

# —HABAKKUK: LESSON ONE—

## Day One

Most prophets speak God's word to their intended audience.

Habakkuk is a precious prophet to me because *he speaks our words to God.*

I don't think Habakkuk is on the Top 10 Baby Boy Names of 2017... I say it in my mind, but when I audibly pronounce it, I say it two different ways! Most pronunciations I looked up broke it up this way:

\* Ha- like the "ha" in "have"

\* buh- like "buh" in "bump"

\* kuhk- like "kuh" in "custom"

Three syllables said together quickly: Ha-buh-kuhk

It doesn't really matter... I personally just appreciate pronunciation! :)

Habakkuk is a different character than some of the other prophets. There are only two times when we see his name mentioned in the book, and he identifies himself as "Habakkuk the prophet" (1:1 and 3:1). There are a few different ideas about him. He could have been trained in the Law of Moses in a prophetic school (these institutions began after the days of Samuel as mentioned in 1 Samuel 19:20 and 2 Kings 4:38) OR he could have been a priest involved in worship at the temple (based on Habakkuk 3).

Any time I read about a person in the Bible, I wrongly seem to celebratize them because, come on, their name is in God's Word! ESPECIALLY a prophet, who God spoke to directly to! The truth of the matter is that God uses ordinary people to display His glory for the good of His people. What a sweet God we serve. He desires to be close to us, so He makes Himself relational. He does that through Jesus, who the Bible says is the fulfillment of law and prophecy (Matthew 5:17).

### **What is a prophet?**

As we read through the Bible, we learn that a prophet communicated God's Word to His people. 2 Peter 1:20–21 says, "The main thing to keep in mind is that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of private opinion. And why? Because it's not something concocted in the human heart. Prophecy resulted when the Holy Spirit prompted men and women to speak God's Word."

A prophet never spoke on their authority or put forth their personal opinions as wisdom. A prophet warned leaders, implored people to repent and follow God,

explained bad things that were happening, and also told of good things that were to happen. This was not a job for the weak of heart; you HAD to rely on God SO much. Remember Jonah? He heard a call from the Lord, but he didn't think that Ninevah was a place worth saving, so he went "away from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3).

Yikes. He intentionally went away from the presence of the Lord. We can "tsk, tsk" him, but we've all been in a situation where we felt a prompting to correct or defend regarding a spiritual matter, but we pushed it away because our flesh wasn't comfortable and we didn't agree with the prompting.

Many of the prophetic books like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, and Zephaniah get right down to business and begin with a depiction of a vision or a message (check out the first couple of verses of each first chapter). In other books, we get a glimpse into the initial calling of the prophet into action.

### **READ JEREMIAH 1:1-8**

- What came to Jeremiah in verse 4? \_\_\_\_\_
- What does God tell Jeremiah right away in verse 5?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How does Jeremiah respond in verse 6?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How often do we respond to God's prompting this way? "Are you sure, God? I'm too \_\_\_\_\_, I'm not \_\_\_\_\_." God's response in verse 7 puts Jeremiah in his place: God pretty much tells Jeremiah not to sass Him... God says that HE will tell Jeremiah where to go, and \_\_\_\_\_; God says that HE will tell Jeremiah what to say, and \_\_\_\_\_.

- What assurance is there in verse 8?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah was instructed to deliver a final warning to Judah before they were taken over by the pagan kingdom of Babylon. This was Jeremiah's home, his people, his nation. His friends and family took no heed to his urgent words. He became discouraged and emotionally drained, grieved by the lack of concern that the Israelites were showing over God's message (ch.15). What else could even be done?

God words to Jeremiah are SO VITAL to the life of any person walking in faith.

- Go to Jeremiah 15:19. What does God say?

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“Use words truly and well. Then, but only then, you’ll speak for me. Let your words change *them*. Don’t change your words to suit them.”

