

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

The Ever Just but Ever Compassionate God
Habakkuk 3

Copy pages 2 and 3 for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.
2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)
3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader: If there are youth in your group, copy the reading in Habakkuk 3 which they will use in the worship time. It is available after the Worship Time materials. Make copies ahead of time.

Worship Time Leader: If there are youth in your group, encourage them to prepare the reading in Habakkuk. Adjust the reading to fit the number of youth in the group. Ask them to read after songs are sung or use the reading to close the Worship Time.

Music Sources:

How Great Thou Art, *The Worship Hymnal* #6; CCLI #14181

How Great Is Our God, *The Worship Hymnal* #5; CCLI #4348399

Worthy of Worship, *The Worship Hymnal* #3; CCLI #82869

Trust and Obey, *The Worship Hymnal* #500; CCLI #3273472 Public Domain

Awesome God, *The Worship Hymnal* #63; CCLI #4099

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

The Ever Just but Ever Compassionate God

Focal Text

Habakkuk 3

Background Text

Habakkuk 1-3

Main Idea

Based on the report of what God has done in the past, Habakkuk responds in two ways. He believes that the One who acted mightily in the past will do so again. He calls on God to reveal the merciful side of his character.

Question to Explore

Can God be characterized as a God of justice and a God of mercy?

Teaching Aim

Help participants to see God as a God of justice who cannot allow evil to flourish and He will judge with compassion.

Gathering together:

Sing: **How Great Thou Art**, *The Worship Hymnal* #6; CCLI #14181

First thoughts:

The Ever Just but Ever Compassionate God

We come to the end of the study of Habakkuk. For many this is a little-known passage of Scripture. Think, however, of some of the passages we have read or will study today. ***I am going to do something in your day that you would not believe, even if you were told. 1:5***

Then they sweep past like the wind and go on -guilty men, whose own strength is their god. 1:11

O Lord, are you not from everlasting? 1:12

Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. 1:13

I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts. 2:1

But the righteous will live by his faith. 2:4b

But the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silent before him. 2:20

Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. 3:2

You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. 3:13

Yet I will be joyful in my Savior.

The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights. 3:19

Even though there are difficult passages with amazing literary descriptions, it is good to read these affirmations which so clearly speak to us in our day. Habakkuk is considered a minor prophet only because of the length of his prophecy, not because it is less important.

May we listen to the Lord's teaching to us as we study today.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

The Ever Just but Ever Compassionate God

Focal Text

Habakkuk 3

Background Text

Habakkuk 1-3

Main Idea

Based on the report of what God has done in the past, Habakkuk responds in two ways. He believes that the One who acted mightily in the past will do so again. He calls on God to reveal the merciful side of his character.

Question to Explore

Can God be characterized as a God of justice and a God of mercy?

Teaching Aim

Help participants to see God as a God of justice who cannot allow evil to flourish and He will judge with compassion.

Introduction to your personal study:

A Swedish folk melody was adapted to accompany the words written by Stuart K. Hine entitled **How Great Thou Art**. A much beloved song since the early 1950's this song talks of creation, nature enjoyed, the crucifixion and Christ's return to earth. The response to these truths is How Great Thou Art; How Great Thou Art!

We might, of course, sing in a more modern vernacular - **How Great You Are!** But the song seems to require the majestic words of long ago. Think about the song and the meaning as you prepare to lead/teach the lesson.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

“In the canonical form of the book, Habakkuk reacts to God’s response to his questions by offering a prayer. He glorifies God for His person (vv. 2, 3b, 4) and His action in creation (vv. 3a, 5-15). In response to his experience of the presence of Yahweh, Habakkuk provides one of the most moving statements of faith and trust found in Scripture (vv.16-19).¹

Throughout the book, Habakkuk has written in a personal style which gives the sense of a personal struggle – we are hearing the heartfelt dilemmas of an individual – a real person. The personal is also communal.

Habakkuk 3:1

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On shigionoth.

“The final chapter of Habakkuk is the written text of a Temple psalm complete with notations for the choir (vv. 1, 19). Apparently God inspired the prophet to take up or write a hymn and use it as his response to the revelatory experience in which questions and complaints (1:2; 2:1) turned to reverent praise. Attached in writing to the prophetic book, the hymn praising God became a source of revelation from God to us. It shows that God regularly intervenes in history to redeem his people in crisis.”²

Habakkuk 3:2

***Lord, I have heard of your fame;
I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord.
Renew them in our day,
In our time make them known;
In wrath remember mercy.***

¹ Baker, David W. **Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah.** Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Publishing, 1988, p. 68.

