



UNIT 14 | SESSION 3

ZEPHANIAH WARNED GOD'S PEOPLE TO REPENT

ZEPHANIAH

CHRIST CONNECTION:

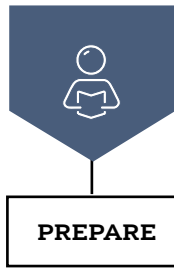
Zephaniah told the people about a special day when God will punish sin and Jesus will return. Jesus will make everything right.

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is repentance? Repentance is choosing to stop making wrong choices and choosing Jesus.

KEY PASSAGE PHRASE:

Turn away from your wrong choices. Acts 3:19



YOUR HEART TO TEACH



LEADER Bible Study

The Book of Zephaniah serves as a stern rebuke of God’s people and a warning regarding a failure to return to Him faithfully. It also serves as a reminder of God’s expectation of holiness and a description of what that looks like when faithfully lived out among God’s people.

Zephaniah 2:3 offers a call to repentance and a promise of hope for this restoration of the faithful. “Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth, who carry out what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be concealed on the day of the LORD’s anger.” Through Zephaniah, the Lord provided a glimmer of hope amidst His stern rebuke and graphic warning. But He didn’t stop there. Zephaniah ended his prophecy with more than a glimmer of hope, a promise that likely warmed the weary souls of God’s people.

Beginning with Zephaniah 3:9, we find a beautiful picture of God’s fully-restored people. It’s a remarkable image of faithfulness, satisfaction, joy, and mutual benefit that ignites a desire for this reality. It may even ignite in the reader a desire for what could be called “a return to Eden.”

Zephaniah 3 describes an environment of pure speech where all are calling on the name of the Lord. There is also painted a

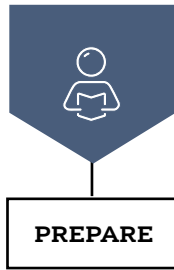
picture of generosity, humility, meekness, joy, singing, celebration, healing, praise, and fortune. Zephaniah also describes an end to failures, arrogance, rebellion, dispersion, lies, wrongdoing, and fear. Following a terrifying warning for God’s people to repent, this wonderful image of restoration leaves the reader with great hope.

The Bible is full of stern reminders of God’s expectation of holiness among His people, but it is always chased by a beautiful and redemptive reminder of His promise to restore all things and the hope that this promise offers to those who repent of their wicked ways and hope in Christ.

Spend some time today asking God to work out the message of Zephaniah’s prophecy in your own heart, to confront you with His holiness and a rebuke of the sin in your life, and to follow that with a reminder of the hope that belongs to all who trust in Christ for the restoration of their soul—and ultimately, all things in the heavens and the earth.

WORDS TO KNOW

Prophecy: word from God to a group of people. In Old Testament times, God spoke to the people through many prophets.



YOUR HEART TO TEACH

GATHER Supplies

Keep a supply of the following items available during all teaching sessions: Allergy Alert, Bibles, washable markers, crayons, scissors (adult use), blunt-tipped scissors, construction paper, copy paper, glue sticks, glue, tape, baby dolls, blocks, play dough, and a beanbag.



WELCOME

Create clouds with paint

- large piece of paper
- large cotton balls
- spring-type clothespins
- blue washable paint
- foam plates
- smocks
- Big Picture Question Poster



LEARN

Review the Bible story

- paper plate

Learn the key passage phrase

- Key Passage Phrase Marker



LOVE

Create a dot sticker picture

- dot stickers

Assemble key passage phrase puzzles

- "Key Passage Phrase Puzzle" printable, 1 per child
- heavyweight paper, 1 piece per child



LIVE

Care for people

- people figures

Follow an obstacle course

- "Adoniram Judson Photo" printable
- items for an obstacle course (hula hoops, foam pool noodles, crepe paper, painter's tape)

Snack and transition

- snacks
- Activity Page, 1 per child



BONUS

Practice the key passage phrase

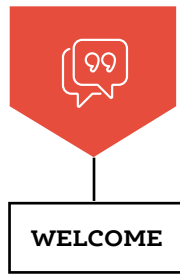
- Key Passage Phrase Marker

Work and fix puzzles

- variety of puzzles: Jesus, Bible stories, nature, animals

Sing and be happy

- rhythm instruments, 1 per child
- music
- electronic device



Provide as many learning activities as possible from the *Love* and *Live* sections to give preschoolers choices to learn. Incorporate the Bible story, the Christ connection, and key passage phrase in your conversations as the preschoolers engage in learning activities throughout the session.

