



Meredith Brock: Okay. So, our upcoming First 5 mobile app study is on the book of Habakkuk and we thought it would be really fun to bring Joel in here on the show so we could ask him some questions about this mystery book. And this will be a little bit different than how we normally have our conversations on the podcast, but we feel like it's going to be really, really helpful, especially around kind of intimidating, obscure, strange book, like Habakkuk. So, are we ready guys?

Kaley Olson: I'm ready. Joel, are you ready?

MB: I can't wait.

KO: We're putting you on the spot, but I feel like this is your time to shine.

MB: This is when he thrives folks. Here we go.

KO: Yeah. I almost threw in like a really random question, like spell Habakkuk in Hebrew for us. But I decided not to. The first question is, and I think a lot of people are wondering this. Why are some of the books of the Bible like Psalms or Ruth or Daniel or the Gospels so popular, but then you've got poor Habakkuk sitting in the corner who kind of just gets, looked over a lot because maybe people don't really know about them?

Joel Muddamalle: Yeah. Well, I would just say for all of y'all that are listening and you heard Meredith talk about Habakkuk and you're panicking because you grew up in the church your whole life, and you've done the vacation Bible schools and you've done the felt boards. And you're like, wait, what? Huh? Like, what is, I just want to like comfort you. Like I had to go into seminary doing my M.Div. before I even like, realized that, Hey, by the way, there's this thing called minor prophets. And one of them is a Habakkuk guy, but we'll get to that. But think about something like the book of Psalms or Ruth or Daniel, like why is it that those are so appealing to us? Well, I think one is we can easily, instantly — almost started thinking about it— relate to these books.

And so, it's natural. So, I don't want us to feel guilty about that. Like the book of Psalms is a series of songs. Who doesn't love songs? We all love songs. We can probably associate a time of our life with a particular song. They're just powerful. Ruth and Daniel have these epic stories that we can read about and kind of think about it and say, oh

yeah, like I've had those Ruth moments in my life or Daniel moments. Then you've got something like Habakkuk and we've got like, what is a Habakkuk moment?

KO: I don't know Joel, tell me.

JM: So, I think one of the challenges is, and this might be a cultural thing, is I think that whatever's at the forefront of our vision, whatever is being presented to us often gets our attention, gets our affection, gets the limelight in the spot in our mind. But when you have a book like Habakkuk where you literally could, if your pages in the Bible stick together on accident, and you can just literally skip by the entire book, right? It's like three pages on some Bible font sizes. And so, the challenge though, is that the biblical writers and the Old Testament in particular, they don't prioritize by length of book of Bible.

They don't show us their value based off of how big a book is or even by the type of book it is. Every book in the Old Testament has its own unique and distinct reason for being there. That's why God has gifted it to us. And I think one of the biggest tragedies is when we overlook a book like Habakkuk and in fact, Habakkuk is super important to us. And so, one of the things — y'all want to get into the cultural context? Slow me down because I get excited.

MB: You said something that Bible nerds say that normal people don't understand. What in the world is a minor prophet, are there major prophets?

JM: Yes.

MB: Like what's the difference between the minors and the majors? Like why did Habakkuk get this sad title? Is minor bad? What does this mean?

JM: Right, right. Okay. That's really good. So, when we think of minor and major prophets, I think if I said like, Isaiah, I think I was like, oh yeah, Isaiah, like if you grew up in the church, right. If I said Jeremiah, like, oh yeah, I think I remember a guy named Jeremiah. Well, this is one of those English vernacular Western kind of things that we've done to help our minds group these books of the Bible. And so, the prophets were just literally spokespeople. They were mouthpieces for God. And so, the major prophets, the reason why they're titled the major prophets and this isn't like the original Hebrew. The original Hebrew doesn't say major prophets. It's a tag, just like the little headers in the top of your chapters in your Bible, like just okay. Pro tip. Those are not naturally like in the original Hebrew text.

MB: You mean there weren't chapter dividers?

JM: They were no chapter dividers. They weren't even verses right. Those help us as readers today, conceptualize these books or these sections of writing in the Bible. So, with the major prophets, it's literally just talking about books that are prophetic in nature that are bigger in size. Minor prophets are literally books that are prophetic in nature

that are smaller in size. There's also another little nuance, usually the major prophets because they're bigger, are dealing with multiple themes. They might deal with justice and they might deal with worship and praise or all these. Minor prophets typically because they're smaller in nature, they've got to be more laser focused. I think this is another thing that's actually really challenging is we're so drawn to the major prophets, but sometimes we get confused, but it's natural because they got so much stuff going on. In fact, I think if you want to enter it, like have your entry point into the prophets, start with the minor prophets, right. Cause they're going to be laser focused. They got one mission, one vision and they're trying to address that thing. And that's really what we'll find with Habakkuk.

