

Habakkuk #4 - From Routine to Real Relationship With God

- Well, howdy. Pastor Mark Driscoll here wanting to welcome you to the Habakkuk series, Honest to God, where a guy brings them all of his questions and complaints to God. God actually takes his call. Kind of like a call in talk radio show, and gives him a series and set of answers. It's an amazing book that really fits the mood of our times. It's an honor to teach it to you. And if you'd like to find the entire series, or more of my Bible teaching, you can visit markdriscoll.org. All right, if you've got a Bible go to the little book of Habakkuk, it's basically around the middle of your Bible. This is our last week in the book of Habakkuk, and we're in chapter three. So we tend to be creatures of habit. How many of you are routine people? You're creatures of habit, amen? You've got a routine. How many of you have got a morning routine? You wake up, you check the news, you get depressed. You pray for the rapture. You go back to bed. You've got a routine. How many of you aren't even Christians 'til you get a cup of coffee? You're not even a good Christian 'til you get a pot of coffee, okay? How many of you have got a bedtime routine? How many of you have got a certain way that you drive to work? How many of you, your day, or your week, or your month, or your year, it falls into a pattern in preceded, because you are a routine person. Routine is perfectly fine, it makes life functional. But it can be death to a relationship, because oftentimes what we try and do is reduce our relationships down to routines. Grace and I have noticed this. We've got our 25th wedding anniversary coming up in a couple of weeks. And that means that I'm blessed, and she's got a high pain threshold. So 25 years together, we have been. And what we have noticed is there are an increasing number of couples that we know personally, that we would have said, "Oh, they love the Lord. And they're a Christian family, and they have a good relationship." And then all of a sudden once the kids leave home the relationship implodes and explodes. We had a notification from a couple that we know from another state this week. It just absolutely kind of floored us both. And here's what we have witnessed. Sometimes even in the relationship of marriage, a husband and wife can fall into a routine for the sake of raising the kids. And then once the kids are grown and leave home, the marriage absolutely explodes and implodes, because there was no relationship. And once the routine changes the relationship ends. You can have what looks like a healthy relationship, but it is really masked by a routine. Routine either builds or breaks relationship. I'm not saying that routine is a bad thing, but you got to ask yourself, is this routine building my relationship? So it is with God. Some of you are believers. Some of you have been believers for a while. Some of you are even mature believers, as is this man Habakkuk. And we are reading a book from a man who's a prophet of God. He is a man who is praying, reading his Bible, go into their equivalent of church and worshipping God regularly. He's got a routine with God. And then all of a sudden the circumstances of his life change. It's like, life is a snow globe that gets shook, everything goes up and all of a sudden you're disoriented, and your routine no longer works. He's very anxious about that. He's frustrated by that. He's concerned regarding that. And he pens his journal, inviting us in to examine his relationship with God. And the question that we're going to be examining together today is how do you transition from a routine to a real relationship with God? That's really the issue that for some of us, the relationship with God is weak, and the routine with God is in the way. And here's what Habakkuk experiences. He wants

God to join his routine. How many of you are like that? Hey God, you're welcome. I know exactly what I need and I patterned it all out. So God, I have this routine, and I invite you to join my routine, and to do what I'm doing and to give me what I'm needing, and to answer my prayers and to fulfill my longings. God, you're welcome, I have a routine, and I invite you in it. And God shows up and says, "No, I don't do your routine. I do our relationship. I don't do your routine, I do our relationship. You can't manage me. You can't control me. You can't invite me to submit to you and to follow you. It doesn't work like that." And so sometimes the most painful, the most arduous, the most confusing moments of our life are opportunities for us to get frustrated with God, because he's not understanding our routine. Or to grow in faith toward God, because he is disrupting our routine for the sake of building our relationship. You understand that? Your God wants a relationship with you. Not just a routine from you, but a relationship with you. Some of you have had friendships, marriages, and you realize that you're in a problem place where it's routine not relationship. I don't feel like you listen to me. I don't feel like you care. I don't feel like you're engaged. Your heart is not in it. You're not present when we're together. And God would say, "Sometimes I feel like that with my people, and I'm jealous in a healthy and good way for our relationship." How do you move from routine to real relationship? First, it begins with prayer. And let's just say this, oftentimes for us, prayer becomes routine. Amen? How many of you have got a prayer routine? Dear Lord, thank you for this food. Blessed to our bodies, which is a weird prayer, can I just say that? That's like saying, "Dear Lord, thanks for the water, make it wet." It is, why are you praying for that? It's weird. And if it's McNuggets, like why are you praying that it would nourish your body? Don't eat the nugget! That's not gonna, it's not even on the periodic chart and there's no chicken in it, it's not, you know. It's just throwing that out there as something to pray about. But anyways, when it comes to prayer, we can get into a routine where you're like, "I don't even know what I'm saying." Or you pray at night before you go to bed, or you pray, you know, twice a week or, you know, you pray the same thing over and over. But it's not really a relationship, it's a routine. Habakkuk is a man who has prayed, but now he's going to pray in a way that deepens the relationship. Here's what prayer is. It's coming into the presence of God to have a conversation with God. That's what prayer is. It's coming into the presence of God to have a conversation with God. Can you imagine how weak my relationship would be with my children if they never came in my presence, and we never talked to each other? Or if all they did was from a distance shouted a few requests a few times a week. Dear Dad, gas in my car. Amen. Okay. You're welcome. Thanks for the text. No relationship, no presence, no conversation. Habakkuk here is a man who is growing in his prayer life. He says it this way, Habakkuk 3:1, "A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet, according to shigionoth. Which I know sounds like a weird dance. Getting shiggy with it. But anyways. Nobody knows exactly what that means. That little word is in Habakkuk, excuse me, it's in Psalm chapter seven. It may refer to a kind of music or worship. We don't know what it is. The big idea is this. Here's a guy named Habakkuk, and what he says is, "I need to get in God's presence, and have a conversation with God." This is what you need. Your problems, they'll only be resolved if you find yourself in God's presence. Oftentimes we are saying, "God, I want resolution to my problem." God says, "I want relationship in my presence." God's priorities are oftentimes different than ours. He is going to spend some time talking to God, praying to God, crying out to God, being honest with God. And he's going to journal this out. This is basically peering over his shoulders. This man is journaling

