

A single mango tree in Malihabad, India produces over 300 varieties! This is the result of decades of grafting by grower Kaliulla Khan ([read more](#)). What is more, this tree named Al-Muqarrar, is said to be over 100 years old! What an amazing example of resilience and productivity over time! We need resilience as we are launching into a new year! At such a time, looking back at the challenges of 2025, do you feel resilient? What kind of spiritual resolve do you feel that you have for 2026?

Proposition

Perhaps you have questions about this year ahead. Today we are launching three sermons from the minor prophet, Habakkuk. Our series is **"Even If"**. Only fifty-six verses long, this book is often quoted in the New Testament. Most notably, "*the righteous will live by his faith*" is found in Romans 1:17.

Habakkuk seems less God's spokesman to the people as his book is full of his questions for God. One author suggests he is like John the Baptist: "*the voice of one crying in the wilderness*". Habakkuk may have been hidden but his heart was laid bare before God! At least a half dozen questions are in chapter one.

Habakkuk 1:1 does not tell us much about the man. Obviously, he was a prophet – entrusted with God's Word ("oracle"). It is possible that he was a Levite. Notice that in 3:1,9,13 there is liturgical instruction. We also know his name means "embracing" ("embraced of God"). He was likely a contemporary of Jeremiah.

Habakkuk prophesied in 626 to 590 BC (or 612-05) before **Judah** was defeated (586 BC) [SEE CHART](#) (SOURCE: <https://genfamily.church/sermon-series/the-minor-prophets/>) **Israel** was conquered by **Assyria** (722 BC). The **Chaldeans** (*kasdim* 1:6; Babylonians) defeated Assyria (616 BC) – which was unthinkable (1:5)! Habakkuk was faced with the decaying spiritual state of his people and a political noose tightening around the neck of Judah. No wonder he had questions. Let's read **Habakkuk 1:1-17** and consider two questions.

[1] Why do I have to put up with this? vv. 1-11

Even as His faithful followers, we many have many question for God? For Habakkuk, the first was "*how long, O Lord*" (v. 2). What were the things Habakkuk "*up with which he had to put*" (a witty Churchill-ism)?

- ***There were problems from within – sinfulness, destruction, violence, injustice (vv.2b-4).***
- ***There were perils from without – wicked Chaldeans/Babylonians threatened (vv.6-11).***

What are your questions for God? Do they revolve around a certain current international crisis and the confusion or fear it brings to our lives? Do you have concerns about the moral decline of our nation? We may even be concerned for the health of our church or family. Consider some current societal values:

- ***Nationalism*** is a focus on one's own nation's interests, values, privileges to exclusion of others.
- ***Moralism*** is based on a belief in the innate goodness of humans to do the right action.
- ***Relativism*** is the philosophy that truth is not absolute so all lifestyle choices are affirmed even if sinful.
- ***Consumerism*** is the acquisition of more possessions which fosters selfishness, discontent, and debt.
- ***Individualism*** is a focus on autonomy which leads to isolation, broken relationships, loneliness.
- ***Credentialism*** is seeking one's identity through degrees thinking social ills are solved by education.
- ***Hedonism*** is the endless pursuit of pleasure; sexual expression often becomes the highest ideal.

How do we faithfully live for God in such a society? Are you asking God, "how much longer!?" In ***My Utmost For His Highest***, Oswald Chambers asked this question: "*What is the use of presenting me with an ideal I cannot possibly come near? I am happier without knowing it. What is the good of telling me to be what I never can be – to be pure in heart, to do more than my duty, to be perfectly devoted to God?*" (Dodd & Mead, 1935, 203) [read more](#)

Are you asking such questions submissively or bitterly? Yet we were never asked to be “perfectly devoted to God” in our own energy! We must be filled with Holy Spirit presence and power to be spiritually resilient.

[2] Why can You not stop this situation? vv. 12-17

As far removed from Habakkuk’s experience as we are, this second question (v.12) is not far from our own experience. Given all that was occurring within and without, Habakkuk wondered something very common to Christians. Is God compassionate and capable to bring about change? But as soon as the question came out of Habakkuk’s mouth (v.12a) he anticipated and articulated the answer – which was two-fold.