² **Disciple’s Study Bible,** Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, p. 1128.

Based on the report of what Yahweh has done in the past, the writer responds in two ways: ***I stand in awe*** shows his personal reaction to the power and sovereignty of the creating and sustaining God whom he can but trust and obey. The One who acted mightily in the past will do so again. Habakkuk stands in awe of the deeds of the Lord; worship is only possible when we approach God with this reverential attitude.

Habakkuk calls on God to reveal the merciful side of His character. God's covenant grace with the Israelites has demonstrated that mercy.

"It is tempting to reckon that Yahweh's acts belong in the past (for instance creation and the exodus) and perhaps add to the expectation that they may come again at the End. Habakkuk wants to see them in the present, in history, in politics and experience, in the here and now "in the midst of the years".³

"Rogez" is not a usual word for wrath as it is translated in the New International Version of the Bible. Along with related words, it most often suggests turmoil or tumult.⁴ It comes from a root word meaning to tremble or to shake. Thus, Habakkuk is pleading for Yahweh not to leave the world in its turmoil. He asks for compassion which is the motive for mercy. Mercy comes from a word associated with the womb.

Eugene Peterson in **The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language** states this passage in these words:

***"God, I've heard what our ancestors say about you,
and I'm stopped in my tracks, down on my knees.
Do among us what you did among them.
Work among us as you worked among them.
And as you bring judgment, as you surely must,
remember mercy."***⁵

The Message captures the concept that judgment must come for evil acts in the world. However, God is also a God of mercy and He will judge with mercy.

It is well to remember the words of Psalm 98:9 ***Let them sing before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and with equity.***

Habakkuk 3:3-15 may be entitled The March of the Divine Warrior. Here "the question about God's justice culminate in an appeal to God to march as the Great Warrior; just as the deity conquered the force of chaos in the past, so too the prophet calls Yahweh to act again on the people's behalf. The musical notation that begins and ends the chapter may

³ Golding, J. and Scalise, P. **New International Biblical Commentary, Minor Prophets II.** Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009, p. 80.

⁴ Ibid. p. 81

⁵Peterson, Eugene H. **The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language.** Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 2002, p. 1697.

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The Ever Just but Ever Compassionate God -- 26-53-03-en

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bear clues for its historical background, but of equal importance is the literary effect of the piece. Habakkuk's final response to Yahweh is not argument, but prayer; and his hope comes as much from remembering what God has done in the past as from concrete promises for the future."⁶

Chapter 3:3-15 is called a theophany in theological language. "A theophany is a divine appearance or manifestation, temporary or prolonged, of God in which he reveals himself or his purpose to an individual or group. These manifestations may take the form of a vision, a dream, a natural phenomenon, or some other as God may choose."⁷

Exodus 19: 16-19 describes the theophany at Mount Sinai:

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. The Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

Habakkuk 3: 3

God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens and his praise fill the earth.

Teman and Mount Paran were words used to refer to God's guidance in the past through the Exodus. "Teman is a reference to Edom, a country which was located east of the Jordan and to the south of Judah. Mount Paran, which lay between Edom and Sinai, was the mountainous region to the west of the Gulf of Aqabah. Those in distress who looked to Yahweh for help would expect him to approach Judah from the regions to the south, an area in which he had previously made himself manifest to Israel in so many miraculous ways. (cr. Ex. 16:1-36; Judg. 5:4).

Selah is probably placed here for the purpose of instructing the conductor in the direction of the music. It indicates some kind of interlude or change in the rendering. Since the root idea was to lift up or to cast up, it appears to be a reference to lifting up the voice or increasing the volume of the accompaniment."⁸

His glory refers to the brightness of His splendor. The heavens are overspread with his glory with the splendor with which Yahweh reveals himself. The earth is filled with the light of His presence. This led all the earth to praise Him.

⁶ O'Brien, J. **Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries.** Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004, p. 61.

⁷**The Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. 7,** Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982, p. 265.

⁸Ibid.

Verse 4 continues the image of brightness . “Horns’ the literal translation rendered rays, is used poetically to compare the early morning sunrays to the horns of animal where the beast’s power is manifest.”⁹

Isaiah, one of the major prophets, use the term Holy One many times. He thought of the Holy One as characterized by perfect moral purity. Through both Old and New Testaments, light is used to signify a relationship with God leading to moral purity.

Habakkuk 3: 4-7

Plague went before him; pestilence followed his steps. He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal. I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish.

Pestilence and plague in verse 5 most likely refer to the Exodus story. When the Egyptian Pharaoh refused to release the Israelites from their bondage in slavery, a series of plagues were sent to pressure the Egyptians. They are recorded in Exodus 7:4- 12:30. The final and tenth plague was that of killing the firstborn of all the Egyptian people.

