

**CRISIS COUNSELING**  
**SESSION #1 WITH HABAKKUK**  
**HABAKKUK 1:1-4**  
 September 27 & 28

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Good morning/Good evening, Ladies. I am privileged to partner with my husband, Paul Hamline, as well as many others at The Bible Church of Little Rock in our counseling ministry! You see that I have a blue file in my hand with Habakkuk's name on it and we are invited to attend session #1 as engaged observers. When someone from our BCLR body or the community places a request in person or by phone requesting help with pressing life circumstances, they are sent paperwork to fill out and return. One of the forms included is a PDI, Personal Data Inventory, which includes the bolded headers, **Personal Identification, Marriage and Family, Health** (questions exploring both the physical and spiritual), and **four questions** regarding the presenting problem and what they have already done about it (i.e. previous counseling, medication, etc.) This information is helpful but many times it can be vague and a bit sparse which allows the counselor to fulfill **Proverbs 20:5** **"A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water, But a man of understanding will draw it out."** ☺ God has provided more information than we can possibly "draw out" or "draw in" regarding Habakkuk's problem from chapter 1 verses 1-4. We have the joy of considering the text as it "talks to us" in our first "meeting" with Habakkuk! Habakkuk 1:1-4 allows the observer to gather information, interact, and identify with Habakkuk, the counselee, in three areas that are common ground for all believers. We already have a head start for rightly interpreting the information we will glean in our first session with Habakkuk, the data gathering session. Our three previous lessons, **Introduction to Prophecy 101** as well as the **Historical background**, have given us enlightening information, helpful parameters, and direction for moving forward which we must use to best understand Habakkuk and in the future to skillfully deal with his dilemma as well as our own. The author of our study wisely reminded us this week that "...some of the questions will remain unanswered right up to the end of the book. So our approach to these first verses has to be different: Rather than expecting to get clarity and find answers right away, in this lesson our goal will be to simply identify the prophet's questions, understand his dilemmas and explore his mindset." (**Read Habakkuk 1:1-5**)

**II. THE PERSON, HABAKKUK (v. 1:1-2)**

**1A. He is subordinate to the Message & Message Giver. (vv.1-2a)**

This is vital to remember in times of crisis! The grammar and structure of verse 1 and 2a, as well as the information which is purposefully omitted, make this very clear. How so? (Briefly discuss) Habakkuk isn't identified by his tribe or his hometown as Nahum the Elkoshite was (**Nahum 1:1**) or as "...**Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah,...**". Early in this book we are introduced to Habakkuk's LORD (2a), the self-existent one, the great I AM, Yahweh, The Covenant Keeping One., who was revealed to fearful Moses through a burning bush **Exodus 3:14**. Is Habakkuk being snubbed or disdained by such a brief and colorless introduction? No! From a high view and trust in the person and character of the LORD flows his identity and all good and profitable counsel in this book! "Relevancy of the name to (the) circumstances" is clearly the prevailing issue. (MacArthur SB) Trying times must propel one to "**embrace**" (meaning of name Habakkuk's name) and to rest in the "**embrace**" of THE LORD. Commentator, O. Palmer Robertson reminds us, "He (Habakkuk) must be heard because he was the bearer of God's message, not because of what he was in himself."

As we walk through Habakkuk and the instruction therein, the place to begin is with a heart attitude of humble subordination / submission before the Message Giver and the Message Given. What would your PDI reflect? Have you postured your heart **"to keep watch to see what He will speak to me (you)."** as you move through this study? (**Hab. 2:1b**)

## 2A. He Had a God Given Job Description.(1:1)

See the document included A Prophet's description. (Certain sections will be highlighted.)

O. Palmer Robertson helps us understand Habakkuk's job and the skills required saying, "Habakkuk's prophecy possesses a burdensome dimension from start to finish. . . . Only the gift of the inspiring Spirit of prophecy could make it possible for a person to declare with faithfulness the utter destruction of his own people and land."

