

Learn how the storms of life can become opportunities to activate your faith in *Habakkuk: Remembering the Faithfulness of God When He Seems Silent*. Through daily Scripture, prayer, and meditation, this six-week study will teach you how to remember that God is at work—even when He seems silent.

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PODCAST 1

Why Would I Want to Study Habakkuk?

Your experience in these pages will be greatly enhanced by listening to teaching podcasts to kick off each week. The six-session podcast series can be found at dannahgresh.com on my podcast page under the series *Habakkuk: Remembering God's Faithfulness When He Seems Silent*. Each is also available as video for group study. The lessons you'll glean from the podcasts are important to this study, but you will still be able to do the study if you're not able to listen to the podcasts.

THE POWER OF HABAKKUK'S POETRY

1. Poetry requires us to get _____ with _____.
2. Poetry is _____ with _____.
3. Poetry is _____.
4. The _____ poetry requires results in _____.
5. Poetry helps us _____.

OTHERS WHO THOUGHT HABAKKUK WAS POWERFUL

1. _____ wanted it _____.
2. The _____ used it as the _____ of _____.
3. _____ used it to get through _____.

Remember to wrestle with God when He seems silent.



WEEK 1

Remember to Wrestle

“This feels like another hard season that we’re in. [I have an] uneasy feeling of fear and dread. This world continually reminds us that the unthinkable happens.”

My friend Leila wrote that on her daughter Julie’s 638th day battling leukemia.

She admits it was getting harder to remember the faith they had on day number one—diagnosis day.

But God has a way of swooping in to help us with our amnesia.

For Leila, He showed up with a special reminder on day number 669. She was at a greater New York City area support group for cancer moms. One of them shared the story of her son’s diagnosis day. In the middle of all the bad news, there was—she reported with tears—a Bible verse hanging on her son’s inpatient room when they arrived. Not just any Bible verse. One of their favorites.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

(JOSH. 1:9)

It was just the reminder they needed. They weren't in that hospital room alone. God was with them. He had been there before them to plant a much-needed reminder of faith and hope.

Leila had to ask: *Which hospital? Which room?* But she already knew the answers.

Morristown.

Room 10.

Her daughter Julie had written that verse on a piece of paper and stuck it to the wall, but when she'd been urgently moved late in the night, the verse was left behind. And no one took it down . . . after one full year.

"It was a powerful moment for both of us. A good reminder that even though times seem tough, God has not left us, and will not leave us," wrote Leila. Her faith refreshed. Renewed. Rekindled as they continue to count the days.

Today is day number 714.

Maybe you too struggle with forgetting to remember. I'm here to remind you.



MEDITATION 1

Forgetting to remember

People say that God is never late. I say that He sure seems slow sometimes.

Why doesn't He answer your prayers to bring you someone to share your life with or someplace to call home? The medical breakthrough that could bring you a new lease on life or the help you need when you've been biting off more than you can chew?

When is He going to show up with the answer you need or the money you owe? Or to fix what's wrong in the church or avenge the one who wronged you in your family?

Where is He when your daughter's fighting cancer or you're fumbling your career? When you're at the end of your rope or the beginning of a terrifying storm?

Sometimes God seems so unbelievably silent. This seems especially true in the storms of our life.

Are you in a storm of some kind?

I'm here to help you not to forget to remember.

We tend to do that in times of downpour. The disciples did. One day Jesus got into a boat with them, and said He wanted to go to the other side of a lake.¹ Then He fell asleep. That's when a windstorm came down on them. It must have been a whopper, because the boat began to take on water. What started out as a merry version of *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* turned into the theme song for *Titanic*.

And Jesus slept right through it.

Feel familiar?

The seasoned fishermen shook. You'd better believe they woke the weary Teacher up: Jesus, we're dying! Don't You care?

He did care, and He told the wind and the raging waves so.

Then He turned His attention back to the guys in the boat. He had something to say to them too. There, in the calm of yet another miracle, He asks them: Where is your faith?

Not the most comforting thing to say to a few grown men who'd probably just lost their lunch about the time they lost their cool. But Jesus doesn't stroke their egos, as we are prone to do. Instead, He cuts to the chase, essentially asking: Did you forget who I Am? Did you forget Who is with you?