out his prayer life, and his Bible study with God. How many of you need to have a prayer routine? Prayer is not bad, prayer is good. And a prayer routine is not bad, as long as it builds the relationship. How many of you really need to say, "I got to figure out what prayer looks like. I got to start talking to God. I need to start coming into God's presence, and having a conversation with God. Like a child would come to meet with their father and talk to him. 'Cause I need him." When I was a brand new Christian, I really struggled with prayer. I didn't understand the point of prayer. My first thought was, why do I got to talk to God and tell him what's going on doesn't he already know? I mean, he does, right? It's like, you're praying that God's like, "What?! That's amazing, I had no idea! Thanks for telling me," God knows. And then I started telling God, "Okay, here's what I need you to do." And then it dawned on me, he probably isn't looking for me to tell him what to do. And if he is, we both have bigger problems than I thought. Like if God's up there going, "I hope Mark knows what to do." We've both got a real issue, this is a situation. So if not to tell God something he doesn't know, or tell God what to do, what is prayer for? Prayer's for me. I need prayer. I need to be in God's presence, and I need to talk to my father, so that we can build our relationship. That's what Habakkuk is doing. That's what prayer is doing. How many of you need to start praying? How many of you your prayer life though, has turned into routine? You know what it's like, right? It's just something that you do. But you don't do it from the heart. It's something you do like a job description where you check it off of your duty list, but it's not something that really deepens the relationship. Do you know what I'm talking about? How many of you are married, and you've had these conversations where you feel like, we're talking, but we're not communicating. We're talking, but we're not connecting. You're not really divulging anything, and I'm not really listening. Oftentimes that's what prayer reduces itself to when the routine overtakes the relationship. Let me tell you a few things about prayer, five benefits of prayer. And these are all taking Habakkuk's example for the totality of the book that he pens. Number one, prayer is how you let God be God. Much of his prayer in this book is going to be reminding himself of who God is. See, 'cause sometimes you'll be like, "I want to know, You know what? I don't know, I know the one who knows. I want to control. I'm not in control. I trust the one who is. It's letting God be God, it's letting God be God. Hopelessness is when you give up, faith is when you give it to God. That's what it is. Hopelessness is when you give up, faith is when you give it to God. Prayer is an act of faith. It's saying God does exist. He does hear an answer. He knows what he's doing. I can trust him. God, I am not God. You are God. Prayer is where I let God be God, and I stop trying to be God. I stop trying to know everything, control everything, and the outcome for all that I am experiencing. Number two, prayer is how you let you be you. It's where you let you be you. God, you be you, I'll be me. You do what you can only do, and I'll do the best with what I can do. Some of you, some of you, really don't have faith that God will be in your future. You have great fear of it. You don't see his presence in it. And prayer is where it gives you hope, faith, the trust that God is in my future, that God is good, that God is for me. And he will never leave me, nor forsake me, nor abandoned me. God, you be you, I'll be me. I'll trust you to take care of me. It's about the relationship. Number three, prayer is ultimately how you deepen the relationship. Prayer is conversation, it's talking, it's heartfelt. It is you sitting down and talking to God, as long as it takes about all that matters. Here's what you need to know, God loves you. His heart for you is a father's heart. The God who loves you, he is never exhausted. He can handle you. He's

