

A woman's profile is shown in a three-quarter view, looking upwards and to the right. The interior of her head is filled with a dense, vibrant forest scene, featuring green and yellow foliage. She is wearing a thick, grey, textured knit sweater. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with trees and a bright sky.

FROM SILENCE TO SONG

Studies in Habakkuk

FROM SILENCE TO SONG

Have you ever felt like God ignores your prayers? Have you wondered if he knows what's best for your life? This term, we're going to be spending some time hearing from Habakkuk and Jonah, two prophets who were forced to wrestle with these questions, as God's response to their prayers seemed to be anything but what they expected or hoped for.

In most Old Testament prophecies, they are more of a monologue. But in both of these books, they're much more of a dialogue with God, a back-and-forth, where the prophets

***"Though the fig tree does not bud and there is no fruit on the vines, yet I will celebrate in the Lord; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!"
Habakkuk 3:17-18***

are shaped by a bigger vision of God's power and plans. As we work through these ancient prophecies, we hope that they can help you to see the goodness in God's unexpected plans, in your life, and ultimately in the hope of Jesus's death and resurrection, that both of these books are pointing to.

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A woman's profile is shown in a contemplative pose, looking upwards. The interior of her head is filled with a dense forest of green and yellow trees, suggesting a connection to nature. She is wearing a thick, grey, textured knit sweater. The background is a bright, hazy sky with soft clouds.

WHEN GOD GETS IT WRONG

Habakkuk 1:1-11

STUDY QUESTIONS

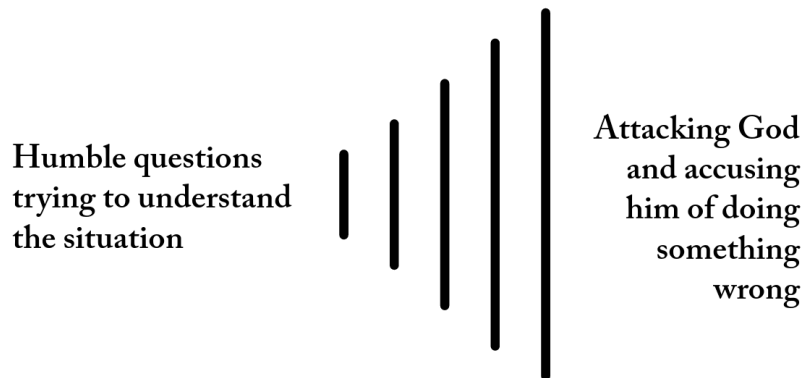
Right from the opening verses, we hear about something that's really troubling Habakkuk, and he can't understand what God's doing. As we begin, write a prayer to God about a situation in your life where you've asked God to step in, and he hasn't answered the way that you were hoping for.

Read Habakkuk 1:1-11

We're not told why or how, but in verse 1, we're told that Habakkuk "saw" this oracle. What do you think this means?

This section is often called "Habakkuk's first complaint". Do you think Habakkuk is complaining? If so, what is he complaining about?

Our questions to God can be genuine cries for help, but other times they can have a more accusatory tone to them. On the scale below, how would you rate Habakkuk's questions of God?



If you can, try to think of a time when your prayers have been at either end of that spectrum. What led you to pray like that?

What does Habakkuk say is the consequence of God's lack of action (verse 4)?

How does God answer Habakkuk's questions, in verses 5-11?

How is God using the Chaldeans (aka. the Babylonians)? How do you think that Habakkuk felt about that?

The Lord says something “unbelievable:” (verse 5) to Habakkuk about what he’s doing. What is it?

Read Acts 13:26-41. The Apostle Paul quotes Habakkuk 1:5 in his speech to the synagogue in Antioch. This time the unbelievable message isn’t about God raising up the Babylonians. What is the unbelievable new message that Paul urges the Jews in the synagogue not to miss out on?

Read Acts 4:27-28. How is this the ultimate example of God using the sinful actions of humanity to bring about his good plans and purposes?

How does this speak to you, when you feel like you can’t see any way that God could be working in your situation?

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FAITH IN THE DARK

Habakkuk 1:12-2:20

STUDY QUESTIONS

Read Habakkuk 1:12-2:1.

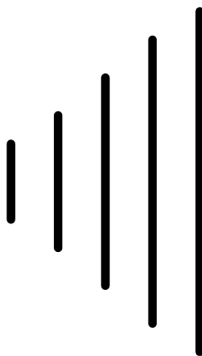
In 1:12, Habakkuk starts his prayer with who God is. Why does he say that “my Holy One, you will not die”?

