

# message

## Crying Out when God Seems Absent

TURNING TO GOD IN TROUBLING TIMES | MAY 30/31, 2015 | PASTOR MATT ERICKSON | HABAKKUK 1:1-4

*"How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?" (Habakkuk 1:2)*

### Habakkuk's Burden (Habakkuk 1:1)

- The context of Habakkuk
- The prophecy as 'burden'

### 'How Long?' for Humanity and God (Habakkuk 1:2-4)

- Humanity's question of wrong, violence, and the apparent absence of God
- God's dance of justice and patience

### Learning to Pray with Habakkuk

- Turning to God vs. going numb
- Learning to lament
- Keeping our hearts open to God and the world

# study guide

1. Have you ever been lost, either on foot or in a car? What did you do to get back on course or find your way home?
2. This weekend at Eastbrook we begin a five-week journey through the book of Habakkuk entitled "Turning to God in Troubling Times." Take some time to pray, asking God to speak to you as you read His word. As we approach this week's study, read the entire book of Habakkuk, chapters 1-3, aloud.
3. *Background:* Habakkuk was a prophet during the last days of the kingdom of Judah somewhere in the timeframe of 620-590 B.C., before the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Nothing is known about Habakkuk other than what we find in this book. He likely would have been a contemporary of the prophets Jeremiah and Nahum, and speaking during the reign of Kings Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin (see 2 Chronicles 36). The book of Habakkuk is organized into three major sections: Habakkuk's first complaint and God's answer (1:1-11); Habakkuk's second complaint and God's answer (1:12-2:20); and a final prayer of trust and worship (3:1-19).
4. Habakkuk's first complaint (1:1-4) reveals a serious situation in the kingdom. From what you read in verses 2-3, how would you summarize what is happening around Habakkuk?
5. While we know that both the Assyrians and the Babylonians were threatening the people of God around this time, verse 4 suggests that the violence and wrong is actually arising from within the people of God through neglect of the Law (Torah). From what we know of the time, how would you describe the state of God's people before the fall of Jerusalem (see 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 11:1-17; Zephaniah 3:1-7)?
6. The word for 'prophecy' or 'oracle' found in Habakkuk 1:1 also carries the sense of a 'burden'. How might Habakkuk's prophecy also be a burden?
7. The 'how long?' of Habakkuk's prayer has many echoes in the prayers of the Bible, particularly in the Psalms (see Psalm 13 for an example). Why would God inspire a prophet to speak out these sorts of words to Him?
8. Have you experienced unanswered prayer or felt like God was absent from your life? How did you turn to God in that season of your life? What happened? How did you grow?
9. How is God speaking to you through the words of Habakkuk about crying out to God in troubling times? How does this influence your life of prayer? How does this shape the way you relate to the troubles of your life or the world around us? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and pray for one another. If you are studying on your own, write it down and share it with someone.

*[Next week: We continue our series "Turning to God in Troubling Times" by looking at Habakkuk 1:5-11. Prepare for next week by reading this passage ahead of time.]*