never overwhelmed. He's patient loving, gracious, good, and kind. And whenever you need him your Father is always there to meet with you. It's how you deepen the relationship. Number four, prayer is how you release pressure. How many of you, when anxiety, trouble, trial comes, you feel it, and the pressure starts to mount. I'll give you an example, okay, one guy's honest, raised his hand, okay. I, I have struggled with this my whole life. I've struggled with this my whole life. I tend to go toward planning instead of praying, when I face a problem. my default is not prayer, my default is plan. There's a problem, I will make a plan, not I need to pray. Because ultimately making a plan is not a problem if you do it after you've prayed, and heard from the Lord what his plan is. You know what happens when life creates stress, drama, trouble, trial, you feel the pressure. If you don't have a release valve, eventually you explode emotionally, physically, spiritually, you break. I still remember, some years ago I knew a guy. He had a water heater, first time homeowner. He had a water heater at his house, and he saw a kind of a release valve that occasionally would drip a little bit. And he thought I better plug that. So he put some caulk in there and plugged it. That'll fix it. The water heater then becomes a what? A bomb. A bomb, because it needs a release valve, otherwise it explodes. The pressure needs a release. Let me say this, you're like that. You're like that. That's why some of you self medicate. That's why some of you freak out, right? That's why some of you listen to country music like you're, you know. Okay. So I mean, you're, you feel the pressure. Prayer is how you release the pressure. It's God's way of saying, "Let me release that pressure for you." And lastly, prayer is how you transfer burden. Habakkuk is demonstrating all of this. He's reminding himself of who God is, reminding himself of who he is, comes to God to deepen and build a relationship. He's releasing the pressure that he is feeling, and he is transferring the burden to God. If you read the whole book, that's what he's doing. Some of you are irresponsible people. Some of you are overly responsible people. So how many of you are overly responsible? They raised their hands. How many of you were irresponsible? I won't even ask you to raise your hand, because you won't. Be like, "I don't do that, no I don't do that." The irresponsible people who won't raise their hands. The irresponsible people, this is how irresponsible people work. They like to take their burdens and share them. They like to delegate them. You feed me, you raise my kids, you change my oil, you take care of me, okay, great. I've offloaded all my burdens and responsibilities. The overly responsible people take upon themselves burdens that they're not even supposed to bear. You're taking on other people's burdens. You're even taking on God's burdens. Things that God only can do, you're like, "That's okay, I'll take care of it." And God's like, "Actually you're not, you're not helping at all. You're not helping at all. What happens then is, you overly responsible people, you're going to feel burdens that you shouldn't. But even a healthy, normal, typical person, there will be certain burdens in your life that are God-sized sized and you can't carry them. You just can't. There are things in life that you need to be responsible for, and so you know what? I need to take care of that. This is my responsibility. There are other things the doctor says it's cancer, and you're probably going to die, oh. Your boss says, "You're fired, and we got no severance," oh. Your spouse says, "I love somebody else, and I'm leaving," oh, oh. All of a sudden you realize this is a burden that is going to crush me. This is too much for me to bear. How do you offload that burden? Through prayer. Jesus says, "Come to me," it's an invitation. All you who are weary, heavy laden, burned out, beat up, wore down. My yoke is easy. My burden is light. In that day a lot of your work got done through an ox. It'd plow your

field or pull your load. And when the plow was too big or the load was too heavy, you would get two ox and you'd yoke them together. And they would pull together. What Jesus is saying is that there are things in your life that you're going to need him to come along and help you pull through. That you can't bear that load alone. You can't carry that burden alone. It's a God-sized burden and you need God's help. And you say, "Well, how do I transfer that burden?" You transfer it in prayer. This is something again that I have struggled with. This is something that I believe, and sometimes I struggle to behave in that way. I'll give you an example last night, this is how funny God is, God's like, "Well before you preach that good sermon you should experience it. So that's my life, okay? That's why I've never preached Job, I don't even want to see what happens. Forget it, yeah, yeah. So I have a routine, I have a routine. And my routine on Saturday is I kind of take the day off with the family. And then I go over my notes and put them in my Bible. Then I figure out what I'm going to wear. And then I pray. And then I clear my head and then we have dinner. And then I chill. And if there's a good MMA fight, I pray about watching it. And then, and so this was my plan last night, I had my routine all set. And then I go to bed at a decent hour. And then I get up, and I drink my coffee, and I come and open God's word. And I'm a routine guy. Last night my routine had a big mushroom cloud over it. It got totally blown up. Got sort of a crisis call, stuff I got to work on, stuff I don't want to deal with, got me up late. I'm very, very frustrated, feels like everything is breaking. And you know what? I'm grumpy with my wife. Yup. Her name is Grace. You know, it was my fault. Okay. My kids could see, Dad's freaking out a little bit. "Dad, why are you freaking out?" I'm preaching a sermon on trusting God, and I don't. So there you go, kids, that's what dad's doing. And then I don't sleep very well, and I'm a little anxious and you know what? I had to transfer that burden to God. God, I'm going to do everything I can do, but there's some things here that I just don't have any control over. I trust you to carry it with me. I mean, literally this is something that we can believe intellectually, but we need to practice daily. And I'm not saying, "I've learned it, so you're welcome." I'm saying I'm a good hypocrite with insight. Okay, that's what I'm saying. But I love the fact that the Bible is the most honest book that's ever been written. And I love the fact that it gives us a glimpse into the life of a godly man who is honest, and he's in the middle of it. And he invites us to walk through it with God in prayer as he did. So number one, how do you break from routine to real relationship with God? It's prayer. It's coming into God's presence, and having a conversation with God. And let me say this, I am not negatively connotating that all routine is bad. One of the godliest men I've ever met, he gets up every morning, reads his Bible, sings in praise and it is relationship. My wife has a daily prayer time, and daily devotional, it's relationship. Our oldest daughter gets up every morning, and reads her Bible, and drinks her tea, and water color paints in her Bible, it's relationship. I am not against routine, but I'm against anything that doesn't build a relationship with God. And so prayer should be about relationships. So if your prayer life is routine, how do you break that routine and break into relationship? Number two, from routine to real Bible study. In Habakkuk 3:2-16, I won't put it all on the screen, 'cause it's a lot of text, I'll just read it to you. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. Here's the word of God: "Oh Lord," he says, "I have heard the report of you, and your work or Lord do I fear. In the midst of the years revived, in the midst of the years make it known," here's the key line, "In wrath, remember mercy. And then he goes back and he reminds himself of who God is and what God does: God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran, Selah. It's a

