

DG Guide: Habakkuk 3 - The Song Before the Storm (and remembering God's character)

Opening Prayer

Lord, we come before you with honest hearts, acknowledging the gap between what we know about your character and what we feel in our current circumstances. Help us to move beyond stoicism and the false comfort of "just looking on the bright side," instead learning to rouse our emotions and direct them toward your faithfulness. We pray that you would revive your work in our lives and teach us to sing a song of trust before the storm even arrives.

Starter Question

Think about a time when your plans fell apart or your life felt out of control. Did you feel a sense of helplessness, or did you manage to find something to hold onto in the middle of the chaos?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. There can be a gap between what you believe and what you feel. Habakkuk gives us a third way between stoic suppression and victimhood: he felt his fear, acknowledged the "rotteness" entering his bones, and then redirected those feelings toward who God is.
2. Our hope must be located in the character of God, not our circumstances. Habakkuk wrote this song for his people to sing *before* the exile so they would have words ready when the suffering came. This means our joy shouldn't be dependent on what is happening around us right now, but on the fact that we belong to a faithful God.
3. Habakkuk changes his prayer." Habakkuk stopped asking God to change his circumstances and started asking God to be faithful to His own character within those circumstances. He recognized that suffering is not parenthetical to our lives, but a part of God's sovereign plan for our sanctification.
4. Joy rooted in your circumstances dies when your circumstances change. Don's point: you don't extract joy from your job, your health, or your family. You bring joy to them, because your joy is already full in the Lord.

Scripture Reading

Read together: Habakkuk 3:1–19

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Gap Between What We Know and Feel

1. Don noted that many of us have a gap where our minds say "yes to Jesus" but our feelings say "I'm afraid." Have you experienced this disconnect, and how has it impacted your daily life?
2. Don described two unhealthy extremes: the stoic who pushes feelings down and the victim who dwells entirely in their circumstance. Which of these extremes does our culture, and do you or your DG members tend to lean toward, and why?

3. Habakkuk's third way isn't a cheerful middle ground between those two. What's actually different about it?
4. Habakkuk describes his physical reaction to God's wrath as "rotteness entered my bones" and trembling. How does this honest admission of physical and emotional breakdown challenge the idea that a christian must always feel "strong" or "peaceful"?

Looking at Who God Is

4. Read Habakkuk 3:3–15. Don pointed out that Habakkuk isn't inventing new things about God, but rather recounting the same story of deliverance from Exodus and the conquest of Joshua. How does remembering these specific historical acts of God help Habakkuk trust God in his current situation?
5. Don highlighted the phrase "In your wrath, remember mercy." How does this specific request change how we view God's anger or judgment compared to a view of God as merely a distant judge?
6. Don noted that Habakkuk's hope is found in the fact that God comes to save his people and crush the leader of the wicked, even before Habakkuk sees it happen. How does trusting God's past faithfulness prepare us for a future we don't yet see?

Living It Out in the Midst of Suffering

7. In Habakkuk 3:17–19, the prophet lists specific things failing (fig tree, vines, olive crop, flocks, herds). Don asked us to think about the "categories of life" that are all going wrong at once. What specific areas of your life feel like they are failing right now?
8. Don challenged the idea that suffering is a "pause" in our lives, quoting Paul in Romans to suggest it's actually the path of our inheritance. How does this reframe your understanding of a difficult season you are currently in?
9. Don suggested we can stop only asking God to "fix this" and also ask God to "show me more of your kindness." How would your prayer life look different if you prayed this way?
10. Don used the analogy of building a well before you're thirsty. How can you begin to build this "well" of a great view of, and relationship with God now, even though the difficult season might not have hit you yet?
11. Don mentioned that Habakkuk's joy is not extracted from his circumstances but brought to them. How can you be a "joy-bringer" to someone else even if your own life is currently difficult?

Personal Reflection

- Where have you been tempted to suppress your feelings or convince yourself that everything is fine when it isn't?
- In what specific area of your life do you feel the gap between what you know about God and how you actually feel right now?
- If you were to write a "song for the choir" for your family or friends right now, what specific truth about God's character would you want them to remember?

Group Commitments

Choose 1-2 of these to commit to as a group:

1. Prayer: Each week, as a group, write down one specific request to God for the coming week, but frame it as "In your wrath, remember mercy" or "Show me more of your kindness" rather than just asking for the problem to disappear.

2. Scripture Study: Read Habakkuk 3 together this week, and take turns reading one verse each. After each verse, each DG member shares one specific detail about God's character that stands out to them.
3. Accountability: Partner up with someone in the group who is currently going through a difficult season. Meet for 15 minutes this week just to listen to them without trying to "fix" it, and ask them one question about what they know to be true about God.
4. Relational/Practical: Identify one person in your circle who feels disconnected from God right now. This week, invite them to a coffee or meal and simply remind them of one specific time God has been faithful in their life.

Closing Exercise

Take turns around the group. Each person will say one sentence that completes this thought: "I know that God is faithful because..."

Closing Prayer

Pray together, focusing on:

- Worship for the character of God, specifically his faithfulness and mercy.
- Confession of our tendency to trust in our circumstances, suppress our honest emotions, or wallow in victimhood.
- Thanksgiving for the promise that God will revive his work in us.
- Commitment to build a "well" of remembrance about God's past faithfulness now.
- Intercession for one another, asking God to be present in our difficult seasons.

For Next Week

- Follow through on your group commitment from this week.
- Memory Verse: Habakkuk 3:17–18 (CSB) – "Though the fig tree does not bud and there is no fruit on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though the flocks disappear from the pen and there are no herds in the stalls, yet I will celebrate in the Lord; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!"
- Preparation: Read Habakkuk 1 and 2 again. Look for the progression of his prayer from frustration to surrender.

Leader Notes

- Pastoral Sensitivity: Be careful not to make the group feel guilty if they are currently struggling with doubt or feeling God's absence. Don explicitly validates that "I don't feel it" is a real and honest experience for many.
- Common Pitfalls: Watch out for the group sliding into "toxic positivity" (the stoic extreme) or becoming so focused on the "good news" that they invalidate the "bad news." Remind them that Habakkuk felt rotten to the core.
- Grace-Centred Tone: Emphasize that Habakkuk's faith was a *process* of learning, not a perfect state of being. He stumbled, he fought, and he had to be redirected by God.
- Leader Encouragement: If you are feeling weary or like your "well" is empty, remember that this song is a gift *from* God to *us*. You don't have to manufacture joy; you just need to remember the One who is the source of it.

Or, if you just want a bunch of discussion prompts:

1. Describe a time when your faith seemed most tested because your circumstances didn't match what you expected from God.
2. Why do you think Habakkuk waited until he was completely broken before he found his joy?
3. How does the idea that "suffering isn't a pause" change how you would counsel someone who is grieving?
4. What does it look like to "build the well" before you're thirsty in your own spiritual life?
5. Compare Habakkuk's approach to suffering with a modern self-help approach to mental health. Where are they similar and where do they differ?
6. If you could write a single sentence that captures the main lesson of Habakkuk 3 for your family, what would it be?
7. How does Don's comment about "book people" versus "emotion people" resonate with you?
8. In what ways are we tempted to use God as a tool to get what we want, rather than trusting Him as the sovereign Lord?
9. Read Habakkuk 3:2 again ("Revive your work in these years"). How would you rephrase that prayer for your own life today?
10. If Habakkuk's song was sung by the choir, what do you think it would sound like? Would it be a sad song or a triumphant one?