hold on to, or commands I need to follow?

### PRAY:

Based on your answers to the above questions, pick one verse or truth from the passage we studied this week, personalize it, and pray it back to God.

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## SESSION 2 NOTES: FAITH THAT WRESTLES

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WEEK 2

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*Habakkuk Wrestles with God*

PART 2



CHAPTER 1:12 - 2:20



## WEEK TWO | DAY ONE

### Shock

The first two chapters of Habakkuk fall into the format of a dialogue between Habakkuk and God. In Week One, we studied their first conversation. This week, we're going to examine the second conversation between God and Habakkuk.

In the first dialogue, Habakkuk was appalled at God's seeming indifference to the injustice and violence that was committed by those in His own household. In the second dialogue, Habakkuk learned God *would* render justice; however, Habakkuk was deeply troubled by the means God intended to use.

**Today we are going to focus on Chapter 1:12-17.** Habakkuk responded to God's answer with all the reasons why using the Babylonians was inconsistent with God's character. **Take a moment to read these verses and write down the words Habakkuk used to describe God's character.**

In Week One, we read how the Babylonians were described. **Re-read Chapter 1:6-11 and write down some of the adjectives used to depict the Babylonians:**

Quite a contrast, isn't it? The terms Habakkuk used for God - "O LORD, my God, my Holy One" highlighted that the One he was complaining to was **his God, the God he knows**. Habakkuk's complaints were rooted in his faith in God's sovereignty, perfection, and compassion. Habakkuk's trust in God's nature led Habakkuk to keep reaching for God despite his distress.

Now let's look closer at the second part of Verse 12 as we could easily skim past it. Habakkuk proclaimed: "We shall not die." Remember, God delivered a dire message to Habakkuk about how His justice would be carried out. The forecast was terrifying, yet Habakkuk assuredly asserted **"We shall not die."** Habakkuk's words seem to communicate: "What you are telling me does not compute! I cannot make sense of it; however, I know your people will continue because you promised they would." Habakkuk remembered that the infinite, trustworthy, and true God would faithfully keep His covenant promises. **Why did Habakkuk have the confidence to make this statement? Read the following passages and note your observations.**

Genesis 17:2-8

Exodus 3:3-15

Deuteronomy 7:6-11

Psalm 89:19-37

Habakkuk was shown that judgment and discipline must occur, and he understood that God would send the Babylonians for that purpose. Despite Habakkuk's confidence in God, he was afraid, and he perhaps wondered if discipline at the hands of such a vicious people would be too much to bear.

Let's move on to Chapter 1:14-17. It was common for Old Testament prophets to use imagery in their writing. Here Habakkuk used fishing illustrations. Let's take a closer look at the imagery.

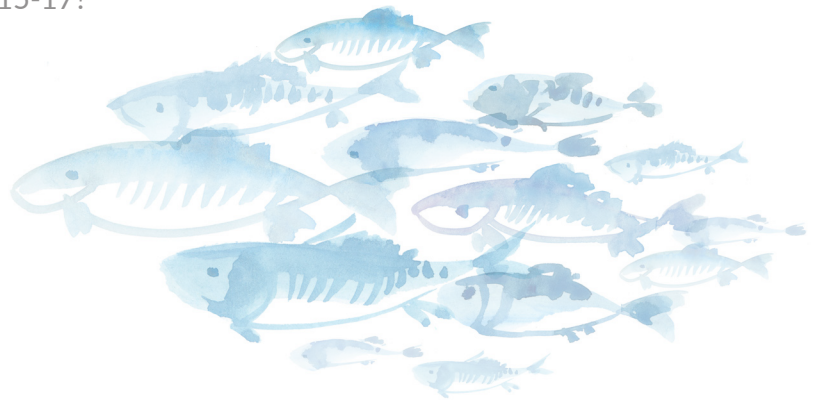
Who are the fish of the sea?

Who do the fish look to as their ruler in verse 14?

Who is the "bigger" conquering fish in verses 15-17?

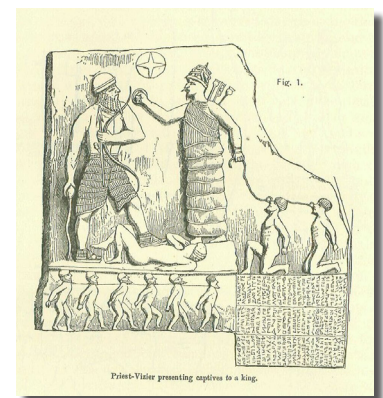
Who are the "smaller" fish?

What do you think this image is describing?



In verse 14, Habakkuk made the point that fish have no ruler other than God. Babylon, a "big fish," would eat Judah, a "little fish." The visual is of the Babylonians fishing for people, dragging them in with a hook and net. Then, after they brought in their catch, they would arrogantly make sacrifices to their nets, treating them as a god. The merciless Babylonians literally heaped up their captives, got rich through their ruthlessness, and enjoyed it all.

