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THE PROMISE IN HABAKKUK FOR THOSE IN TRANSITION

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Yet; The Promise in Habakkuk For Those in Transition
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The background is a watercolor-style landscape painting. It features rolling green hills in the foreground and middle ground, with a blue sea or ocean in the distance. The sky is a pale, light blue with soft, wispy clouds. The overall mood is serene and natural.

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

A Note from the Author

Hey. I'm so grateful you've picked up this book.

I'm going to ask you to be honest throughout these pages. We are going to look at Scripture, the most accurate account of human history and the story of God. It's a safe space, held between you and Jesus, here and heaven. When you write down how you feel or what you have experienced, there are no right answers.

Since I'm going to ask you to reflect and share about your life, here's the low-down on me.

At 22 years old, like many people, I graduated from college. A few months later, unlike many people, I moved to Bulgaria. While my life changed drastically as I learned new languages and discovered an absence of toilet seats, my friends' lives were also changing simultaneously.

All at once, it seemed, marriage bells rang. We were starting jobs. We were painting, dreaming, trying to pay bills. We were applying to grad programs, getting rejected, and then applying again. We were sitting with cancer-ridden loved ones. We were seeing positive signs on pregnancy tests and wondering how different a baby shower would be from a bachelorette party.

There were moments—so many moments—of great joy. There were also moments of great pain. Of wondering how life changed so much,



of moving to a third apartment, of craving something consistent among the ever-changing politics, partners, places, and plans.

During a weekend trip with a few college friends, we looked around at each other and asked, *Why didn't anyone tell us it would be this hard?*

Yes, people told us things would change and life would look different, but no one mentioned the possible identity crisis, conflicting emotions, and the chasm between our starry-eyed dreams and reality.

Then, I remembered: we've already been walking through transitions like this. You don't have to move to Bulgaria to experience the growing pains of adjustment. It was like moving to college and eating dinner alone for the umpteenth night in a row. It came with friends in high school adjusting to having divorced parents, sports seasons ending in college, and significant others changing—or cementing.

It is neither wholly good nor bad, neither black nor white. This is life in the gray area.

As humans, our souls crave being known and loved; we are made that way. All the while, life sets us up for a roller coaster of change. We are typically preparing for a transition, in a transition, or adjusting to our post-transition “new world.” None of us are exempt from a



life of continual change, and none of us walk through transitions without receiving a scratch or bruise—not even the most resilient, adventurous, laissez-faire of us.

I have spent much of my life in gray areas of transition, even when life appears stable from the outside. I think many people feel the same. We live in the “already” and the “not quite yet”—the present today, preparing for tomorrow, and maybe frustrated at the past. We are constantly moving, continually in motion, and it is unlikely that will change anytime soon.

In the midst of swirling change, God is our constant. When the world moves and we are laid off, or when the ground shakes and we lose a dear friend, God remains the same: unchangeable.

You may not know God. Or maybe you know him and you don’t like him a whole lot. Or maybe you know him and love him and know God is unchangeable.

This is for all of you.

It is one thing to *know* God never changes, and it is another thing to *experience it*. To live it. To walk in it daily. To know he is steady when everything else swirls about and flips upside down. To know he is peace when anxiety creeps up. To know he is present when isolation rains down on us.



Have you ever been told, “God is good, just trust him”? Have you ever thought, Yes, I *know* that, but I cannot *feel* that? Those nonchalant Christian sayings—while they may sometimes be true—can be insulting or frustrating when life seems to be caving in.

This is for you, too.

Whether I was in high school, college, or the continuum of adulthood, I wanted a manual of sorts. A quick guide to pulse check if I’m doing this okay, if God is still with me, and vice versa. I think many people feel this way.

This devotional is far from a *how-to* guide. It’s not a manual. I’m kind of directionally challenged (unless I’m driving), and all I really know is the best thing you can offer people when life seems gray is something constant: Jesus.

This is my best offering of him to you. This is a resource that is going to walk consistently with you through inconsistent times. It’s a way for young and old alike to know they have an anchor, a hope, a constant, a steady in a malleable situation. I’m praying for you.

