

Anchored during Times of Question (Lesson 5)

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Words to Anchor Your Soul

“When the fig tree does not bud,
and there are no grapes on the vines;
when the olive trees do not produce,
and the fields yield no crops;
when the sheep disappear from the pen,
and there are no cattle in the stalls,
I will rejoice because of the LORD;
I will be happy because of the God who delivers me.

[Habakkuk 3:17-18](#) (NET)

Introduction

Have you ever dealt with a very difficult time when everything seemed to be going wrong, and then it got worse despite your prayers? I expect you questioned God about what He was doing in the midst of it all. If you have ever been in that situation, you have company in the prophet Habakkuk. He had the courage to come right out and ask God what He was doing and why. In the end, Habakkuk learned to trust God as his anchor in the midst of a time when what was happening seemed unjust!

Background to Habakkuk

The message of Habakkuk dates from the seventh century B.C. Parts of the book seem to predate the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., and some suggest a date following the victory of the Babylonians over the Egyptians in that battle.²² That battle occurred some eighty years after the death of King Hezekiah, whom we met in our study of Micah last week.

Day One Study

Read the book of Habakkuk at one sitting, if possible, and answer #1 as you go through it. The book is easy to read when you understand that it involves a series of dialogues between Habakkuk and God.

1. Divide the book into Habakkuk’s words and God’s. (Don’t read notes but read the book carefully and do this yourself!) Write down who is speaking and in what verses. You should end up with three “speeches” of Habakkuk’s and two of God’s.

Diamonds in the Word: Add more detail to what you just wrote down about Habakkuk. You can put it in outline form or in a book chart.

2. Write down your first thoughts, feelings, and impressions of the book.

Read [Habakkuk 1:1-4](#).

3. What did Habakkuk see happening around him at that time? How do those things parallel what we have seen the past four weeks in the other books of prophecy?

4. What questions did Habakkuk have for God because of what was happening in his world?

5. *Sharing question:* Share with your group some questions that you have for God about what you see happening in the world today.

6. *Responding to God:* Write a prayer or poem honestly asking God those questions, just as Habakkuk and some of the other writers have done. It is not a sin to ask God questions! It acknowledges humility, that you do not know everything and cannot fathom Him because He is God and you are not.

Day Two Study

Read [Habakkuk 1:5-11](#).

7. What was God's answer to Habakkuk's questions in 1:1-4?

8. How would you have felt if this were the way God answered your questions about injustice and evil?

Read [Habakkuk 1:12--2:1](#).

9. Describe the Babylonians in your own words from Habakkuk's description.

10. God's reply brought more questions for Habakkuk. What was Habakkuk's main issue with God's plan (1:13)?

Diamonds in the Word: Read about the Babylonians and their methods of warfare.

11. Read these cross-references and write down your thoughts about what Habakkuk said to God in 1:13:

a. [Romans 2:6](#)

b. [Acts 17:30-31](#)

c. [2 Thess. 1:8-9](#)

d. [Revelation 20:12-13](#)

12. *Sharing question:* What injustices in the lives of individuals or in nations have you seen that have not been righted? How do you feel about them?

13. *Responding to God:* Although we desire justice, we read about the final judgment and recognize how final it will all be. We realize that it is only by God's grace that we will escape it. Pray [2 Peter 3:9](#) for specific people in your world but also for world leaders.

Day Three Study

Read [Habakkuk 2:2-20](#).

14. Summarize God's answer to Habakkuk's questions in 1:12--2:1.

15. What do these verses teach about the character of God?

16. *Responding to God:* Write a prayer, psalm, or poem of praise to God extolling these character traits.

Diamonds in the Word: What Bible stories do you think of when you consider how eventually God brings justice for a person's or nation's actions.

17. *Sharing question:* Share a story of a time when you did see justice prevail in a situation.

18. *Sharing question:* How does [Hab. 2:3](#) give you hope for the future?

Day Four Study

Read [Psalm 37](#). We will finish Habakkuk tomorrow.

19. This psalm helps us see how to respond when we see people prosper and succeed although they are committing evil acts against other people. What kinds of injustices did the psalmist mention?

20. What hope does this psalm give those who have seen or experienced the apparent success of evil?

21. According to this psalm, what does God want His people to be about while we wait for Him to deal with evil?

Diamonds in the Word: Carefully read this psalm. What do you learn from the parallelism in the lines?

22. *Sharing question:* Copy one verse in this psalm that gives you hope. Why did you choose that verse?

23. *Responding to God:* Draw a picture representing God as you see Him in this psalm. Yes, you can draw! Then, spend time thanking Him for the hope that He gives us, knowing that we will have questions about what is going on in times of trouble.

Day Five Study

Read [Habakkuk 3:1-19](#).

Our memory verses come from this section of Habakkuk. They are one of the most beautiful expressions of trust during times of trouble in the Bible. Knowing these verses will be an anchor for you when all seems to go wrong. Work on learning them today!

Diamonds in the Word: What stories from the scriptures come to mind that model Habakkuk's trust despite his questions? What other Bible characters had that kind of faith when nothing made sense?

24. The imagery here for the acts and power of God is beautiful. What picture do you like best? Why?

25. What feelings did Habakkuk experience after God let him in on His thoughts, according to v. 16?

26. What was the secret of Habakkuk's ability to withstand the times of trouble and question that were there and getting worse (3:17-19)?