We may wonder why Habakkuk chose to describe the Babylonians' deeds using fishing imagery. Habakkuk's understanding of the Babylonians' methods have been validated by Babylonian archeological ruins (see illustration). Given this, it is easy to understand the dread Habakkuk felt.



This brings us to the end of Chapter 1. The intense, very personal dialogue that played out between Habakkuk and God has many things to teach us. Habakkuk saw his own nation reject God. He lamented the perversion of justice going on, which caused him to ask God heart-felt questions, like “Why?” and “How Long?” Habakkuk recognized that the injustice he saw was among God’s own chosen people, which is why I think it was particularly distressing to him. But Habakkuk’s cries and laments did not go unanswered! Let’s end today with these encouraging words from biblical scholar James Bruckner:

***Questions and lament are part of a believer’s burden, and honest dialogue with God is a necessary form of relationship with him. Habakkuk’s protest is faithful and inspired because it is done out of the conviction that God is good all the time, even in death and dying. This conviction does not silence the questions and pain of the faithful in Scripture. Rather, it focuses the questions in the form of personal dialogue with a loving Creator and Redeemer, who accompanies the sufferer and will, in perfect time, bring victory.***

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

## PRAY:

Habakkuk made the confident statement, **“We will not die,”** knowing God would keep His promise to preserve His people to the end. Like Habakkuk, we can rely on God and His promises. There will be times for all of us when doubt and worry creep in. When this happens, we can turn to God and ask for His help to believe!

Today, let’s pray through some of the promises God has given to us in His word and thank Him for being a trustworthy God.

### **Deuteronomy 31:8**

*It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.*

### **2 Corinthians 1:19-20**

*For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him.*

### **Philippians 1:6**

*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

## DAY TWO

### *Right on Time*

Today we start our exploration of Chapter 2 and will focus our attention on verses 1-3. Chapter 1 ended with Habakkuk's second complaint. Habakkuk longed for justice and went straight to God to ask for it. And while Habakkuk desperately wanted God to act, he objected to God's plan for judging Judah. Habakkuk laid out his best argument to God and he expected God to respond. Read Chapter 2:1. **What did Habakkuk do as he waited for God to speak?**

This verse tells us that Habakkuk positioned himself as a **watchman**. We might wonder what a watchman is. The Hebrew word for "watchman" means "one who looks out," "one who spies," or "one who watches." The prophets' job as watchmen was to urge God's people to live faithfully and to warn them of the perils involved in falling away from the Lord and doing evil. As watchmen, the prophets were also called to warn wicked people of the judgment and destruction that would come their way unless they turned from their evil ways.

Habakkuk humbly and quietly positioned himself on the look-out, expecting God to respond. And while Habakkuk expected God to answer, based on this verse, **what kind of response do you think Habakkuk expected? To help with your answer, look up this verse in the King James or New American Standard translation and also read Job 40:1-5.**

In Chapter 2:2, we read Habakkuk's description of God's response: "And the LORD answered me." According to several interpretations of this passage, Habakkuk appeared to expect God to correct him, even "put him in his place." God's response was personal as He continued to speak to Habakkuk and give His answers directly to him. God's response also included instructions for Habakkuk. **What were the instructions Habakkuk received?**

The vision Habakkuk was instructed to write confirmed Habakkuk's fears: **God would use the "bitter and hasty" nation of Babylon to execute His judgment.** Because the vision was written down, its message was recorded for all, not only Habakkuk. What a kindness of God to make sure His word was documented and memorialized so Habakkuk's generation, and the faithful generations who would follow, could trust God and His word.

Writing God's words/commands on tablets was not new. According to David Firth's commentary, God's instructions to write the vision on tablets made a comparison between Habakkuk and Moses. Moses had received the torah on tablets (Exodus 24:12), and we read Habakkuk was asked to place the vision he was given on tablets. This vision was also to be "made plain," using a verb that occurs only two other times in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 1:5; 27:8), probably referring to large lettering. Just as the Sinai covenant had to be made known and understood, the vision given to Habakkuk was also to be shared in an understandable way.

We may also wonder what God meant when He said **"so he may run who reads it."** Based upon the translation of the pronoun "it" used to refer to the vision, the running could be metaphorical: those who read the tablets will "run" into the vision disclosed to them. The runner finds security and comfort in the message of the vision. **Take a moment to read Proverbs 18:10 to enhance your understanding of this phrasing and note any observations you have.**

We will wrap up today by looking at verse 3. God told Habakkuk to record the vision. God also told Habakkuk the vision *may seem slow to come but it will not delay so wait for it.* The fulfillment of the vision would seem to be delayed, yet delay was conditional because it was based on only one thing: God's timetable. God is never in a hurry, yet he is always on time. His purposes unfold slowly, but surely. They always come to pass. God dealt with His people by requiring them to wait patiently for his promises to come to pass (Hebrews 11:13). Abraham waited many years for the child he and Sarah were promised. Isaac waited 20 years for his wife to bear children. Joseph waited over two decades before the dream he was given by God was realized. The nation of Israel waited 430 years (!!!) for deliverance from their Egyptian oppression. David waited many years before he became king. And The Church continues to wait for her Lord to return. Faith means being faithful to God rather than relying upon a specific timeline.