The Message Translation

A prophet spoke God’s words, and God’s message is life changing and relentless. Scripture does not need to be put in to hip terminology or dressed up in any cultural trend to tailor a person. God’s word was, is, and always will be alive, active, and full of power. It is suited to fit every nook and cranny of His creation at the time He ordains it to fit, including that wayward heart that seems so calloused and lost. God’s word can change back to glory what has been distorted by sin.

## READ DANIEL CHAPTER ONE

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had gotten his hands on the reign of Jerusalem. He told his Head of Staff to collect young, healthy, intelligent Israelite men to be groomed into government positions. Daniel was a teenager when the Babylonians began their siege on the city. He had two choices: serve the empire or die. The King’s plan was to drop them into the Babylonian culture and for them to take on all beliefs and customs, including eating from a menu that was not compatible with a Jewish diet. Jerusalem had been besieged. Does it sometimes feel like you and I are living in a culture that is God-opposed? Is there persecution and suffering?

What is God showing us throughout the entire Bible? **He is always involved.** Let’s focus right away on the fact that we have books like Jeremiah, Daniel, and Habakkuk, which means that history is full of God’s people going through tough times and God worked mightily to show Himself and His will in it all.

Do you know that God has a story written out for you? From before there was time, before He formed you in the womb. Right now... in this culture.

On this day in the year\_\_\_\_, YOU awoke another day to walk in faith, to defend the true Word of God, and to live in the freedom of Christ. As a purposed

part of God’s creation, God has direction for you and good for you. Despite the wrongs and despair of this world, He will reign and you will be victorious in His name. His promises are true and meant to be hidden in the very depths of your heart so that you can be anchored to them in both good and bad times, never to be tossed about by the waves of doubt or confusion. Seek His face in this day, allow the Holy Spirit to guide you, be convinced that your relationship with God is everlasting, and step forward.

- Daniel had to go through how many years of actual training in the ways of this godless culture (v.5)? \_\_\_\_\_
- Was Daniel the only child of Israel in training (v. 6)? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who was with him in verse 7 (we know them better by their Babylonian names)? \_\_\_\_\_
- Look at Daniel 3. What does God do through these three?

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- Despite having been torn from his home and educated in the ways of Babylon, what does Daniel 1:8 say?

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God blessed Daniel and the other children of God who held to their faith (verse 17) and they became top leaders and trusted advisors. Verses 19-20 say that, upon being interviewed, King Nebuchadnezzar found that there were none like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In matters of wisdom and understanding, he found them to be better than any of his magicians or astrologers. Why? BECAUSE GOD WAS AT WORK. It was the trust in the wisdom of God and His ability to see them through (whether it meant physical life or death) that made even Nebuchadnezzar profess that there was no other God that could bless and deliver in Daniel 3:28-29.

Jeremiah was in his hometown, the kingdom of the children of God, and he had to speak what God instructed him to. Daniel was living in the kingdom of pagan, idol-worshipping enemies, and he had to speak what God instructed him to. We know that Isaiah was sent to a people “ever hearing, but never understanding” (Isaiah 6:9). Where they were, God was at work and He used them. A true prophet of God will always say that, as surely as the Lord lives, what my God says is what I will speak (II Chronicles 18:13).

*Father, I pray that as we start this Bible Study year, the beat of our heart will be "...as surely as the Lord lives, what my God says is what I will speak." We see Jeremiah and Daniel holding fast to You. We live in a world where the only hope is repentance and holding fast to You. Thank You for their examples and for allowing us to see their situations, have a concept of what they were feeling, and see Your strength steal the show. Holy Spirit, help us to put aside circumstances- whether in the form of blessing or trial- so that we can keep our eyes on what God wants to do in our lives day by day. You know the exact happenings of the world at this very moment, and You know the personal cries of our hearts. Through it all, I pray that we would lay it all at Your feet and profess You alone as Savior and King. Amen!*



## **Day Two**

Habakkuk speaks of the coming Babylonian invasion in Habakkuk (1:6, 2:1, and 3:16) that took place in 605BC. The Book of Habakkuk was likely to be written between 610-605BC.

In order for us to fully understand what's happening, we need to become history buffs on the subject. Turn to 2 Kings 22.