worship line where he's talking about geographically is in reference to an Old Testament book called "The Exodus", around an area called Mount Sinai. Where a man named Moses went up and met with God, and got The 10 Commandments. So that's geographically where he is reflecting back on historically. He goes on to say regarding God: His splendor covered the heavens. and the earth was full of his praise. His brightness was like light raised flash from his hand. And there he veiled his power before him. When pestilence and plague followed his heels, he stood and measured the earth. He looked and shook the nations. Then the eternal mountains were scattered and everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction. The curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was your wrath against the rivers, oh Lord? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea when you rode on your horses on the chariot of salvation? You strip the sheath from your boat, calling for many arrows, Selah. Again, this is all worship song. You split the earth with rivers, the mountain saw you and writhed, the raging river swept on. The deep gave forth its voice, it's lifted its hand on high. The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows, as they sped at the flash of your glittering spear. You march through the earth in fury, you threshed the nations in anger. You went out for the salvation of your people for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked laying in bare from thigh to neck, Selah. You pierced with his own arrows the heads of warriors who came from a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters. Here's his response: I hear, a body trembles, my lips quiver at the sound, rottenness centers into my bones, my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will wait quietly for the day of trouble to come upon the people who invade us. What is he talking about? This is a journal entry from a man following his Bible study. You and I are to read the Bible and then reflect on it. And journaling is a way of praying. This is his poetic summation of an Old Testament account called "The Exodus." This is a good thing for you to do study the Bible get time with the Lord and then journal it out, and think, how would I explain this in my own words? How do I interpret this? How would I articulate this to someone else? This is his Bible study summary of "The Exodus". If you don't know the story of "The Exodus," the first book of your Bible is called Genesis, it means beginnings, it's where everything begins. Except for God, and he's eternal and precedes it all. Nonetheless, there's a guy named Abraham that God raises up through him a chosen family. By the end of the book of Genesis, this family is in a precarious circumstance. Famine has hit, poverty has hit. They are in desperate and dire difficult situation. And so God instructs them to go to a nearby nation called Egypt. And there they find provision, and they find God's peace and presence, and they are blessed. They live there for some 400 years. Political leadership changes. They're no longer welcome, they're in fact enslaved. God's people become slaves of a political leader who thinks that he's God. He thinks that he's God. And he oppresses and abuses God's people, which have grown from a family of dozens to a nation of millions. They cry out to the Lord for deliverance from their oppression. This is Habakkuk saying, I wonder what it feels like to live under unjust political rule, under a corrupt government? When you were abused by a tyrant and mistreated, and your rights are taken away. And he remembers, oh, that's what happened to God's people previously in "The Exodus". So he goes back and he does his Bible study on "The Exodus". And he remembers that God answered their prayer, which gives him faith that God will answer his prayer. He

remembers that God delivered them, which gives him hope that God will deliver him. And he reminds himself that God crushed the Pharaoh who thought he was God revealing himself to be in fact, the real God. He brought plagues upon the people. He delivered his children. He parted the Red Sea. He brought them forth to worship him freely! That's what God can do. And what did the people do? God's presence went with them. They were to be in relationship with him, and literally follow him, though they knew not where he was taking them exactly. And rather than relationship, the people wanted to go back to their routine. They started having this conversation. "Oh, you remember the good old days when we were slaves." We laugh at them, but we say the same thing. You drank too much in college, then you get married, started reading your Bible, you're like, "Remember the good old days?" "No, Tony. No, Tony, no Tony. You wore the same clothes for a semester and threw up beer. Those were not good old days, Tony." What we do, we tend to romanticize and fantasize, and rewrite history. And we long for that, which was for us, slavery, oppression and death. Because we would instead prefer a routine that was death than a relationship which is life. Because you can control a routine, but you cannot control a free God, and a relationship with him; it's one of trust, which means that the future is uncertain and unknown, and you need to stick near him. And you need to trust him, even though you may not understand where he is taking you or what he is doing. Habakkuk is remembering "The Exodus". He is remembering the fact that God invites to relationship, but the people still long for routine, and he is checking his own heart. Does he trust God for the relationship, or is he trying to beg God for the routine? I want you to spend time in God's word. I want you to be studying God's word. I want you to be examining God's word. Let me give you three tips for better Bible study, and then I want to pick one thing out that Habakkuk said. First of all, this is the word of God. If you want to hear a word from God, you need to open the word of God. Here at the Trinity Church we say, we open our Bibles to learn, we open our lives to love, that's our deal. Everything rises and falls with the teaching of God's word, the reading of God's word, the study of God's word. It is tragic, sad that many Christians don't spend time reading God's word. If you want your soul to be healthy, it needs protein. And man does not live on bread alone, but every word that proceeds from God. That ultimately, even if you're a non-Christian, I would encourage you to start reading your Bible. So whether you accept or reject the God of the Bible, you're actually getting an accurate portrait of who he is, what he says and what he does. I got saved. I became a Christian reading the Bible. I was not a Christian, I started reading the Bible. And all of a sudden it challenged me. It rebuked me. It caused me to really question who I was and what I thought. And then God changed my heart, and God changed my mind. I believe that God's word is the only perfect thing on the earth. I believe God's word is the only thing that we'll take with us into the kingdom of God. I believe that every other opinion, every other book, every other philosophy, every other religion is speculation. It's not revelation, and at some point it has a shelf life and it expires, but the word of God endures forever. And since you are an eternal people, you need an eternal word from an eternal God to prepare you for eternity. That being said, we want you to read the Bible. I love teaching the Bible by the way. Thanks for letting me do that. I love my job. I didn't accidentally end up as a Bible teacher, I really like this. So I really love what I get to do. And you're gracious people who endure me for the better part of an hour. And if you're new and didn't know that that's what you're going to do. That being said, what are some tips to Bible study? First thing I say is, you need to have some sort of time to read and

