

GOD'S LONG -TERM PLAN - Studies 1 - 5

Other prophets carry messages from God to His people, but Habakkuk only talks to God as he struggles to understand why evil and its consequences are growing and it seems that God is doing nothing about the situation.

God shows His prophet that two things are certain: there will be judgment of all who sin, and God's character doesn't change. He may be silent for a time, but His plans will be fulfilled. Habakkuk "saw" His glory, and it changed his attitude. God's people today need to live by faith, knowing for certain that the future is in God's hands.

Study 1

God's Plan: for the Future

Genesis 50:15-21

INTRODUCTION

5 MINUTES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 30 MINS

AIM: To be assured and encouraged that God has good plans for the lives of those who trust Him.



As we move into another year it is an opportunity to look back at what God has done in our lives and to reflect on what He has taught us about Himself over these past months.

What are some of the things you have learned about God that give you the confidence to trust Him for all that lies ahead?

In this study we look at verses from the closing chapter of Genesis in which Joseph is the key figure. He has many problems as well as successes in his life, but most importantly, He has received a heritage which is more valuable than everything else—a deep understanding of the true and living God. This gives him confidence to know that God is in control of the events of history and gives him a sense of purpose for the future.

Read Genesis 50:15-17

Lack of trust leads to fear:

1. What has been Joseph's attitude to his brothers since they arrived in Egypt?
Read Genesis 47:11-12, 27.
2. What two things do you think the brothers fear after the death of their father Jacob (v. 15)?
What is the real cause of their fear?
3. Why do you think Joseph weeps when he receives the message from his brothers (v. 17b)?

Read Genesis 50:18-21

God's provision for the future:

4. Why do the brothers fall down before Joseph and put themselves at his mercy (v. 18)?
What makes you think their repentance may be genuine this time?

<p>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONT.</p>	<p>3. He responds to his brothers wrongdoing with kindness and assurance (v. 21).</p> <p>Joseph had some harsh experiences in his life, but as he comes to recognise God's presence with him, that takes away much of the bitterness. Instead of allowing family hostilities to grow he is able to look at his brothers' wrong from a different perspective and tries to encourage them to trust him and trust God who would provide for the future.</p> <p>If we trust in God's good plans for the future, we will have confidence to face difficult times and relationships in a new way.</p>
<p>5. How does Joseph show his understanding of God's activity and control in the events of his life as he responds to his brothers (v. 19-20)?</p> <p>6. What three things does Joseph do for his brothers (v. 21)? How do these gracious actions show Joseph's motives and his trust in God for the future?</p> <p>7. What difference will it make to your attitude and response to difficult situations or relationships if you can trust God for the outcome?</p>	
<p>TEACHING SUMMARY 5 MINUTES</p>	<p>APPLICATION 20 MINUTES</p>
<p>The brothers returned to Egypt with Joseph after the impressive burial ceremony of their father (Gen. 50:7-9). They are not only sad, but afraid. The deep heaviness they carry in their hearts is the guilt of sin they committed so many years before. With Jacob dead there is no one to protect them in this foreign land if Joseph now decides to take his revenge. True to character they make up a story which they hope will ensure their safety.</p> <p>Does Joseph weep with frustration as he sees their attempt to deceive him and their continued mistrust? What did he do to raise this fear in their hearts? In response Joseph shows a number of Christlike actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. He leaves judgment of wrong to God (v. 19) 2. He sees God's hand at work in events, even his brothers' cruelty (v. 20). 	<p>Divide into two or more groups. Discuss one question each and pray.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A family/church member has just lost a well-paid responsible job. Describe ways you will encourage him/her to trust God for the future. 2. There is a bitter family problem over a piece of land. How will your trust in God's ability to care for the future affect your attitude toward your relatives? <p>SING: "Because He lives I can face tomorrow..."</p> <p>PRAYER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Thank God for all the evidence of His hand at work for good in your life. * Pray for help to show that you trust Him for the future and the grace to help others in difficult situations. <p>MEMORY VERSE: Genesis 50:20-21a</p>
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