Plague 1 — water turned into blood; fish died.

Plague 2 — frogs.

Plagues 3 and 4 — biting insects and wild animals.

Plagues 5 and 6 — livestock disease and boils.

Plague 7 — fiery hail.

Plague 8 — locusts.

Plague 9 — darkness.

Verse 6 refers to the ability of God to “measure the earth” – that is, to evaluate the people of the earth. His look can shake the very earth. ***His ways were of old.*** Perhaps the prophet hoped that Yahweh would punish the Chaldeans in the way the Egyptians were convinced to allow the Israelites to escape from slavery. God will always be at work among his people. However, we may not understand “his ways”.

Cushan and Midian were nomadic tribes whom the Israelites would have encountered on their way out of Egypt. This was wilderness areas.

Habakkuk 3: 8-16

⁹ op. cit.

***Were you angry with the rivers, O Lord? Was your wrath against the streams?
Did you rage against the sea when you rode with your horses and your victorious
chariots?***

***You uncovered your bow, you called for many arrows. Selah. You split the earth
with rivers; the mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by; the
deep roared and lifted its waves on high.***

***Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the
lightning of your flashing spear.***

In wrath you strode through the earth and in anger you threshed the nations.

***You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the
leader of the land of wickedness, you stripped him from head to foot. Selah***

***With his own spear you pierced his head when his warriors stormed out to scatter
us, gloating as though about to devour the wretched who were in hiding.***

You trampled the sea with your horses, churning the great waters.

***I hear and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my
bones, and my legs trembled.***

Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.

“Wrath is God’s very real reaction against persistent sin. At times He displays His wrath in nature. Experiencing wrath, God’s people begged for mercy. God acted in wrath against enemies to save His people. The faithful people trusted God to exercise His wrath and rejoiced in praise even before the signs of God’s saving actions became apparent.”¹⁰

This is most likely an allusion to the power of God demonstrated at the Red Sea. The prophet believes that just as God delivered the Israelites and delivered them from the Egyptians so Habakkuk hopes that God will deliver the people from the Chaldeans. It is wise to remember that the Israelites remained in Egypt for 400 years before deliverance came. Habakkuk’s physical reaction – heart pounding, lips quivering, weakness in his bones – is a natural human reaction to this dramatic picture. In verse 16, he affirms that he will wait patiently to God to act and for the day of trouble to come upon the invaders.

¹⁰Disciple’s Study Bible, p. 1128.

Several things speak to us in today's world. First, we are aware of wars, disasters and conflicts within minutes of their occurrence. Second, we are not good at waiting. In fact, to wait may seem to us to be an abdication of our own responsibility to cause change. Yet, we simply must wait. The needs are too great; our resources too small. We can effect small changes and should do so. We should find those places where the world's great need and our money, time and effort can meet. We must not be complacent. Believing that God is in control and that in His time, He will come again and end the suffering of the world does not mean that we should do nothing.

Habakkuk 3: 17-19

Though 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,

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

The Sovereign Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, He enables me to go on the heights.

For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.

Habakkuk knows that Yahweh's people will be affected by judgment upon their oppressors. Yet he affirms that whatever happens, he will rejoice in the Lord. The Sovereign Lord is the source of the prophet's strength. The inner resources bestowed by God will sustain him in time of trouble, sorrow and humiliation.

A deer is surely one of God's most beauty creations. To see a deer running and leaping across the field is a picture which Habakkuk captures here with beauty. Like the deer, Habakkuk can pass over the difficult places with assurance. He finds safety in high places.

"The people of Judah have a like security because they have **God, the Lord**. With his help they will surmount every obstacle and overcome every foe. They will pass over the dangerous and difficult places with assurance. Their *strength* is from God. Their *strength* is God."¹¹

This affirmation reminds us of earlier words in 2:4 ***The righteous shall live by his faith.***

¹¹ Broadman, p. 269.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

And as you bring judgment, as you surely must, remember mercy. This verse as interpreted in **The Message** clearly portrays a God of justice who cannot allow evil to flourish, but is also a God of mercy. As you conclude this study of the book of Habakkuk, help participants to consider these two aspects of the nature of God.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

The Ever Just but Ever Compassionate God

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Habakkuk 3

Background Text

Habakkuk 1-3

Main Idea

Based on the report of what God has done in the past, Habakkuk responds in two ways. He believes that the One who acted mightily in the past will do so again. He calls on God to reveal the merciful side of his character.

