

Wrestling with the Goodness of God

Jonah & Habakkuk

**Rainier Hills Christian Fellowship
Women's Winter Bible Study - 2026**



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for printing purposes.

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Sometimes it can be hard to trust in God's goodness when He calls us to something we do not want or would never have chosen if left up to us. It also can be hard to see His goodness when we look at the world around us and see evil prosper and go unchecked. In the books we are studying this winter, Jonah and Habakkuk wrestle with these same things. I pray that through our study, God would reveal Himself to us and empower us to run to Him with our questions, that we would be in awe of the grandeur of His goodness, His sovereign power, and His deep and abiding love for us.

This study guide is meant to help you as we immerse ourselves in God's Word. You will need your own Bible, preferably one that you feel comfortable highlighting and making notes in.

Each weekly study guide section includes:

- Tool suggestions
- "Jonah/Habakkuk as a Whole" – questions to help you think about the bigger picture in these books
- "Focusing in" - questions geared to help you look more deeply at the specific verses we're studying for the week
- Notes pages – for use during the teachings

Your study guide is designed for you to explore Jonah & Habakkuk on your own *before* listening to the teaching. Doing your own work in advance will deepen your understanding, give you a more robust conversation in your discussion group, and prepare you to get the most out of the teachings. Depending on the season of life you're in, or the circumstances of any given week, you may do more or less work in advance. That's life! Yet we also know that the more you put into your own work, the more you will get out of it. So, do what you can, and know that there is abundant grace for the weeks that are stretched too thin!

I'm praying for you!

Father God, meet us in the places where we struggle to see Your purpose in difficult circumstances in our lives or in the world around us. Would you give us humble hearts willing to set our desires aside and come to your Word with eyes open and hungry for more of You? Give us wisdom and discernment as we study your Word; and perseverance for when we are confused or do not have clarity. Use this time studying together to draw us near to You, to transform us evermore into your image, and grant us a glimpse of Your good and sovereign plan for us.

Your servant,
Tina Hickcox

Part 1

Tool Suggestions:

- Repetitive reading
- Begin marking up the text (e.g. repeated words & ideas, transition words).
- Focus: “What does it SAY?” (Comprehension)

Jonah as a Whole

Study with Perspective²

Reading with the eyes and ears of the original author and his audience, rather than through the lens of our own culture. Read the introduction to Jonah in your Bible to find the answers to these perspective questions (if available).

Who wrote it?

When was it written?

To whom was it written?

In what style was it written?

(Narrative...like story telling? Poetry...like song verses? Discourse...like a speech or sermon?)

Why was it written?

Keep going!



² Study method quotes, labels, titles, and concepts throughout have been taken from *Women of the Word* by Jen Wilkin, © 2014. Used by permission of Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, www.crossway.org.

Jonah as a Whole continued...

1. Please read through the entire book of Jonah. Note here any repeated words, ideas, or themes you find.
 - a. What do you think is God's main message or main purpose in including Jonah in the Bible?

2. What characters are part of this story?
 - a. Which characters are at odds or in conflict in this story? Note verses where you see this.

 - b. What is the source of each conflict?

Focusing in: Jonah 1:1-3

3. Read Jonah 1:1-3. Write down all the directional words you find in these verses. Here's one to get you started:

1:1 the word...came to Jonah...

4. Based on his behavior, what do you think Jonah is wanting in this first scene?
5. Look up the following cross-references for "*flee from the presence of the Lord*" and note what each adds to your understanding of Jonah's heart in this moment.
- a. Genesis 3:8 –

Hint:
If you are new to these stories, skim the surrounding verses of each one to help you understand the context.

- b. Genesis 4:16 –

6. Put yourself in Jonah's shoes. What do you suspect he is thinking about God?

a. What in Jonah's behavior shows that these are his thoughts about God?

7. Has there ever been a time when God has asked you to do something you didn't want to do? If so, how did you respond?

Sometimes studying a text brings more questions than answers at first. Were there any questions that came to mind as you studied this section?

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Part 2

Tool Suggestions:

- Repetitive reading
- English Dictionary (Look up unfamiliar words or too-familiar words!)
- Keep marking the text.

Jonah as a Whole

1. Try making an outline of Jonah. Don't get bogged down with detail; rather, observe the larger sections you're seeing in the story. It might help to think of it as a movie or play. How is it divided up into "acts" or "scenes"?

(If your Bible already has an outline for Jonah, please, try not to peek!)

