

## **Bible study group Questions**

### **Habakkuk 1.1- 2.1 – unanswered prayer**

#### **Introduction:**

Do people have prayers that seem to remain unanswered? What sort of things?

Does this bother you? (Personally and with respect to your faith)

#### **Context**

- The year is around 600BC and the Northern Kingdom of Israel has fallen to the Assyrians but Judah (including Jerusalem) is still in Jewish hands. However, King Josiah's attempts to lead people back to God have not stuck and it is clear from Habakkuk's complaint that things are now at all well in the Kingdom of Judah.
- We are some 20-30 years (probably) before the fall of Judah and the exile of the Jews.

#### **Read:**

Chapter 1.1 - to 2.1 (two people read - one as Habakkuk and the other as God's answer)

#### **Questions**

What is going on in this chapter - what's happening?

What is Habakkuk's issue and prayer?

What kind of an answer does Habakkuk get at first ( in v5) and then in the end?

How does he feel about God's answer? And how is he at the end of the reading?

Given all this...

What does the dialogue show you about Habakkuk's attitude to God?

What does the passage show you about God's attitude to Habakkuk?

Do you have things that you don't understand/are confusing about the way God works - and what do you do about them?

What lessons can you see in this passage about prayer and our relationship with God? Try to list as many different lessons as you can find from the passage)

What are the most important points for you to learn for your own prayer life?

#### **Finally**

Read chapter 2

What does this add to the discussion - what do we learn from this?

Isaiah 55:8-9 – "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Some additional notes that might help the group leader

1. Habakkuk is a prophet. Not much else is known about him. His name means “embracer.” He was prophesying not long before Babylon’s first invasion of Judah in 605 B.C. Judah is in an active state of rebellion against the Lord. For decades the people have been spurning the counsel and warnings of the prophets. It is against this background that this exchange between Habakkuk and the Lord occurs.
2. Habakkuk asks the Lord why He allowed the people to sin without consequences. – In verses 2-4 we see that Habakkuk himself couldn’t tolerate all of the wickedness he saw around him. He sees “violence, iniquity, strife, destruction.” He sees the law being ignored and justice perverted. When we look at the question Habakkuk poses to the Lord we can clearly see his sensitive conscience. While others around him could go on living their own lives and not give the sin running rampant a second thought, Habakkuk could not. He knew God was holy and hates sin. And he himself had the same character quality. His question arises out of his confusion. He knows and believes God is holy. But why is God not acting? Why is God allowing the sinner to escape unpunished?
3. Possible applications of what we are reading:
  1. We should have a sensitive conscience toward sin. Jesus was angry when he saw the temple and His father being disrespected. Habakkuk is angry to see the sinful rebellion in his culture. How do you react when you see the sin around you? Like Habakkuk, God wants sin to disturb us. He wants us to be disgusted by it.
  2. It is normal and OK to be confused and have doubts about what is going on around us. God did not create us as robots. Neither does God mind if we sincerely question Him in order to increase our understanding about His nature and why He does things. We are not to ‘test’ God (Deuteronomy 6:16) but that is not what Habakkuk is doing - it is a good lesson not to hide our own feelings and thoughts from Him, (which is impossible anyway! If we do not understand something, we should ask God and study His Scriptures. The very same question can be asked in sincerity or out of disbelief (or even hostility). Mary and Zachariah both asked the angel how the prophecy regarding their prospective children could come to pass. The angel rebuked Zachariah, but graciously answered Mary. Gabriel must have discerned that Mary asked out of a sincere desire to learn while Zachariah asked out of disbelief.
  3. We should have a close relationship with God that is open like Habakkuk does. That means that God is our friend and we should feel free to talk to Him about anything. Do we talk to God about our own doubts or feelings? We should - when confused or frustrated about the circumstances of life around us we should turn to God.. more than the news and the world around us.