study the Bible. But it can become for you routine, amen? if you're a person who's a student of God's word, and maybe even a fairly mature believer you've had seasons where it became routine, not relationship. Three keys to better Bible study. Number one, decide between a burden study or a book study. One of the pastors in our life that we know and love, and they're older, and speak life and encouragement into us, and one of my pastors. Was having a conversation with him, And he said, "You're a book preacher, I'm a burden preacher." I said, "Explain that." He said, "Well, you you find a book of the Bible that you're really excited about, and then you start studying it. And then out of that section you're preaching that week God gives you a burden." I said, "That's for sure true." He said, "I'm a burden preacher. I pray, I spend time in God's presence, I worship God. And then God burdens me for something. And then I dig into the Bible to see what the relief of that burden is, the answer to that question is, and then I preach on that burden." He said, "We both have burden and book. You just start with book and go to burden. I start with burden and go to book." And he said, " I think they're both good." And I said, "You know what? I agree with you." Some of you need to do a book study. You need to just pick a book of the Bible, I'd say pick a short one. Don't say, "I'm going to do Isaiah." Hm, no, you won't. That's like, "I'm going to go for a walk up Mount Everest." Mm, you got to start, you got to build up to that. You can't just start there. In flip flops, you just can't do that, okay? Pick a short book of the Bible and just say, "You know what? I'm going to dig into that. I want to get to know that." Others of you are going to be burden people. God burdens you with something. You're like, "I'm going to study God's word on prayer. The Holy spirit," or... I recently was talking to someone I love very dearly, and they felt like they got shot in the soul. And asked him, I said, "So how does your heart feel?" They said, "I feel like I have a broken heart." I said, "You know what? You really need to look in the Bible, it says a lot about a broken heart. And how God heals a broken heart, and how God is tender and kind with a broken heart." I said, "This is a burden study for you. You need to look at God's word for a broken heart." There are times it's gonna be book, there are times it's going to be burden. Some of you are going to be book people, some of you are gonna be burden people. That's all good, just get into the word of God and get the word of God into you. Number two, don't keep plowing the same field over and over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over. Some of you the way you get into routine you're like, "I read the Bible, and I really like the Proverbs, so I read one proverb a day," which is great. But there's other stuff in the book. Some of you are like, "I only read the epistles of Paul." Do you read the old Testament? "Nope, Paul, Paul, Paul, Paul, Paul. And all I ever eat is Chick-fil-A, I'm just a routine person." That's all I do. Which is fine, I like Chick-fil-A, but occasionally you need a burrito. You got to explore the palette. You got to look at your options, amen? And the Polynesian sauce is the best. I'm just throwing it out there. What can happen is you find yourself gravitating toward a genre of literature, toward an author, toward a book, and that's all you do. You need to get out of that and look at the rest of God's word. Number three, it's less about how much you read, and it's more about how much you retain. It's less about how much you read, and more about how much you retain. Meaning, if you read 10 books of the Bible and can't remember any of it that may not have been the best use of your energy. If you read 10 verses of it and you memorized, and meditated it all, and it fed your soul, then that was a good investment of your energy. If you can read and retain, praise God. if you need to slow down and soak in, then that's what you need to do. I'll compare this, I'll compare

