

When God Seems Gone

Connect Break the ice and get people talking

What are some of your favorite things to do as the weather starts getting warmer?

Truth Understand and discuss the scripture's meaning

READ: Habakkuk 1:1-11

DISCUSS: Describe a time in your life when it seemed like God wasn't answering your prayers.

Habakkuk prophesied during the final years of Israel's southern kingdom – often called Judah – before they were conquered by Babylon. Judah was a terrible place to live at the time. It was filled with violence, injustice, and corrupt leaders. Even though Habakkuk prayed for God to help, things only seemed to get worse. So Habakkuk cried out to God in protest. God answered. The book of Habakkuk is that exchange, and it helps us know how to respond in times of life when God seems gone.

SEEING EVIL & HEARING SILENCE

READ: 2 Kings 21:1-6

DISCUSS: What about Manasseh's reign stands out to you as particularly evil?

Habakkuk lived during the reigns of some of Judah's worst kings, where violence and iniquity would've literally been right in front of his face. And God seemed to be doing nothing about it. Rather than distancing himself from God, Habakkuk went to God with brutally honest questions. We often think we need to show up to God perfectly composed and unemotional, but Habakkuk shows us that we can cry out to God when our prayers go unanswered.

GOD SEES MORE

READ: Habakkuk 1:5-11

DISCUSS: Describe God's answer to Habakkuk in your own words.

"Seeing" is a major theme in this chapter. In verse three, Habakkuk asked why God made him "see iniquity," and why God was "idly look[ing] at wrong?" God gives Habakkuk a vision of something he couldn't see – that God planned to use the Chaldeans – also called Babylonians – to put an end to the injustice in Judah. When we are deeply troubled by what we see, we must remember that there's so much we don't see. God's field of vision is far greater than our own. Though it shouldn't stop us from crying out to God, the fact that our personal perspective has limits should humble us.

HIS PLAN IS AT WORK

READ: Isaiah 46:8-11

DISCUSS: What's your reaction to the claim that God "will accomplish [his] purpose" for all history?

God says to Habakkuk, "I am raising up the Chaldeans." God wasn't merely responding to unexpected events, like a doctor in an emergency room. His plan was at work. God directs the events of history. Injustice won't go unanswered, corruption won't go unchecked, and violence won't be swept under the rug.

Grace See how the passage connects to Jesus

READ: Matthew 27:45-46

Many years after Habakkuk, Jesus Christ cried out to God in agony from the cross, "Why have you forsaken me?" He received silence. Jesus didn't just see violence; he suffered through it. But all the while God's plan was at work. Jesus's death means that God's sovereignty isn't a blind, cold determinism. It's a personal, compassionate, loving plan at work. The resurrection of Jesus means suffering and violence don't get the final say. God does.

Change Apply the passage to our thoughts, feelings, and actions

- How does this exchange between Habakkuk and God impact the way you process times in life when God seems silent?
 - On a scale from 1-10 (1 being not confident, 10 being fully confident) how confident are you that God is in control of history?
 - In what ways should God's answer to Habakkuk and the death of Jesus humble us?
-

Prayer Respond to the passage in prayer

- If there are areas in people's lives where God seems silent, cry out to God and ask for his answer.
- Pray for God to work in areas of our own world in which you see injustice and violence.
- Pray for a deep humility in view of God's sovereignty.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN

- Have you read your Bible consistently the past week?
- Who is someone you're praying to share Jesus with this week, and what's one way you can love them well?