A quick Google search on "Christian books about waiting" returns hundreds of results, like:

“Seasons of Waiting: Walking by Faith When Dreams are Delayed,” “Waiting: A Bible Study on Patience, Hope, and Trust,” “Waiting on God: Becoming What God Wants Us to Be,” etc. We know it’s a popular topic because as most of us have learned, waiting is the norm with God. **And if we know we should expect to wait on God, what does God’s word have to teach us about waiting? Read the following passages of scripture and note your observations.**

Psalm 33:20

Psalm 40:1

Isaiah 26:8

Romans 8:23-25

2 Peter 3:8-9

We can be confident that even though the timing of God’s just purposes may seem slow, it is always right on time. God will ensure the justification of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked at the appointed time. Scripture teaches us there is a bounty of blessings for those who remain faithful in the waiting. **As we end today, reflect on the following questions and note your thoughts:**



In what ways can God's "slowness" be a mercy to you?

How can an eternal perspective help you trust Him as you wait?

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

## PRAY:

Spend time today asking God to help you believe in Him alone and to wait for His perfect plans to unfold. It can be a struggle, so we need Him to give us the courage and confident strength to trust.

### **Psalm 27:14**

*Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!*

## DAY THREE

### Faithful Living

God reassured Habakkuk He would deal with the wickedness of Judah through judgment and discipline in His way and in His time. If it seemed slow in coming, wait for it. It was on the way.

**Today as we focus on Chapter 2:4,** we find a pivotal passage that packs a punch:

*“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,  
**But the righteous shall live by his faith.”***

Many of us are probably familiar with this powerful verse. It communicates some of the most significant theological truth in all of scripture. We could even say the book of Habakkuk hinges on the truth of this one passage. And the power of this passage became the foundation on which Martin Luther’s life was transformed, giving birth to the doctrine of the Reformation. Martin Luther said of Habakkuk 2:4b:

*“Before those words broke upon my mind,” he says, “I hated God and was angry with Him because, not content with frightening us sinners by the law and by the miseries of life, he still further increased our torture by the gospel. But when, by the Spirit of God, I understood these words—*

*‘The just shall live by faith!’*

*‘The just shall live by faith!’*

*—then I felt born again like a new man; I entered through the open doors into the very Paradise of God!”*

*“Henceforward,” he says again, “I saw the beloved and holy Scriptures with other eyes. The words that I had previously detested, I began from that hour to value and to love as the sweetest and most consoling words in the Bible. In very truth, this text was to me the true gate of Paradise!”*

We see that two contrasting truths are presented. In the first half of the verse, the Babylonians are described as *puffed up*. The term puffed up conveys the basic meaning of “swelling.” The Babylonians were conceited and self-important. The same root occurs in Numbers 14:44 which explained the presumptive arrogance of the Israelites to go to battle without the Lord’s presence.

In contrast, the second half of the verse states: **BUT, the righteous shall live by his faith.** Note the word, "but." It is always important to pay attention to terms of contrast. The contrast between the first and second statements of this passage is crucial as it describes the difference between life and death. God told Habakkuk the way to *real* life is trusting Him. This is not the first time God made promises in the Old Testament about justification by faith. We might think about the example of Abraham. **Read Genesis 15:6 and note what it says about Abraham.**

**The righteous shall live by his faith.** This statement is quoted three times in the New Testament. Each time a different aspect of the statement's meaning is highlighted. **Read each of the New Testament passage references, noting the author's key message.**

Romans 1:17

Galatians 3:11

Hebrews 10:37-38

Reading these New Testament passages helps us understand that the Bible isn't a random collection of books. Instead it is a complete storyline from Genesis to Revelation, which tells of God's plan to save the world through Jesus Christ. Let's dig a bit further into each passage as they contain fundamental truths for us today.

**1. Romans 1:17: *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."***

Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4b in his letter to the Romans, as he states the power of the good news of Jesus's coming, his life, his death and resurrection. The work of Christ is what saves everyone who believes. And the righteousness of God is revealed to those who confess faith in Christ's finished work, which allows everyone who believes to live faithfully. Paul continues the theme of justification by faith in his letter to the Romans, where he states the blessings believers receive.

**Look up the following passages and note what you find.**

Romans 3:21-26

Romans 5:1-5

**2. Galatians 3:11: *Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”***

Paul’s argument to the Galatians is that all who rely on works of the law are **cursed** because it was impossible to perfectly obey. We might wonder what Paul meant by cursed. **Look up the following passages and note your observations.**

Deuteronomy 21:22-23

Deuteronomy 27:26

Jeremiah 11:3

No one is justified by the law. Paul’s message to the Galatians was that salvation was found only by faith in Christ, who is the fulfillment of God’s promise. And connecting back to the statement

in Habakkuk, the righteous ones would persevere by their faith in God, unlike the Babylonians who arrogantly trusted in themselves.

