

Week Beginning: 23rd June 2019

Worship Series: #1 in series

living sharing growing

Theme Verse

Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

Habakkuk 2:4

Remember This Week

When confronted or touched by evil and suffering in our lives and God seems silent or uninvolved, remember that no place is too dark for God's grace to penetrate in a life-affirming way. God always has a plan to deal with evil and always works out justice...in his time. Faith trusts that he is at work, and has more to say, even if we cannot see it.



MAJOR FROM THE MINOR
QUESTIONS PROPHETS



You are righteous, Lord, and your laws are right.

The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy. Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true. Trouble and distress have come upon me, but your commands give me delight. Your statutes are always righteous; give me understanding that I may live.

Psalm 119:137-138, 142-144



Heavenly Father, we thank you that you work all things for the good of those who love you. Give us hearts that trust in you alone, even when we can't see you at work in our lives or in the world around us. Fill us again with your Holy Spirit as we gather around your Word so that it may come alive in us and we might come to a deeper faith and trust in your promises to us. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

1. *Share your highs and lows since you last met with one another.*
2. *Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?*
3. *Have you ever witnessed/suffered an injustice? How did it make you feel?*
4. *Where or how do you think you developed your sense of fairness or justice?*
5. *What do you consider to be the largest issue facing the Christian church at this time?*

One of the big hurdles many people face when they start exploring Christianity is how to come to terms with an all powerful, loving God, who appears to be okay with letting evil and injustice run unchecked around the world. Habakkuk faced this question too. Stuck between a corrupt and violent King of Judah and God's coming judgement at the hands of the equally oppressive and violent kingdom of Babylon, Habakkuk struggled to see how God could bring justice through such injustice and violence. Today we will look at God's response to Habakkuk and how God also offers hope to us in our struggles today.

Read Habakkuk 2:1-5, 18-20

6. *What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?*
7. *What was Habakkuk's attitude after raising his complaint to God? (v1)*
8. *Looking at this text, do you think Habakkuk's complaints and concerns to God demonstrated a lack of faith or simply a lack of understanding?*

Each of us, like Habakkuk, has developed our own picture or understanding of who God is and what he is like. We construct this understanding from a variety of sources; our parents, our pastors, our churches, our culture, our experiences of God in the world around us, and hopefully, more than a bit from God's revelation of himself in the Bible. We encounter problems when the picture of God that we have created for ourselves does not line up with how God reveals himself to us in his Word. People who experience a traumatic childhood, particularly at the hands of their fathers or significant males in their lives, often have trouble





with the idea of God being a Heavenly Father. Others come to view God through the eyes of the media and culture as an old man with a long white beard sitting in the clouds, removed from the world, chuckling to himself over the bumbling efforts of humankind. The danger is that we let our experiences colour our image of God, rather than letting a biblically informed self-revealed image of God colour the way we interpret our experiences. Have a look at some of these passages...

Deuteronomy 4:24, Psalm 86:5, Matt 6:9,26 , Revelation 1:8

9. *The verses above highlight some of the ways God reveals parts of his character to us. Which of these resonates most with your experience of God?*
10. *To what degree would you say your picture of God matches what God says about himself in the Bible?*

When we face unfairness and injustice in our lives, the way we think of God influences how we interpret these experiences. If we see God as distant and removed then he simply doesn't care that we suffer. If we see him as a Heavenly Father then we may be inclined to see difficult situations as discipline or a corrective measure. If God is just an angry, jealous judge then it is easy to interpret our suffering as judgement or punishment. Look again at Habakkuk chapter 2.

11. *What does Habakkuk do after making his complaint to God? What can you learn from this?*
12. *God does respond to Habakkuk's complaint (v4-20). What do you understand to be the main point of God's response?*
13. *Would you be content with this response? Why/why not?*

The last few verses of chapter two talk about idols. When we do not have a biblical understanding of who God is and we create for ourselves an image based on anything other than God's own self-revelation in his Word, then we create an idol; a false god that is limited by our imagination and thinking. A false god who is bound to operate only according to our understanding and logic.

14. *How well does your thinking about God match with his own revelation of Himself? Are there areas or aspects of God's nature that you tend to overlook?*
15. *Read Matthew 26:36-45. In what ways does Jesus' attitude in the face of the greatest injustice of all time reflect the attitude of Habakkuk?*
16. *What other instances can you recall from the Bible where God uses hopeless situations and injustice to bring life and hope?*

What we learn from Habakkuk's dialogue with God, is that in the face of injustice where God seems either unable or unwilling to do anything, He is still in control. We may not see the sense in it, we may not see what God is doing through it but we belong to a God who is bigger than our understanding all he asks is for us to trust him and his power.

17. *In any relationship trust is something that develops over time. What are some of the ways God has shown his faithfulness to you in your life?*
18. *Someone once said, 'There is no such thing as coincidence for a Christian, there are just times when we see God at work more clearly than others.' Think of one area of stress or concern in your life and consciously hand it to God in prayer this week. Then be like Habakkuk and keep watch for God's response. (You might like to share these in your groups and pray for each others concerns in the prayer time below)*

- * Praise God for his steadfast and consistent love that protects and keeps you. Thank Jesus for his steadfast commitment to living the will of the Father. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the courage to live boldly as his people in this world
- * Pray for those who's faith is shaken daily by injustice and violence. Ask God to make himself and his plans known to those who are suffering.
- * Pray for each other - for opportunities to see God at work and to partner with him in the world despite the suffering and injustice.
- * Pray that God may help you live in confidence and trust that he is in control of all things. Even the things that don't seem to make sense.

Turn to the person next to you and make the sign of the cross on the palm of their hand or forehead as you say:

Name, Jesus cares for you and is with you always. Amen..