- **God’s character may be misunderstood, but it is always reliable – vv. 12-13**
- **God’s punishment may be unusual, but it is always with purpose – vv. 14-17**

Do you ever ask God why He does not stop a serious, tragic situation? This is a precarious pivot point in our Christian life! We can fall away from confidence in God. Or we can lean into His sovereignty and purposes, even when we do not comprehend – remember, the righteous lives by faith!

Habakkuk’s first volley of questions concludes in 2:1 – which “stands by itself” (Minor Prophets, H. A. Ironside, Loizeaux, 1988, 280). The prophet’s “I will” statements declare his responsiveness to God. This transformed questioning God from **complaint** to **compliance**! What is pictured here? Habakkuk has in mind a **watchman** on the rampart of the city wall. Mizpeh was a typical fortified pre-exile city which had a wall 600 yards long, 12 yards high, and 4 yards wide. With ten towers this was the kind of setting Habakkuk would have had in mind when he spoke of being a watchman. Such work was a spiritual responsibility for all OT prophets (see Ezekiel 3:17; Carl E. Arnedding, **TEBC**, F. E. Gaebelein, ed, Zondervan, 1985, 509).

The **Messianic Prophecy Bible Project** offers insight into to this role of watchman. Jesus Himself, being the ultimate watchman, who announce the Kingdom of God, calling for repentance and belief (Matthew 4:17; Luke 24:9 [read more](#)). What can we see “from the wall” in Canada today. Two years ago, **FaithToday** (EFC) commissioned a study of small Canadian churches. In **Significant Church**, authors Rick Hiemstra and Lindsay Callaway write about community perceptions and cultural distance faced by congregations.

As pastors talked about their congregation’s relationships with their communities, there was usually a sense they were trying to overcome what they believed to be negative community impressions either of their congregation specifically or of evangelical Christianity generally. One pastor said his community had anti-church and anti-Jesus attitudes. He described his church’s relationship goals with their community in the following way: “[That t]he people inside the community don’t see us as this, you know, toxic, angry entity inside the community that actually does more harm than good, that hurts people or destroys lives or just uses people for their money or whatever it is, the stereotypes that people have of the church.” Another pastor talked about his church working to overcome their reputation as “kind of a very strict – I’ll use the phrase ‘holier than thou’ kind of a reputation … where you’re not really welcome....These are stark descriptions of cultural distance with their communities. Pastors are aiming not to be toxic, angry, holier than thou, tucked in the back corner, judgmental, and a social drain on their communities. It is a list of nots, and clearly pastors feel overcoming these is the most pressing relational priority. (Faith Today Publications, 2023, 129)

Conclusion – See Digging Deeper

Children ask many questions – and they are not always defiant! Question asking is good when it seeks God in the process. In a place of honest searching we may be far more submissive to God than if we practice superficial religion. Habakkuk cried out to God for answers and found God faithful (**Psalm 9:9-12**).

God’s sovereignty allows for earnest questions! What grace and freedom this gives. Along with this privilege is the responsibility to “keep watch to see what He will speak to me” (2:2b). Are we prepared to watch and wait on the rampart, until God acts?

Also, I have an assignment for you. This is about the values that we share as a congregation. Remember the list of unhealthy values found in our society? We need to articulate and act on Biblical values! During this series, I invite you to share with me one, most important value you hold for Cornerstone.

A Prayer for a New Year

*Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your holy Word
 Take Your truth, plant it deep in us
 Shape and fashion us in Your likeness
That the light of Christ might be seen today
 In our acts of love and our deeds of faith
 Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
 All Your purposes for Your glory*

*Teach us, Lord, full obedience
 Holy reverence, true humility
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
 In the radiance of Your purity
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
 Your majestic love and authority
 Words of pow'r that can never fail
 Let their truth prevail over unbelief*

*Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us
 Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
 That will echo down through eternity
And by grace, we'll stand on Your promises
And by faith, we'll walk as You walk with us
 Speak, O Lord, 'til Your church is built
 And the earth is filled with Your glory*

Songwriters: Keith Getty / Stuart Townend
Speak, O Lord lyrics © Thankyou Music, Thank You Music Ltd.