



**FLOURISH
BIBLE STUDY**

HABAKKUK

LEADER'S GUIDE



LYDIA BROWNBACK



INTRODUCTION: GETTING INTO HABAKKUK

At this first meeting, you'll want to cover the setting of the letter—who wrote it and to whom, when it was written, and the primary themes. It would be helpful to spend a few minutes covering the backstory—what preceded and led up to the happenings in Habakkuk's day. There are some challenging themes to cover in this study, such as God's wrath and how and when it springs from God's justice. At this first meeting, it might be good to ask the group to share what they believe about these divine traits and how their understanding has impacted their faith to this point in their walk with God.

WEEK 1: HOW LONG?

HABAKKUK 1:1-4

Start with a brief review of the backstory to Habakkuk's prophecy—the deeply entrenched corruption of God's people and the prevalence of idol worship. The resulting evil, marked by violence, is what causes Habakkuk to question God. Your conversation this week can highlight this theme, how difficulties and evils of all kinds can lead us to questions about God—his goodness, his power, his purposes—when he seems silent or far off. Talk about Habakkuk's response to what seems like “divine delay,” and how related passages noted in the lesson (Pss. 6:1–3; 13:1–2; and Rev. 6:9–11) shed further light on these “delays” and how to respond to them. You can take the same approach when discussing Habakkuk's *why* questions, taking into account one or two of the related passages noted in section 3. Allow sufficient time to touch on God's justice as it's addressed in this week's lesson. Depending on the size of your group and the time you have, you might want to simply center your group time on the two “Let's Talk” questions at the end of the week, bringing into the discussion these major themes.



WEEK 2: AN UNWANTED ANSWER

HABAKKUK 1:5-11

The discussion this week can begin and end on when God answers prayers in not only unexpected ways but in ways we had hoped he wouldn't. Draw from both biblical and personal (group members') examples. You can really focus in on this with the "Let's Talk" questions at the end. In between, center the discussion on the Babylonians, specifically God's purposes in giving them so much power. What does this reveal about God's ways with his people? That's key.

WEEK 3: WHEN EVIL FLOURISHES

HABAKKUK 1:12-17

You'll want to focus on the attributes of God that are revealed in this portion of Habakkuk's prophecy—God's holiness, power, and eternity—and how knowing him and his ways enables us to trust him in the midst of perplexing circumstances. Since God is everlasting, his people are forever secure. Talk about how we know from Scripture that God welcomes our questions, and include the heart posture we must have in order to receive his answers. The Babylonian net and dragnet signify their callous plundering of the surrounding nations as they ruthlessly take what they want. Be sure to talk about how the events going on in Habakkuk's day—the apparent victory of evil—are mirrored later in the events of Jesus's life.



WEEK 4: LIVING BY FAITH

HABAKKUK 2:1-5

This week's lesson contains the most notable phrase in Habakkuk: "the righteous shall live by his faith" (2:4). You'll want to make that the lynchpin of your conversation this week. Make sure everyone in the group understands the nature of saving faith, that faith itself isn't actually what saves us. *Christ* saves us; faith is simply the instrument. In your discussion, cover the link between righteousness and faith and how various passages of Scripture clarify what this looks like. The point to emphasize is that our own righteousness contributes nothing to salvation. It's Christ's righteousness, which God declares as ours by virtue of our union with Christ. Another topic to touch on this week is waiting. Talk about how Scripture reveals the blessings of waiting on the Lord. We will cover this theme in more depth later in the study.

WEEK 5: WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND

HABAKKUK 2:6-17

The eventual fate of Babylon is revealed this week. The overarching point is that, although God allows evil to prosper for a season—and even uses it to accomplish his purposes, he will inevitably judge that evil with destruction. This is a good place to talk more about God's wrath (the first "Let's Talk" question). We want to think about why God's wrath against evil would have encouraged Habakkuk and all God's people, and, by way of application, how this—a pattern in Scripture—serves as an encouragement to believers today. God's glory is another feature to touch on in your discussion. Understanding more about this attribute of God refines our understanding of his purposes both in Habakkuk's day and in ours.



WEEK 6: GODS THAT ARE NOT GODS

HABAKKUK 2:18-20

Habakkuk's fifth and final woe centers on idolatry, the sinful practice of turning to false gods rather than trusting and submitting to the one true God. You might want to spend time going over the idol worship chart on pages 72–73. Take some time to bring out the idols—the false gods—that tempt women in our day and age, and then focus in on the remedy outlined in section 3 and in “Let’s Talk” question 2.

An important note: please amend pp. 69–70, where my abbreviated commentary gives the wrong impression about whose words are actually being communicated! On p. 69, change “Before Habakkuk announces his fifth woe oracle, he asks a question” to *Setting the stage for the fifth woe is a question*. And then, at the top of p. 70, change “Habakkuk already knows the answer to the question. In fact the answer is obvious, right there in plain sight. But he asks it anyway as a way to get people to think” to *The answer is obvious, right there in plain sight. But, by means of Habakkuk, the Lord poses it anyway*.

WEEK 7: A PROPHET’S PLEA

HABAKKUK 3:1-7

Habakkuk focuses on God—his mighty being, his works, his words—and this, in turn, shapes his prayer. We learn from Habakkuk how to pray during difficult seasons in our own lives. Prayer is vital when we’re in the midst of perplexing circumstances, but we gain real confidence in prayer only when it is rooted in a biblically informed understanding of the Lord and his ways. Talk about how Habakkuk meditates on God and the specific ways this shapes his prayer.



WEEK 8: REMEMBER!

HABAKKUK 3:8-11

Remembering—it’s vital to our faith when we’re in the midst of difficulties, and this is something to emphasize this week. Habakkuk focused his anxieties on all he knew of God, and this shaped his perspective and renewed his confidence in the Lord. We remember through Scripture, looking intently at God’s work all through redemptive history, including what he was doing in Habakkuk’s day. Remembering the Lord in this way strengthens our trust that he is actively at work in our own lives, even when we cannot understand what he is doing. Be sure to factor in sufficient time to talk about how Habakkuk’s vision foreshadows Christ’s return at the final judgment, perhaps including one or two of the related passages from this week’s lesson (Isa. 65:7–25; Matt. 24:29–31; 2 Pet. 3:1–10).

WEEK 9: DIVINE DELIVERER

HABAKKUK 3:12-15

The theme of remembering is still front and center in this week’s lesson, but ultimately it is all future-oriented. Go back to the topic of God’s wrath and include how the fact of his wrath doesn’t contradict the fact of his love. Flowing naturally into this conversation is the Lord’s “anointed”—what this term represents in the Bible and what it ultimately points to—the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Touch on all the ways this portion of Habakkuk’s prophecy point forward, to the future. Be sure to save time for the “Let’s Talk” questions at the end of the week and point out how what we glean from this portion of Habakkuk shapes our answers to those questions.



WEEK 10: HOW TO WAIT

HABAKKUK 3:16–19

Habakkuk is really honest about his fears, about what the Lord is going to bring into the lives of his people, yet ultimately his faith is strengthened. Spend a minute or two reviewing what, up to this point, has served to strengthen his faith. We touched earlier on the theme of waiting for God, but it reaches its pinnacle here at the end. Take a few minutes to talk through the material in the “waiting” chart on pages 108–9, perhaps asking attendees to share which passage in the chart impacts them most profoundly and why. You might want to focus particularly on section 2 and discuss what enabled Habakkuk to exhibit such peace and even great hope in the midst of waiting for something frightening. Allow sufficient time to wrap up the week—and the entire study—by answering the third “Let’s Talk” question at the end.