Start your outline here:

Focusing in: Jonah 1:4-16

2. Read Jonah 1:4-16. List all the actions taken by the sailors in their attempt to solve the problem.

- a. How do the sailors' actions compare to Jonah's actions?
3. Although He seems to be a background figure here, we can see some of God's characteristics through His action and "inaction" in this story.
 - a. Are there any indications of God's compassion in these verses? If so, note where you see this.
 - b. Are there any indications of God's sovereignty in these verses? If so, note where you see this.
 - c. What other characteristics of God do you see on display in today's verses? Note where you see them.
4. Read Jonah 1:8-9. Summarize Jonah's answer to the sailors' list of questions.
 - a. How does Jonah's answer align with or clash with his actions?
5. How would you describe:
 - a. Jonah's heart in this moment –

- b. What is most important to Jonah in this moment –
 - c. What Jonah is thinking about God in this moment –
6. If we are honest, we can all sympathize with Jonah to some extent. Has there ever been a time when you have placed your own comfort, sense of control, or desire to escape above worshipping, obeying, honoring, or serving the Lord?
- a. Is the experience you're remembering resolved between you and the Lord? If so, how did that happen? If not resolved, would you consider prayerfully taking that experience to the Lord in repentance & faith?

"I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me..."

Sometimes studying a text brings more questions than answers at first. Were there any questions that came to mind as you studied this section?

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Part 3

Tool Suggestions:

- Repetitive reading
- Cross references
- Focus: Comprehension + “What does it MEAN?” (Interpretation)

Jonah as a Whole

1. Read through Jonah in its entirety. Are there any elements that you've never noticed before or that stick out in fresh ways? If so, what?

Focusing in: Jonah 1:17-2:10

2. Read Jonah 1:17-2:10 again. What does Jonah remember about God that changes his perspective?

3. Look up the following verses, and note how they add to your understanding about what Jonah is remembering.

Look up this verse:	How does it add to your understanding?
Psalm 77:10-11	
Isaiah 50:10	
Lamentations 3:21-26	
2 Corinthians 1:9-10	

4. Look up the word *repent* in an English dictionary and note its best definition here. Where do you see elements of repentance in Jonah 1:17-2:10?

5. God had a bigger purpose for Jonah's story than what we see here in his book. Jesus himself later spoke of Jonah. Look up the following verses: Matthew 12:38-41, 16:4; Luke 11:29-30, 32. How do Jesus's words broaden your understanding of God's purpose in Jonah's story?
6. Consider your own story. If you are a believer, how has God rescued you from your own depths of sin? If you are not yet a believer, is it time for you to be rescued? As you consider your own life with all its sins & shortcomings, remember that there is no depth too deep for God's mercy; let Him rescue you!

Sometimes studying a text brings more questions than answers at first. Were there any questions that came to mind as you studied this section?

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Part 4

Tool Suggestions:

- Repetitive reading
- Keep marking up the text (e.g. lists, attributes of God, confusing ideas).
- Compare with another reliable translation (not a paraphrase).

Focusing in: Jonah 3:1-10

1. Read Jonah 1:1-3 and 3:1-3. What is similar and what is different between them?
2. Now read chapter 1 in its entirety, followed by chapter 3 in its entirety. List any similarities and differences. (Be sure to compare & contrast the sailors and the Ninevites.)
3. In Jonah 3:1-10, where do you see the compassion of the Lord? Note verses where you see this.
4. In Jonah 3:1-10, where do you see God's sovereignty on display? Note verses where you see this.

5. How do you think Jonah is viewing God, or thinking about God, as we approach the close of the story?

a. How does this compare to where he began in chapter 1?

6. Look up Matthew 12:41 and Luke 11:32. What do we learn about the Ninevites' response to God's message?

7. God gave Jonah a second chance to follow and obey the Lord's call. He gave the Ninevites a chance to repent.

a. What "second chances" do you remember from other stories in the Bible? Note your favorites here.

Newer to the Bible?

What an incredible opportunity to begin learning our stories! Grab coffee with one of the older women in your small group this week. Ask her to tell which stories she picked and why!

b. Tell about a time God gave you a second chance at something. Were you quick to repent? or did you have to experience your own version of a big fish?

Sometimes studying a text brings more questions than answers at first. Were there any questions that came to mind as you studied this section?

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Part 5

Tool Suggestions:

- Repetitive reading
- Cross references
- Focus: Comprehension + Interpretation + “How should it change me?”
(God-centered application)

Jonah as a Whole

1. Read Jonah in its entirety. Then look back at your answer to Part 1, Question 1.a (page 18). Has anything shifted in your view of God's main message or main purpose in including Jonah in the Bible? Or, has anything developed further since beginning this study?