They had, in fact, forgotten who was with them. In spite of all the amazing things they had been witness to, the men cowered when a storm brewed.

Can you identify?

If so, Habakkuk is just the tutor we both need. Oh, at the beginning of his three-chapter book, he doesn't seem to be. In fact, he's dreadfully afraid of the future and seems to be the poster child for doubt, fear, and questioning God. He has a big case of spiritual amnesia. But by the end of the book, his memory kicks in and he becomes a shining example of how the righteous live by faith. And so much of faith has to do with remembering.

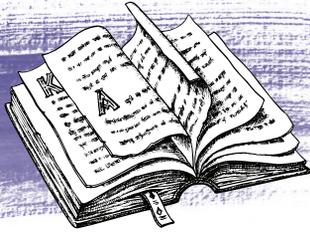
REMEMBER
(re•member)

.....
verb. Have in or be able to bring to one's mind an awareness of (some-
one or something that one has seen, known, or experienced in the past).²
.....

I once heard that to remember is “to put back what is dismembered.”³ Much as you would reattach a limb if it were tragically lost, hopelessness requires us to re-member what’s been missing in our minds and souls.⁴ We’re invited to put our faith back where it belongs.

In this study, we will discover the six practices or habits Habakkuk exercised to re-member his faith.

Shall we get started?



Today, I’m providing the passage we’ll be studying right here in the English Standard Version. I encourage you to mark up your Bible when you’re learning as I have in the sample below.

Our study activities today and tomorrow are based on the center of Habakkuk, where we find the thesis for the book. Begin by reading and writing out any early observations you have about Habakkuk 2:2–3 either below or in your own Bible.

The Righteous Shall Live by His Faith

² And the LORD answered me:

“Write the vision; → *The King James Version calls this a “burden.”*

make it plain on tablets,
so he may run who reads it

³ For still the vision awaits its appointed time; → *Who? And why is “he” running?*

it hastens to the end—it will not lie.

If it seems slow, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay. → *This seems like a contradiction.*

(HAB. 2:2–3)

Given the facts that this book is written in poetry and poetry requires us to seek after its meaning, what’s ironic about the first sentence God speaks to Habakkuk in this passage?

There is nothing plain about the poetry of Habakkuk. So, this is not speaking of the style of writing, rather the intention of it.

The New International Version reads: “Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.” A herald is an official messenger assigned to bring news about something.

What can we assume if God is expecting Habakkuk to send someone running with this “plain” message?

What did God instruct Habakkuk to write the message on?

Of course, we have a lot of ancient documents and forms of communication carved on tablets, but as early as 1500 BC, scrolls of papyrus, parchment, or leather were other common methods of writing and a bit less tedious than carving on stone or wood tablets. It’s likely that Habakkuk was using the latter. It was a unique instruction that stands out in the pages of Scripture. Only a few other writers recorded similar specific instructions from God about the messages He gave them. Moses records that the Ten Commandments were written on stone tablets (Ex. 24:12). Isaiah reveals that he wrote his beautiful prophecy of Christ’s birth on wood tablets (Isa. 30:8). And Job reveals that he recorded wisdom on a rock concerning how to suffer (Job 19:24).

What might we assume based on the fact that Habakkuk is instructed to write this on tablets rather than on scrolls?

Why might these authors, including Habakkuk, have been specifically instructed to use tablets rather than easier methods of inscription?

Having these books written on more durable materials communicates that God wanted these messages to last. Why? Habakkuk 2:3 may offer us some clues.

What promises about the revelation does God make? And what will they require of Habakkuk?

When I read this verse, I wanted to point out conflict in stating that Habakkuk had to “wait for it,” and that it “will not delay.” It seems God often asks us to wait, especially when we are facing painful storms in our lives.

Read Philippians 4:6. Why does God allow us to wait patiently for Him to show up in our times of need?

Oh, if only God offered us immediate results for our prayer requests and did not make us dust off our patience, dig up some steadfast staying power, and muster up our joy! But He often takes us through monsoon seasons that require those very things of us. Often when we come out the other side, we see that God has used it to help us remember our faith.