In him,
Erica

Why Habakkuk?

I stumbled upon Habakkuk when it was about -14° Celsius (≈7° Fahrenheit), and the people I interacted with were mainly 13-19 years old who called me Miss, Teacher or Учителка (Bulgarian for teacher, pronounced in my mind: ew-chee-tell-ka). I was looking for a book of the Bible, something I could read through quickly, and Habakkuk jumped out as it was fairly short. The winter was dragging on as my desire to spend time in Scripture was fizzling out. Exhausted from my attempts at sleeping (the nightly four layers and creaky space heater weren't a winning combination), I debated not reading it. The Old Testament sometimes scares me, if I'm being honest, and I wasn't looking to feel more intimidated than I already did on a daily basis.

When I was about to flip past it, I read one of the first headings: *Habakkuk's Complaint*.

I didn't know the Bible had any variation of the word *complain* in it, so I was interested. It was the first reminder in a long time that I recalled relating to people in the Bible. The book, while short, had layers unraveling the *realness* of the Father to me again. My Father was approachable and wanted to be approached by me, even if I was feeling off.

Here's some quick background information to help explain some context for what you're going to be reading over the next several weeks:



Habakkuk is one of the twelve minor prophets in the Old Testament (alongside Hosea, Joel, Amos, etc.). In the Hebrew Bible, these twelve minor prophets are considered one big book, called “The Twelve.”¹ We do not have a lot of information about who Habakkuk was, but he’s introduced as a prophet, so we know he was someone who taught the will of God.

Habakkuk was active around 600 BC, which is 600 years before Jesus was born. Given that, Jesus returning or “the end” of the suffering wasn’t exactly in sight yet. There wasn’t a grandiose light at the end of the tunnel, and as Habakkuk looked around at the state of the world, it was evil and dark.

In 722 BC, God used Assyria to punish Israel by destroying the northern kingdom. God’s people remained faithful. During the time Habakkuk prophesied, the Babylonian army tore through the land God gave his people, leaving disastrous damage. God was now using Babylon (Chaldea) to punish Assyria and Judah.²

Habakkuk felt like God was silent and not present while people and nations—specifically the Babylonians/Chaldeans—continued

¹ For more information, see Shawn Aster, “The 12 Minor Prophets,” *My Jewish Learning*. Last accessed January 27, 2022, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-12-minor-prophets/>.

² Most of the background information for Habakkuk came primarily from Chuck Swindoll, “Habakkuk,” *Insights on the Bible*. Last accessed January 27, 2022, <https://www.insight.org/resources/bible/the-minor-prophets/habakkuk>.



to get away with destruction. (Babylonians and Chaldeans are used interchangeably throughout the book, referring to the evil people of Babylon.)

Habakkuk, a faithful, God-following person, wondered what God's plan was. When Habakkuk looked around, he saw God's people suffering. He wanted to know what God was doing, so he asked God. What we see unfold in the book of Habakkuk is exciting, reminding us of hope, faith, and a caring God.



How to Use This Devotional

We will read a full book in the Bible, Habakkuk, with supplemental texts and Scripture along the way. Even if your world feels changed or different, and you're just trying to feed your kids and not lock your keys in your car, you will get to read an entire Old Testament book by the end of this.

I'm not trying to surprise you, so here is a tentative plan for each day of the week, numbered 1 through 7. You can choose when you want to "start" your week. If you know the weekdays are hectic, maybe do some of the study parts on the weekend. If Sundays are your most free day, I recommend kicking it off with day one, as you'll read the entire text for the week on day one.

As a note, I read the English Standard Version of the Bible (ESV). Sometimes I might reference a specific line of Scripture or a few words from it, and if it varies from what you read, just know we have different translations! All translations will work great with this devotional.

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How to Use This Devotional | Structure

Day 1 | Assessment: Take inventory of where you are spiritually, think about what's on the docket for the week, and read the entire portion of Habakkuk assigned for the week.

Days 2 - 6 | Study: Read smaller portions of the week's Habakkuk reading, additional Scripture, then answer and pray through the relevant questions.

