FREE SAMPLER · SESSION ONE

THE ONE

How Sixty-Six Books Tell One Story
About One Savior for One People

Chapter One: Can You Find Habakkuk?

with the matching Companion Workbook session

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A NOTE BEFORE YOU START

Read this one first

This is the opening session of The One, free and complete — the whole first chapter of the book, followed by the matching pages from the Companion Workbook. Nothing is held back and nothing cuts off mid-sentence.

It is here so you can try the thing before you buy anything. Run it with your group this week. If the room is still talking when the hour is up, the other nineteen sessions work the same way.

One instruction, and it is the whole method: **do the Scripture work before the discussion questions.** Three passages, looked up and written out by hand, before anybody is asked what they think. That order is deliberate. It is the difference between a group that discusses the Bible and a group that discusses itself.

Print it. Write on it. The lines are there for a reason.

Find Habakkuk. By the end of this book, you'll know where it is.

PART ONE • ONE BOOK

Chapter One

Can You Find Habakkuk?

Here's how our first study started, and here's how I want to start with you.

Put this book down and pick up your Bible. Don't open the table of contents. No index, no ribbon, no phone. Just the book itself, and your thumbs.

Now find these five, one at a time. Time yourself if you're brave.

Habakkuk. Philemon. Nahum. Third John. Obadiah.

I have run this exercise with my family and I have run it with people who have been in church their entire lives, and it goes the same way every time. There's a confident flip toward the middle. Then a slower flip back. Then the sound of pages going the wrong direction, and somebody muttering "it's one of the little ones." Somebody always lands in Zephaniah and stops, briefly certain, before realizing that isn't it either.

I want to be clear that I'm not standing outside this. The first time I did it, I was the one hunting. I have taught the Bible for years and I still fumbled Nahum, because Nahum sits in a stretch of Scripture I had visited maybe four times in a decade.

Now do the second half of the exercise, which is the half that matters.

Find Genesis. Find John. Find Psalms.

Nobody needs a race for those. Your hand goes there without consulting you. You don't think about it any more than you think about where the light switch is in your own hallway.

That gap — between the books your hands know and the books they don't — is the whole subject of this chapter. Because that gap isn't random. It's a map of what you actually read.

You Do Not Read What You Can't Find

We tell ourselves the reason we skip parts of the Bible is that those parts are hard. Sometimes that's true. Habakkuk is a genuinely difficult little book, three chapters of a prophet arguing with God about why He would use a worse nation to discipline a bad one.

But be honest about the mechanics of it. When you sit down with fifteen minutes and your Bible, and you have to choose between a psalm you can find with your eyes closed and a minor prophet you would have to hunt for, which one wins? Not because you're lazy. Because friction wins. It always wins. Every one of us takes the path with less resistance in it, especially early in the morning, especially when we're tired.

So the parts of Scripture we can't navigate quietly become the parts of Scripture we don't read. And the parts we don't read become the parts we don't know. And the parts we don't know become the parts we assume aren't important — which is the most dangerous step in the sequence, because

now our ignorance has hardened into a conviction.

I have heard sincere Christians say the Old Testament is "mostly background." I have heard people say the prophets are "for scholars." Nobody arrived at those conclusions by studying the prophets and finding them thin. They arrived at them by never going there, and then explaining the absence to themselves.

Knowing where the books are won't make you holy. But not knowing where they're will keep two-thirds of God's Word functionally closed to you, and that isn't a small thing to accept.

"But I Have a Search Bar"

Somebody is thinking it, so let me deal with it honestly.

You've a phone. On that phone is an app that will find any verse in the Bible in under a second, in nine translations, with cross-references. Why on earth would a grown man in this century spend two minutes a day memorizing the order of the minor prophets?

It's a fair question, and I'm not a crank about technology. I use those tools constantly. But there are three things a search bar can't do for you, and they're the three things that matter most.

Search only finds what you already know to look for. It's a retrieval tool, not a discovery tool. If you don't know that Habakkuk closes with one of the most remarkable statements of faith anywhere in Scripture — a man declaring he will rejoice in God after listing every possible way his life could fall apart — then you'll never type "Habakkuk" into anything. The app is happy to hand you what you ask for. It can't hand you what you don't know exists. Only familiarity can do that, and familiarity comes from walking the territory.