27. Compare [Psalm 46:1-3](#), 8-11 with [Habakkuk 3:17-19](#). What do you learn from these about dealing with times when you question God?

28. *Sharing question:* In what present "time of trouble or questions" are you in right now that makes you feel limp and shaky, much like Habakkuk?

29. *Responding to God:* Write your own prayer or psalm of trust in God in your present situation.

Habakkuk questioned God because his prayers for God to deal with the injustice and evil in the land seemed to be unheeded. Then, things only got worse! This week's stories deal with times of questioning God and with the God who anchors despite not giving the reasons for what is happening. Although both stories are long, they are worth reading!

Kara's story

Last year was a year I will never forget. My husband was in a difficult work situation. We didn't feel peace about his staying there, but no matter how often we asked God, he didn't provide another job. To top it all off, we were expecting our third child due in the midst of this. We began to feel as if the Lord wanted my husband to resign without having another position to go

to. It's not something I would ever consider encouraging someone else to do, but it was clear that is what the Lord wanted him to do.

Our son was born with complications. (God what are you doing here?) My husband returned to work two weeks later and resigned. (God, how long until you provide, and why is this taking so long?) I'd like to tell you that the Lord provided right after my husband resigned, but that wasn't the case. My son recovered from his complications within a month, but we spent 8 long months crying out to God to provide financially for our family, the whole time living off of all the inheritance we had. (Lord, why are you wasting this money? Like Peter said: Lord, to whom shall we go?) Ironically, though my husband has a graduate degree, he couldn't even get a call back to stock shelves on a night shift. God had closed all opportunities.

Eight months later, to the week our savings ran out, we received our first paycheck for my husband's next position. Reflecting on "our wilderness," as I call it, I have realized several things about how the Lord loves His children. First, sometimes he wounds us intentionally, just so he can be the one to precisely put us back together again, only this time better, more Christ-like. We are all like zebras, parts of us still black with sin, and other parts masterfully changed to white because we met up with our Father, the surgeon. Second, the "promised land" after the wilderness doesn't always make sense or look nice, but our promises are little pieces in a bigger promise. It's less about our thing, and more about His larger plan. It's more about our hearts, our view of His nature, and our faith that He is orchestrating all things. Third, after all this the deepest of peace and an ability to trust the Father like never before remain. I feel it; I feel it now, deep, deep, down inside.

[Job 5:17-18](#) (NET) "Therefore, blessed is the man whom God corrects, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he also bandages; he strikes, but his hands also heal."

Tommie's story

On a Sunday morning several years ago I was awakened by the phone ringing. The call was from my son. He was crying so hard that it was all that I could do to understand what he was trying to tell me. After he calmed down a bit he told me that he and his wife were separated. She was involved in an affair, and he needed me to come be with him. I was on the first plane possible. My son Tom was so grief-stricken that he could not come to the airport to pick me up. When I arrived at his home, I was shocked to see the physical condition that he was in. This had apparently been going on for a while and he just could not bring himself to tell us.

I was so heart-broken for him. He would get in a fetal position in the floor and cry uncontrollably. The more I heard and saw, the angrier I got. How could she have done something like this to him? My son had allowed her to have control of the checkbook, and she had spent most of their funds unwisely. She was going out with her guy friend to fancy restaurants, buying him gifts, and you name it. Tom found this out after he learned of the affair. I just wanted him to come to Texas with us for a while to get well both physically and mentally—and to file for divorce.

I stayed with him for at least a week. He would go from being certain of what he wanted to do to falling apart. We had a meeting with her and her parents to try to decide how things like bills, the sale of their home, etc., would be handled. Her parents were great, but she was very hateful and showed much disrespect toward us both. Needless to say, I wanted to get as far away from her as possible and never wanted to see her again. I did have to get back to my job, so I made arrangements for the return trip home. My son would not come with me. Even as much as she hurt him, he still loved her and wanted to try to make things work.

My son did come to visit us and was almost to the point that he was not going back to her. This is what I wanted. I had only prayed that he would leave her. I felt I could never forgive her and that if he went back to her that I would lose my son forever. He did go home. One day we got a letter saying they were back together and that they would be glad to discuss their decision at any time. The letter was supposedly written by our son and signed "Sincerely," not "Love." That hurt so much.

I was consumed by the situation. I did not want to talk to God about it because I did not really want to hear what He had to say. I finally reached my breaking point. I asked God to forgive me for my actions and attitude toward Him. I asked my family to forgive me. I also told God that I was ready to forgive my daughter-in-law. I could not do this alone and asked for the faith to turn it all over and to leave it with Him. What a relief this was! I could function; I could sleep; I was at peace.

It was more than a year before we heard from our son. Our daughter called him to see if he would come to her wedding. He was not able to do so, but this broke the ice. When my first grandchild was born, he asked me to stay with them when they got home from the hospital. This time together was so healing. There is a good relationship now between their family and ours. My daughter-in-law and I have a love for one another. This could have never happened if I had not finally been willing to turn myself and my son over to the Lord. He taught me so much about faith in Him and what forgiveness really is. I am glad that He did not give up on me when I lacked faith in Him for a solution. He was there waiting to meet me where I was in my life once I decided to meet Him. What an awesome God we have!!