### **WHEN?**

King Josiah had began his reign (from 640-609BC) over Judah at age 8. His dad and grandpa were wicked kings. What does 2 Kings 22:2 say about Josiah?

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Josiah repaired the temple and reestablished God's Law.

Read 2 Kings 23:29-37. What happened to:

- Josiah? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Jehoahaz? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Jehoiakim? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jehoiakim was protected by Egypt (he paid a hefty tribute for it). Jehoiakim changed his allegiance to Babylon after they defeated Egypt, letting them get their foot in the door = Captivity, **DANIEL LED OFF TO BABYLON.**

The TOTAL destruction of Jerusalem took place in 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar burned the temple and took the rest of Jerusalem's residents to Babylon (he left the poorest people to tend to the land in 2 Kings 25).

Jerusalem was at a very low point. Jeremiah struggled to convince his people that God was going to let them fall because of their immortality, and the response was discouraging. Habakkuk was also woeful over the spiritual apathy.

### WHY?

Habakkuk reminds me a lot of the book of Psalms. This book is an intimate dialogue between Habakkuk and God. Habakkuk is asking God questions that I am sure most of us have when we hear world news: *Why are your people allowed to suffer? Why do You seem so inactive during our distress? Why is evil prevailing?*

God wants us to be open and honest with Him. He already knows our thoughts (Psalm 139:1-4), and He knows all things (1 John 3:20). If God knows everything and He knows us inside and out, there's nothing that we should hide from Him or try to keep under our own control. Isn't it freeing to think that we can tell Him anything? When we keep our thoughts and feelings to ourselves, it's almost as if we are relying on our own self/flesh/carnality to process them.

What do these verses say about the nature of our flesh/self?

- Galatians 5:19-21 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Romans 7:18-20 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Holy Spirit, PLEASE help me to refrain from depending on my own understanding, and in all my ways, acknowledge God in all His wisdom and goodness (Proverbs 3:5-6).

God made us relational, and part of a relationship is sharing the good, the bad, the happy and sad with each other. The God of the Universe wants you to share your feelings with Him! When we share our feelings with God, we make it a

spiritual matter. That opens up room for the Holy Spirit to tether our feelings to God's truths so that we don't get swept away. This brings HIS peace into play, and- whether or not the circumstances change- our hope is renewed, our faith is exercised, and God IS who He says He IS.

Do any of these next verses speak to your heart, your situation right now? Lay that down now and praise God for being in front of you, behind you, and by your side through it all!

1 Peter 5:7- Cast all of your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.

John 14:26 - But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Proverbs 16:9 - The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

Lamentations 3:40- Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD.

As we close out this day, I'd like you to end by reading Psalm 77. David shares his troubled spirit, temptations, and despair with God. David pours out his heart in this chapter, and, as a result, you can almost sense the Holy Spirit working in him. By the end of the chapter, David is praising God. David remembers the God of His people and finds comfort. I read in a commentary by Matthew Henry that remembering God's works is a powerful remedy when we are ill with the grievances and strife of the world.

- As you read Psalm 77, did you relate to any of David's cries?

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- What are some works/ remembrances of God in your personal life that you need to recall in order to bring peace and comfort?

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## **Day Three**

Habakkuk had a deep-rooted faith, even though the world around him was rocky and discouraging. For TOO long, political power was going from the hands of one bad empire (Assyria) to another (Babylon). The kingdom of Judah could not seem to maintain a godly ruler (refer to the leaders we looked at in Day Two). God spoke, but His people showed no signs of repentance.

Did God care? Was He in control?  
Sound familiar?

As I write this in July 2017:

- America is reevaluating many of their allies (to the chagrin of many).
- America just “celebrated” another Gay Pride Month in June.
- North Korea has a new, intercontinental missile that could reach Alaska.
- 558,135 abortions have occurred so far (1 more every 29 seconds).
- There have been 649 terrorist attacks across the world so far.
- Our country is so quick to divide and lash out when things don’t go their way.