Search returns sentences, not neighborhoods. Type in a phrase and you get a verse, cleanly extracted, floating free of everything around it. That's precisely how most abused verses in circulation got abused. "I know the plans I have for you," lifted off a page and printed on a graduation card, with no memory that God is speaking to a nation seventy years into an exile He Himself sent. "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me," pressed onto athletic gear, when Paul is talking about surviving hunger and want. In both cases the verse is true and the use of it's nonsense, and it happened because someone had a sentence without a neighborhood. When you know the layout of the book, a verse arrives with an address attached. You know what street it lives on and who its neighbors are.

Search is external. Psalm 119 says the word was treasured in my heart, not bookmarked on a device. And the moments when you most need Scripture are almost never the moments when you have a free hand, a charged battery, and thirty uninterrupted seconds. They're the moments in the car after the phone call. The three in the morning ones. The conversation that turns serious two sentences before you were ready. Jesus in the wilderness didn't have a concordance. He had it in Him.

And search lives inside the most distracting object you own. The phone isn't a neutral container. It's engineered — deliberately, by capable people who are paid very well — to interrupt you. You

open it to find something in Colossians and a banner slides down from the top of the screen. A text. A work email at 6:40 in the morning. A red number on an icon you didn't intend to look at. Now you're three taps from your inbox and the passage is still sitting there unread.

I have done this more times than I want to admit. I have opened the app with real intent and surfaced eleven minutes later having read nothing, and I couldn't have told you what I read instead. A paper Bible can't do that to me. Its worst distraction is a margin note I wrote in 2019.

The Parking Lot

Something I noticed a while back, and I want to tell it carefully, because it would be easy to tell it badly.

We pulled into the lot of a large church one Sunday. Big campus, thousands of people, a river of them moving toward the doors. My family and I got out with our Bibles under our arms and joined the walk in. And somewhere between the car and the entrance I started counting. Not on purpose, at first. I noticed the man ahead of me was carrying one, and then I was counting.

Out of all those people, I could have counted the Bibles on one hand.

Now let me say the honest thing about that, because there's a version of this story where I'm the guy with the leather Bible under his arm and everyone else is failing, and that version is worthless to you.

Most of those people almost certainly had the whole Bible on their phones — better translations than mine, with study notes I don't own. Some of them know the Word far better than I do and always will. Carrying a book up a sidewalk proves nothing about anybody. And I have walked into a service with my Bible under my arm and my mind four hundred miles away, thinking about a customer problem, and not heard a word of the sermon. So I'm not standing over anyone here.

But here's what I couldn't shake, and still can't.

When the preacher says turn to Habakkuk, the person with a Bible in their hands turns pages. They find it or they don't, but either way they're inside the book, looking, with the neighboring pages going by under their thumb. The person with a phone opens the phone. And the phone is never only a Bible. It's also the notification, and the score, and the message from work that can wait but won't feel like it can.

I'm not saying those people weren't listening. I have no idea, and it isn't my business. I'm saying that most of us have handed the most important reading we will ever do to the one device built specifically to take our attention somewhere else — and we did it without ever really deciding to. It happened the way most drift happens. Quietly, for good reasons, one convenience at a time.

That's the part worth sitting with. Not what anybody else was carrying into that building. What all of us traded, and whether we got the better end of the deal.

Use the tools. They're good tools. Just don't mistake access for knowledge. A library card doesn't make anybody educated.

The Craftsman and the Straight Line

Paul is writing to a young pastor who is in over his head, surrounded by people teaching nonsense, and he gives him this:

> *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*
>
> — 2 Timothy 2:15

The word behind "accurately handling" is a striking one. It carries the idea of cutting straight — the picture of a craftsman working a piece of material and making a clean, true line. A stonecutter squaring a block. A tentmaker, which Paul was, cutting leather so the seams meet.

The picture assumes competence. You don't cut a straight line by wanting to. You cut it by knowing your material and knowing your tools, and you get there by doing it badly for a while first.

Now put that next to somebody flipping helplessly through a Bible for ninety seconds looking for Habakkuk.

I'm not mocking them. I was them. But I want you to feel the mismatch. Paul says: handle this book accurately, like a craftsman. And step one of handling anything accurately is knowing your way around it. You can't make a clean cut in material you can't locate.

This is why the first study we ever did wasn't on a doctrine or a theme. It was on the book itself — what it is, how it's put together, where it came from. Not because that's the most spiritual place to start, but because it's the floor. Everything else in this book stands on it.

