

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *What is God's Answer to Suffering?* There are many times when God does things beyond our understanding. The distance between us finite and sinful human creatures and our finite and inexhaustible God is very pronounced in seasons of suffering. Yet God invites us to draw closer to him even in our questions. We see this well in Habakkuk.

Introduction:

Is it wrong to question God? Probably.

Is it wrong to ask God questions? Probably not.

We see throughout the Scriptures that God often welcomes questions from his creatures. But there are types of questions which really aren't questions but statements of unbelief. Habakkuk helps us to see the difference between the two.

1. It's okay to ask questions

What God was doing didn't make any sense to Habakkuk and he had the audacity to tell God just that. Habakkuk looked around and only saw evil. His countrymen were incredibly evil but they were supposed to be a light to the nations. It's one thing when those who aren't trusting in God do evil things and do not reflect him, but it's a gut punch when those who claim the name of Yahweh look nothing like him. It's unsettling, and so Habakkuk takes up his beef with God. He asks God when he's going to do something.

God graciously responds to Habakkuk and lets him know that he is definitely going to judge His people. And he is going to do it by the hands of the wicked Assyrians. This answer didn't sit well with Habakkuk and so he asked God again. He struggled with the will of God.

We can learn from this that it really is okay to ask questions amidst suffering. Habakkuk asked very pointed questions of what God was doing. God did not seem to be consistent and so Habakkuk called him on it. But these are questions of faith. These aren't questions coming from a posture of unbelief where God is called to prove himself. These are questions where Habakkuk knows that God is good but what is happening in the world doesn't make sense.

2. Don't expect to fully understand the answer

The Scriptures testify that God's ways are not our ways and His ways are higher. Finite and sinful human beings cannot expect to fully understand what an inexhaustible and all-knowing God is doing in our world. But sometimes God does reveal Himself to us.

He did this with Habakkuk. He answered his questions but even still Habakkuk was left scratching his head a bit.

Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted in the New Testament 3 times. One that is especially important is Romans 1:17 where Paul says that this is what the gospel is revealed as, “the righteous shall live by faith”. You are made right with God by grace through faith! It is through a belief and trust in God that we are made right with Him. And this is what God is revealing to Habakkuk. The Babylonians are going to be judged and if you trust in me and look to me as your rock and your Redeemer though they die and though you might be dealt difficult times you will live. Some 100 years after Habakkuk’s message it came true for the Babylonians. They were defeated by the Persians and their mighty empire came crashing down—they were judged and destroyed. But the message still rings true today, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Or to again use the words of Habakkuk, “the righteous will live by faith”.

Notice how God does not ever specifically answer Habakkuk’s questions. He just says trust me and you will live. He lets Habakkuk know that the Babylonians will be judged, their being used by God is only temporary and they will be judged for their wickedness, pride, and blasphemy. This is sufficient for Habakkuk.

3. We must adopt a settled position of faith

What does it look like to live by faith? Habakkuk gives us an example in his prayer, he gives us advice on what to do when we do not understand God, he shows us how to live by faith.

First, we are called to *remember*. In 3:2 Habakkuk reminds himself of the mighty works of God. This is a powerful thing to do when suffering leaves you confused. Set your mind back upon a time when things did make sense and move on from there.

Secondly, we *rest in God’s character*. In 3:3-15 Habakkuk meditates upon God’s character. It is helpful in suffering to be non-negotiable on a few things. If we are unmoved in our belief that God is good, God is holy, and God is powerful it might not solve our questions but it will help us rest. “I don’t know how this fits together but I know that God is good.”

The third thing we see from Habakkuk is to remain still until God speaks. He knows that if he is going to find an answer it’s going to come from the hand of the Lord. No other answer is good enough. We would do well to follow him in this. You see this posture in Habakkuk 3:16. He is terrified but he will remain steadfast until God speaks.

Lastly, Habakkuk rejoices in God’s salvation. I love how deep his faith is here. He prays Habakkuk 3:17-19 even while things are difficult. He is filled with hope because he knows God’s character and so he rejoices even before he has “things” which cause him to rejoice.

Conclusion:

In 3:8 Habakkuk asks, why do you demonstrate your lordship for us to see? Verse 13 provides for us an answer, “You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the wicked, laying him bare from

thigh to neck.” Habakkuk knows that God is going to come through and eventually save his people from the grip of the Babylonians, but something more is being said here. This is pointing us to Jesus.

Our enemy is not Babylon. Our enemy is not flesh and blood. Our enemy is Satan and the bondage he holds us in because of our sin. Therefore, Jesus Christ came to earth, “he went out” for the salvation of His people and He took our place and died to take the wrath of God away from us. He took God’s wrath that was upon us and placed it on Himself. Then when God raised Him from the dead it took the power of sin and death out of the hands of Satan. He no longer has a hold on us. We no longer have to fear death nor do we have to partake in the wrath of God poured out against sin. All of this because of what Jesus has done. He has crushed the head of the serpent.

Do you trust God even when things are difficult? Can you say, though I have no fun, though I have no food, though I see no light at the end of the tunnel, though I do not understand what is going on, I am going to sit here and wait on God and rejoice in His great salvation? In other words, can you say, If all I have is Jesus it is enough.

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