

Hard Questions, Harder Answers  
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Habakkuk 1:1-6,12-13; 2:1-4

Josh Hunt poses a good question: **“If you could ask God one question, what would it be?”**

Habakkuk has some heartfelt questions for God. “Why does God permit evil?” “In light of His holiness, why would God allow this?” “Why doesn’t He do something about the evil around us?”

J. Vernon McGee writes:

*“Why God permits evil is a question every thoughtful mind has faced. This book answers the question: ‘Is God doing anything about the wrongs of this world today?’ This book says He is. The theme of the book is FAITH.”*

The BIG Idea: If we knew everything God knows, we’d never question anything He does. Since I don’t know everything God knows, it comes down to this: If I believe what the Bible says, I have to trust God’s character even when His plans don’t seem to make sense.

Habakkuk 1:1–6 (NLT) (Using the New Living Translation for clarity)

This is the message that the prophet Habakkuk received in a vision.

Habakkuk’s Complaint

2 How long, O Lord, must I call for help?

But you do not listen!

“Violence is everywhere!” I cry,  
but you do not come to save.

3 Must I forever see these evil deeds?

Why must I watch all this misery?

Wherever I look,

I see destruction and violence.

I am surrounded by people  
who love to argue and fight.

4 The law has become paralyzed,  
and there is no justice in the courts.

The wicked far outnumber the righteous,  
so that justice has become perverted.

- **What is Habakkuk's first complaint in verse two?**
- **What was going on among the people of Judah (v.3)? What words jump off the page?**
- **What was happening in the courts of law (v.4)?**
- **What is Habakkuk really asking? What would YOU ask God in these conditions?**
- **Question: Is it appropriate for us to complain to God? How does a close relationship with God help you speak to Him frankly about matters on your heart?**
- God was neither indifferent nor idle. He was at work with a plan...a shocking plan...to deal with the sins of the people of Judah.

5 The Lord replied,  
“Look around at the nations;  
look and be amazed!”  
For I am doing something in your own day,  
something you wouldn't believe  
even if someone told you about it.  
6 I am raising up the Babylonians,\*  
a cruel and violent people.  
They will march across the world  
and conquer other lands.

- **Habakkuk was praying for a revival in Judah, but what was God sending?**
- The prophet Jeremiah described what was to come:

Jeremiah 25:8–9 (ESV)

8 “Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, 9 behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the Lord, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation.

Jeremiah 25:11 (ESV)

11 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

- In verses seven to eleven God describes this horrible horde of blood-thirsty Babylonians.
- By the way, if you look on a modern day map, any idea where Babylon was?

Habakkuk 1:12–13 (NLT)

Habakkuk's Second Complaint

12 O Lord my God, my Holy One, you who are eternal—surely you do not plan to wipe us out?

O Lord, our Rock, you have sent these Babylonians to correct us, to punish us for our many sins.

13 But you are pure and cannot stand the sight of evil.

Will you wink at their treachery?

Should you be silent while the wicked swallow up people more righteous than they?

- Habakkuk understands: God is holy; the people have sinned; and punishment is coming.
- **What can he NOT understand? Why is it okay to have doubts about God's plan?**
- Notice something: Habakkuk may be questioning God's plan but he is not questioning God's character. *"God this sounds like a bad idea, but what I know for sure is that you are ETERNAL; you are our ROCK (refuge); you are PURE and HOLY."*
- **When we have doubts about God's plans how can we follow Habakkuk's example?**

Warren Wiersbe writes that *"...if you believe in God, you sometimes wonder why He allows certain things to happen. But keep in mind that there's a difference between doubt and unbelief. Like Habakkuk, the doubter questions God and may even debate with God, but the doubter doesn't abandon God...unbelief is rebellion against God. Unbelief is an act of the will, while doubt is born out of a troubled mind and a broken heart."*

- Habakkuk turned to God with his doubts. He never turned away from his belief in who God is!
- He expected God to answer his questions. Look at chapter two verses one through four.

Habakkuk 2:1–4 (NLT)

1 I will climb up to my watchtower  
and stand at my guardpost.

There I will wait to see what the Lord says  
and how he\* will answer my complaint.

The Lord's Second Reply

2 Then the Lord said to me,  
"Write my answer plainly on tablets,  
so that a runner can carry the correct message to others.

3 This vision is for a future time.

It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled.

If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently,  
for it will surely take place.

It will not be delayed.

4 "Look at the proud!

They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked.

But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God.\*

- Verse two: God said to Habakkuk, *"Write this down in permanent ink (tablets). Make it so plain anyone can understand it and explain it to others. I've seen the sins of the Babylonians and I'll deal with them at a future time. I know it seems like evil will win. Be patient, I'll deal with evil. In the meantime I want you to have FAITH."*
- Verse three: **What "future time" do you think this vision was for? Could this verse be about two different future times? What other future time does this speak to?**
- Verse four: **What does God say about the proud? Who are the "proud" he's referring to? How might that apply today?**
- The last part of verse four is one of the most memorable verses in scripture. *"The just (or righteous) will live by faith."* It's quoted regarding salvation in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; and regarding sanctification in Hebrews 10:38.

- **How does that sentence: “...the righteous will live by faith in God.” apply when we have doubts?**

John MacArthur writes:

*“Two opposing characteristics are here contrasted (in 2:4). The proud trusts in himself; the just lives by his faith. In contrast to the proud, the righteous will be truly preserved through his faithfulness to God. The true believer, declared righteous by God, will persevere in faith as the pattern of his life.”*

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- If we knew everything God knows, we’d never question anything He does. But, we don’t!
- It’s natural to have doubts when we don’t understand God’s plans. It’s okay to ask Him about our doubts. What we do when we doubt confirms where we are with God.

One of my favorite quotes from Charles Spurgeon reminds us:

*“God is too good to be unkind. He is too wise to be confused. If I cannot trace His hand, I can always trust His heart.”*

- If I believe what the Bible says, I have to trust God’s character even when His plans don’t seem to make sense.
- We call that LIVING BY FAITH.