

HABAKKUK

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Inside Terry's Office:

The Book of Habakkuk - "The Soap Opera Twist"

In the soap opera, John and Joan are looking deeply into each other's eyes. She realizes how his soft brown irises blend with the other remarkable features of his face to create a sense of longing within her to share with him her inner-most soul. John is equally enamored with Joan, seeing in her twinkling green eyes a joy for living that draws him to her with a power that seems irresistible. We recognize the mutual attraction between them, enhanced by a melody in the background that seems to emanate from their very hearts. The light is fading as the sun sinks on the horizon and John and Joan will soon have to leave this moment in paradise and return to their separate worlds or chose to embrace each other throughout the night.

What will they do? ... What do you hope they will do?

Based upon the moment we've been given with them, I would hope for them to move forward into a relationship that seems to promise a lifetime of wonder, adventure, and fulfillment!

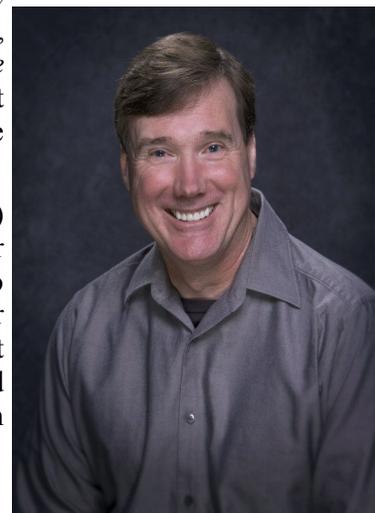
However, what you haven't been exposed to is John and Joan's history together. You see, they have been characters in this soap opera for many years. During those previous years, their relationship with each other has been tumultuous and interspersed with various other romantic relationships. In the last five years alone, John and Joan have had an illegitimate child together and they've been separated while John attempted to kill a couple of Joan's various boyfriends. John became Joan's step-dad when he manipulated Joan's wealthy mom (who was dying from Alzheimer's) into marrying her, thus gaining the family fortune for himself when she died two weeks after the wedding. Joan got back at John by pretending that their child was kidnapped and secretly collecting a ransom from John before returning home from vacation with the child. And on and on ... til now when we see them gazing into each other's eyes.

This soap opera is a pretty good analogy for how God sees the relationship between Israel and false gods. He has watched their love/hate relationship spin crazily through the years as He has been drawn in to the soap opera by his 'agape' love for Israel. Although, His love is healthy and true He has become a character in the soap opera. He is not powerless or befuddled by Israel's chaotic unfaithfulness. He has a plan. God's plan takes into account all the characters in the soap opera and the roller coaster of blessings and chaos that the characters create for themselves.

In the book of Habakkuk, Israel has reached a low point in which one of its previous lovers is turning against them. In pain and confusion, Israel asked God, "*How long must I call for help, but you do not listen?*" And, the Lord replies, "*I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe even if you were told.*" It is not an answer that Israel wants to hear, but it is an honest answer given by the only truly healthy character in the soap opera.

I don't like the idea that my life is a soap opera (of my own creation) and that I often don't understand when the only really healthy character in my soap opera is loving me best and working for my good; BUT I do trust that this is the case. Left to myself, I could be just like John or Joan. From my limited perspective I can feel drawn to the very worst things for me and could justify my most sinful of actions. Thank God for God. He really is willing to enter our soap operas and make a plan that is for the highest good of all the characters involved!

In His Grip, TWE



***Struggle Well!
Wait in Hope!***

Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. (Habakkuk 1:5)

I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior. (Habakkuk 3:16-18)

~

From 66 Love Letters: “But what I allow seems to contradict My holy and pure character. I required Habakkuk, as **I require you, to live in the tension between the evil that prospers, whether in the church or in secular society**, and My plan to restore the beauty of My character in this world. It is that tension that shifted Habakkuk’s focus away from frustration with what he saw in the world toward the mystery of how I execute My plan [2:1].”

I am writing today one week after returning from a voyage to France on a Viking River Boat Cruise with my best girlfriend of 50

years! We saw breathtaking sights, experienced historical venues of ancient time, and met the most interesting people! It was truly a trip of a lifetime gifted to me by my precious friend, Linda Cobb! As I read the above verses, especially 3:17, I was able to picture the grape vines and olive trees and livestock and recall the aroma and taste of said crops. I heard the stories of the necessity of these crops and livestock (goats included) for livelihood. Visiting churches, cathedrals with architectural structure, artistic sculptures and beautifully etched stained glass that was more than the eye could take in all at once and almost more than my mind could completely process! While, honestly, I could see the twisting of God’s message in some of the theological depictions, I was most impressed with the reminder that these structures were of the presence of God throughout history and man’s quest to search Him out.