**3. Hebrews 10:37-38: “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”**

In these verses, the author of Hebrews incorporates language from Habakkuk 2:3 and Habakkuk 2:4. We see a theme of endurance in suffering emerge. The major difference between Habakkuk 2:3-4 and Hebrews 10:37-38 is that in Habakkuk, Judah was going to suffer because of their wicked **unfaithfulness** to God. In this Hebrews passage, God’s people were suffering because of their **faithfulness** to the Lord. It is also important to note in verse 37 that the author of Hebrews changes the pronoun used in Habakkuk 2:3 from “it” to “one.” **Who is the writer referring to?**

Habakkuk spoke of a revelation which was to come. Since Jesus is both the great and final prophet whose revelation completes the Old Testament (Hebrews 1:1), it was fulfilled!

We end today faced with a choice. We can be like the proud who shake their fist at God. Or we can be like those who walk by faith, trusting in God when we cannot see and when life is more than we can understand. **Reflect on the following questions and note your thoughts:**

Read the last two verses of Hebrews 11. How do these words help put life into perspective for you?

Is there an area of your life right now where you need a biblical faith to persevere and endure?

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

## PRAY:

As we thank God for His gift of faith, spend time in prayer asking Him to help you live by faith as you trust the One who is dependable and faithful.

### **Hebrews 11:1-3**

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

## DAY FOUR

### *And Justice for All*

While the prophet Habakkuk received bad news of the impending judgment on Judah for the many sins Habakkuk had complained about in the first part of Chapter 1, God assured him there would be certain judgment against the Babylonians. In **Habakkuk 2:6-20**, God declared judgment on Babylon in the form of five woes. A woe is simply a pronouncement of judgment. God's use of the Babylonians to mete out His justice against Judah was His divine prerogative. God would not be mocked by anyone (Galatians 6:7). Yet in proclaiming the punishment of Babylon because of their haughtiness, God demonstrated His justice is consistent and that His own faithful people would be vindicated and not put to shame, either.

It's important to note here the distinction between **discipline and wrath (Verse 1:12 and Verses 2:6-2:19)**. The Hebrew word for reproof/punish used in 1:12 is "Yakach" which means to correct. The Hebrew meaning for the woes God declares on the Babylonians in 2:6-2:19 is used as an exclamation of judgment or wrath upon God's enemies. There is a difference between wrath and discipline. Judgment/wrath is punitive, making someone pay for wrong. But discipline is different. Discipline is purposeful. As Nancy Guthrie explains,

*All who are in Christ need never fear that their suffering is a result of being punished for sin. How do we know that? Because Christ has already been punished for our sin, so we don't have to be. The writer of Hebrews tells us, "The Lord disciplines those he loves" and, "No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening – it's painful" (Hebrews 12:6, 11). "... endure this divine discipline," the writer encourages. "God's discipline is always good for us" (Hebrews 12:7, 10). His discipline is never too harsh or inappropriate. We can endure his discipline in our lives because while it's painful, we can be confident it's purposeful. God's purpose in disciplining us is that we might "share in his holiness." He wants us to live in a way that demonstrates that we share the passions and priorities of our Father. When we are willing to be trained by his discipline – to be molded and shaped by it – something beautiful happens. Something blossoms in our lives – a peaceful harvest of right/righteous living.*

**Amen!**

Before God announced the woes, He asked a question in the beginning of verse 6: "Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him, and say..." **Who are "all these" and who is the "him" against whom "all these" will taunt and scoff? Read verse 5 to help you with your answer.**

The "all these" are the nations and people, including Judah, who would suffer under Babylon's wickedness. The "him" is Babylon. So, in Habakkuk 2 as God announced the woes that would befall Babylon when He brought judgment against them, part of the judgment would be Babylon's victims revolting against them.

Verse 6 begins the set of Five Woes which call attention to the Babylonian's wicked deeds and the reasons for judgment.

## WOE #1

Read verses 6-8

What sin(s) did Babylon commit?

What was God's punishment for this sin?

## WOE #2

Read verses 9-11

What sin(s) did Babylon commit?

What was God's punishment for this sin?



## WOE #3

Read verses 12-13

What sin(s) did Babylon commit?

What was God's punishment for this sin?

Verse 14 is an interesting interlude in the pronouncement of the woes:

**For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea.**

God is now the subject. For Habakkuk, the destruction of the wicked and the vindication of the righteous equate to God's glory revealed in the earth. The phrase "glory of the LORD" is used for the visible presence of God. It is associated primarily with the tabernacle and temple, and especially with the cherubim above which the Lord is enthroned in ruling over Israel. **Read the following passages that depict God's glory and note your observations.**

Exodus 29:43

Psalm 72:19

Ezekiel 9:3

The pronouncement of the woes resumes in verse 15:

## WOE #4

Read verses 15-17

What sin(s) did Babylon commit?

What was God's punishment for this sin?

## WOE #5

Read verses 18-19

What sin(s) did Babylon commit?