KO: That's awesome.

MB: That is so helpful. I love it. Well, so let's talk about Habakkuk. Like what is the laser focus there? Like what's the context that we're looking at?

JM: Yeah. So first we have to understand that Habakkuk, the time that they write. And so, guys, if I said something like the pandemic, what would you all say?

KO: 2020. If you say the pandemic, like I want to assign a time to it kind of like whenever we're learning history or like the American revolution or whatever.

JM: Great depression. Your grandparents. And what is the feeling around the great depression?

MB: Sad.

KO: Despair.

JM: I think hiding money in like floors and in beds. Right. Okay. So, we could go on and on, but this is so important. Sometimes what happens when we read the Bible is, we strip the natural context out of it. And when we strip the natural historical context out of it, we actually impose our own context into it, which can get us into a lot of trouble because that's not the natural writing that was taking place. And so, Habakkuk, we have to orient ourselves on what is happening in the life of Israel. In the life of Israel, at one point in time, the Israelites were at the top of their game. They were winning championships every year. That's an NBA reference for all of my friends out there.

They were winning the Olympics every year. If that's a little more relatable, but at some point, in time, they just like broke apart. And so, Habakkuk is actually writing at a time when the kingdom of Israel is broken into Northern and Southern, the Northern kingdom is actually eventually fully destroyed and the Southern kingdom is left. And now Habakkuk is the lone prophet watching all of the former glory that the people of Israel had literally fall apart in front of him. And there is this massive nation called the Babylonians that are rising in this far off distant place. And all of a sudden there are these own ...

MB: Oh no, this sounds terrible.

JM: ... They rise up getting and you're getting messengers, like y'all better watch out. The Babylonians are coming. They're taking over this, this and this. And here's poor Habakkuk and the people of Israel. Now here's the other problem. God had given Habakkuk and the people of Israel a very particular promise, that they would be a great nation. It's the Abrahamic promise. Like they would be great and multiply and their name would be great. And all the other nations would come under them. And have you ever been in a situation where you felt like, man, I got a promise from the Lord, but right now I'm sitting and the sitting I'm in right now is not promised but disaster. This is the historical context of Habakkuk. The people of Israel are ticked off. Habakkuk is very frustrated because all of the promises that God had given him and his people all look like, honestly, they're not promises they look like lies because they're not experiencing any of these things. In fact, they're experiencing the total opposite of it. So, this historical context kind of helps us to orient ourselves inside of this story.

KO: Wow. I think that leads us into a really good follow up question. So, you're talking about the context and what's going on. Things were really broken in Israel and God used Habakkuk to speak. And so, when I read Habakkuk, am I supposed to read it in the context of like what was happening, is God speaking this to me, am I supposed to apply this to my life? Or am I supposed to learn about the culture of the time and apply it to that? Can you help me understand? Like how am I supposed to read Habakkuk?

JM: Yeah. So, this is super important. So, this is like the, I don't know how to say this... this is so important. That's the only thing I can say. First and foremost, we have to read the Bible in its natural setting. We have to read it as a message given to those people that time. This is the miraculous nature of Scripture, though. It is never just isolated to that time, there is a bridge that is drawn between this ancient time and to our present time. Now what we have to do is figure out the principles, the application points. What are these eternal truths that are being presented that God is giving to the people of Israel during, when Habakkuk is walking around and dealing with all of these issues that we can apply to ourselves. And so, let me give you kind of a little bit of how we can apply this today. Here's the situation that Israel finds themselves in. They're upset with God; anybody ever been upset with God? No. Oh yeah.

JM: A hundred percent. A hundred percent good. All being honest today. That's very good. And what happens when you're upset with somebody? You typically like, you let them know, right? Yeah. If not to them, to other people, to our people. Right. We go to like, a close friend group and you're like, *Yo, I'm for sure going to let them all know what I'm dealing with right now. Guess what the people are doing?* They're venting to our boy Habakkuk. And so this is also really important. Prophets in the Old Testament, the typical way that prophets worked is that God would have a message, God would give the message to the prophet, the prophet would give that message to the people.