Focusing in: Jonah 4:1-11

2. Read Jonah 4:1-4, and skim the surrounding verses. Why is Jonah angry?
3. Anger can be righteous (honoring God) or unrighteous (anger over things that do not anger God).
 - a. Look up the following verses. What do you notice about each example of righteous or godly anger?

Exodus 32:19-26 -

Mark 3:1-5 -

John 2:13-17 -

- b. Look up the following verses. What do you notice about each example of unrighteous anger?

1 Samuel 20:27-31 -

James 4:1-3 -

- 4. Look up Exodus 34:6-7.
 - a. What do we learn about the Lord's anger?

- b. How does Jonah's anger in Jonah 4 compare, and is it righteous or unrighteous?

5. Read Jonah 4:5-11. Jonah's thinking and behavior are not godly or gracious. In some ways we might expect more from a man who was recently shown great mercy himself. Perhaps we would even understand if God turned his wrath on Jonah at this time. But He doesn't.
 - a. Where do you see indications of God's compassion in these verses?
 - b. Where do you see indications of God's discipline or correction?
 - c. What surprises you about how God interacts with Jonah in this scene?
6. The original audience for this story is the Jewish people. How do you think God wants them to think, believe, or act differently as a result of this story?
7. Has there ever been a time when you were sinfully angry like Jonah?

- Sometimes studying a text brings more questions than answers at first. Were there any questions that came to mind as you studied this section?

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Part 6

Tool Suggestions:

- Repetitive reading
- Begin marking up the text (e.g. repeated words & ideas, transition words).
- Focus: “What does it SAY?” (Comprehension)

Habakkuk as a Whole

Study with Perspective

Reading with the eyes and ears of the original author and his audience, rather than through the lens of our own culture. Read the introduction to Habakkuk in your Bible to find the answers to these perspective questions (if available).

Who wrote it?

When was it written?

To whom was it written?

In what style was it written?

(Narrative...like story telling? Poetry...like song verses? Discourse...like a speech or sermon?)

Why was it written?

Keep going!



Habakkuk as a Whole continued...

1. Please read through the entire book of Habakkuk. Note here any questions you find in the text. Here's one to get you started:

...how long shall I cry for help, and you won't hear? 1:2

2. What do you think is God's main message or main purpose in including Habakkuk in the Bible?

Focusing in: Habakkuk 1:1-11

3. Read Habakkuk 1:2-4 & 1:5-11. Who is speaking in each section?
4. What are the charges against the "wicked" as Habakkuk describes them?
5. Based on how Habakkuk is describing the situation in Hab. 1:2-4, how is he feeling about this situation?
 - a. What do you think is his attitude toward or view of God in this moment?
6. How does the response in Hab. 1:5-11 answer or address the complaint of 1:2-4?
7. Examining God's discipline can be uncomfortable and confusing. Look up the following verses, and note what each tells us about the discipline of the Lord, especially as regards His people.

Jeremiah 31:16-20 –

Hebrews 12:5-11 –

- a. What is your view of God's discipline, and how do these verses change, challenge, or affirm your thinking on this topic?
-
- 8. Has there ever been a time when you felt as Habakkuk did – that sin and wrongdoing was going unpunished and you could not understand God's seeming lack of response?
 - a. In that situation, have you seen God's ultimate response yet? If so, what was it?
 - b. If not, what are you asking the Lord to do in that situation?
 - c. What is one thing you can do today to cling more tightly to Christ in the midst of any unresolved situation?

Sometimes studying a text brings more questions than answers at first. Were there any questions that came to mind as you studied this section?

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Part 7

Tool Suggestions:

- Repetitive reading
- Cross references
- Focus: Comprehension + “What does it MEAN?” (Interpretation)

Habakkuk as a Whole

1. Try making an outline of Habakkuk. Don't get bogged down with detail; rather, observe the larger sections you're seeing in the story. It might help to think of it as a movie or play. How is it divided up into "acts" or "scenes"?

(If your Bible already has an outline for Habakkuk, please, try not to peek!)