Does God care? Is He in control?

### **Please read Habakkuk Chapter 1:1-4**

I want you to see verse one in a few different Bible translations:

- NIV: The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received.
- ESV: The oracle (revelation, message) that Habakkuk the prophet saw.
- KJV: The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.
- The Message: The problem as God gave Habakkuk to see it.

- Who sent the message? \_\_\_\_\_

If God is aware of the issue He is addressing, is He in control of it? \_\_\_\_\_

The King James Version uses the word “burden.” The Hebrew word for “burden” is a message or something to carry. Are you to carry things on your own? \_\_\_\_\_ God brings things to awareness in us. God sets things upon us, not to crush us, but to spiritually access: *can I carry this alone? NO. What do I need? God’s help through Christ.*

Another aspect of the Hebrew concept of “burden” is that it is a verb that calls for the lifting up of something. If God have given you the burden of \_\_\_\_\_ in your life, He wants you to become so comfortable in your relationship with Him, so trusting, that you feel the message and the weight it carries on you... and then you automatically lift it up in prayer and petition, thanking Him that He already knows and has worked it out. This is when you take on HIS yoke, HIS burden (Matthew 11:30). You are paired with Him to work it out under His direction.

God opened Habakkuk’s eyes to the severity of what was going on around him. God is giving Habakkuk the spiritual perspective because the remedy could only come from spiritual realms of righteousness and justice.

I want you to be real for a moment: Is it your initial instinct to look at situations spiritually? \_\_\_\_ (I almost typed in “No” for you, but I wanted you to write it in). We may be better at it now than we were two years ago, or we may really strive to, but it is not easy in our flesh.

- Hebrews 1:1-2- “Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, He has spoken to us through His Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son He created the universe.”

How does God speak to you and I? \_\_\_\_\_

- John 3:3- “Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.’”

How do we gain the ability to spiritually be aware of God’s Kingdom?

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- 2 Corinthians 3:16- “But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is removed, so they can understand the meaning of God's promises to them through Christ.”

What happens when we come to salvation? \_\_\_\_\_

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Psalm 119:18 “Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from  
Your law.”

When God opens our eyes to spiritual things, it is only then that we can grasp His awesome nature and feel the assurance of what He has promised us in His Word. Do you ever watch home makeover shows? There is always a part where the homeowner is a bit skeptical of what’s being done. Sometimes a designer will bring out a swatch of color or some tiles, and the homeowner becomes relieved and excited for what is to come. When we focus on the spiritual, we catch glimpses of God’s glory at work around us, even in the most severe situations.

In 2 Kings 6, God gives Elisha important locations of the impending attacks from the Arameans. The Aramean king is upset and, after learning that he doesn’t have a traitor, he sends troops to seize the Israelite who has such private information. The king sends troops at night to surround Elisha’s city. Elisha’s servant got up the next morning, and he freaks out and yells, “What are we going to do?!”

 **Please turn to 2 Kings 6:16-17 to read Elisha’s response for yourself.**

Israel was already aware of the enemy around them. Now, the enemy was specifically surrounding Elisha and his city. Spiritual eyes needed to be opened in order for the servant to realize that the battle was not all in the hands of man. The battle belongs to the Lord. What God establishes in your life, He promises to see through, by your side. This **MUST** be the approach we take when we sense the enemy closing in. Christ is victory=YOU have victory. There are armies of FIRE surrounding you.

God gave Habakkuk spiritual eyes to sense the burden of the unrighteousness and injustice surrounding him. Violence, evil deeds, arguing and fighting, lawlessness, and the wicked outnumbering the righteous. Habakkuk speaks against these things as God shows them and addresses the fact that this has gone on for so long and God has not seemed to show up (do you recall Psalm 77? This is similar, isn’t it?). This vision will drive Habakkuk’s passion as he delivers the prophecy and speaks out against evil kings and the sad state of God’s people.

