

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

The title 'ARGUING WITH GOD' is rendered in a bold, white, sans-serif font with a slight 3D effect. The words are stacked vertically. A bright, glowing sunburst or starburst effect is centered behind the letter 'H' in 'GOD'. The background is dark with several jagged, glowing lightning bolts in shades of blue and purple. The subtitle 'THE BOOK OF HABBAKUK' is written in a smaller, bold, yellow font below the main title.

ARGUING WITH GOD

THE BOOK OF HABBAKUK

HABAKKUK: ARGUING WITH GOD

We all know what it's like to argue. Whether it was a brawl with your brother or a disagreement with a friend, you are familiar with the emotional toll an argument can take on a person. It's exhausting, so why do we do it in the first place? We often clash when something seems unfair. We fight when we want to be right or argue due to confusion. An argument is often an attempt to regain control.

We can all relate to arguments with our siblings, friends, and significant others, but have you ever argued with someone in authority? That can be scary. Today, we are going to examine an argument with the ultimate authority.

The prophet Habakkuk argued with God. The thought of an argument with the Almighty makes many of us uncomfortable. It's true for me too. Are we even allowed to do that? I was shocked to discover that Habakkuk was not alone in his attempt to debate with the Divine. Many Biblical figures grappled with God. Moses argues that God is being unfair (Exodus 32). Abraham begs for God to spare the people of Sodom (Genesis 18). Mary petitions for Jesus to do a miracle before His appointed time (John 2). Hezekiah pleads for God to let him live longer (2 Kings 20). Jesus asked God to alter His plan (Luke 22).

What does this mean? It's okay to ask God hard questions. God's not intimidated by big questions. Why? Because He is a big God. Take a look at the protest of prophet Habakkuk to kick off his book.

READ: Habakkuk 1:1-4

"How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails."

The entire book of Habakkuk is an argument between Habakkuk and God. This debate took place when Habakkuk was leading Israel during a significant siege. Like a seasoned lawyer, our protesting prophet wrote out his case for Israel in the face of crisis. This is probably the easiest of all the prophetic books to read due to its straightforward style, so I encourage you to dive in later this week. You can read the

whole thing in half an hour. Habakkuk is proof that it's okay to argue with God, but we must be obedient to God's ultimate outcome. This book shows us three out-of-the-box principles about arguing with the Almighty.

Don't Be Afraid to Ask God Tough Questions

The prophet wasn't afraid to ask the tough questions. Habakkuk opened his book with a very relatable question. Why, God? Why are these bad things happening to my people? Why are the good guys losing? Why does justice seem lost? Why is life so unfair?

Israel was the underdog in a violent war. People were fleeing their homeland, and countless lives were on the line. Habakkuk wanted some answers. His little book of arguments poses two questions as an opening statement. One, "How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?" (Habakkuk 1:2). Second, he probes, "Why do you tolerate the treacherous?" (1:3) Habakkuk's words may be ancient, but his situation is timeless.

He asked tough questions. God answered — sort of. A voice from heaven came to the prophet and said, "Look at the nations and watch and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe" (1:5). God invited Habakkuk to look beyond the present circumstances. Were Habakkuk's questions perfectly answered? No, not really. Yet, God's response radiates hope. To sum it up, God says, "hope is on the horizon."

When life looks devastating, keep investigating. Know that God has more in store. Prepare to be utterly amazed at God's ultimate plan. Trust God because His purpose is far more clear through the rearview mirror than the windshield. God is working in your life in ways that you won't even believe. Be on the lookout for something amazing.

Allow Your Protest to Become Praise

It may be okay to argue with God, but it's not okay to stay stuck in an argument with God. We must let our interrogation push us towards transformation. Even if the answers aren't clear and the confusion persists, we must learn how to develop through our disagreements.

The argumentative prophet prods, pushes, and protests for the first two chapters. It's the same back and forth over and over again. The tone shifts in chapter three. Suddenly, his protest turns into praise. Israel was still feeling forsaken. Their nation was still in conflict. Habakkuk still feels like God's letting the bad guys win. Regardless of all those things, the prophet praises God.

He rejoices, "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (3:17). Habakkuk praised God for his perfect track record. Their relationship reminded him that things would get better soon.

God is the God of Salvation. Due to this reality, he could glorify God despite their troubles. God delivered them in the past, and He will do it again. Their trying circumstances are merely a blip on the radar of God's redemptive story.

"Yet" is one of the most significant words in this section. My nation is in ruins, "yet" I will rejoice. You should try to bring this word into your own conversations with God. My family is struggling, yet I will praise God. My heart is broken, yet I know God is here for me. My situation is scary, yet I will seek peace. My life is confusing, yet I will rely on God.

End Differently Than You Began

Take a look at the closing verse of the book of Habakkuk. The protesting prophet concludes, "The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills" (3:18).

What a weird closing line. God made his feet like... deer hooves? Has Habakkuk lost it? No. The protesting prophet understands something about deer that we don't. When a deer moves forward, their hind hooves step exactly where their front hooves did. It prevents them from tripping or stumbling. This enables them to navigate hazardous hillsides with ease.

Habakkuk doesn't look to God just for conflict resolution. He looks to God for resilience. God is going to give him durability, steadiness, and the ability to navigate tough terrain. His next season won't be easy, but God will give him the strength to get through it.

Sometimes we pray for God to take away our problems when we should be praying for God to help us overcome them. When we tackle our troubles with God, we become more resilient, vigorous, and courageous. Habakkuk's argument with God should be a template for us.

Be open with God about your desires, but be obedient to compromise. Instead of removing your problems, God may want you to walk through them with Him. Habakkuk did not end in the same place he began. He started with protest but ended with praise. He started with an argument but ended in awe. He started with strife but ended with submission.

Whenever you want to argue with God, go for it. Just ensure you end in a different place than you began. You may not understand why you're facing such a difficult season. Ask God to get you through it. You may not comprehend why your family fell apart. Ask for God to help you grow closer to Him. You may not understand why you feel stuck. Ask for God to give you the strength to move forward. You may not have the answers to your problems, but you can talk to the world's best problem solver.

Let God turn your protest into praise. You may not understand it, but I can assure you of this. God can help you withstand it.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share this week's highs and lows (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week).

Q1: What's one thing that stood out to you about today's message?

Q2: Did it surprise you to learn about the prophet Habakkuk's argument with God? Why or why not?

Q3: Why is it important that we acknowledge all of our feelings to God, even when that means praying about our anger, frustration, confusion, or doubt?

Q4: How can we ask God tough questions in a healthy way?

Q5: How did Habakkuk change from the beginning of his argument with God to the end? What can we learn from this?

Application: What tough questions do you want to begin asking God? Commit to praying to God every day this week to share your feelings about that situation. Be open to a transformation in your perspective.

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Habakkuk 1
Habakkuk 2
Habakkuk 3

Do the following with each passage:

ASK – God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ – the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT – on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND – to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.