Start your outline here:

Focusing in: Habakkuk 1:12-2:20

2. Read Habakkuk 1:12-13a.
 - a. What characteristics of God does Habakkuk recognize and affirm?

- b. How might these particular characteristics be comforting to someone in Habakkuk's situation?
- 3. Read Habakkuk 1:13-17.
 - a. What is Habakkuk's complaint?
 - b. Who is the "he" mentioned at the end of 13 and multiple times throughout verses 15-17?
 - c. To what or who does "he" credit his success? (Hint: Look at 1:16, and peek back at verse 1:11.)
 - d. Where does "his" temporary dominance actually come from? (Hint: Look back at Habakkuk 1:6.)
- 4. Read Habakkuk 2:4, where God contrasts the righteous and unrighteous. Here He states that the "righteous shall live by his faith." Look up the following verses and note what we learn about faith.

Ephesians 2:8 –

Hebrews 10:36-11:2 –

5. God shows Habakkuk that He really does know these people, the Chaldeans, who are chosen to be an instrument of discipline. What does God note about them in Habakkuk 2:4-6?

6. Read through Habakkuk 2:6-20.

- a. List "who" each of the five woes is addressed to.
- b. Note how each woe is connected to God's description of the Chaldeans in 2:4-6.
- c. Note what specific consequence, if any, is attached to each woe.

a. "Woe to him who..."	b. Connection to description in 2:4-6	c. Consequence attached

7. Consider the uncertainty of our own lives, where we are not able to see all the details of God's plan and often don't understand why He allows certain circumstances.
 - a. What things make it challenging to live by faith & trust God in the face of uncertainty?
 - b. What things help and encourage you to live by faith & trust in God in the face of uncertainty?

Sometimes studying a text brings more questions than answers at first. Were there any questions that came to mind as you studied this section?

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Part 8

Tool Suggestions:

- Repetitive reading
- Cross references
- Focus: Comprehension + Interpretation + "How should it change me?"
(God-centered application)

Habakkuk as a Whole

1. Revisit your answer in Part 6, Question 2 (page 64). Do you still agree with your perspective on what God's main message or purpose for this book is? Or has anything shifted? Explain.

Focusing in: Habakkuk 3

2. Read through Habakkuk 3:2-19, marking the verbs (usually an action word, like "came" or "shook," sometimes "was" or "were") as **past**, **present**, or **future**. You can simply mark the text rather than rewriting them here. Below is one example of how you might do this:

Past = 
Present = 
Future = 

² O Lord, I have heard the report of you,
and your work, O Lord, do I fear.
In the midst of the years revive it;
in the midst of the years make it known;
in wrath remember mercy.

3. Now that you've marked the tenses in this passage, notice how it helps us visually break the text up into sections. How would you summarize each of the sections you see?

4. Questions have been a big part of Habakkuk.
 - a. What is Habakkuk asking the Lord for in Habakkuk 3:2?

 - b. How is this question similar to or different from the questions he's asked previously?

5. What events in Israel's past do you see referenced or alluded to in Habakkuk 3:3-15? Note verses where you see connection to their history.

Need help?

If no events are coming to mind, or if you are newer to the story of God, look up some of these verses to help you make some connections!

Exodus 12:29-30; 14:19-29;
19:16-20

Joshua 10:10-14

6. Habakkuk is recalling God's awesome power and rescuing provision of the past, times when God's people were under oppression or threat of harm. How would remembering God's past works and sovereign plans bring comfort and increase Habakkuk's trust in God, in spite of the suffering to come?
7. What characteristics of God does Habakkuk acknowledge & affirm in his prayer? Note verses where you see these.
8. Use your own words to paraphrase Habakkuk 3:17-19.
 - a. What allows Habakkuk to rejoice in verse 18, even though there is such potential for hardship?

9. Remembering the faithfulness of God in the past can be a powerful means of trusting Him through difficulties in the present, and bolstering our trust in God for the future. Think about your own history. What are some of the stories of God's faithfulness that you can remind yourself of when times are difficult?

If you are not yet a believer, is it possible that God has been present and working in your life all along, even in difficult circumstances? If so, how?

Sometimes studying a text brings more questions than answers at first. Were there any questions that came to mind as you studied this section?

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We want your feedback!

Thank you for studying through *Wrestling with the Goodness of God: Jonah & Habakkuk* with us! Like you, we are learning, growing, and trying new things, including the creation of future studies and study guides. Your feedback will help us greatly as we strive to be faithful stewards of God's Word and faithful servants to His people. Please take a moment to give us your candid feedback and suggestions. You may submit your responses anonymously if you prefer. If you use this form, please return it to the RHCF office drop box. Feedback by email can be sent to info@rainierhills.org.

Name (optional): _____

1. What did you like most about this Bible study? What parts were most helpful to you?
2. What did you like least about this Bible study? Which parts were confusing or unhelpful to you?
3. What specific suggestions do you have for how we could improve our studies?