Question to Explore

Can God be characterized as a God of justice and a God of mercy?

Teaching Aim

Help participants to see God as a God of justice who cannot allow evil to flourish and He will judge with compassion.

Connect with Life:

State: We may see the God of the Old Testament as a God of justice expressed in His wrath against unfaithful Jews as well as opposing forces. The God of the New Testament may be seen as a God of love expressed in many passages such as John 3:16.

Guide the Study:

Begin the study by indicating that this final chapter in the book of Habakkuk reaffirms the teaching of earlier chapters: God works in history and He is in control. Habakkuk gives a very personal look at his questioning of God and his affirmation of God's leading.

Ask someone to read Habakkuk 3:1.

Say: Notations for a choir are indicated throughout this chapter. Apparently God inspired the prophet to take up or write a hymn and use it as his response to the revelatory experience in which questions and complaints turned to praise.

Have another person read Habakkuk 3:2.

Inquire of the group what strong affirmations appear. (Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds.) Discuss the meaning of these affirmations to us today.

Request an answer: What are the pleas which Habakkuk makes? (Renew your deeds in our day and even in judgment, remember mercy).

Discuss: What relevance for this request of God exists in our day.

Explain: "Rogez" is not a usual word for wrath as it is translated in the New International Version of the Bible. Along with related words, it most often suggests turmoil or tumult.¹² It comes from a root word meaning to tremble or to shake. Thus, Habakkuk is pleading for Yahweh not to leave the world in its turmoil. He asks for compassion which is the motive for mercy. Mercy comes from a word associated with the womb.

Have a person read Psalm 98:9. Remind the group that God will judge with equity or fairness.

Have someone read Habakkuk 3:3-15.

Indicate: This passage is sometimes entitled "The March of the Divine Warrior". Here the prophet remembers what God has done in the past. He asks God to intervene again on the people's behalf. This is not as much a historical description as a literary one. Notice the descriptive language.

Say: This passage is called a theophany or a divine appearance or manifestation in which God reveals Himself.

Ask someone to read Exodus 19:16-19 and state: This is another theophany.

¹² Ibid. p. 81

Explain: Teman and Mount Paran were areas south of Judah. The Israelites would have passed through these areas during the Exodus from Egypt. The following verses are dramatic references to the Exodus.

Have someone reread verse 3b and 4.

Explain:

His glory refers to the brightness of His splendor. The heavens are overspread with his glory with the splendor with which Yahweh reveals himself. The earth is filled with the light of His presence. This led all the earth to praise Him.

Verse 4 continues the image of brightness. “Horns’, the literal translation rendered rays, is used poetically to compare the early morning sunrays to the horns of animal where the beast’s power is manifest.”¹³

Isaiah, one of the major prophets, use the term Holy One many times. He thought of the Holy One as characterized by perfect moral purity. Through both Old and New Testaments, light is used to signify a relationship with God leading to moral purity.

Indicate that verse 5 refers to the 10 plagues which were sent to Egypt by God when Pharaoh refused Moses’ request to set the Israelite people free.

Stress the literary images in verses 6, 8-11. The power of God is great. These may be images related to creation.

Explain: The difficulty in verse 12 lies in interpreting this in a literal rather than a figurative way. The overall teaching is that God is powerful and He will, as verse 13 indicates: **You will deliver your people, to save your anointed one.**

Ask: What is the word picture given in verse 16? (Fear and awe at the power of the Lord causes physical weakness – heart pounding, lips quivering, legs unable to sustain one)

Question: Are these descriptions merely indications of God’s activity in the past or does Habakkuk anticipate God’s work in the Chaldean (Babylonian) invasion? (See verse 16:b)

Have someone read verses 17-18.

Now ask: What is the prophet willing to do? (Rejoice in the Lord even if there are no crops of animals to provide sustenance)

Discuss the word picture in verse 19. (Strength from the Sovereign Lord like a deer climbing in mountain places)

¹³ op. cit.

Encourage Application:

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If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.  
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Review the basic teachings of this passage:

God's deeds inspire awe.

God will be merciful as well as enact justice.

We can ask God to work in our time.

The Exodus is a reminder of God's faithfulness.

God was in control of creation.

God will deliver His people.

There may be times when the people of God lack necessities.

The strength of the Lord sustains us.

Ask someone to read verse 19 again to conclude the study.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

YOUTH!!! TAKE TEN

Bible Study Application for Youth

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You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.



JUSTICE and/or/versus COMPASSION

Choose passages from this chapter to read dramatically during the worship time. If there are more than 3 youth to read, adjust the assignments to fit all who want to participate.

First person: Lord, I have heard of your fame.