Day 7 | Reflection: Re-read select verses from the week, reflect, share thankfulness, and praise God.

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INTRODUCTION



Introduction

When I think of end caps on the chapters of my life, they are vivid.

I see the shiny, crinkly confetti falling at high school graduation. I feel the gray, wiry carpet I fell on when I got a call that my friend died. I taste my face's salt as I hobbled across the finish line of a marathon. The awkward first night after my parents dropped me off at college alone, with a bowl of Honey Bunches of Oats, thinking, *now what?* The first day of a new job. The first day after a break-up.

Yes, these events are significant for what they are. Some are the culmination of years of academic work or physical training. Some, though, weren't chosen nor prepared for. They were flung upon us, despite not wanting to know what adjusting to life—without a friend, a significant other, or the job that felt promised—looked like.

Moreover, these events are significant for what they represent: the entering of a transition season—a gray area of life, the muddled, maybe even the mess itself. The areas of life that may come with both joy and sadness, and maybe both in the same day. Heck, it could be multiple times a day.

The emotions of life's transitions are seen in the elation of commencement and the heartbreak of leaving beloved college roommates. It's when you get a new boss at work, and it's neither good nor bad, but both: it's bittersweet. It's the reality that being married might be so fun, but living with another person might be



so hard. The clarity of feeling called and the confusion when you answer the call. It can be felt in groups of people or in the isolating silence of your 600-square-foot apartment. These areas of life are neither black nor white. It's the gray area.

We spend a lifetime full of preparing, transitioning, and adjusting to a new normal—then getting ready to do it again.

I began following God when I was seventeen. As a believer and lover of Jesus, I knew God walked with me. I knew Scripture was filled with stories of God walking with his people, never leaving nor forsaking them. Yet, it wasn't until years later, when I moved home from Bulgaria after a year of living, teaching, breathing, and being there, that resilience failed, and I realized just knowing wasn't going to suffice. Somewhere between reverse culture shock, trying to merge onto highways, and sheer exhaustion, mere knowledge couldn't keep me from sobbing in a privacy booth at work or snapping at an innocent barista.

When life turned on its head, I needed to know *and* believe God was there. I needed to see him *in* it with me, not looking back in a hindsight-is-20/20 kind of way. If he is the Prince of Peace, the Ultimate Healer, and the Great I AM, then I need to find him in the transition daily. I need to believe he, in fact, would be there—more vividly than the end caps in my life.



The end caps haven't closed a door without the Lord opening another.

In the midst of new zip codes, new last names, new diagnoses, God is *with* you. He sees you. He walks with you. He carries you.

In the midst of change—whether good or bad, whether chosen or unexpected—will you dare to believe with me he's going to be present?





Transition Time: Where Are You?

As we begin, write down what you are walking through. This could be where you're coming from or going to, where you physically are, or how you're hoping to grow. If you don't know where you are or where you're going, that's okay! This is just for you to have as an initial pulse check. After you finish Habakkuk, this pulse check will allow you to reflect on how you've seen God the past several weeks.

What transition or life change are you currently experiencing?

How would you describe your current relationship with God?



WEEK ONE



DAY ONE | Assessment

I thought I was walking fast, but the consumption of six bags of mini pretzels and the lack of sleep made me feel like a groggy fifth-grade girl meandering and shuffling her feet through the crowded airport.

My eyes were blinking faster than my heart was beating as I scanned the approaching open space, looking for two middle-aged people I fondly call Mom and Dad.

My panting eyes met my mom's.

I was home.

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“Take the next exit ... now, Mom! Turn right!”

I joyously sat in the backseat, laughing as my mom flung our white Ford Flex off the interstate heading toward the building with red cursive font. Bags slid across the floor of the trunk. I looked down at my watch. It was 10:25 a.m., and the minute hand was rounding for home. I had five minutes until breakfast ended, and I had spent the last year dreaming of this moment.

We were going to make it.



Eight minutes later, we had finally made it to the front of the Chick-fil-A line, and a woman was telling me that it was past breakfast hours, something about hash browns not being available, and she was very, very sorry. Other than that, I don't really know what happened because I began, well, crying.