studying God's word to let's say a trip. So our family had vacation. And on vacation my goal is not to get there as fast as I can. My goal is to, on occasion, pull over and see something. You dads, I'm just throwing this out there as something you may want to consider. Otherwise, how was vacation? It was terrible. It was NASCAR, that's all it was. We just kept passing people, and dad would not even pump the brakes. And I peed myself 'cause he wouldn't pull over. What I like to do when I'm taking a road trip, I like to have a penciled plan and see what happens. You're like, "Oh, that's pretty, we're gonna pull over. That's interesting, I wonder what's over there?" Sometimes you find yourself getting down a little road. That's a weird road. Oh, look a bridge. It goes into a little town. Oh, let's go check it out. It's good to be curious in life. It's good to be curious in God's word. Meaning there are times you're reading you're like, I'm just going to hit the brakes and take a look at this for a while. Holy Spirit, this is speaking to me, this is resonating in my heart. Help me understand this. Okay back in the car. Oh, there's a rabbit trail, I got to go look at that. Reading God's words, studying God's word should be an adventure. It's an awesome, wonderful, great glorious, good adventure. As your pastor, I want you to read the word of God, but I also want you to retain the word of God. Some people ask me, "Mark, what's your Bible reading plan?" I'll let you in a little secret, I don't have one. I don't, do I read my Bible? Say yes. That was really discouraging, by the way. You're like, "I don't know. I can't tell." I couldn't tell either way, okay great, so. I read my Bible all the time, not because I have to, but because I like to. Every time I read the word of God, I learn something about God and myself, and it deepens and builds the relationship. There are days that I'm digging into a book, there's other days I got a burden. There's days when sometimes something hits me, and I'm like, I got to bring this to the Lord in prayer. And I got to hear from the Lord in scripture. And let me tell you, this is how you build your relationship with God. You speak to him in prayer and you hear from him in scripture. And this is what Habakkuk does. In the first two chapters it goes like this, here's the pattern. "God, here's all my frustrations!" God's like, "Huh, I love you, how about a relationship?" "No, God, I still there's all these problems!" God's like, "I know how about our relationship?" Chapter three Habakkuk is like, "All right, let's try the relationship." You and I often want resolution, God wants relationship. We want God to jump into our routine, and God wants to pull us out of our routine, so that we can enter into relationship. We want God to get rid of all of our problems, and God wants us to be in his presence, even in the midst of our problems. This is what Habakkuk is learning, this is what we're all learning. And let me pull out one little phrase. So we just read a long section of Habakkuk, he's reflecting back on The Exodus narrative, and he pulls out one curious line. So let's pull the car over and just take a short glimpse at that. He asks, "In your wrath, remember mercy." In our day, many would write, since you don't have any wrath, thanks for the mercy. In our day, we do not assume or presume that God is a God of wrath. In fact, very few will even teach or talk about the wrath of God, and I'll tell you why. Because when you do, you receive the wrath of people. How do I know? Experience. If you tell people that God has wrath, the people will have wrath to you. So you either live in fear of God's wrath, or fear of people's wrath. The wrath of God is inextricably connected to the justice and the holiness of God. The love of God is mentioned in the Bible. But the number one attribute of God mentioned most frequently is holiness. When we sin, we violate his holiness, we violate his character. It's a behavior, but it's also the breach of a relationship. The Bible talks about God's wrath a lot. About 20 words are used in the Old and New Testament. It appears

about 600 times. It's a mega theme of the Bible. God's wrath ultimately culminates in hell, where those who do not belong to the Lord Jesus receive justice from God. Now, let me say this. Many of you, many of us, we struggle with justice and wrath, until we're the one who's offended. We all love justice and mercy. We all love wrath and mercy. When he says, "In your wrath, remember mercy. And what I mean is this, wrath for you, mercy for me." That's how we operate, amen? Let's just be honest. God killed them! You want me to kill all the bad people? I did not say that. I, for sure, I said kill them. Not all the bad people, 'cause I'm one of the bad people. And I feel like I should get mercy. This is where we're all hypocrites. Wrath for them, mercy for me. God has a right to justice. God has a right to justice. You have a right to justice. If somebody steals your car, they should give it back. If somebody kills your loved one, they should go to prison. If a crime is committed justice requires that a consequence occur. If that does not happen then this world is hell and it's anarchy. We know that there is a moral standard, because when we are violated or offended, we appeal to it for justice. God deserves justice. Everyone has sinned against God. Everyone has violated God. God has sinned against no one. God has violated no one. I think it's Psalm 51:5, where he says, "Against you only, Lord God, have I sinned." If you believe that you should have some justice, then you should also believe that God should have all justice. For those of you who are non-Christians, let me make this plain and clear. If you do not belong to the Lord Jesus, then all that awaits you for all eternity is the wrath of God. The wrath of God. And this is the punishment fitting the crime. It's why Jesus speaks of hell more than anyone else in the Bible. It's why the Bible says that there'll be tormented forever day and night, in the presence of the lamb, the Lord Jesus and his Holy angels. Jesus rules over heaven, Jesus rules over hell. How do you avoid that? How do you escape that? Let me tell you this dear friend, whatever problem you have, that is the biggest problem you have. Every other problem pales in comparison. The eternal problem is the problem. This is why we love Jesus so much. If God sent everyone to hell, he would be just, and we would be silent. It's like all the criminals go to jail, okay? Yet God in mercy, God who is rich in mercy, sends his only Son to live the life we have not lived, the life without sin, to take our place, to substitute himself, to die the death that we deserve. The cross of Jesus is the answer to the prayer of Habakkuk. In your wrath, remember mercy. Jesus goes to the cross and the Son of God endures the wrath of God. He cries out, "My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?!" The wrath of God was poured on the Son of God. And as Jesus takes the place of wrath, he then positions us in the place of mercy. Death to him, life to you. Condemnation to him, salvation to you. Unrighteousness to him, righteousness to you. Wrath to him, mercy to you. This is why we love Jesus, amen? That's why we love Jesus. Three days later, he rises, he conquers Satan, sin, death, hell and the wrath of God. He lives today. He hears your prayers. He'll forgive your sin. And let me just tell you this. If you're not a Christian, if you do not belong to the Lord Jesus, then all you get is wrath. If today you confess your sins to Jesus, and you trust in him, then he will give you mercy. Mercy, forgiveness, love, relationship, relationship. So when Habakkuk is praying he is not saying, "God, deal justly right now with all sinners!" Because he's a sinner who knows that he needs mercy. Instead he asked God to find a way to have him be faithful to his wrath, and gracious with his mercy. And again, the fulfillment of the prayer of Habakkuk is the death of Jesus in our place for our sins. Let me just say this. If you're a Christian, God loves you. He's not angry with you. God is not punishing you. He already punished Jesus. God is not