With all that has transpired in our world over the last year and specifically the terror that has stricken France, my plans to visit France made some that I talked to about it nervous for me. Only weeks earlier, innocent vacationers in Nice, France had been plowed down by a truck driven by an ISIS sanctioned devotee. Nice was only a few hours’ drive from our last dock and several on our boat were traveling on to Nice for a few extra days. I had no expectation for God to exempt me from terror but I had every confidence I was and I am walking in the presence of God at all times. I trust God is working His plan! As Crabb says in this

Thirty-fifth Love Letter, nothing catches God off guard, neither Adolf Hitler, Osama Bin Laden and I would add or ISIS!

God calls us to walk into “the tension” trusting that He is working to “restore the beauty of His character in this world.” We are not to pray it away but embrace it. I love Crabb’s conclusion that the message of Habakkuk is to “**struggle well and wait in hope.**” Think what I would have missed had I let fear hold me back!

Carol Anne



Habakkuk—Where In The World Are You, Lord?

Chapter 1:2-4 “How long, O Lord, must I call for help? But you do not listen? ‘Violence is everywhere!’ I cry, but you do not come to save. Must I forever see these evil deeds? Why must I watch all the misery? Wherever I look, I see destruction and violence. I am surrounded by people who love to argue and fight. The law has become paralyzed, and there is no justice in the courts. The wicked far outnumber the righteous, so that justice has become perverted.”

I wonder how many of us have felt this same way. We are going through something hard, or we’re watching someone we love go through tough things, we don’t understand it, and we agonize. We wonder where God is in it and why He doesn’t make things “right”. We can’t perceive Him with any sense and it feels like He has left the building. I’ve been there.

The Lord replies in chapter 1:5 “Look around at the nations; look and be amazed! For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn’t believe even if someone told you about it.”

The Lord goes on to say that He is raising up the Babylonians, who are noted for being cruel, their own strength being their god, to bring judgement against Judah. This doesn’t make any sense to Habakkuk and he complains to the Lord, surely you do not plan to wipe us out? Will you let them get away with this forever?

Have you ever felt like someone was just getting away with something? That God is just turning a blind eye? Then maybe you see God move in a way that doesn’t seem fair? Habakkuk felt the same way. He saw the evil, asked God where He was, God told him judgement was on the way. Then Habakkuk was bothered by the way of judgement, the Babylonians who were even more evil than the Judeans.

Ha. I’ve been there before. In the place where God answers and it makes no sense. In fact His answer seems to lead to a place WORSE than what’s already happening. Times where it’s hard to believe ANYTHING good can come of this. Habakkuk asks some tough questions, trying to understand, and so do we when hard things come.

Here’s where we find a ditch sometimes. We ask God, He doesn’t answer the way we want Him to and we retreat, we isolate, we get mad at God, and sometimes...we even run away from Him. I have done all of these things in my hurt and desperation.

Habakkuk chooses a different way. In chapter 2:1, he says, “I will climb up to my watchtower and stand at my guard post. There I will wait to see what the Lord says and how He will answer my complaint.” I love this picture!

Did you know, according to Blue Letter Bible Online, the name Habakkuk is derived from the Hebrew verb embrace? It also states, “His name probably means, ‘He Who Embraces’ or ‘He Who Clings.’”

Side thought...Doesn’t that sound like...”acknowledge and embrace your reality and make a godly response?” or...”God delights in the struggling, striving, growing Christian?” □

Chapter 3 is a prayer proclaiming who God is and all the attributes of God. I love that about Habakkuk. He sees things he doesn’t understand, he is grieved by them, he asks God about it, waits for His response of truth, then in the midst of not understanding, he holds on to who God is.

In my mind, I’m picturing those bumper pads at the bowling alley for the “little kids”. Ha. I think we are like that bowling ball. Life throws us down the lane, we wobble to the right and to the left and God is the bumper pad. If we let Him, He gently guides us back to the middle...where He is....where Truth is. He brings us to a place where we are able to trust that His ways are good. We may not understand, but His ways ARE good.

Struggling, striving, growing,

Michelle Elliott



UNMET EXPECTATIONS

A very good pastor/friend once told me that the biggest issue that he would help people work through was this notion of “unmet expectations”. And so far in my pastoral counseling journey, I think he may be right. Expectations are interesting things. Some can bring us great joy, while others are very depressing. Some can help us feel loved and cared for and others make us feel lonely and isolated. But the ones that cause us the most intense reactions are the ones that are “unmet”. The one thing that all expectations have in common is this: They are all ours!