I'm an adult woman, back on American ground permanently, crying in a fast food restaurant.

I walked out of the line as my mom began explaining to the cashier her daughter just got off an airplane from Bulgaria, and she was hopeful they could *make one more batch of hash browns, thank you very much.*

"I'll order some, too!" a man from the back of the line bellowed, as my mom made our case.

Four chicken minis, a couple boxes of hash browns, and a huge iced coffee later, we were back in the safety of the Flex.

As happy and content as the crispy, golden brown, hashbrowny outside made me feel, causing a salty smile I hadn't had for quite some time, I couldn't help but feel immense shame and embarrassment for breaking down within my first hour home. *Get a grip,* I thought to myself.



Like many people, I don't feel immediate peace when I begin a new chapter. There's whiplash in my emotions and speed bumps in my heart. I just cycled through a ton of emotions I experienced above: excitement, sadness, and embarrassment are a few.

Pulse Check: *How do you currently feel about life? Jot down a few words or phrases below.*

Looking at your life, or the past few weeks, how do you feel when your life is in transition?



How do you view God when your life is in transition?

This week we will study verses 1:1-11 in the book of Habakkuk. Go ahead and read these verses now, and describe what stands out to you.

DAY TWO | Study

Read Habakkuk 1:1-4

What does Habakkuk feel in verse 2?

Write down a time where you felt like Habakkuk in verse 2.

When have you communicated (or felt like communicating) with God as Habakkuk does here?



How do you usually communicate with God?

The season you are currently in may bring a lot of emotions to the surface, some that could be entirely new. One of the most complex things about moving home from Bulgaria was knowing I felt called back to America, but not feeling remotely comfortable back home. It began a season of contrast: joy and frustration. God made us with the ability to feel so many emotions, and he wants to hear about them. God wants to hear how you are really doing, not a buttoned-up, perfectly poised version of how you're feeling.

Read Isaiah 62:6-7.

In Isaiah 62:6-7, it says to give the Lord no rest with your words. He loves the sound of your voice. He loves hearing you pray or talk to him; he waits to hear from you or answer your questions.

We can call it complaining; or, with some days and in some situations, we can just call it being transparent. This honesty is not



reckless, though. Like a healthy relationship or a friend you love, we do not get to talk without listening. We certainly don't hastily shout and walk away (even though God can handle our outbursts). We can speak to God honestly, while still respecting who he is.

If you were communicating honestly with God, what is something you'd tell him?

Read 1 John 4:16.

According to 1 John, what is God?



Consider your life at the moment. What is another word that represents who God is to you?



DAY THREE | Study

Read Habakkuk 1:1-4

Habakkuk was living and preaching during uncertain times, and he had questions for God, like *why?* And, later, *how long?* These questions show the urgency of Habakkuk's questions, the intensity of his pain.¹ Habakkuk's questions may stem from a place I have visited often, perhaps a place you are right now: the island of feeling forgotten by God.

My journey back into America felt like falling off of a tightrope, hitting a trampoline, and trying to land my flailing body gracefully, upright and feet-down onto the skinny rope. All the while, I watched my friends appear to transition seamlessly. I wondered if God had forgotten me. I doubted his love for me. I questioned if I were really supposed to be here.

In verse 3, Habakkuk asks the Lord specifically why he sees inequity (injustice). He feels justice is gone, and he thinks God is not listening to his pleas for help.

How do you feel God's presence (anything goes: song, nature, friends, prayer, or another way the Father reveals himself)?

¹ This opening statement is cited from Pastor Tyler St. Clair's sermon titled "Why and How Long?" Last accessed January 27, 2022, <http://cornerchurch313.org/media/398371-1580095-2645299/why-and-how-long>.



Like Habakkuk's questions for the Lord, what is a question you have for God right now?

What is something challenging about your current transition and journey?

Habakkuk prays for God to show up, for God to be seen! Habakkuk asks if God is still good in a world that has so much evil and is entrenched and covered in sin. He's honest, begging God to move. As we soon see, the Lord will answer Habakkuk.