waiting to get you. He's waiting to forgive you. That's our God. How do you go from routine to real Bible study? It's ultimately connecting everything to the person in the work of Jesus. Number one, it's prayer. Number two, it's Bible study. Number three, it's worship. His last point is how to move from routine to real worship. Here's what Habakkuk has to say. "Though the fig tree should not blossom." What did they eat? Say figs. Figs, okay, thank you. This is like saying, though the Costco is empty. Really, what do we eat? Nothing. Well, that's not good. Right. How many worship songs are not written about poverty, and suffering and hunger? We don't have a lot of those really bright, upbeat, I'm glad I don't eat food songs. Amen? We don't have a lot of those. Though the fridge is empty. Though there's nothing to eat, though the job is gone. Though the credit cards are maxed out. Though the bills can't be paid. Nor fruit on the vines, this is how you eat. This is how you sustain your livelihood. And this is your business. This is like saying, "And even though I go bankrupt, and I have nothing to eat." The produce of the olive fail. If you've been to the Middle East, you've been to the Mediterranean, you realize that olive oil is a huge part of their life. They cook in it, they use it for beauty supplies. It's part of their diet. When the olive is gone, much of your life is devastated and ruined. And the fields yield no food. There's nothing to eat. In our country, obesity and gluttony is a real problem, but sometimes it's starvation and hunger. How many of you been hungry? My dad was a union dry waller, hung sheet rock to feed five kids until he broke his back. And I know what it's like to eat food from a food bank. I know what it's like to reach the point where it's like, there's nothing in the house. That's what he's talking about. The flock be cut off from the fold. That's your income. Those are your investments. Those are your assets. That's your portfolio, and the protein to feed your family. And there'll be no herd in the stalls, yet I will what? Rejoice! This is crazy, right? I mean we're Americans, we're like, "Man, for sure that's not what it means." We don't, that's crazy! I mean, if I walked up here like, "How are you doing?" "I am so happy. I don't eat! I don't have a house. I lost my job. My pants don't fit. I'm bloated. Whoo! It's going great!" Really? Okay, go in that room with no corners and work it out, you need help! You're not doing good! What?! I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the deer's. He makes me tread on my high places. We were hiking Sedona this week, and go up with the family and we reach a point, and the kids are like, "You want me to go any higher?" No, I don't, I don't. I'm 46, and I know my limits, and it was about a hundred yards ago, so I'm good, right, amen? And then you look up, I mean at 46, I can't see anything. My bangs had gone home to be with the Lord. I've gone from a six pack to a cooler. It's just sad, right, it's just sad. That's why I wear the vest, so anyways. But you look up and you realize, boy, up on these peaks are places that I can't get to, but certain animals they just sort of bound right up to the top. What he's saying is that those who walk with God, they have sometimes supernatural experiences, where their perspective changes, they see things from God's high places, and they're able to overcome things. They're able to overcome obstacles, and pains, and troubles and trials, and to get above them and beyond them in a way that is not natural, it's supernatural. That's what he's saying. To the choir master, he's talking about the worship team, with stringed instruments. I don't know if it's a guitar or what, but he's ready to rock. That's the end. That's the final word. The book starts with all the problems, and it ends with praise. Not because the problems have been resolved, but because the relationship has been strengthened. You and I oftentimes we bring our problems to God, and God wants us to enjoy the presence of God. And