I believe that every situation, every interaction, and every area of life carries expectations. How often do you find yourself asking or saying things like: “How did that happen?” or “I sure didn’t see that coming?” or even “this wasn’t supposed to be like this?”. This is where we find the prophet Habakkuk. He’s asking God “How long,....,must I call for help?” (AME Paraphrase) “Things are bad here and they’re not supposed to be this bad for this long. You’re supposed to do something.” Can you hear the frustration of the met expectations? So, in typical God fashion, He answers Habakkuk. (AME Paraphrase) “Hey, just look around. I’m sending the Babylonians to come wipe out all the wicked people.” But then Habakkuk says “Whoa! That’s not how this is supposed to look. They may kill us all!”

Habakkuk was struggling to realize that he had put expectations on God to not be in the situation in the first place and also on how God was supposed to fix the problem. When we cannot own the fact that the expectations are ours, we give our ability to be who we want to be away to the person or situation and their ability to meet our expectations. There are so many things that get wrapped up into this dynamic; Definitions of Good, Emotional Investments, Codependency, Knapsacks and Boulders, Boundaries, etc...

By now you may be thinking that “expectations are bad and that I just won’t expect anything from anybody”. But this is not so (and it’s not healthy). We are going to have expectations. And there are some things (like relationships) that require expectations. Expectations are not inherently good or bad-they just are. But they are OURS.

One of the most common ways that expectations go unmet is when we are not fully embracing our realities. It is so hard sometimes to embrace the sadness of a situation that we put expectations on others that they are not able to meet. Other times our expectations go unmet because we are holding on to unhealthy definitions of what love looks like. Still another common scenario is when we are looking to others to meet things that only God can meet. (And He may use other people to meet the needs, but the trouble is when we are looking to the people and not Him.)

In the last Chapter of Habakkuk, we find our prophet finding his healthy emotional investment. He says that even though the crops have failed and the fruits are not growing, the flocks are dead and the barns are empty, “yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!” (Hab 3:18) He was able to loose his expectations and rest (trust) that no matter the circumstances, God was the one he could trust to be with him in whatever may come. “Lord, helps us to find that place of trust and to see our expectations.”

Be Who You Want to Be!
Anthony Elliott

FALL CLASSES

BOUNDARIES

What are boundaries and why are they important?

Boundaries are unseen structures that protect us from harm and support healthy, productive lives. Boundaries are personal property lines that define who you are and who you are not. This class is a study based on biblical principles designed to help people learn how to determine what they are and are not responsible for; emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically. Boundaries give you the **freedom** to walk as the loving, giving, fulfilled individual God created you to be.

Signs of boundary issues:

Feel guilty when you say no. Feel resentment when you say yes. Second guess yourself. Feel controlled by others. Have difficulty hearing no. Need to control others.

Note: This is not a typical Cloud & Townsend book review with video boundaries class. There is an abundance of information in this **10 week class**, so put your running shoes on. In addition to the C & T core curriculum, we will introduce various specific tools in an effort to help the participant overcome their own inner struggle with setting boundaries. We will cover such things as the biblical definition of emotional responses; how to process emotions in a productive healthy manner and what a Godly response looks like; emotional investment and what's involved in maintaining our personal power. We will also cover what forgiveness is and what it is not and what does "just give it to God" look like?

Class Instructor: Michelle Carpenter

Class fee: \$70 plus cost of book. Due at first class. (A notebook/workbook is provided)

Book: "Boundaries" by Henry Cloud & John Townsend

(Books are available at Barnes & Noble, Amazon, Christianbooks.com or Mardel's)

Registration: Opens 4 weeks prior to class. An email with all pertinent information will be sent to those on the mailing list. If you are not on the boundaries mailing list, please email us using the format below.

Upcoming Class:

Begins Tuesday evening, September 13th 6:30-8:30 , ends November 15th

CODEPENDENCY

Were you raised to be nurturing, caring, loving and responsible? That's a good thing.....right?? So I'm doing these "good things" and yet I'm called a "CONTROL FREAK" ? Bossy, selfish, obsessed! So when did nurturing, caring, loving, and being responsible become such bad things?

Learn how codependency is taking normal behaviors too far. Explore feelings, boundaries, family of origin, forgiveness and more. The new Co-Dependent Study is based on Melody Beattie's latest book, "**The New Codependency**." Please purchase the book and read section I prior to the first class.