Three Reasons It Is Worth the Trouble

Let me give you the payoff, because "learn the table of contents" isn't exactly a rallying cry, and you deserve to know what you're buying.

You'll be ready.

> *…sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;*
>
> — 1 Peter 3:15

Ready. That word doesn't describe a feeling; it describes a state of preparation. And here's the plain fact underneath it: you can't hand someone a verse you can't find.

Picture the actual moment. Somebody at work, somebody in your family, catches you off guard with a real question — not a hostile one, an honest one. Why do you believe that? What does the Bible actually say about this? And you know there's a passage. You can almost see the page. And you spend the next two minutes flipping while the moment cools and the person politely waits and eventually says, "it's fine, don't worry about it."

That isn't a failure of faith. It's a failure of preparation, and preparation is fixable.

You'll be armed.

> *Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.*
>
> **— Psalm 119:11**

Watch how Jesus fights in the wilderness. He is forty days into a fast, physically wrecked, and the enemy comes at Him three times with three different angles. Three times He answers the same way: It is written. And then He quotes Scripture — from Deuteronomy, all three times, from memory, under pressure, with nothing in His hands.

That's the model. Not "I felt a peace about it." Not "I just knew." It is written, followed by the actual words.

You can't fight with a sword you left in the other room. And the temptations that come at you hardest rarely give you time to go look for it.

You'll be whole.

> *For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.*
>
> **— Acts 20:27**

Paul says this to the Ephesian elders as a defense of his ministry. He didn't give them a curated Bible. He gave them all of it, including the parts nobody enjoys.

Let me show you mine.

I carry a MacArthur Study Bible. My wife gave it to me in 2018. If you opened it right now you would not need me to explain any of this to you, because the book tells on me.

The Gospels are wrecked. Romans is wrecked. Psalms is soft at the corners and marked up in highlighter, pencil, and two colors of pen, some of it from years ago in handwriting I barely recognize as mine. There are notes in those margins arguing with notes I wrote earlier.

And then there are whole stretches that look like I bought it last month. Crisp. Square at the edges. Clean.

Anybody could flip through that Bible in thirty seconds and tell you exactly which parts of God's Word I have been avoiding. It's all right there in the wear pattern. I didn't decide to neglect those books. I just never went, and the paper kept the record.

Most of us have a Bible inside our Bible — thirty or forty pages we return to constantly while the rest sits new. And a Bible read that way will produce a faith shaped like those thirty pages. Comfortable where they're comfortable. Blind where they're silent.

Here's what that looks like in practice. A believer who lives in the Gospels and Paul's letters will have a rich grasp of grace and almost no grasp of God's holiness, because the passages that press hardest on holiness are sitting in Leviticus and Isaiah where he never goes. He isn't wrong about what he knows. He is unbalanced by what he has never met. Then a hard providence lands on him

— a diagnosis, a layoff, a child who walks away — and he discovers that the parts of Scripture written specifically for people in that spot are the parts he skipped. Job. Lamentations. The psalms nobody puts on a coffee mug.

God didn't include those books as filler. He included them because His people were going to need them, and He knew which mornings they would need them on.

You only see the whole picture when you know all the parts are there.

Ready. Armed. Whole. That's what's on the other side of the work.

Now the Heart Check

I need to stop and say something, because I know how this can land.

There's a kind of Christian who hears "learn all sixty-six books" and immediately reaches for a highlighter and a scoring system, and what starts as devotion turns into a performance review he administers to himself every night. If that's your wiring — and it's mine, so I know it well — hear this carefully.

None of this earns you anything.

You can't make God love you more than He already does in Christ. That's settled, it was settled at the cross, and it was settled before you were born. Memorizing the minor prophets doesn't move that needle, because that needle doesn't move.

So why bother?

> *If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.*
>
> — John 14:15

Think about a house you love. You know it in the dark. You get up at two in the morning and cross the room without touching a wall, and you didn't memorize the floor plan to impress a guest. You know it because you live there. Because it's yours and you love it.

That's the posture. We aren't learning this book to earn standing. We're learning it because Someone we love wrote it to us, and we would like to know what He said — all of it, not just the parts that are easy to reach.

There's an inscription on the inside cover of the Bible I told you about. My wife wrote it before she gave it to me.