Read Revelation 3:20.

As we've written out above, we have questions for God. That's okay. We also know God is love. It's okay to still have questions for a God whom you know loves you. As humans, we have the ability to experience confidence and questioning: again, those conflicting emotions. We have the ability to not feel good, and yet know God is still good.

Although transitions can be incredibly challenging, they often come bearing the promise of exciting things to come. Maybe for you it isn't excitement, but a feeling of deep peace. Rather, this transition could bring a new way to experience the Father, or bring a new routine into your schedule.

What is something good about your current transition and journey?



If you are struggling to see God today, I invite you to pray this with me. However you feel comfortable praying, whether it's writing it below, saying it out loud, or whispering it in your mind:

God, I ask to see you today. I understand I may not have all the answers or feel completely steady, but I ask to see your love for me today. Thank you for welcoming my questions, my voice, my very self. I trust you are working in me. Amen.



DAY FOUR | Study

Read Habakkuk 1:1-4

Rewrite Habakkuk 1:2-3 in your own words.

Read Psalm 34:8.

According to Psalm 34, what is God?

Read Psalm 46:1.

According to Psalm 46, who is God?



Consider your life at the moment. What is another word that represents who God is to you?

As noted yesterday, we have the ability to not feel good, and yet know that God is *still* good. We also wrote down questions we have for God. Asking God questions and allowing ourselves to tell the Lord our emotions may be a new experience.

Fortunately, though, God does not experience the uncertainty we do. We can feel unsure about a situation or season, but the Lord is never unsure. We might not understand the world or our surroundings, but the Lord understands everything. We may not see the other side yet, but the Lord sees it all. Our confidence comes from God, trusting these things are true about God, not our own understanding.

Read Philippians 1:6.

Paul, in Philippians, tells us something of which he is sure: God, who has begun a good work in you, will bring it to completion through Jesus Christ. God is currently working in you and will continue working in you until we are in heaven with him. Paul is sure of this, which allows him to live with confidence in God.



Reflect on where you are today. What is something you are sure of or confident in during this transition?

What is something you are sure of and confident in about God?

We have voiced and identified our different feelings, as well as different characteristics God has, like being loving and good. Those things may not always look the same, but we have a loving Father who wants to speak peace and safety into anger and fear. We have a God who is trustworthy and good, even when the world doesn't feel good.

DAY FIVE | Study

Read Habakkuk 1:1-11

This week began by reading Habakkuk 1:1-11. Let's quickly zoom out. *What are the two headings you see in this Scripture?*

- 1.
- 2.

I love seeing these two things together: Habakkuk complains, then the Lord answers. Habakkuk, crying out to God in honest frustration, gets a response from him. While it looks immediate here, we do not know the exact time or duration that passed between Habakkuk calling on the Lord and receiving an answer from God. Yet, this gives me great hope. At a zoomed-out view, we see the Most High King answer one of his children's complaints. That's pretty powerful.

Read Habakkuk 1:5-11.

Growing up, I was always told you get out what you put in. (Does anyone else hear their high school sports coaches yelling that? Just me?) Only honesty can truly invite people near your heart. While God is always honest, even if we aren't, being honest with him invites him near our hearts, making our human selves more susceptible to looking for him around us. After Habakkuk asks God why and how long, God answers. Even if we do not audibly hear God's response in a present moment, he will answer.



Prayer turns into answers; speaking with God is action.

Write down verse 5.

Look among the nations, and see;

Turn back to page 25 of day one this week, what did I say to myself in the last line?

While this is an old, yet commonly-spoken phrase among siblings, this is also a clear picture of my self-reliance. I walked into a new environment, and instead of asking God to reveal himself to me, I reminded myself *I have this*. Once I get a grip, I will be okay because I am strong. This contradicts verse 5, where God tells us he is doing the work.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.

Recount something that has challenged, frustrated, or stretched you during your transition.



Explain how you reacted in the above scenario. Do you see yourself trying to “fix” or handle these challenges, or asking the Lord to help?