What is Habakkuk’s complaint in this passage (verses 13-14)? Do you think that this complaint is more or less justified than the last one?

What do verses 15-17 tell us about the Babylonians?

Look at 2:1. How does Habakkuk end his complaint? This is the first time the word ‘complaint’ is used in the actual text. Going back to our ‘Habakkuk attitude scale’, how would you rate Habakkuk's prayer now?

Humble questions
trying to understand
the situation



Attacking God
and accusing
him of doing
something
wrong

Are you ever tempted to justify yourself by comparing yourself to those around you who seem to be morally 'worse' than you? Read Romans 3:23-25. How does speak into that?

Habakkuk is concerned that God is allowing a situation to happen where it looks like He has lost control—like an ocean of fish that “have no ruler” (1:14). Is God really going to let the Babylonians continue on their merry way, consuming the other nations for their own wealth? So Habakkuk stands waiting, ready to hear how God can respond to this.

Read Habakkuk 2:2-20.

This is God's response to the complaint. God starts by contrasting two different types of people in verses 4-5. What characterises each?

Arrogant Man

Righteous Man

In the context of Habakkuk, what does it mean to “live by faith”?

Verse 4 is one of the most quoted Old Testament passages in the New Testament. **Read Romans 1:16-17, Galatians 3:10-14 and Hebrews 10:35-39.** How do these passages help us to understand what it means to “live by faith”?

Romans 1:16-17	Galatians 3:10-14 Hebrews 10:35-39

From verses 6-20, God gives five woes against Babylon, because of their rebellion against him. What kinds of attitudes are described here, that led to God’s judgment?

Amidst all of these woes, how can we see God’s ultimate plan, from verses 14 and verse 20?

How does God’s word help you when you’re in a time of difficulty?

In the three passages from the New Testament that we just read, the focus of the “faith” is Jesus Christ and his gospel. How are Jesus’ death and resurrection an answer to our difficulties, and a picture of God’s plans?

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FROM SILENCE TO SONG

Habakkuk 3:1-19

STUDY QUESTIONS

In this final chapter of Habakkuk, he has gone from silence to song, by finishing with a Psalm filled with trust and praise.

Read Habakkuk 3:1-19.

What's your favourite line in the Psalm?

What is the "prayer of Habakkuk" (verse 2)—that is, what is he asking for?

From verses 3-15, Habakkuk sings about the nature of the God he is putting his faith in. What reasons does he give for putting his trust in this God?

In 3:16 we learn that Habakkuk is terrified of what's about to happen with the oncoming invasion of Babylon. And in verse 17, it seems like the situation is taking its toll on his standard of living (it's possible that verse 17 is hypothetical, but it wouldn't be surprising if it wasn't). But Habakkuk still trusts and praises God. How does this encourage us, if our prayers are coloured by fears or doubts?

When Habakkuk is struggling to trust in God's plans, he remembers God's goodness and faithfulness in the past. What does Habakkuk remember, to remind himself of who God is?

What about for you? When you're struggling to trust in God's plans in your life, what moments of God's goodness and faithfulness to you help you to remember who God is?

In verse 16-19, Habakkuk turns towards reflecting on his own response to what's happening. What is his response? How is this different to his response in chapters 1 and 2?

How does "quietly waiting" show that Habakkuk is living by faith?

How can Habakkuk "rejoice" in his current difficult circumstances? Where does his strength come from?

Read Philippians 4:10-13.

Similar to Habakkuk, Paul praised God whilst wrestling with his life situation—he wrote these words whilst sitting in a prison

cell. He had every reason to be fearful and doubting God's plan in his situation. But what's the "secret" that he has found?

Throughout the book of Philippians, we see over and over again that, in spite of his situation, Paul rejoices, because the Gospel is still being spoken, trusted in, and at work (try and read the whole book of Philippians this week, and look for every way you can see this throughout the book). How might this reality change our prayers?

We started our study in the book of Habakkuk by writing a prayer to God about a situation in your life that you struggled to see God's work in. To finish our time in Habakkuk, write another prayer, this time about remembering God's goodness to you, and praising him for it (if you like, use some of the lines from Habakkuk's song to inspire you).

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for writing a prayer. It occupies the lower half of the page.



VILLAGE CHURCH
2023