While we believe this particular job description of a Prophet has ceased, you see that their impact on the contemporary world has not. (Read last point on job description)

We as women have been given specific job descriptions within our God ordained time and space in history Are we embracing this realm of influence that speak God's message by both our word and deed? From the mundane to the monumental we can echo Queen Ester's counsel received from Mordecai in **Ester 4:13b**, "**And who knows whether you have not attained \_\_\_\_\_ for such a time as this?**" (Discuss briefly)

### III. THE PRESENTING PROBLEM (vv.1:2-4)

#### 1A. The "Unresponsiveness" of God to His Pleas (1:2)

Men and women of all ages, races, ethnicities, and socio-economic status normally seek counsel after a period of prolonged dark days. Difficulties are a common denominator touching all mankind since the fall in **Genesis 3**. This is one fact that Eliphaz, a "friend" of Job, **did** get right as he said, "**For man is born for trouble As sparks fly upward.**" (**Job 5:7**) Many times, counselees' answers to the preliminary question on the PDI, "What are your expectations from counseling?", reflect the "just fix it" mentality. Usually, that which needs "fixing" is a debilitating disease, a harsh or unfaithful husband, a rebellious child, an unreasonable boss, a difficult co-worker, a cantankerous family member or nose/noisy neighbor. We should not trivialize the confusion and deep pain that are experienced in any of these life circumstances but gently, we need to be reminded that our propensity is to flounder and "wander" into wrong thinking and thereby wrong action in the midst of fiery trials. In **Psalm 73: 2;21-22**, Asaph was in a similar trial and cried out, "**But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped. . . . When my heart was embittered And I was pierced within, Then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.**" This template of blame shifting with the finger of fault ultimately stretched upward began in **Genesis 3** with Adam and Eve and has continued until today. In **Habakkuk 1:1-4**, Habakkuk, a prophet of God, finds himself in a "**slippery**" place on the edge of a potential spiral down into deep resentment and distrust of God. If we are honest, we too find ourselves in the same "**slippery**" spot during trials. Let's peek back into the file and look at Habakkuk's expectations.

#### 1B. Quick Relief From The Pain (1:2a)

He expects quick relief from the pain he is in and there was none. (Singular pronouns/self-focused) What clues you into the fact that Habakkuk was watching the sun dial in the midst of these hard days? Yes, the "how long" in his question coupled with his other verbiage helps us to understand he has had enough and in his estimation, the situation should have been dealt with already.

He has been "calling" (Piel Verb Form showing greatest intensity) for help with the same level of emotion that Jonah had used in calling for help from the belly of the whale in **Jonah 2:22**, "**I called out in my distress to the LORD, And He answered me. I cried out for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice.**" Jonah did see God's intervention as, "**...the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.**" (**Jonah 2:10**), but Habakkuk's perspective on his circumstances was the opposite; the Covenant Keeping God "**will not hear.**" This reflects much more than someone missing a few words or misunderstanding them. (TWOT-to hear, listen, obey) **Unhearing**>Uninvolved>Uninterested>Uncaring>Unresponsive

#### 2B. Measurable Results Or Change In Present Distresses(1:2b)

The cry spoken of in the next stanza is filled out in meaning by the TWOT as "exclusively in reference to a cry from a disturbed heart in need of some kind of help. . . . a felt need. . . . most frequently directed to God." It

reverberates in volume and the decibel level is a “shriek” of body or soul in times of “anguish or danger.” (CDWGTHB) We can look back on our three previous lessons and teaching times as well as the rest of the book of Habakkuk to gain understanding of what had the Prophet in anguish of soul. (Discuss) **Jeremiah 2:8** sadly sums up Judah’s corporate sin saying, **“The priests did not say ‘Where is the LORD?’ And those who handle the law did not know Me; The rulers also transgressed against Me, And the prophets prophesied by Baal And walked after things that did not profit.”** Habakkuk is calling for and expects physical & societal salvation from extreme wickedness. To make it worse, this wickedness was among the very ranks of Judah’s leadership; priests, those who handle the law, rulers, **and** the prophets! Violence—hamas—had infiltrated the nation internally. It was pervasive and permeating and would adversely affect the common man living Judah. Yet, Habakkuk’s repetitive cry was not, in his perspective, met with the extended right arm of God in deliverance. In fact, in the prophet’s estimation he got the good ‘ole “talk to the hand”. Barker & Bailey sum up our counselee well saying, “... in Habakkuk the prophet’s cry of complaint sounds forth hauntingly ‘The prophet is weary—with the world as it is’” (They are quoting Achtemeier) **An Unhearing** >Uninvolved>Uninterested>Uncaring >unresponsive God has now become an **Unwilling** God. Is He good but limited in power and unable to intervene?