While verse 5 is one of the most commonly and happily-quoted verses—speaking of God’s greatness and magnitude of what he will do for us—verses 6-11 are a bit less cheery. God’s response to injustice, at this time, is letting them know there’s more coming: more wrong is coming to their world.

While we don’t know what will happen tomorrow, God does not promise a painless life. *In this season where the ground may be shifty at times, what would it look like to be content?*

DAY SIX | Study***Read Habakkuk 1:5-11***

We are going to read a passage from the book of Job. Like Habakkuk in verses 1-4, Job is also honest and real with God. Before our next reading, let's begin with some quick background information.

The book of Job was written between the years of 1500 and 500 B.C. This book looks into God allowing a good, God-following man—Job—to suffer. It tells the story of a man who believed God was good and clung to that truth as his world turned upside down and his friends left him. Through Job's commitment to God, Job's deep faithfulness to the Father is revealed.²

Satan has just taken Job's property—his oxen, his home—and his children. Let's read Job's response.

Read Job 1:20-22.*Write down verse 22.*

In all of this—losing his family, friends, home, oxen—Job doesn't charge God with wrongdoing. Job doesn't stop following God because he's experiencing loss on earth. Here we see an intensely

² This background information for Job is found in the book introduction for Job in my Hosanna Revival ESV Journaling Bible®, published by Crossway.



suffering man be honest with God without spitefully accusing him of messing up. If we're being honest with ourselves, we have all probably been in situations where we've let our anger get the best of us. Have you ever hit one too many red lights when you're already running late? If so, you probably know exactly what I mean.

I do not excel at not sinning.

When have you lost something or someone you love? Maybe you're experiencing this right now, or maybe you've experienced it in the past. How did you react to that? How did you commune and communicate with God during that?



As we talked about on the first day, we have a lot of feelings. The world can be complex, and the world can be emotion-driven. God and his word are constant.

Read Psalm 116:5.

*What does Psalm 116:5 say **that God is?***

What is another word God is to you right now?

You don't have to write anything down now, but what would it begin to look like to bring God deeper into this season of transition? What would it look like to look to God? To converse with him more, to lean on him?

Pray and contemplate on this today. Consider asking the Spirit to reveal to you where you try to carry yourself or where you've charged God incorrectly with wrongdoing.

DAY SEVEN | Reflection

I have not wept in a Chick-fil-A since that hot July day. My mom hasn't had to jump to my defense. I don't feel embarrassed for thinking my world might crumble without breakfast.

As wild as it felt in the moment, looking back, I think I was doing the best with what I had at that time. Was my best glamorous? Nope. Did my best involve being eloquent? Nope. Was my best as kind or as loving as I want to be? Nope.

But fresh off an international plane and with my emotions jumbled, like the clothes in my suitcase, my best was what it was.

The days and year following my incident at Chick-fil-A were not absent of pain. I didn't meet a local or fall in love or suddenly prance back onto the tightrope without pit stains. When all was said and done, though, a few short years later, there was more joy than pain in my transition back to American life.

A week is not equivalent to years, and it may feel like you are in the middle of your story—squashed between two chapters and unsure of which way is up.

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What would it look like to pause when you feel anxiousness, frustration, or apathy creep in and remind yourself of who God is? Reflect on what we have read this week, and write down the characteristics of who God is.

Read Habakkuk 1:5.

After reading this verse again, what stands out to you? What does this verse reveal about the character of God?

Read Psalm 34:4-7.

Thanksgiving + Prayer

Here we see the Lord answering those who seek them, delivering them from their fears. He hears his children and saves them from their troubles. *What is a prayer for this week? Before you ask your requests of God, honor and glorify who he is in thanksgiving. Use the below phrases as prompts for your thanksgiving and prayer.*

Jesus, I am thankful for...

Father, I ask...

Write down a word or phrase for your upcoming week. Not what you feel in this moment, but a word or two to remember who God is. Example: Peace.

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A series of horizontal dotted lines spanning the width of the page, intended for writing notes.



A series of horizontal dotted lines spanning the width of the page, intended for handwriting practice.



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