What was God's punishment for this sin?

The last woe pronounced in verses 18-19 depicts the lifeless idol in contrast with the power of the living God. Worshiping the created thing rather than the creator is what fools do. **We may read this passage and think it doesn't apply to our day and age. Read Romans 1:18-24.**

Idolatry is anything that replaces love for the Creator with the thing that He has given as a gift. **Is there anything in your life (people, activities, possessions, etc.) that has become an idol and replaced God on His rightful throne? Take some time and talk to God about this and write down any thoughts.**

As we conclude the 5 woe pronouncements and realize that part of God's judgment would include the Babylonian's victims rising up against their oppressors, we may honestly want to cheer just a little bit. *Get 'em, God!* But let's take a close look at verse 20 before we start celebrating too much:

***“But the LORD is in his holy temple;  
let all the earth keep silence before him”  
be silent in his presence”***

We are now face to face with God's holiness. Before we smugly give each other a high five because the Babylonians got what they deserved, we should consider how the prophet Isaiah responded in God's holy presence:

***And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” (Isaiah 6:5)***

Woe is me. Sinful people in desperate need of grace and mercy are left with only one response: Silence. The Hebrew word for silent used in this passage is “hacah” (pronounced haw-saw) which means hush. Hush. Hold your tongue. In this passage, the command to “be silent” before God is a way of calling all of creation to recognize the divine verdict of judgment.

Being silent before God can be difficult. But He is worthy of our full attention and our worship. **Read the following passages of scripture, taking time to be quiet before him, listening to His voice.**

Zechariah 2:13

Psalms 46:10-11

Exodus 14:14

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

## PRAY:

As you pray today, rejoice in the truth that God alone is sovereign and God alone reigns. Join the prophet Isaiah in proclaiming,

### **Isaiah 6:3**

And one called to another and said:

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory!"*

## DAY FIVE

### *Personal Application*

**Read Habakkuk 1:12-2:20 one last time** and look at all your notes and comprehension summary answers before answering these application questions.

What have I learned about God (Father, Son or Holy Spirit) in this passage (His character, truths, authority, sovereignty, etc.)?

How does this knowledge about God shape my view about myself, mankind, the world, and/or my circumstances?

Are there any action steps I need to take, truths I need to hold on to, or commands I need to follow?

### PRAY:

Based on your answers to the above questions, pick one verse or truth from the passage we studied this week, personalize it, and pray it back to God.

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## SESSION 3 NOTES: FAITH THAT WAITS

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WEEK 3

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# *Habakkuk Worships God*

CHAPTER 3:1 - 19



## WEEK THREE | DAY ONE

### Habakkuk's Prayer

Chapter 3:1-19

The final chapter of Habakkuk contains some of the most beautiful, hope-filled words in all of scripture.

**Read all of Chapter 3. As you read it, note any questions or thoughts you may have about the text.**

As we've journeyed from Chapter 1 to Chapter 3, we've seen a significant change in Habakkuk the man as well as a change in the structure of his writing. It's important to note that the book of Habakkuk is eclectic in the sense that it contains multiple literary genres. One Bible commentator provides us with guidance for understanding the different structures:

*First, the book contains prophetic literature in that Habakkuk is a prophet who communicates God's message to the citizens of Judah and Jerusalem through the vision that was written on tablets. Secondly, the book contains wisdom literature which addresses the deep questions of life, especially the attempt to understand the nature and actions of God in the face of evil and suffering (Theodicy). Habakkuk is also a lamentation, which is a literary structure of grief and sorrow. The book is also a complaint since the prophet complained to God about His failure to judge the wicked, unrepentant people of Judah and about His decision to use the Babylonians as his instrument of judgment against Judah. And finally, chapter three of Habakkuk is a psalm or poetry.*

According to one author, the goal of Hebrew poetry was to address the mind through the heart. Like any well-written poetry, biblical poetry is intended to affect the emotions as well as the intellect. If you're like me, you may not be overly familiar with parsing poetic passages of scripture. But our God, who is the Creator of creativity, chose to use this beautiful form of writing to reveal His truth to us. So, let's dig in!

**Today we will focus on Habakkuk 3:1-2.** By this point, God had delivered the chilling news of the



Five Woes that would befall Babylon. **What might the significance be of the first two words of verse 1 in relation to Chapter 2:20?**

The phrase “a prayer” is found in the superscript of several Psalms. **Look up the following passages and note your observations about these prayers.**

Psalm 86

Psalm 90

Psalm 102

Having seen the Lord is in His holy temple (Habakkuk 2:20), Habakkuk humbly lifted up his prayer to *that* temple with the expectation that God would hear and answer him.

Now let’s examine the last word of verse 1.

