



The Mystery of Trials

INTRODUCTION

Habakkuk was a prophet who lived during a very troubled time in ancient Israel's history. He was believed to have lived in Judah around the 7th century BC; just as the brutal Chaldeans (Babylonians) were rising to power and flexing their military might against Jerusalem and the Assyrians. Habakkuk could not understand why God would allow cruelty and injustice to even exist, much less use evil such as the Chaldeans in His divine plans. Habakkuk petitioned God to answer his complaint, and waited.

Habakkuk's question may have been ancient, but it stays relevant to many people even today.

TALKING POINTS: TEACHING SESSION 1

Habakkuk 2 Overview

- "The just shall live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4) is quoted three times in the New Testament.
- In the Hebrew, Habakkuk 2:4 really means: "The just shall live by His (God's) faithfulness."
- God tells Habakkuk the complete answer to his question will come at the very end.

Why does God allow evil to happen?

- Ultimately, the question starts on a large scale.
- Eventually, the question comes back to a personal level (why did God allow this to happen to *me*?)

Even though Habakkuk did not yet get the full answer to his question, he still affirmed his faith in God's faithfulness.

- He was willing to be patient for God to bring justice, and clear His name.
- He was also willing to let God be God, and work all things together for the ultimate good.

Forgiving God does not mean He has done anything wrong.

- It simply means we are willing to rely on God and "let him off the hook."
- Even if we don't understand at the time, we still trust in His will.
- We are willing to accept a reason for what we do not yet understand.

TALKING POINTS: TEACHING SESSION 2

Habakkuk had the same complaints many people have today.

1. God did not answer his prayer
2. God looked the other way when violence came upon His covenant people.
3. God's own covenant people were having to endure injustice.
4. God tolerated evil.

It all comes down to faith.

- People tend to look at faith in God from two different perspectives: secular and Biblical.
- The secular perspective on faith was the view of those who wanted to see Jesus come down from the cross and prove He was the Son of God. "Seeing is believing".
- True faith is when you don't yet see, but you still believe.

The example of Lazarus.

- Jesus heard Lazarus was ill, yet did not rush to go heal him.
- Even when Lazarus eventually died, Jesus affirmed His decision not to go immediately.
- Jesus was more interested in the bigger picture, including building the faith of the disciples and those present, as well as demonstrating the power of God.

- Even though Jesus was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, He still felt sorrow with the sisters of Lazarus and wept with them. Jesus knew they did not understand, and could not yet see the great miracle about to take place.

Jesus wept with them, and weeps with you.

- Even in the midst of your great trials, that same Jesus who wept with Mary and Martha is touched by the feeling of your weaknesses.
- He does not berate you for feeling weak, but instead He understands who you are and where you came from.

God teaches us faith at times when He doesn't immediately answer our prayer.

- If God answered all of our prayers immediately, we would not know faith.
- If God answered all of our prayers immediately, we would not develop a deep relationship with Him.
- Sometimes God withholds the answers to prayers so we may believe consistently.

TALKING POINTS: TEACHING SESSION 3

Every great person the Bible, at some point, felt disappointed or betrayed by God.

- Hebrews 11:39. None of the great people of faith in the Bible received all they were promised in their own lifetime.
- Through all that, none of them gave up on God. The Bible says the world wasn't worthy of them.
- If you have experienced that, then you also have a chance to be a great person of faith!

How do you forgive God totally?

1. Be totally honest with God. Tell Him anything!
2. Make a list of what you really are thankful for. Focus on the good things God has given you and done for you, not the evil trying to come against you.

3. Fight self-pity and a feeling of entitlement. God owes you nothing, but He wants to bless you.
4. Choose to believe God is just, and He has a larger purpose.

Be willing to wait until things become clear to you.

Break the betrayal barrier

- In the 20th century, airplanes succeeded in breaking the sound barrier; flying faster than the speed of sound.
- The betrayal barrier seems overwhelming, but it is breakable.
- If you never give up on God, you can break this barrier and speed past the trials of your life.

The Book of Revelation

- The specifics of how God will clear His name in the end of the age, and the events leading up to it, are vague. However, we can know three things for sure:
 1. God wins.
 2. Satan loses.
 3. Those who overcome by the Blood of the Lamb will be extremely glad they didn't give up!

CONCLUSION

Even if you didn't get the answer to your prayer in your lifetime, would you still rejoice in God? There are many who would give up, but you have an opportunity to overcome this trial and make this your finest hour. If God doesn't give you what you were asking, then He will give you something even better. It may not be what you were expecting, or even be in the time you were expecting it, but His will is always worth the wait. Never give up on God.