When Jesus stilled the wind and raging waters that day on the lake for the fearful fishermen, He used it to invite them to remember what they’d lost for a moment. Luke records that the Savior asked them: *Where is your faith?*

He didn’t ask: *Don’t you have any faith?*

He knew they had it. I imagine Him asking them this in the same tone He might have asked them, *Well, where were your raincoats? Don’t you think they could have been helpful in this situation?*

This was just the prompting they needed to remember. They turned to one another and said, *Who is this!? Even the winds and water obey Him!*

The question is not answered, but one is implied: *God is with us!*

Whatever “wind” and “water” you’re facing in your storm, I assure you of this: God is with you. Even if you’ve forgotten to remember that.



For today's prayer activity, imagine that Jesus has been sleeping in your proverbial storm, whatever that may be. Write what you would say to awaken Him. And then imagine He asks you, "Where is your faith?" What would you tell Him? Do you need to remember? Write a prayer in the space below.

MEDITATION 2

Are you living by faith or fear?

"Noah believed in rain before *rain* was a word."⁵

That sentence stopped me dead in my tracks recently.

And it's not just because when I get to heaven, I want to see Jesus and *then* Mrs. Noah. Animal lover that I am, it has always been on my bucket list to have tea with her and thank

her for helping God save all those lovely creatures. But more than that, she was one amazing woman of faith.

Burdened by the broken condition of the world, Noah and his wife had faith that God would fix things. They did not fixate on the chaos around them; they kept their minds tuned in to the God they trusted. They reacted with faith instead of fear. They built a boat. A big one. Even though they'd never seen a drop of rain.

Until recently, I had not considered the absolute insanity of that kind of faith. Crazy as it seemed, Noah built an ark proving his faith in God.

Is your world looking a little broken? Or a lot?

Do you need some “rain” in your life?

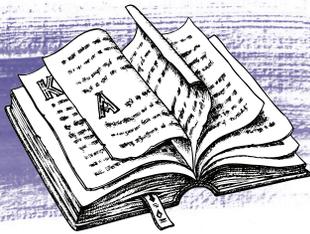
Do you have the faith to believe God will send it? And to live as if you believe it?

Or are you struggling to even believe that God is up there? Or that He is good?

You're in just the right place, my friend.

Habakkuk was struggling to believe that God was up there too.

But by the time he gets midway through his storm, he has remembered what was lost.



Today, we'll complete our study in the center of Habakkuk, and we will examine the thesis for the book. Begin by reading and making notes about your observations for Habakkuk 2:4 in your Bible.

What phrase or line in the poetry is familiar because you've read it in other parts of the Bible or heard it spoken frequently? Look up Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11 to see how the apostle Paul quoted Habakkuk. Then, look up Hebrews 10:38 to see how the author of Hebrews referenced it. Write the key phrase below.

Let's start this study with a good solid definition of faith.
From a faith perspective, our confidence and trust rests in God.

FAITH
(feyth)

.....
noun. Confidence or trust in a person or thing.⁶
.....

Look up Hebrews 11:1. Based on this verse, write your own definition of faith below.

Hebrews 11:1–40 honors individuals of exemplary faith.

Read Hebrews 11:13, which is no doubt another spot where the author was referencing Habakkuk. Answer the following questions.

How were these people living when they died?

Why did they have to continue that way?

But they still “saw” the things they hoped for. How?

What did this make them feel like?

Believing in the God of the universe and all of His promises can make you feel like a stranger. But those who walk by faith keep believing until the moment they are called “home.”

How has living by faith made you feel like an alien or stranger in your own corner of the world?

I’ve listed a few of the “card-carrying members of the Hall of Faith” below. These are not people who just said they believed something. They acted on what they believed.

Skim Hebrews 11:1–40. What was the specific thing that each of the people below “had not yet seen,” making their faith worthy of mention? You’ll need to draw on your understanding of these key Bible characters. I’ve included the passage where their story originally appears in case you want to reference it.

CARD CARRYING MEMBER OF THE HALL OF FAITH	WHAT THEY HAD NOT YET SEEN
Noah (Gen. 6:9–9:17)	Rain
Abraham (Gen. 12:25)	
Sarah (Gen. 12:25)	
Joseph (Gen. 37–50)	

A home and sense of belonging. Babies. Deliverance from human trafficking and abuse. Children who walk with God. Maybe the greats of the faith longed for some of the same things we do.

There’s another thing we have in common with them. They lived in a broken world full of broken people surviving broken dreams.

So do we.