Most commentators think the word Shigionoth carried the idea of “strong emotion,” “erratic wandering,” or “wild tumult.” The word appears only twice in scripture. **Look up Psalm 7. Note the themes and images you observe in this passage and how they might support the definition of Shigionoth.**

Let’s move to verse 2. This is where the prayer set to music, the Shigionoth, begins. **Read the verse. Write down what you think the work was that Habakkuk feared and what he prayed would be revived and made known. Look back at Week One – Day Two to help with your answer.**

Habakkuk used words in verse 2 that have similarities to words used by Job. **Look up Job 42:5-6 and write down any likenesses you find between Habakkuk's and Job's statements.**

The humbled prophet had heard and seen God, and he was moved to intercede on behalf of God's people. As one commentator put it: *Without mercy, God's wrath would completely destroy God's people. Without mercy, there would be no opportunity for sinners to receive grace. Mercy tempers justice.* In other words, God's people would experience His salvation in and through judgment. This reality prompted Habakkuk to pray that God would remember mercy in the midst of His terrible wrath. We find an example of this same hopeful mercy in another passage of scripture. The book of Lamentations was written during Judah's exile in Babylon. **Read Lamentations 3:21-23 and write down your observations.**

Re-read Chapter 1:1-2 and compare them to Chapter 3:1-2. What a transformation! Habakkuk the wrestling prophet is now Habakkuk the worshiping prophet. Awed by the display of God's power and glory, Habakkuk was changed. Habakkuk's prayer was for revival. His greatest concern was spiritual revival, not the impending doom. **As we end today, spend some time reflecting on your own life, those times when you have gone from being a "wrestler" to a being "worshiper." If you'd like, write out your thoughts as a prayer, thanking our Glorious King.**

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

## PRAY:

Habakkuk begins his prayer asking for God to revive the work He has done in the past. Revive it. What in your life needs to be revived by the Lord? Spend time with the Lord today asking Him to show you.

## DAY TWO

### God's Appearance

**Today we are going to focus on Chapter 3:3-7.** Take a moment to read the verses.

This section of Habakkuk's poetic prayer is unique because it describes a **theophany**. This word may be unfamiliar to many of us. **Look up the word theophany in the dictionary and write the definition.**

The word, theophany, is a combination of two Greek words meaning God and appearance. Theologian Vern Poythress offers this helpful definition of theophany: ***an appearance of God, an intense manifestation of the presence of God that is accompanied by an extraordinary visual display. More precisely, it is a visible display to human beings that expresses the presence and character of God.*** Some sources suggest there are over 50 possible theophanies recorded throughout the Old Testament. Most of them appear in Genesis, Exodus, Judges and the prophets. **Why do you think God chose to manifest Himself in this manner?**

According to Dr. Poythress, throughout the Old Testament God portrayed his presence to his people in various ways (a thunderstorm, enthroned, a warrior, a man). But Jesus Christ serves as the climactic theophany in history: God-become-man. We can understand how God can present himself to his people as a messenger or angel, in that Christ came as the messenger of God, although he was fully God. In this trinitarian mystery, we begin to see the ways in which God has made himself present with his people throughout history.

Habakkuk steadied himself for the coming judgment against Judah. As the poem progresses, Habakkuk pronounced his hope by remembering God's past theophanic manifestations which carried with them acts of deliverance and salvation for God's people.

Re-read verses 3-7.

Write down how God is described in each verse and note why you think it's significant.

Verse 3:

Verse 4:

Verse 5:

Verse 6:

Verse 7:

Now read the following passages and note their similarities to Habakkuk's depiction of God in verses 3-7:

Deuteronomy 33:1-2

Judges 5:4-5

Ezekiel 1:27-29

Psalm 104:2

This passage explodes with imagery - God the Deliverer, God on the move, God full of power and glory. God is a Warrior (Exodus 15:3) who holds lightning bolts in His hands, with power to destroy His foes. He simply takes His stand and the mountains scatter. With just a look, He terrifies the nations. In reverence and awe, Habakkuk described God in a manner that could instill fear as well as comfort. God was faithful in the past and He would be faithful in the future.

In what ways have you seen God's past faithfulness?

How does this knowledge impact how you experience your current circumstances?

There is another important word associated with verse 3 that we could easily miss: **Selah**. The word *selah* appears in only two books of the Bible, namely Psalms and Habakkuk. It appears seventy-one times in Psalms and three times in Chapter 3 of Habakkuk. While there isn't consensus about the meaning of the word, many commentators believe the word is a combination of two Hebrew words: *s\_lah*, "to praise"; and *s\_lal*, "to lift up." An-

other commentator believes it comes from *salah*, “to pause.” From *salah* comes the belief that *selah* is a musical notation signifying a rest to the singers and/or instrumentalists who performed the psalms. If this is accurate, then each time *selah* appears in a psalm, the musicians paused, perhaps to take a breath, to sing acappella, or to let the instruments play alone. Perhaps they were pausing to praise the One about whom the song was speaking, perhaps even lifting their hands in worship. This theory would encompass all these meanings—“praise,” “lift up,” and “pause.” Pause and Praise. ***Selah***. As we close today, let’s follow Habakkuk’s example. **Take time to reflect and praise God for His faithfulness, His grace, His mercy, His love, His deliverance.**

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

### PRAY:

Let’s join David in this prayer, lifting up our voices and praising our Creator:

*Psalm 66:4*  
*All the earth worships you*  
*and sings praises to you;*  
*they sing praises to your name. Selah*

## DAY THREE

### *God's Power on Display*

Yesterday we read of Habakkuk's remembrance of God's faithfulness to His covenant people as He appeared to them in times past. **Today we are going to focus on Habakkuk 3:8-15. Take a moment to read the verses.**

In this passage, Habakkuk switched from the 3rd person point of view used in verses 3-6, to the 2nd person point of view. In a second person point of view, the reader is part of the story, which we see as Habakkuk spoke directly to God once again.