On-Site Group taught by Marion Fuller

Day of Week- Sunday

Time: 2:00-4:00

Cost per person - \$70.00

Class begins Sunday, September 11 and ends Sunday, November 13

Stickman's Prayers

Plumblin's newest book, *Stickman's Prayers* has been published and is now available at Plumblin!

stickman's prayers

the everyday practice of
"loosing prayers"
and the ministry of
"exploratory prayers"



Michelle Carpenter
Terry Ewing
Erin Garcia
Margo Hanne
Carolyn Knippers
Carol McNamarra
Sue Merrill

Would you be surprised to know that the "Prayer of Jabez" was a joke?

Would you be happy to know what kind of prayers are appropriate for you to pray for yourself and what kinds are meant for you to pray for others and others for you?

Would you like confidence and freedom to simply enjoy your personal and ministry prayers?

Praying is the most natural thing in the world for Christians; an on going conversation with our best friend, counselor, and confidant; gratitude to our Savior and provider; intercession on behalf of our friends; requests to our Creator. In this regard, a book on prayer may seem presumptuous. When you write a book on Prayer aren't you suggesting that some are praying wrongly, or, at least could be praying better?

That really is not the kind of message we look to promote. So...why the book?

The *Stickman's Prayer's* serves two purposes. First, to challenge some ideas that other teaching and preaching concerning prayer has promoted. And, to offer simple encouragements to personal prayer and prayer ministries.

FOUNDATIONS

Soul Care Training VI

Unit 1

September 1, 2016 – November 17, 2016 (Cancel week of Fall Break)

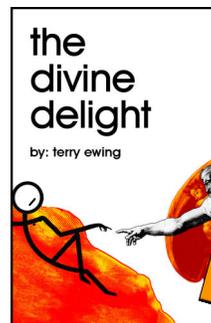
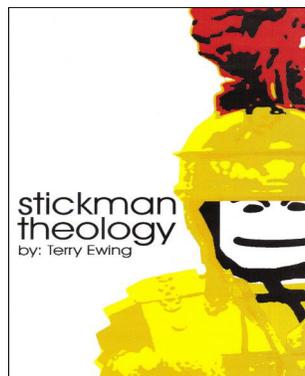
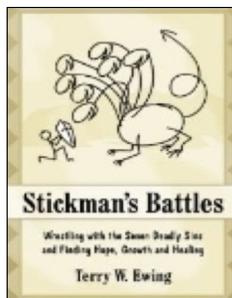
It will be back to the basics in Soul Care Training VI Unit 1. In this course students will learn about the foundational principles of counseling on which Plumblin is based. Students will be introduced to our most often used tools of discovery and emotional processing. The course will end with the sharing of "personal narratives" developed during the three months of the course. The required reading for this course includes Terry Ewing's Stickman Theology and How to Stop the Pain by Dr. James Richards. These books will be read in that order and will be reviewed during dedicated class discussion sessions.

Our goal in Soul Care Training is to equip individuals in the community of faith to embrace others as well as themselves in the midst of challenging life circumstances and to build confidence to engage in meaningful and soul shaping conversations. Our sixth two-year cycle of on-site classes begins Thursday, September 1. The cost for our on-site classes is \$250 per unit. Registration and a \$50 deposit is strongly suggested by August 10, 2016. The remaining balance of \$200 is due by the first class session. You may register online at www.plumblinonline.com or at the Plumblin office, 8222 E. 103rd St., Suite 127, Tulsa, OK 74133. Call our office at 918-477-9068 for any further information or email Carol McNamara at carol@plumblinonline.com or Michelle Carpenter at michelle@plumblinonline.com.

For more information on Soul Care Video on Demand pricing and scheduling contact Anthony Elliott at Anthony@plumblinonline.com. For more information on satellite Soul Care class availability and pricing, contact, Traci Rostamo at tjrostromo@gmail.com.

Financial Snapshot	July 2016	Year-to-Date 2016
Number of Client Hours	324	2160
Contribution Income	\$10,805	\$73,820
Operations Expenditures	\$13,183	\$78,955
Shortfall	(\$2,378)	(\$5,135)

Available at Plumline for a suggested donation of \$10.00 each



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Stickman Theology

On your KINDLE?

Did you know that when you shop on Amazon, you could be helping to financially support Plumline? Through the Amazon smiles program, **Amazon will donate a portion of the sales to Plumline.** All you need to do is go to smiles.amazon.com, designate Plumline Ministries, and start shopping! Amazon will then donate 0.5% of the total sales price to Plumline. Please remember to bookmark that page and you can help us as you shop!

PLUMBLINE

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