As we get to know Habakkuk and those his writing impacted, our own experiences of fear and faith will be validated or re-directed through Scripture. Our faith will be remembered as we examine how God has worked on behalf of others.

When you learn how God has worked throughout history, you can depend on His working in a similar way with you.

—HENRY T. BLACKABY AND CLAUDE V. KING⁷

That brings me back to Noah. It was a dark time to be alive. The Bible states that people were violent and corrupt (Gen. 6:5). It is not difficult to imagine a world where murder and war were the norm. Only eight people were chosen by God to harbor inside the ark (1 Peter 3:20). The rest were so completely depraved that you and I may have a hard time imagining it.

Noah—like every other individual in the Hall of Faith—could have focused on all the pain he saw around him. He lived in anxious, fearful times. But he did not wear his hurt. He wore his hope.

He chose faith over fear. Will you?





To prepare for today's prayer activity, I want to invite you to take inventory of your own life. This is a long assignment. I want to be thorough about pinpointing your need as we get started. Are you living by faith? Or are you living by fear? Answer the questions prayerfully.

LIVING BY FAITH

Below are some of the evidences and outcomes of faith. Check the ones that are true of you. The questions below each category are to help you consider it carefully.

____ YOU ARE JUSTIFIED IN CHRIST AND SAVED

(Eph. 2:8; John 3:16; Rom. 10:9)

- Are you mindful of your sin and aware of its impact?
- Was there a time in your life that you were sure that Christ lived, died, and rose again? Did you confess it with your mouth to others? Are you "saved"?
- Is there evidence in your life that Christ has changed you? Has your confession of faith proven to be genuine? Do you live free from the shame of your sin and in full joy of your salvation?

____ YOU EXPERIENCE ANSWERS TO YOUR PRAYERS

(Matt. 17:20; 15:28; Mark 11:24)

- Do you take your burdens, complaints, and woes to God? Do you seek answers from Him?
- When was the last time you felt God answered a prayer with a clear yes, no, or wait?
- Can you recount stories in your life where God showed up to rescue you or those you love?

____ YOU HAVE PEACE AND JOY

(Rom. 5:1; Isa. 26:3; James 1:2-4; Phil. 4:4-9)

- Even though there are trials in your life, is the overall tenor of your spirit peaceful? When you face difficult times, do you remain largely peaceful?

- Do you have a sense that even difficult things will strengthen your faith and perfect you as an individual?
- Do you choose to rejoice when circumstances are difficult, resulting in a shift in your emotions? Are you certain that God is in control of everything?

YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO OVERCOME AND LIVE VICTORIOUSLY IN CHRIST

(Eph. 6:16; 1 John 5:4; John 1:5)

- Do you have an awareness of the battle between good and evil? And do you sense that you have power to overcome the darkness through faith and prayer?
- Though you sometimes feel tempted, is your life lived in the direction of moral purity and holiness, as opposed to generally succumbing to sinful desires?

YOU LIVE SURRENDERED TO CHRIST

(Heb. 11:8; Jer. 29:11)

- Have you surrendered your life purpose to God? Are you doing what He has created you, equipped you, and prepared you to do with your life? Are you aware that He has a good plan, even if you cannot see exactly what it is or how it unfolds?
- Do you sense the joy of living your life in obedience to God? Are you aware that your paycheck is heavenly and intangible? Are you certain you have an inheritance?

YOU HAVE CONFIDENCE ABOUT THE FUTURE

(Heb. 11:1; Prov. 31:25; 2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 8:28)

- Do you look to the future with happiness and joy? Do you laugh (as opposed to cry) about what's ahead?
- Do you feel hopeful when you think about the future? Even if things aren't all going in the direction you'd planned, do you sense that God is at work and will bring something good out of where you are?

LIVING BY FEAR

Below are some of the evidences and outcomes of fear. Check any of them that are true of you.

YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE NOT A PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

(Rom. 11:20; Heb. 4:2; 11:6)

- Do you feel like you don't fit in or don't belong around church or around Christian people?
- Do you doubt God's existence? Do you struggle to understand the words you read in the Bible?
- Do you feel cut off or rejected from people at church even when they are warm and welcoming to you?
- Have you made a conscious decision that you are not a Christian?