Read verses 8-11. Write out what was subjected to God's power.

Now list the weapons that God was described as possessing.

Habakkuk used potent poetic imagery to portray God's power. **Read the following Psalms and note any similarities between these passages and verses 8-11.**

Psalms 18:7-15

Psalms 77:16-20



In verses 8-11, Habakkuk described the power God that was demonstrated over nature. **Read the following passages and note the power God displayed specifically over water.**

Genesis 7:11-12

Exodus 7:19-24

Exodus 14:21-22

Mark 6:47-50

Luke 8:22-25

Now read the following passages. Write down what you observe about God's power displayed specifically over the earth, sun and moon.

Joshua 10:12-13

Exodus 10:21-23

Matthew 27:45-46

Mark 13:24-26

Why do you think Habakkuk placed so much emphasis on God's power as He applied it in relation to nature/creation?

As we move on to verses 3:12-15, note the shift to a focus on God's power directed against the enemy nations that oppressed His people. **Read these verses and write down the six actions that God took to victoriously vanquish His foes:**

Verse 12a

Verse 12b

Verse 13a

Verse 13b

Verse 14

Verse 15

Why do you think God had been angry with the nations? Look up Deuteronomy 12:29-31 and Deuteronomy 18:9-12 to help with your answer.

Judgment and Salvation. Wrath and Mercy. Today's passage reveals a God who renders divine retribution while also offering divine rescue. Habakkuk's narration of God's faithfulness throughout His people's history was Habakkuk's own reminder, as well as ours, that all the hope and deliverance needed by everyone, everywhere is found in God alone. And the ultimate deliverance God promised in Genesis 3:15 is foreshadowed here: God himself came to the earth He created, in the person of Jesus Christ, to **deliver** his people from the bondage of sin through the life, death, and resurrection of his Son. The ultimate enemy has been ultimately defeated by the ultimate Savior. Selah.

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

## PRAY:

Habakkuk recounted many powerful ways God had worked in the lives of His people. Let's spend time today remembering and thanking God for His work in our lives. Maybe there's a special Bible verse, or a meaningful journal entry you want to focus on to guide you as you pray. He is worthy of our praise.

## DAY FOUR

### *Yet I Will Rejoice*

Today we are going to focus on the final four verses of Habakkuk 3. **Take a moment to read Habakkuk 3:16-19.**

Now let's focus on Habakkuk 3:16. **Write down the ways Habakkuk was physically impacted by his knowledge of the judgment that was to come.**

Habakkuk responded with such physical intensity because of the terrible devastation that Judah would suffer before God's promise of wrath against the Babylonians would be fulfilled. As it is noted in The Expositor's Bible Commentary: *"for Habakkuk to see such things is to experience distress (reference 1:5). To see beyond them to the Holy One who has appointed them is to demonstrate the greatness of faith and to find strength to "wait patiently" (reference 1:12; 2:2-4; 3:18-19)."*

Now let's move on to Habakkuk's final summary of the circumstances. Read verses 17-19.

What is the first word in verse 17?

What is the first word in verse 18?

**Though and Yet.** Two of the most powerful words in this passage. **THOUGH** the world Habakkuk inhabited would be decimated, **YET** he would rejoice in the Lord. No matter what would come, Habakkuk would choose **joy** and to trust God.

Let's focus on verse 17. It is a solemn recital of the calamities Habakkuk knew that he and the nation of Judah would endure at the hands of the Babylonian invaders. **Read verse 17 and write out a description of the various losses the nation of Judah would suffer.**

No crops. No livestock. No food. No livelihood. No shelter. No clothing. The Babylonians would sweep through Judah and leave it as if it were wiped out by an atomic bomb. The people of Judah would have nothing left of their civilization. Catastrophic loss like this can cause us to see where we really place our trust. What if the things we counted on (our jobs, our retirement accounts, our families) were all taken away? In Week One of this study, we learned about God's promise to use the Babylonians as His instrument of judgment against Judah. Now it was a reality. **If Habakkuk's reality was your reality, how would you respond to God? Take some time to write out your response to this question.**

In spite of the demoralizing reality described in verse 17, we find Habakkuk staked a claim in verse 18. **Read verse 18. What does Habakkuk resolve to do?**

**Yet I will rejoice.** What does it mean to rejoice? Take a moment to look up the word in the dictionary and write down the meaning.