And that message would be like, y'all are not doing the things that you're supposed to do. Y'all have to get your act together otherwise consequences are going to happen. Right? This is so unique. The only other instance of this is like that happens in the Bible that I'm aware of in the Old Testament is the book of Job. There is a prophetic reversal that takes place. In fact, here, Habakkuk doesn't hear from God and then gives it to the people. Habakkuk hears from the people. And here's what they're saying. God seems to be a liar. He seems to be unjust. He seems to maybe even, and I would say this, this would be my interpretation of it. God even seems to be acting like the false gods of the nations around us because all of the stuff is just falling apart. So, Habakkuk has the uncomfortable and uncanny responsibility to now give this message to God and actually present the case of the Israelites to God Himself.

Like this is, I don't want to be Habakkuk. That's super heavy. And this is how God responds. I think this is the application point. God's response is actually Habakkuk chapter two. And He responds by saying, if it seems slow — and I love that — if it seems slow, the message seems slow. If what you're desiring seems slow. He says, wait for it. It's coming. God doesn't delay, but you have to be patient. You got to wait. Now this example of the application point. Now, are we dealing with the Babylonians that are rising? But like, nah, not that I'm aware of. Are we dealing with famine? And like, not that I'm aware of, but I do know we are dealing with a pandemic that at the time of this writing and what does life, what is it going to look like? And who might want this thing and God's answer to be immediate. And this is the beauty of God's Word. He says to Habakkuk, which is so true to us today. He says, be slow, be steady, wait for it. The time is coming. God's Word does not delay. It might feel slow at times. But what we experience as slowness is just God's right timing.

MB: Wow. Joel, this is so good. I'll be honest. I am really excited to go read Habakkuk. Y'all, I went to Bible college. I got a bachelor's degree in biblical studies and I remember Habakkuk, but not really, but what you're sharing and this is exactly what we're all about here at Proverbs. We hope that when you interact with our content and with what we're putting in front of you, it will give you a new passion for the Word of God. Okay. So, I'm going to ask one final question of us for you today. And so, I feel like I've got a good understanding of like, what was during the time of the writing of Habakkuk, but how does Habakkuk make us more like Jesus today? Like what does Habakkuk have to do with Jesus in my life today? What is it going to help me do?

JM: I think that's really good. I think one of the things that happens in the Old Testament is we want to see how does the Old Testament work itself out in the New Testament. And so this doesn't just come naturally. So, I want to just give you one of these teaching points and Habakkuk two for the very end of that verse has, but the righteous one will live by faith. This is crazy because this is one of the most prominent New Testament citations, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:37-38. The key word in this word, in this verse is faithfulness. The actual Hebrew word here has an underlying meaning of firmness, fidelity, steadfastness and trust. Here's the problem that the people of Israel experience, they ain't got none of that on them. And they are longing for

this. And how does a book like Habakkuk make us more like Jesus? It creates inside of us an anticipation and a longing for the one who would be firm.

The one who would have fidelity, the one who'd be steadfast, the one who is trustworthy. And so, we read a book like Habakkuk and we say, yes, we can acknowledge that there is a deep human longing in our hearts for one who can rectify all the evil that's taking place. And who do we look to? We look to Jesus. Jesus is the faithful one, but here's how the book of Habakkuk changes us. It doesn't just create anticipation and longing. It demands of us to be a new type of person. You see, we can't come and encounter the goodness of Jesus and experience the faithful of Jesus in the New Testament without that faithfulness being expected and required of us today. So how does a book like Habakkuk help us? I think we leave a book like Habakkuk with some questions, huh? In my marriage, in my parenting, in my friendships, in my work place, am I exhibiting faith, am I exhibiting firmness where I need to be firm, am I exhibiting a fidelity to like this mission, to this vision that I've said I'm going to do.

So, I want to just make this very on the ground. If your work has a vision and a mission and you have bought onto it, but your life and your words and your actions, don't represent that, that's an issue of fidelity. There's a compromise there. Are you steadfast in what you're going to say? Are you a trustworthy person? Like when you say you're going to be there, you're going to be there. And I think, especially for friendships y'all, we live in a day and age where we can say, *Yo, you're my friend Meredith and Kaley, you're my friends. And yet that friendship almost has no meaning anymore.* What does that actually mean? Like we're Instagram friends? We're Facebook friends or do you get the green little close friends thing on Instagram. On what level of friendship are we talking about? A book like Habakkuk, it's not only are we reading Habakkuk, but God through the book of Habakkuk is reading us and He's asking us, He's pleading with us. And I would even go further and say, He's demanding of us that we would emulate the person of Jesus. And here's what's so crazy. We're getting all of that from an Old Testament book called Habakkuk.