to have new perspective on our problems. Let me say this, worship is something that requires faith. The great theme of Habakkuk, Habakkuk 2:4, is the righteous will live by faith. Worship is what we do until we see what God does. Worship is trusting that God will show up until we see God show up. Worship is what fills the gap between where we are and where God says we will be when he is finished with what he does. It's singing until we're seeing. Worship is singing until we're seeing. And I know that worship is not just singing, but it is singing. And I know worship is not just what we do when we're together, but it is what we do when we come together. And we come together to be in the presence of God, as the people of God, to remind ourselves of the promises of God, to enjoy the presence of God, and to sing the praises of God. That's why we're here. Now, let me say this. Most people who struggle with worship it's because of bad teaching. I don't want to critique individuals, I don't want to be negative. But as your pastor who loves you, I want to hit an issue that is important. The opposite of worship is idolatry. It's one of the great themes of your whole Bible, the first two commandments. There's one God, worship him alone, don't have any idols. The last line of I John, I think it's I John 5:21, he says, "My dear children keep yourselves from idols," that's the last word in that book of the Bible. Idolatry, is when we use God to get something that we value more than God. Idolatry is when a good thing takes God's place. And as a result it becomes a bad thing. And in our culture, there is a lot of idolatry that is presented as worship. Meaning God is not the ends, he's the means to an end. Example, worship God, he'll make you healthy. Worship God, he'll make you rich. Worship God, he'll save your marriage. Worship God, he'll save your kids. Worship God, he'll bless your business. Some of you have tried that. And you got sick, and you lost your job. And you got divorced, and your kids walked away from the Lord, and your business failed. Because of bad teaching you get angry at God, you turn your back on God. I am not worshipping God. I'm not reading my Bible. I'm not praying. I'm not going to that church. I'm not going to let Mark yell at me for an hour, I'm done! God, this is not working! And God would say, "That's not how I work. That's why it's not working." God, I love you. You need to know my heart. God does not exist to give you your idol. God exists to be the object of your affection, the center of your devotion, the cost for your adoration. If God wants to heal you, I am so good with that. If he would save your marriage, I would rejoice in that. If he would grab your kids, I would hold you and weep over that. If he would cause you to flourish financially, so that you could give generously, I'd be fine with that. But, you cannot use God to get something or someone that you value more than God. And that's what idolatry is. And this is where Habakkuk lands. I don't think it's gonna get better, I think it's gonna get worse. I don't think I'm going to get richer, I think I'm going to be poor. I don't think I'm going to be full. I think I'm going to be hungry. I don't think it's going to go well! But God, here's what I will do. I will worship you for who you are, not just for what you give. Everything God gives will go away. And the relationship with God endures forever. And what Habakkuk has learned is there's a lot of things that he values in life, but what he values most is his relationship with God. I've got a lot more points, but I think I'll end right there. What Habakkuk does, he starts frustrated, but he brings his frustrations to God. You need to do that. He's honest with God, he prays to God, he talks to God, he wrestles with God. You need to do that. And then he receives a word from God. I hope that that has happened for you today. That from the word of God, you've received a word from God. He spent some time in prayer. I want you to take time to pray. And then he surrenders again. Surrender is not when you lose hope,

but you realize that God is your only hope. And then he sings, and he worships, and he enjoys God's presence. I want you to enjoy God's presence in worship today. Which means some of you need to break your routine. How many of you, church is routine? I come twice a month, I park in the same spot. I come in late, I ignore all those people. And then when the band starts singing, I start leaving. This may be where you need to sing. This may be where you need to raise your hands. This may be where you need to kneel, and get some time in prayer with your face on the seat. Somebody say, "But what are people gonna think?" Well, you're not supposed to be thinking about you, that's the whole problem. You need to be in God's presence, you need to enjoy God's peace, because you're one of God's people. When you're ready, you can take communion, remembering wrath and mercy in the body of Jesus. That his body was broken, and the wrath of God was satisfied, and the mercy was given. The love of God was revealed in the death of Jesus, in our place for our sins. You're welcome to partake if you're a Christian. Lastly, I want to say this. Habakkuk is a man. Most men don't worship God. Women statistically, they pray, they read their Bible, they come to church to worship God. Their husbands don't, statistically. At the Trinity church we want all people to love and serve and worship God. But believe it's very important if the men do. Because statistically if the men do, the children do. There's something powerful that a child learns when they see their dad surrendering and worshipping God. There's something powerful that happens when a wife sees that the husband who is leading the family is led by the Lord. So that ultimately to follow him is to follow the Lord, otherwise she's in a scary place. Habakkuk is a man who emotionally starts very frustrated, and then he's very free. Worship is how God unburdens and emotionally frees us up. And this is particularly true for men. Many of you men are emotionally constipated at the soul level. There is a deep blockage. And as a result you don't have good relationship with others. Maybe with your wife, your kids, your coworkers, your friends, your family. Emotionally, you don't connect. By worshipping God, you become emotionally healed. As you're in the presence of God, your emotions are healed, and as a result, the relationship is strengthened. And then you become a person who is emotionally healthy and ready for other relationships. Again, God doesn't need prayer, we do. God doesn't need worship, we do. Father God, as we come into your presence right now, we invite the Holy Spirit to be in our midst. Holy spirit, you are the presence of God. You are God with us. Holy spirit, we invite you to be in our midst. We invite you to take the word you have written, and to open our hearts to receive and understand something of the word that you have inspired to be written. We ask Holy Spirit, that you would allow us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author, and perfecter of our faith, and not just ourselves or our circumstances. God, if there's anything in our heart today, that we are wanting you to give us our idol, that we would repent of that, and come into your presence, and work on the relationship and trust the future to you. Lord, for those who are not Christians, would you give them the gift of life right now, faith in Jesus? For those of us, Lord God, who are believers, but there are aspects of our prayer life, our Bible study, or our worship that have fallen into that rut of routine. Would you break it right now in the strong name of Jesus? In this very moment would we respond differently, passionately, intimately, wholeheartedly, intentionally, presently? God, I thank you for this church, I thank you for this church family. I thank you for these people who give me the great honor of teaching them the scriptures. These are a good hearted, kindhearted, teachable people, Lord. And so would you please help us to become more like Jesus? In whose name we

pray. Amen.