> *Read this Bible with joy and understanding. Always seek the truth, love the Lord, and follow your dreams. Keep his commandments for your life and share your knowledge with others. You are a true man of God. I am so glad to be able to have a husband and best friend that shares the same faith and love of God. May we always seek God's instruction in all that we do. May we always read in his word everyday. I am blessed everyday and reminded everyday of God's love through how you treat me, care for me, and love me.*

I've read that more times than I can count, usually when I didn't deserve it.

And notice what isn't in it. There's no scorekeeping. Nothing about discipline, nothing about proving anything, no standard I'm being measured against. She tells me to seek the truth, love the Lord, and pass on what I learn — and then she spends the rest of it on us.

That's the spirit of the thing. Somebody who loves you handed you a book and hoped you'd read it with joy.

Mine came from my wife. All of it came from God.

Learning your Bible isn't legalism. It's what love does with a letter.

Where We Are Going

So here's the plan for Part One. Three things, and I will hold myself to them.

You'll know the books — all sixty-six, in order, by their groups. Not someday. Chapter Four gives you a method that works and takes about two minutes a day.

You'll know it's one book. Forty writers, fifteen centuries, three continents, one message that doesn't contradict itself. Chapter Two makes the case that this isn't merely unlikely but genuinely inexplicable apart from one Author standing behind all of it.

You'll know where it came from. Who wrote it, who decided which books belong, and why the answer to that second question is almost universally misunderstood. Chapter Three is the meatiest of the four, and if you've ever been rattled by someone claiming a committee of bishops voted your Bible into existence, it's the one to read twice.

That's the ground floor. Get it under you and the rest of this book has something to stand on.

One last thing before we start.

> *Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*
>
> **— Psalm 119:105**

A lamp doesn't illuminate the whole road. It illuminates the next step. That's the point of knowing this book — not to master it as a subject, but to have it lit and in your hand when you need to know where to put your foot.

Right now, for most of us, that lamp has a lot of it covered up.

Let's uncover it.

TALK ABOUT IT

- Which books did you have to hunt for? Be specific — and be honest about the last time you read one of them.
- What's the practical difference between owning a Bible and knowing one? Where do you actually live on that line?

- If someone asked you tomorrow why you believe what you believe, could you point them to a passage — or only describe one?

WRITE IT DOWN

You don't read what you can't find.

COMPANION WORKBOOK

Session One: Can You Find Habakkuk?

Read Chapter One of the book before this session.

WORK THE TEXT

Look each one up. Write what it says before you write what you think.

2 Timothy 2:15

What does 'accurately handling' assume a person already knows how to do?

1 Peter 3:15

What does it mean to be ready — and what would being unready look like this week?

Psalm 119:105

A lamp lights the next step, not the whole road. Where do you want light right now?

SESSION ONE • CAN YOU FIND HABAKKUK?

TALK ABOUT IT

Which books did you have to hunt for? Be specific — and be honest about the last time you opened them.

What's the practical difference between owning a Bible and knowing one? Where do you actually sit on that line?

If someone asked you tomorrow why you believe what you believe, could you point them to a passage?

You don't read what you can't find.

THIS WEEK

Find all five books again, timed. Beat your first attempt.

NOTES

What struck you, what you want to look up, what you want to ask somebody.

WHAT'S IN THE REST OF IT

Nineteen more sessions

The One runs twenty sessions in five parts — One Book, One Story, One Savior, One People, One Hope. Twenty weeks at a session a week, or ten at two, or five six-week blocks with breaks between.

- Why forty writers across fifteen centuries produced one message
- Where the canon came from — and why "a committee voted" is backwards
- The whole storyline in six acts, and where you are standing in it
- Nine Old Testament pictures of Christ, and four rules for finding them
- Who you became the day you believed, and what you are part of now
- What Scripture actually promises about the end — and what it doesn't

GETTING IT

The One — paperback and Kindle on Amazon. 197 pages.
The Companion Workbook — paperback, 66 pages. Paperback only; you cannot write in a Kindle.

Most churches buy the book for everyone and the workbook for anyone who wants to write — in practice about two-thirds of a group.

IF YOU WANT HELP STARTING

Patrick will come and teach this session in front of your group, then spend time with the people who will lead the other nineteen. A weekend covers both. There is no set fee — tell us the situation and we will work it out.

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