YOU GENERALLY FEEL YOUR PRAYERS ARE NOT ANSWERED

(Matt. 13:58; 21:22; Mark 11:24; James 1:6; 4:3)

- Do you feel like God does not hear your prayers? Are you disappointed with the number of times you can remember feeling like God answered your prayers?
- Are your motives often built on your selfish desires rather than on faith-filled promises?

YOU EXPERIENCE A GREAT DEAL OF FEAR AND ANXIETY

(John 14:1-2; 2 Tim. 1:7; Ps. 32:10)

- Do you struggle with overwhelming or constant fear and anxiety (as opposed to occasional)? Is your natural state of reaction to the future fearful?
- Do you react fearfully towards others during difficult times, rather than responding with self-control and love and peace?
- As a general rule, do you live under the weight of a sick heart? Do you feel weighed down by anxiety? Do you have a hard time remembering that God has a good plan?

____ **YOU'RE LIVING IN BONDAGE TO ADDICTION AND SIN**

(Heb. 3:12, 13; Rom. 4:20)

- Do you seem to be powerless over sin, even when you know it's wrong? Is there a recurring sinful habit or pattern that you have been unable to break?
- Do you no longer even feel convicted about behavior that you know is bad for you or is called sin in the Bible? Is your heart growing hard?
- Have you begun to doubt that God can even forgive you?

____ **YOU SUFFER FROM A LACK OF PURPOSE AND DIRECTION**

(James 1:5, 6; Heb. 10:36)

- Are you having a hard time discovering your life's purpose? Do you feel like you are tossed to and fro in various directions without a solid compass to direct you?
- Do you feel like giving up? Are you prone to forget what God has promised you in His word about your purpose and future? Have you forgotten entirely?

____ **YOU HAVE NO ENTHUSIASM ABOUT THE FUTURE**

(Prov. 12:25; 3:5-6)

- Is your natural state of reaction about the future negative?
- Do you lean on your own understanding of the future without applying God's Truth and direction to your path in life?
- As a general rule, do you live under the weight of a sick heart? Do you have a hard time remembering that God is unfolding a good plan?

Based on what you sensed God saying as you prayed through this inventory, are you living primarily in faith or predominantly in fear? Write a prayer to God, communicating what you would like Him to help you change.

MEDITATION 3

*When was the last time you
heard from God?*

As I pound out these words on a computer, another year is coming to a close and it's official: the number one highlighted, shared, and looked-up verse of the year is a healing balm for anxiety and fear.⁸

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

(PHIL. 4:6)

What are you afraid of right now? I bet there is something. The future. The bills. An old wound. An addiction. Spending your life alone. Spending your energy in a purposeless career.

Everything in me wants to tell you, *"It's going to be okay."*

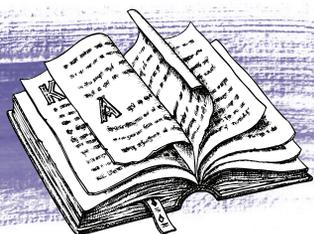
But that platitude will make you weak. It will lull you into comfortable complacency. God knows you were made for more. So, let me tell you the truth.

First, in all likelihood, what's ahead is going to be so much harder than you can imagine. Of course, that's not a guarantee. Sometimes we get a bye.

The second thing you need to know is this: If you can learn to live in faith rather than fear, it's going to be so much more amazing than you can imagine. And that I can promise you.

God wants to strengthen you for what's ahead. He wants the muscles of your emotions, your mind, and your will to be trained for walking in the most difficult places.

So, I'm not going to tell you what you want to hear. I'm going to take you to God's Word and invite God's Spirit to tell you what you need to hear. And we'll use the ancient writing of the prophet Habakkuk to turn up the volume.



For today's study activity, I'd like you to become better acquainted with Habakkuk. You'll quickly see that you may have some things in common with him. Begin by reading and making observations about Habakkuk 1:1a.

Say the name of the writer of this book out loud.

Just kidding! No one knows how to pronounce Habakkuk. Just have confidence when you say it. You're probably saying it wrong, but so is everyone else!

What title does he use?