MB: I love it. I'm always so encouraged when I see, and I've said this so many times before to our staff and to other people, I became a believer when I was 17 and, kind of started reading the Bible and I always assumed that Jesus was God's way. There was a moment. God was like, oh gosh, what am I going to do? I mean, I guess I'm just going to, I mean, they're just a mess. I'm going to have to send my son down there, but that really and truly it was the plan from the beginning. And you can even see that in places like Habakkuk, where God's pointing to His son and He's pointing our hearts to the desire for His son. So, so good.

KO: It's so good. Well, and I think I'm just encouraged by this. And even just like, I have a passion now where I want to go open Habakkuk and I hope that our listeners have that too, but I think what's so cool about when you have Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is God with us, God in us. And because we have the Holy Spirit, we're then enabled to be able to read a book like Habakkuk and understand it and apply it to our life. God does not want us to live a life that's a void of His Word and Habakkuk

is His, in His Word. And that's really important. And I think too, we earlier talked about how passionate we are about studying biblical truth and really equipping people to know the truth and live the truth that we talk about verse five.

And that's why we have Joel on here today is to talk about Habakkuk, to get Meredith and I excited to talk about it, to get you guys as listeners excited to dig into it. But we also, as a team at Proverbs 31, create these awesome study guides that accompany our First 5 app. And I just want to take a moment. And Joel, I might ask you a couple of questions about like how they're created, because we've got a couple of pages from our Habakkuk study guide that we want to equip our podcast listeners with right now for free. And so that includes things like a welcome letter, the themes in Habakkuk, days one through three of the study, which are questions that you can dive into, where we see Habakkuk 2:4 in the New Testament. And it's all available on our show notes at [proverbsthirtyone.org/listen](http://proverbsthirtyone.org/listen). But Joel, will you just take a moment and share why you're passionate about the study guides and maybe explain some of the work that goes into creating those additional pages that equip people to study Habakkuk on their own.

JM: Yeah. I think a lot of people may have listened to this and go, wow, that's so intriguing. I didn't know anything about these Babylonian people. And while I didn't understand like the Greek, the Hebrew there. Wow. I also want to say, it probably feels really daunting to try to Google, what is the Hebrew word in Habakkuk 2:4?

I want to actually, I need to try that, to see what actually comes up, right. So, what happens in these study guides is we've got Bible people who have gone to school like me to study the Bible, the Greek and the Hebrew and commentaries. And we want to take these academic theological concepts and bring them in a presentable in everyday applicable context and kind of situation for you. And so, the study guide is almost like your personal little commentary to give you some background information, to help you think about the text in a certain way, and really to help you take the Bible from being like this thing that you're just reading to making, building that bridge to apply to your life. And that's why I love those daily questions because it's kind of pointing you in a certain way and you can have the sense of confidence and assurance that this isn't just some people in a basement that are Googling. We're looking at just scholarship, just trusted, biblical and theological scholarship, and we're presenting it to you. I think in a way that is so accessible.

And my hope is that you will get super excited about this. A group of y'all will be like, *Yo, I do want to go and learn Hebrew and you will become Hebrew scholars*. And I can't wait for that. If you're out there and you want to be a Hebrew scholar, I support you.

KO: I support that too. Yes. Well, all of those things that we talked about earlier, the welcome letter, the themes where we've packaged that up for you and you can get access to it at [proverbsthirtyone.org/listen](http://proverbsthirtyone.org/listen) on the show notes for today's episode is free. You can just download it.

MB: Absolutely. And our hope, our goal here is that you don't just listen to this podcast, turn it off and go on about your life and never talk about Habakkuk again because there's just too much good gold in there. So y'all join us in studying Habakkuk and we're going to be doing it in our First 5 mobile app, totally free mobile app that you can download in any of the app stores on your smartphone. And then we'll start the study on August 9, 2021. If you're listening to this in real time, but also you can head on over to Proverbs 31.org's bookstore, and purchase one of those study guides, because we want you to open up your Bible. Find that tiny little book of Habakkuk and get to know the minor prophet that he is. You like how I slid that in there, Joel? Talking about it like I know.

KO: Using that knowledge, there you go, Meredith. Well, I'm not sure if you guys have missed in-person events, but I sure have. And that's why we're excited to let you know that you can join Lysa TerKeurst this fall in 2021 on the Encounter Tour, there are several one-night gatherings happening across the U.S. And friends, you're not going to want to miss it. Together with Lysa you'll pursue healing as you share the hard parts of your story, dig into God's Word, lean in and laugh and remind each other that God is not finished with you yet. Man, I need to hear that for sure. Check out our show notes at [proverbs31.org/listen](https://proverbs31.org/listen) to find the link to the Encounter Tour and see if it's coming to a city near you. Thanks so much for joining us today friends at Proverbs 31 Ministries, we believe when you know the truth and live the truth, it changes everything.