Second person: I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord.

Third person: Remember mercy.

First person: Remember mercy.

Second person: His glory covered the heavens and his praise fill the earth.

Third person: His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden.

First person: Were you angry with the rivers, O Lord? Was your wrath against the streams?

Second person: Sun and moon stood still in heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear.

Third person: You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one.

First person: Though 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,

Second person: Though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls.

Third person: Yet I will rejoice in God my Savior.

All together: The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***O the Depth of the Riches***

Romans 11:33

Beginning the Service:

Choose from the following to sing:

How Great Is Our God, *The Worship Hymnal* #5; CCLI #4348399

Worthy of Worship, *The Worship Hymnal* #3; CCLI #82869

Trust and Obey, *The Worship Hymnal* #500; CCLI #3273472 Public Domain

Awesome God, *The Worship Hymnal* #63; CCLI #4099

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

Six men who are Udmurts of Russia have been attending a Bible study in their village. Some of the men are struggling with addiction. Pray that these men realize their need for a Saviour and give their lives to Him. The Udmurtia live primarily in Russia with some in the Ukraine and a few in Estonia. The total population was 637,000 in 2002. They speak Udmurt and Russian. Some are part of the Russian Orthodox Church and others a part of the Udmurt Vos which is a ethnic religious revival. Minority groups include Protestant, Pentecostal and Islam.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Oh, the Depth of the Riches
Romans 11:33, 36

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

For three sessions we have examined the book of Habakkuk and sought to understand its teaching for our day and our world. In the first chapter, Habakkuk asked God why the wicked seemed to flourish and righteous people suffered.

In the second chapter, God told the prophet of the consequences of wickedness. Those who become wealthy at the expense of others will be victims of their own schemes. Nations who shed the blood of innocents will find those warlike actions will only incite more war during which they may be defeated. Seeking unjust gain will lead to the forfeiting of one's own life. Humiliating a person or a nation will bring disgrace to self. Those who worship idols of wood or of fame or of money will find their idols valueless.

In the final chapter of Habakkuk, the prophet asks God to do the mighty deeds He had done in the past in the present day.

Throughout all of the prophet's writing is the indication that he is waiting on the Lord to act in His own time. And in the waiting, the prophet rejoices in His relationship with the Lord.

In the Romans 11:33 passage we affirm that God's wisdom and understanding are deep and beyond our understanding.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

In our reasonable and thoughtful moments we know that we would not worship a God who we could totally understand. The Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Almighty God, Eternal One, Creator of the Universe, I AM - these names remind us of the depth of the riches of wisdom and knowledge of God. His judgments on the wicked and his bestowing of grace on the unworthy are beyond our understanding. Like Habakkuk we struggle with the questions, but ultimately we will admit we do not understand – his paths are beyond our tracing out.

So much is beyond the limits of the human mind. Yet these things are the foundation of any hopeful effort to understand life. Paul recognized that there was no way of making neat sense out of the realities evidenced in the believer's experience of the grace of God in Christ. These realities far out run any logic.

The riches of God refer to the inexhaustible resources of God available in Christ. Colossians 1:27 26 expresses this truth in this way ***the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.***

Wisdom is God's design and purpose for his creation that has been disclosed most fully in Christ. Both wisdom and knowledge are gifts from God and their source is in Christ.

Paul states this truth in Colossians 2: 2-3 ***My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.***

Finally, then, we come to rest our faith in Christ who brings us hope for the resurrection.

When Paul spoke of having the full riches of complete understanding he was not speaking of our having every earthly question answered. He was speaking of being able to understand and believe that faith in Christ is the answer to the most important questions we will ever ask.

Call to Commitment:

God's being is the ground of our life. He is the source, the sustainer and the end of all that exists.

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Concluding the Service:

Use the reading which follows this Worship Time service to conclude. If you have youth, they may have prepared to do the reading. If not, ask three readers from your group to participate.

Copy for 3 or more readers (if more are available to take parts)

Habakkuk 3

Choose passages from this chapter to read dramatically during the worship time. If there are more than 3 youth to read, adjust the assignments to fit all who want to participate.

First person: Lord, I have heard of your fame.

Second person: I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord.

Third person: Remember mercy.

First person: Remember mercy.

Second person: His glory covered the heavens and his praise fill the earth.

Third person: His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden.

First person: Were you angry with the rivers, O Lord? Was your wrath against the streams?

Second person: Sun and moon stood still in heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear.

Third person: You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one.

First person: Though 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,

Second person: Though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls.

Third person: Yet I will rejoice in God my Savior.

All together: The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.