According to Webster's Dictionary, rejoice means to feel **joy** or great delight. To feel **joy**. The Hebrew word used here is 'ālaz, "rejoice"; gîl, "be joyful." Scripture has much to say about joy. In the English Standard Version of the Bible, the words "joy," "rejoice," or "joyful" appear a total of 430 times, compared with "happy" or "happiness," which appear only ten times. **Read the following passages and write down what they say about rejoicing/joy.**

Psalms 5:11

Psalms 16:11

Philippians 4:4

Galatians 5:22-23

Joy is a marker of a Christian. It is a fruit of the Spirit and it is a gift from God. We receive this gift of joy when we treasure God's presence, God's promises, God's salvation, and God's work in our lives. **Are there any things in your life right now that are preventing you from rejoicing and experiencing God's joy? Take time to talk to the Lord about it.**

Habakkuk ended his prayer by declaring, "GOD, the Lord is my strength." **Read verse 19.**

Note that Habakkuk didn't deny the severity of the situation. He didn't pretend it wouldn't be painful and ultimately life-altering. But he knew where his strength came from. Strength came from trusting the One who was worthy of his trust.

Habakkuk used beautiful imagery to describe how he could navigate his circumstances when he trusted God for his strength. How did he get through this? **Read Psalm 18:31-33 to help with your answer.**

Habakkuk trusted in a God that would give him strength to keep from falling and we can, too.

How does the truth of Habakkuk 3:19 give you hope for any challenging circumstances you are currently facing in your life?

What hope does it give you for any fears you may have about the future?

The last sentence in the book of Habakkuk is: *"To the Choirmaster: with stringed instruments."* Chapter 3 is a song. It was meant to be sung in full-throated worship to the Lord by the very ones who would experience devastation and ruin because of their disobedience. Let's conclude our study by rejoicing in Him, regardless of our circumstances, knowing He will give us the strength we need, making our feet like deer's feet, allowing us to walk on the high places of our life and not fall. **Hallelujah and Amen!**

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

What is one thing I learned from this section so far?

Do I see a gospel connection anywhere in this section?

What have I learned about God in this passage so far?

## PRAY:

**Yet I Will Rejoice.** Thank the Lord for being your hope and strength. Remember the goodness and kindness that He has shown you even during difficult times. Thank Him for His ultimate gift of deliverance to us, Jesus Christ.



## DAY FIVE

### *Personal Application*

**Read Habakkuk 3:1-19 one last time** and look at all your notes and comprehension summary answers before answering these application questions.

What have I learned about God (Father, Son or Holy Spirit) in this passage (His character, truths, authority, sovereignty, etc.)?

How does this knowledge about God shape my view about myself, mankind, the world, and/or my circumstances?

Are there any action steps I need to take, truths I need to hold on to, or commands I need to follow?

### PRAY:

Based on your answers to the above questions, pick one verse or truth from the passage we studied this week, personalize it, and pray it back to God.

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# SESSION 4 NOTES: FAITH THAT WORSHIPS

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# FACILITATOR GUIDE

Dear facilitator, THANK YOU for leading the discussion on Habakkuk in your small group. Your faithfulness to the ladies in your group and to God's word honors the Lord.

At the end of each day's homework, you will find the same comprehension questions. You can go over those questions in your group, or you can choose to go through the homework day by day asking your small group members what stood out to them.

I've also scattered questions throughout the homework for small group discussion. Encourage your ladies to share their thoughts with the study method they're practicing, including any struggles or successes they've experienced. After you've spent some time going over the 4 days of comprehension questions, move on to the application questions on day 5. It is my hope that your small group will begin to share the truths about God and themselves they are learning, and will encourage one another to live out those truths in a way that brings glory to God.

I know it can be challenging, but try to save time in your group for prayer. Along with praying for the needs within the group, you can use one of the prayer prompts at the end of each day for inspiration. Or try picking a verse or two from the passage studied and pray it through together.

Since there will be no homework to discuss on the first day of the study, I've compiled some questions and an icebreaker below to generate discussion and sharing in your group. You can also discuss the teaching session and go over the introductory sections of the workbook.

## SESSION ONE QUESTIONS:

**Icebreaker idea:** The book of Habakkuk begins with the prophet asking God some penetrating questions. Habakkuk wants God to deal with the wicked violence that was rampant in his own nation but was angry when God didn't deal with the issue the way he thought he should. By the end of Habakkuk's journey with God, he is a different man. Can you think of any unexpected journey you've been on? Maybe it's a journey to a physical place, or a journey of learning. Did the journey change you, and if it did, how?

1. Have you ever studied Habakkuk before? What is your impression of the book? What do you remember from it?

2. What has been your experience with studying Scripture on your own? Are there any study tools that help you? What frustrates you when studying scripture?

3. What drew you to this study? What do you hope to learn?

## RESOURCES

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*All Scripture quotations are taken from the ESV Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, Wheaton, IL., Crossway, 2001) unless otherwise noted.*



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