

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

WHEN DARKNESS RAINS
IT'S NOT FAIR, GOD!
FEBRUARY 21-27, 2016



MAIN POINT

When we feel that God is not fair, we wait for justice and trust that God will make things right.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. What circumstances most often tempt you to think God is not fair?

2. How do these types of situations stretch our faith?

Leader: "Life is not fair." You probably heard this from your mother as a child when you did not get something you wanted or when someone hurt your feelings. From a young age, we begin to see that the world is not as it should be. There is injustice. People who are bad do well for themselves. In those moments, if we are honest, we can admit it is hard to trust God. However, life seeming unfair does not mean that God is unfair. God is good and gracious and will one day return and make right all that is wrong. Until that day, we trust in God's character as revealed in His Word.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HABAKKUK 1:12-2:3.**

Leader: Today's discussion is from a small portion of Habakkuk, but pre-read Habakkuk 1-3 for the context of this prophet's writing. Habakkuk was unique among the Old Testament prophets. Most prophets relayed the word of the Lord to the people, but Habakkuk did just the opposite. He took the words of the people to God. The issue for Habakkuk was how God used Assyria to punish both Israel and Judah (though God rescued Judah in the end). Habakkuk wrestled with why God used these evil nations to punish people who are more righteous than they are, like God's own prophets. Those nations were just evil. It didn't seem right to Habakkuk that they could prosper while God's people were destroyed.

3. At this point in history, Assyria had destroyed Israel and punished Judah. Babylon was on the horizon to rule and everyone knew it. Both were purely evil nations. What was the main point of Habakkuk's complaints to God? What injustices did he observe?

4. Habakkuk addressed his very direct questions about God's justice to God Himself. What must Habakkuk have believed about God to talk to Him in this way? What about you—do you ever get worried or lose faith?

Leader: Habakkuk struggled with how to understand God's actions in history, especially His use of an unrighteous nation as the instrument of His justice. The "one who is wicked" in verse 13 referred to the nation of Babylon, who God was going to use to punish the nation of Judah. Habakkuk complained that rewarding the "more wicked" in order to punish the "less wicked" seemed inconsistent with God's pure goodness. As bad as the Jews were, they were more righteous than the wicked Babylonian invaders. Despite not understanding what God was doing, Habakkuk chose to patiently wait on God to bring direction and clarity to his ministry.

5. How do you react when you see widespread injustice? Why is trusting in God's character the best approach in these situations? How does Habakkuk's response give you confidence that you can take your complaints to a God who listens?

6. In Habakkuk 2:2 and following, God answers Habakkuk's questions. What does God's willingness to be questioned and answer questions tell us about God?

Leader: Throughout the course of this short book God never rebukes Habakkuk for asking Him questions. Neither are Habakkuk's questions dismissed off hand. The fact that God answers the questions is further proof that God has a plan for the ages. Though Babylon will come and appear to flourish, they will be judged themselves. God is the most important answer to life's questions. We approach Him in faith and know that He loves us enough to address our concerns, which He has done through the testimony of Scripture.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HABAKKUK 3:16-19.

7. What was surprising to Habakkuk about the way God acted, positively or negatively? Why was it surprising?

8. What can we learn from Habakkuk's concluding verses about a God-honoring response to our questions of justice?

9. Read Habakkuk 2:4. What does that verse tell you about how Habakkuk arrived at his attitude in 3:16-19?

Leader: Earlier in the Book of Habakkuk, God responded to the prophet by telling him "the righteous person will live by his faithfulness" (Hab. 2:4). This often quoted verse gives us the answer to how Habakkuk was able to reconcile God's allowance of evil with trust in Him. His faith in God allowed him to trust in God's ultimate justice over his momentary circumstances.

10. How hard is it for you to do what Habakkuk did in the face of personal injustices you suffer? What can you do to bring yourself to a response like Habakkuk's?

Leader: The take away for us from the Book of Habakkuk is that God would punish the evil nations for their wickedness. Unfortunately, Habakkuk had to wait for that to happen. So, he responds with faith in God's ultimate justice.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- 11. What in your life seems unfair? How can you trust God in these moments?**

- 12. What impact does it have on those who watch us when we as Christians respond to tough situations with faith and trust in the Lord? On the other hand, what impact has the faith of others in our Growth Group or in your life had on you when you have struggled to trust God?**

- 13. How would things be different if you lived and centered your thoughts around the words, “the Sovereign LORD is my strength” (v. 19)?**

PRAYER

Pray for the Lord to return and His kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. Express your confidence in God’s character and ask Him to help you trust Him in those moments when life seems less than fair.

MEMORIZE

¹⁷Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,¹⁸yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. Habakkuk 3:17-18

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

HABAKKUK 1:12–2:3.

1:13. Habakkuk complained that rewarding the more wicked in order to punish the less wicked seemed inconsistent with God's pure goodness. As bad as the Jews were, they were more righteous than the wicked Babylonian invaders.

1:14-16. Like fishermen who pull in a huge catch of fish from the sea and as a result begin worshiping their net, so Babylon captured hordes of people and thus worshiped its own military strength (cp. v. 11).

1:17. How could a just God allow Babylon's merciless slaughter of the nations, much less their triumph against His people Judah?

2:1. Habakkuk braced himself for God's response. Hebrew tokachath ("reproof, reprimand") is probably stronger than the word complaint suggests: The prophet had presumed to correct God. Alternatively, it may refer to God's reproof of Habakkuk: "[His] reproof of me." The Syriac translation preserves another text for 2:1b that is possibly the original reading: "What He will reply about my reproof [of Him]."

2:2-3. God replied that the vision must be written down clearly for—in spite of Habakkuk's objections—the vision of the Babylonian invasion would come true.

HABAKKUK 3:16-19.

3:17. Habakkuk accepted that the period ahead would be a trying time. The six losses he foresaw were what could happen to him in a Babylonian invasion. These losses seem to have an ascending order of severity in them, each more serious than the previous one. The fig tree might not bud. Figs were delicacies, not staple foods. No fruit like grapes might be available. Grapes provided a daily drink. Other liquids still would be available. The olive crop provided oil for cooking and lights. That loss would be greater than the loss of figs or grapes. Should the fields produce no wheat or barley, one would not have necessary basic foods. Also, should no sheep or cattle be available, starvation was possible.

3:18. Habakkuk declared if all of the losses mentioned in the previous verse came to pass, he would still triumph in the Lord. Why? He would live by faith in God's plans, and God would deliver him. He would rejoice in the God of his salvation. Everything might be gone but God would still be there.

3:19. Habakkuk ended his prophecy with a personal confession of faith and hope. God had come through with help to the prophet's questions and confusions. He testified Yahweh my Lord was his strength. He could not face the events of the future without the Lord's presence and power. He and Judah faced mountainous problems. Habakkuk believed the Lord would enable him to tackle those problems like a deer tackles the mountains. A deer is sure-footed and moves easily and safely on mountainous terrain. The prophet knew God would enable him and his people to face and overcome everything they would face in the future.