



GROW IN THE WORD

Habakkuk

a four-week group study

The questions in this study are based on the [Grow in the Word Women's Workshop](#) led by Colleen McFadden at Bronx Household of Faith on Sept. 12, 2020.¹ Although some of the questions here are a bit more detailed than those in her handouts, they are largely applications of her threefold emphasis: *Context, Structure, Jesus Christ*.

The questions in this study are intended to model one way to apply the approach taught in the workshop, in this case, to a Prophetic book. You don't need to answer every question; the goal is to grow in your understanding of the *context, structure, connection to Christ, and application* of the section of Habakkuk you're studying. Please refer to your notes/handouts from the workshop for clarification or more direction.

This booklet divides the study of Habakkuk into four sessions. Each session has four main parts (one page per part), except the last session, which adds one final wrap-up section for the whole study. The four parts are:

- Reading the Word in its **context**
- Reading the Word in its **structure**
- Reading the Word in light of **Jesus Christ**
- **Applying** the Word you've read

By God's grace, your knowledge of and therefore your love for the God of Scripture will grow deeper, richer, and stronger as you seek to understand what he reveals in the book of Habakkuk. God bless your study together!

¹ Some questions are also taken/adapted from David Helm's *One-to-One Bible Reading: A Simple Guide for Every Christian, 92–93*.

SESSION 1: HABAKKUK 1:1–11

Before you read...

Pray.

Read the following excerpt:

Prophetic Literature

Many people, even in churches, think that biblical prophecy is mainly about predicting the future. While there is a predictive element in the prophetic books, this is not their primary function. A prophet is one who speaks for God, whether about the present situation or the future. The prophetic books are records of God speaking to his people through the voice of a chosen man. God speaks not only of his historical promises to his people, but also of the judgments and blessings they face as a result of their ethical conduct. In this sense, the prophets are as concerned, if not more so, with the present-day moral character of the people as with the future.

The prophets also anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ in significant ways. They often directly predict what God will do through Jesus, and specific attributes of Jesus' time on earth, but they also point to the general interplay between God's judgment and God's mercy on his people in anticipation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.²

Reading the Word in its context

- 1) Given the literary genre of Habakkuk, what themes/features might you expect?
- 2) *Literary context:* Read the entire book of Habakkuk together.
 - a. What are some of the different “sections” of the book, in terms of who’s talking and what kind of writing it is (e.g., discourse? victory song? poem? lament?)?
- 3) *Historical Context:* Focus on 1:1–11.
 - a. What clues are there in these verses about the circumstances in which the prophecy was given or written?
 - b. Which people or places are mentioned that you aren’t familiar with? (You could look them up in other parts of the Bible or refer to a Bible dictionary or commentary. Jot down what you learn here!)
 - c. What can you infer, if anything, about the original audience(s)? What different groups might Habakkuk be directed toward?

² David Helm, *One-to-One Bible Reading: A Simple Guide for Every Christian*, 64–65.

Reading the Word in its structure

Read Habakkuk 1:1–11 (once out loud, then once quietly on your own).

- 1) What text type is this—discourse, narrative, or poetry? What features should you expect in this text type?
- 2) How is 1:1–11 organized? What are the parts? How are the parts related?
 - a. Try to answer for each section:
 - i. Who is talking?
 - ii. Who is God or the prophet talking to?
 - iii. Who are they talking about?
 - b. Are there repetitions or multiple instances of similar ideas? Do these repetitions make a particular point, or point to the structure of the passage? If so, what is that point or structure?
- 3) Are there images or word pictures used that stand out as particularly striking or important in any of the sections? What might be the intended effect of these images on the audience?
- 4) Paying attention to when the prophet is speaking and when God is speaking, what does the passage tell us about God's plans? What does it tell us about God's character?
- 5) Is there anything surprising about God's speech? If so, what?
- 6) What kind of human behavior, if any, is condemned or rewarded? How would you describe Habakkuk the prophet so far?
- 7) What is the main point or points?

Reading the Word in light of Jesus Christ

- 1) Where does Habakkuk 1:1–11 fall on the redemptive historical timeline? What are similarities between our situation and the situation in Habakkuk’s day, in terms of this passage?

- 2) What are themes in this passage that relate to the person and work of Christ? (Justice and mercy, for example.)

- 3) Is any part of 1:1–11 quoted or referenced in the New Testament? (Cross-references in the Bible margins are helpful for this.) List any such references here.

- 4) What does God reveal about how he plans to bring about salvation and/or judgment? Is that expectation fulfilled in Christ? Is it fulfilled in surprising ways? In what ways do we still wait for him to fulfill it?

Deuteronomy 18:15–19 and Hebrews 1:1–4 (among other passages) identify Christ as the ultimate prophet. All the Old Testament prophets point to and anticipate Christ in some way through their writings (1 Peter 1:10–12) but also frequently through their own actions and relationships with God.

- 5) Are any of the character traits of Christ seen in this passage—are things said of God that we see “fleshed out” in Christ? Are things that Habakkuk the prophet does or says “filled full” in Christ? If so, describe them here.