- How would you describe Habakkuk's feelings in verses Habakkuk 1:2-4?
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These feelings are real. Judah is spiraling downward, and Habakkuk didn't understand why there was no justice handed down to correct it. God designed us to react to situations. My Bible titles this portion of the chapter as "Habakkuk's Perplexity," which means he was baffled, confused, and anxious. Habakkuk genuinely implored God for understanding. When we genuinely seek God out, what does He do? He shows up. He opens the eyes of those who seek truth.

What do you need to ask God to spiritually open your eyes to today? What difficult situation seems to loom over you? End this day by sincerely asking God to give you HIS eyes to see your situation through.



## **Day Four**

“Look at the other nations! Watch them, and you will be amazed.  
I will do something in your lifetime that will amaze you.  
You would not believe it even if you were told about it.”

### Please read Habakkuk 1:5-11

God is:

- omnipotent (able to do anything)
- omnipresent (everywhere)
- omniscient (knows everything)

Because of this, God is not indifferent to tough situations. God is always at work, but it's in His providential (divine foresight) timing based on His will and plan. Babylon knew their reputation as a mighty army and they capitalized on it. Judah was in political turmoil but could only see that Babylon would win and Judah would be in captivity from a temporal perspective; God told Habakkuk in verse 5 that He was doing a work through it all that nobody could ever comprehend. God holds the completed blueprint of His creation. Through the rise of the Babylonian empire, His people would be restored one day. God says look... and watch. Wait and see.

- According to verse 6, who will make the Babylonians strong? \_\_\_\_\_

God was going to use the Babylonians for a time to deal with Judah. The Babylonians were well-trained and always ready for battle.

- What are the Babylonians known for (verses 7-10)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Verse 11 tells us that the Babylonians leave a path of destruction and, “Then suddenly they disappear like a gust of wind—those sinful people who worship their own strength.”

Using the concordance in the back of your Bible (or online) OR truths that you have stored in your heart already, list a couple of verses and what they say about God’s strength versus our own strength.

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In 539BC, Persia conquered Babylon, thus ending the reign of its empire. They worshipped their own strength and false idols, and although it may have seemed to have been working in their favor...

- What does Daniel 2:21 tell us? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- And Romans 13:1? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

God knew their empire’s reign on His blueprint, and He remembered His covenant with His people.

 **Please read Habakkuk 1:12 - 2:1**

Whoa, now, Habakkuk... is that how we talk to God? **YES!**

Look at how Habakkuk addresses God in verse 12a (the first half).

Habakkuk had just learned that God would use a wicked empire to overcome the wickedness of Judah. The news just kept getting worse and worse, more and more difficult to comprehend by human understanding. Despite this lack of understanding, Habakkuk keeps pressing in to the Almighty God, calling out His

attributes and names. When we are in a difficult place, we press in to what we know is sure and safe, seeking refuge and comfort.

- How do you refer to God when you call out to Him? \_\_\_\_\_

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Sometimes I find myself calling on Him and I don't even get to the issue I wanted to lay down because it seems to have dissolved as I spoke truths. To speak His Name is power; it envelopes us in light and warmth, bringing spiritual clarity and perspective as we approach the throne.

- Revisit verses 14-16. Knowing what a mighty, idolatrous, self-serving people the Babylonians were, how do you interpret Habakkuk's story of fish and nets? \_\_\_\_\_

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Pagan, wicked King Nebuchadnezzar seemed to just throw out his net and always pull it in full of weaker kingdoms. The pleasure he got out of this caused worship of the net, or his army's strength. How could this wickedness overtake God's people?

- After presenting his heart to his Abba Father, his Daddy, the One with answers and Peace Unexplainable, what does Habakkuk do in Chapter 2:1? \_\_\_\_\_

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Habakkuk was honest with God and shared his concerns. Do we not encourage our children to tell us how they are feeling? God wants to be called upon- He is worthy to be praised and acknowledged for being the One who knows all/sees all/is everywhere. So, Habakkuk positioned himself in an intentional place of perspective where he can see all points of access from both inside and outside of the walls, above the noise and confusion of the crowds. God said He was on the move, and Habakkuk trusted. Look...and wait.