## 2A. The “Unjust” Circumstances God has Placed In His Path (1:3–4)

### 1B. The quantity is overwhelming (1: 3)

Everywhere Habakkuk looks among the people of Judah he is **made to see “iniquity”** and **caused to look upon “wickedness”**. What was he facing each morning? “... many kinds of moral evil and corruption (which was) damaging to one’s relationship to God and others.” He was watching the beloved people of Judah, his nation, turn away from their covenant God and turn upon one another from the top down. God’s summary notes in our blue file regarding the people would read, **“But you are a harlot with many lovers; ...” Jer. 3:1c)**

**Destruction and Violence**, in Habakkuk’s eyes, have been staged by His God in a prominent and most conspicuous spot before him. (Hifil-causative verb 2X’s) It can be compared to walking into a home that is listed for sale by a realtor and carefully and intentionally it has been set up for a quick and lucrative sale. In every room of life Habakkuk was **“made or caused to see”** oppression, destruction, robbery, spoil, and desolation as the nation of Judah unraveled.

**Strife and Contention** exist and again are pervasive in Judah. One commentator contrasted it with the desired state of **Proverbs 17:1**, **“Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it, Than a house full of feasting with strife.”** Quarreling, discord, and disputing were characterizing the society and Habakkuk’s, “...question implies that God’s inactivity had allowed the wicked people to dominate Judah.” (Barker & Bailey)

### 2B. The results are devastating (1:4)

#### 1C. Low view of The Law (1:4a)

To Habakkuk it must seem like yesterday when King Josiah stood before the people and read beginning at **Genesis 1:1** and finished at **Deuteronomy 34:12**! Well he remembered the great day when **“The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all His heart and all his soul, to carry out the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And all the people entered into the covenant.”** Now the law was **“ignored”**. The Torah had no effect in the lives of leadership or the majority of the population of Judah. It had grown cold, was torpid, sluggish, inert, inactive, slow, lifeless. The precious law lay dormant like an animal that has gone into hibernation. (compiled & adapted from GHCLOT)

#### 2C. Rise of social injustice (1:4b)

##### 1D. Immoral Majority (1:4b)

The wicked by far outnumbered the righteous in the land and remember this majority holds the high positions! The picture painted by Habakkuk’s lament is that **“the wicked hemmed in the righteous (for) without justice the righteous have little recourse.”** (Barker & Bailey) Is our counselee tired and depressed and seeing things

through a skewed perspective? God never corrects Habakkuk's summation on Judah's condition and the magnitude of the future judgment confirms that things in Judah are indeed, very bad! The tense of the verb in this section depicts the few righteous remaining consistently encircled by evil men. The "halo data" of our prophet would speak volumes about his emotional condition. Slumped shoulders, sighs, weary and concerned lines on his face and possible thinness due to lack of appetite might lead us to suggest he be treated for chronic depression.

#### 2.D. Unlawful Decision Making (1:4a & 1:4:b)

This evil majority is using their positions of authority to bend, twist and pervert God's law. Leadership is wresting justice from the hands of the common man and it is happening often as a 100% word is used as "**the law is never upheld...**". In light of this injustice, Habakkuk cannot understand why God is silent. Is an **Unhearing**>Uninvolved>Uninterested>Uncaring >Unresponsive>**Unwilling** God now seen as an **Unjust** God? Is He, indeed, able to deal with all of these atrocities but not good in character and essence?

#### IV. THE PRECIOUS PROMISE (v. 1:5)

Well, fellow observer, our data gathering session with Habakkuk has been a very dark session. I wish I could tell you next week's session was better but it is NOT! In fact, things are going to get worse! Should we leave our counselee here? We should not and must set hope in every session. What can we truthfully say in light of the data gathered in today's session? The Prophet had a heavy burden or load to bear as He wrestled with rampant internal injustice in the land of Judah. He wasn't seeing God respond to the circumstances surrounding him and actually perceived he was unheard by the very one who had commissioned him. Compassionately, we need to call our counselee to stop and think and then place a nugget of truth before his eyes and ours from Habakkuk 1:5, "**Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I (am) doing something in your days—...**". We need to begin to walk through the first second steps in the bookmark as God does with Habakkuk in our upcoming lessons.

Bailey & Barker sum it up well, "Alongside the 'men at work' signs stands another more important sign: 'God at work'". I cannot wait to see this unfold in our upcoming sessions in the life of Habakkuk and in the lives of each woman involved in this Bible study.