Applying the Word you have read

Reflect on and then discuss answers to some or all of the following questions:

- 1) How is my/our own situation similar to or different from those being addressed?

- 2) How does this passage challenge (or confirm) my understanding?

- 3) Who can I identify with in this passage...
 - as a sinner?

 - as a saint?

 - as a sufferer?

- 4) How does this passage lead me to trust God and his promises in Jesus?

- 5) Is there someone's example I'm intended to follow? What might that look like in my situation?

- 6) Is there some attitude I need to change?

- 7) How does this passage call on me to change the way I live?

Pray.

SESSION 2: HABAKKUK 1:12–2:5

Before you read...

Pray.

Note: This week's passage is tightly connected to next week's, especially verses 4 and 5. Since verse 5 especially is transitional, you may want to keep it in mind but not be too concerned if it doesn't play a major role in most of your answers this week.

Reading the Word in its context

Read 1:12–2:5

1) *Literary context:*

- a. How does this section (1:12 and following) relate to what came before?
- b. Are other bits/themes of the Old Testament mentioned or alluded to in this text? What part do these 'memories' play in the passage?

2) *Historical Context:*

- a. Are there any more clues given about the circumstances in which the prophecy was given or written? What are they?
- b. Are there any people or places mentioned that you aren't familiar with? (You could look them up in other parts of the Bible or refer to a Bible dictionary or commentary. Jot down what you learn here!)
- d. What more can you infer about the original audience(s) based on this passage, if anything?

Reading the Word in its structure

- 1) How is 1:12–2:5 organized? What are the parts? How are the parts related?
 - a. Try to answer for each section:
 - i. Who is talking?
 - ii. Who is God or the prophet talking to?
 - iii. Who are they talking about?
 - b. Are there repetitions or multiple instances of similar ideas? How do these repetitions make a particular point, or point to the structure of the passage?
- 2) Are there images developed or word pictures used that stand out as particularly striking or important in any of the sections? What might be the intended effect of these images on the audience?
- 3) Paying attention to when the prophet is speaking and when God is speaking, what does the passage tell us about God's plans? What does it tell us about God's character?
- 4) Is there anything surprising about God's speech? If so, what?
- 5) What kind of human behavior, if any, is condemned or rewarded? How would you describe Habakkuk the prophet at this point?
- 6) What is the main point or points?

Reading the Word in light of Jesus Christ

- 1) What are similarities between our situation and the situation in Habakkuk's day, in terms of this passage?

- 2) What are images/themes in this passage that relate to the person and work of Christ? To the Christian's life in Christ?

- 3) Are any aspects of the life of faith/obedience are referenced in this passage? How does Jesus fulfill them?

- 4) Is any part of this text quoted or referenced in the New Testament? How does the NT authors' use of that part (if any) shed light on its meaning or extend/deepen its implications?

- 5) What does God reveal about how he plans to bring about salvation and/or judgment? Is that expectation fulfilled in Christ? Is it fulfilled in surprising ways? In what ways do we still wait for him to fulfill it?

- 6) Are any of the character traits of Christ seen in this passage—are things said of God that we see "fleshed out" in Christ? Are things that Habakkuk the prophet does or says "fleshed out" in Christ?

Applying the Word you have read

Reflect on and then discuss answers to some or all of the following questions:

- 1) How is my/our own situation similar to or different from those being addressed?

- 2) How does this passage challenge (or confirm) my understanding?

- 3) Who can I identify with in this passage...
 - as a sinner?

 - as a saint?

 - as a sufferer?

- 4) How does this passage lead me to trust God and his promises in Jesus?

- 5) Is there someone's example I'm intended to follow? What might that look like in my situation?

- 6) Is there some attitude I need to change? How does this passage speak to that?

- 7) How does this passage call on me to change the way I live?

Pray.

SESSION 3: HABAKKUK 2:5–2:20

Before you read...

Pray.

Reading the Word in its context

Read 2:5–2:20

1) *Literary context:*

- a. How does this passage relate to what preceded it?
- b. Does this section compare/contrast with any previous section in particular?
- c. Are other bits/themes of the Old Testament mentioned or alluded to in this text? What part do these 'memories' play in the passage?

2) *Historical Context:*

- a. Are there any more clues given about the circumstances in which the prophecy was given or written? About things happening within Judah or other nations? Between Judah and other nations? What are they?
- b. What people or places are mentioned that you aren't familiar with? Write down what you learn researching them.
- e. What more can you infer, if anything, about the original audience(s) based on this passage?

Reading the Word in its structure

- 1) How is 2:6–2:20 organized? What are the parts? How are the parts related?
 - a. Try to answer for each section:
 - i. Who is talking?
 - ii. Who is God or the prophet talking to?
 - iii. Who are they talking about?
 - b. Are there repetitions or multiple instances of similar ideas? How do these repetitions make a particular point, or point to the structure of the passage?
- 2) Are there images, word pictures, or rhetorical questions used that stand out as particularly striking or important in any of the sections? What might be the intended effect of these images on the audience?
- 3) Paying attention to when the prophet is speaking and when God is speaking, what does the passage tell us about God's plans? What does it tell us about God's character?
- 4) Is there anything surprising about God's speech? What is it?
- 5) What kind of human behavior, if any, is condemned or rewarded? How would you describe Habakkuk the prophet at this point?
- 6) What is the main point or points?