The book of Habakkuk is a vision the prophet receives from God. In the original Hebrew, this word is rooted in the noun *hazon*, which means "vision, revelation."⁹

Many years ago, my husband Bob was burdened by the pressure he was receiving from some people to write a long-term strategic plan that encapsulated his vision for Grace Prep, a Christian high school we founded together. While he and I both feel it can be useful to have a mission statement and some short-term objectives, we often see churches and ministries pursue human-centered ideas rather than God-sized tasks. Our own plans often get in the way of our ability to see God's plans.

Bob asked God for wisdom, and the Lord directed him to this Bible verse. (Excuseth the King James. It's what my husband groweth up on.)

**Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.
(PROV. 29:18 KJV)**

Circle the English version of the word *hazon* (meaning vision or revelation) in the verse above. Then, double underline the outcome of living without it.

How might someone living without vision (or revelation) “perish”? What might they experience?

If you are not hearing from God concerning the direction of your future, you will grow dispassionate, disinterested, and disgruntled no matter how many good ideas you have. You and I need to hear from God. We need *hazon*. Our emotional and spiritual heartbeat grows faint if we are not directed by Him. Purpose fades. Hope dies. And before long, we’re forgetting to remember.

Ironically, one important element that calls us into our future is our past. So much about what God has ahead for us is tied to what God has already done! Therefore, we must remember. Treasuring what God has done in our past helps us make it through difficult times and hope in what God can do in the future.

I find that we know this in our heads. However, when times get difficult, we often forget to remember what God has already done in our lives. To help us embrace this, we’ll be plotting Habakkuk’s timeline. By the end of our study, we’ll have charted his past, present, and future in an effort to build our own faith.



TIME FOR TIMELINES!

Turn to pages 222–223 in the back of the book.

You’ll discover a two-page timeline spread. We’re going to begin to plot important dates, names, and events for the nation of Judah to gain perspective as we study this book. A lot of the stuff that happens on the timeline of Jewish history gives us context to fill in layers of meaning within the author’s poetry. Let’s get the first two recorded right now.

Find 930 BC on the timeline and note how I’ve handwritten, “Israel Divides.”¹⁰

This is a somewhat significant event in the history of Israel. I found that plotting on the timeline helped me to see when Israel was one nation and when it had divided. The Northern half retained the name Israel and comprised ten tribes. The Southern half was called Judah and

included the other two tribes, which retained the sacred land of Israel. Habakkuk's prophecy concerned the nation of Judah.

Find the bar that runs from 612 BC to 588 BC and write "Habakkuk."¹¹

Habakkuk's ministry began in 612 BC and ended about 588 BC. Sometime between those bookends of our prophet's life, he wrote his poetry for us. And he's pretty worked up when he does. Why? The King James Version makes it a bit easier to see.

Circle the word that the KJV uses in place of the English Standard Version's oracle.

"The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see."

(HAB. 1:1)

To Habakkuk, God seemed silent. That would have probably been stressful for a man who had been chosen by God to carry His *hazon* to the people. For that reason alone, the prophet could have been burdened, but there was a reason God was silent. He was frustrated with His people.

And so was Habakkuk. He was deeply disturbed with the sins of the Jewish people, which we'll look at specifically in Meditation 4. The state of the nation was impacting him personally, and there would be more suffering to come. Unfortunately for Habakkuk, he was a prophet. So he knew it. If we peeked at the end of his book, we'd essentially see the Great Depression meeting an ancient World War. No wonder he's burdened.

A few synonyms for burden are listed below. Circle any that seem all too familiar to you concerning what you just recorded.

<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>Hardship</i>	<i>Grievance</i>
<i>Concern</i>	<i>Load</i>	<i>Obstruction</i>
<i>Difficulty</i>	<i>Affliction</i>	<i>Sorrow</i>
<i>Stress</i>	<i>Purposelessness</i>	<i>Depression</i>

What burden are you currently suffering under? What is it that you have but do not want? What do you want, but do not have? Where do you need hazon?

In the next few days, we'll examine what Habakkuk did with his burden. We have a clue in the meaning of his name.

Look back at your notes from this week's podcast if you don't recall the meaning of Habakkuk's name. How are these two actions alike, but different?

Does Habakkuk wrestle with God or embrace Him when He seems silent? Tomorrow we'll find out. In the meantime, do you wish God would not be so silent? Tell Him.



When was the last time you really felt like you heard God's revelation of Truth in the depths of your being? Are you craving answers and direction from Him? Write a prayer to God below.



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