Reading the Word in light of Jesus Christ

- 1) What are similarities between our situation and the situation in Habakkuk's day, in terms of this passage?

- 2) What are themes in this passage that relate to the person and work of Christ? To the Christian's life in Christ?

- 3) Is any part of this text quoted or referenced in the New Testament? How does the NT authors' use of that part (if any) shed light on its meaning or extend/deepen its implications?

- 4) What does God reveal about how he plans to bring about salvation and/or judgment? Is that expectation fulfilled in Christ? Is it fulfilled in surprising ways? In what ways do we still wait for him to fulfill it?

- 5) Are any of the character traits of Christ seen in this passage—are things said of God that we see “fleshed out” in Christ? Are things that Habakkuk the prophet does or says “fleshed out” in Christ?

Applying the Word you have read

Reflect on and then discuss answers to some or all of the following questions:

- 1) How is my/our own situation similar to or different from those being addressed?

- 2) How does this passage challenge (or confirm) my understanding?

- 3) Who can I identify with in this passage...
 - as a sinner?

 - as a saint?

 - as a sufferer?

- 4) How does this passage lead me to trust God and his promises in Jesus? How does it show me my need of Jesus?

- 5) Is there someone's example I'm intended to follow? What might that look like in my situation?

- 6) Is there some attitude I need to change? Elaborate.

- 7) How does this passage call on me to change the way I live?

Pray.

SESSION 4: HABAKKUK 3:1–19

Before you read...

Pray.

Reading the Word in its context

Read 3:1–19

1) *Literary context:*

- a. How does this passage relate to what preceded it?
- b. Does this section compare/contrast with any previous section in particular? How is it similar/different?
- c. Are other bits/themes of the Old Testament mentioned or alluded to in this text? What part do these 'memories' play in the passage?

2) *Historical Context:*

- a. Are there any more clues given about the circumstances in which the prophecy was given or written? About things happening within Judah or other nations? Between Judah and other nations? What are they?
- b. Are there any people or places mentioned that you aren't familiar with? Write down what you learn researching them.
- f. Can you infer any more about the original audience(s) based on this passage? About their history? If so, describe it here.

Reading the Word in its structure

- 1) How is 3:1–19 organized? What are the parts? How are the parts related?
 - a. Are there any transitional verses? A clear climax? If so, identify them here.
 - b. This section makes use of major shifts in verb tense (past, present, future). How do these contribute to the structure and message of this chapter?
 - c. Are there repetitions or multiple instances of similar ideas? How do these repetitions make a particular point, or point to the structure of the passage?
- 2) Are there images, word pictures, or rhetorical questions used that stand out as particularly striking or important in any of the sections? What might be the intended effect of these images on the audience?
- 3) What does the passage tell us about God's plans? What does it tell us about God's character?
- 4) What kind of human behavior, if any, is condemned or commended? How would you describe Habakkuk the prophet at this point?
- 5) What is the main point or points?

Reading the Word in light of Jesus Christ

- 1) In what ways does the attitude/story of Habakkuk the prophet point forward to Jesus Christ's attitude/story?
- 2) What are other themes in this passage that relate to the person and work of Christ? To the Christian's life in Christ?
- 3) Is any part of this text quoted or referenced in the New Testament? If so, how does the NT authors' use of that part (if any) shed light on its meaning or extend/deepen its implications?
- 4) What does God reveal about how he plans to bring about salvation and/or judgment? Is that expectation fulfilled in Christ? Is it fulfilled in surprising ways? In what ways do we still wait for him to fulfill it?
- 5) Are any of the character traits of Christ seen in this passage—are things said of God that we see “fleshed out” in Christ? Are things that Habakkuk the prophet does or says “filled full” in Christ?

Applying the Word you have read

Reflect on and then discuss answers to some or all of the following questions:

- 1) How is my/our own situation similar to or different from those being addressed?

- 2) How does this passage challenge (or confirm) my understanding?

- 3) Who can I identify with in this passage...
 - as a sinner?

 - as a saint?

 - as a sufferer?

- 4) How does this passage lead me to trust God and his promises in Jesus? How does it show me my need of Jesus?

- 5) Is there someone's example I'm intended to follow? What might that look like in my situation?

- 6) Is there some attitude I need to change? How does the passage speak to that?

- 7) How does this passage call on me to change the way I live?

Now that you've read: tying it all together

- 1) If you had to summarize the main point of the whole book of Habakkuk (**to his original audience**), what would you say?
- 2) How would you rewrite that main point given the fact that we live on this side of Christ's godly life, his substitutionary death, and his victorious resurrection (while we wait and groan for his return)?
- 3) Habakkuk's final song is a humble declaration of trust and joy in God despite the most agonizing and frightening circumstances. Write your own personal version of Habakkuk's song, using details from your own life and context.

Pray.