WELCOME

Use the following activity to greet children as they enter the classroom. Talk about the big picture question and answer. After each child completes the welcome activity, encourage him to participate in the activities provided from the *Love* and *Live* sections of the leader guide.

CREATE CLOUDS WITH PAINT

Tape a large piece of paper to the top of a table. Pour a thin layer of blue paint on a plate. Attach cotton balls to the ends of spring-type clothespins. Lay them next to the paint. Display the big picture question poster nearby. As preschoolers arrive, greet them by name and help them put on smocks over their clothes. Show them the plate with the blue paint. Invite them to paint clouds by holding clothespins and dipping cotton balls into blue paint and then dabbing them on the paper creating clouds. Encourage them to continue creating clouds on the paper. They may need to dip the cotton balls again to get more paint as they paint. Replace cotton balls if they get too soggy.

SAY “ Hello! I am happy you are at church today. You worked hard to paint clouds on the paper. We will learn about a man named Zephaniah in our Bible story today. Zephaniah told people that God was going to punish them. God’s people were sinning, and they needed to repent. **What is repentance? Repentance is choosing to stop making wrong choices and choosing Jesus.** Because the people were sinning, Zephaniah said that when God punishes them for their sin, it will be like a bad, dark day with clouds. But Zephaniah also said that one day God will fix everything that is wrong. God will take care of all people who trust in Him. ”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

1 CHOOSE HAPPY OR SAD

As preschoolers come to group time, guide them to make a happy face and then a sad face. Explain that you will tell them a few statements. They are to decide if each statement makes them happy or sad, and then show you by making the corresponding face. Possible statements include these: “it is raining outside so you cannot play with friends; you get a new pet; you do not feel well; God loves you.”

SAY “ You showed me with your face if I told you happy or sad news. In today’s story, we will hear about news a prophet named Zephaniah gave to God’s people. Listen and decide if it was sad news, happy news, or both. ”

2 TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Open your Bible to Zephaniah and tell the following Bible story.

ZEPHANIAH WARNED GOD’S PEOPLE TO REPENT

SAY “ Zephaniah (ZEF uh NIGH uh) was a prophet. God told Zephaniah about something that would happen one day. God said a day is coming when He is going to punish people because they disobey Him. Zephaniah shared this important message with the people in Judah.

God said to Zephaniah, “I am going to take away the things people worship instead of Me. I will punish their leaders.”

It would be a bad, dark day with clouds. Zephaniah said that God would be angry because people did wrong things.

“Change how you are living before it is too late,” Zephaniah said. “Love God and do what He says.”

Then Zephaniah told the people some good news. When it was time for all the people to be punished, God would take care of the people who trust in Him. He would keep them safe. Zephaniah said that one day, God will fix everything that is wrong. He will make all bad things good. He will make all broken things like new.

The day when God makes things right will be such a happy day for God’s people. They will be glad. They will sing and be happy. Zephaniah said, “God will be with you. You will not need to worry about anything bad happening.”

“God will be with you,” Zephaniah said again. “God will take care of you. He will show you how much He loves you.” ”

Christ Connection: Zephaniah told the people about a special day when God will punish sin and Jesus will return. Jesus will make everything right.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

3 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

Make a happy face on one side of a paper plate and a sad face on the other side. Show preschoolers the faces on the sides of the plate. Guide the children to tell you some of the sad things that they remember from the story as you hold up the sad face. Then, ask them to tell you some of the happy things they remember from the story as you show the happy face. Some children may repeat other children's answers. Provide help as needed. Possible answers for sad things include "People worshiped other things besides God; people will be punished for disobeying God; it will be a bad, dark day with clouds; people did wrong things." Answers for happy things include "God will take care of the people who trust in Him; He will keep people safe who trust in Him; God will fix everything that is wrong; God will make all bad things good."

SAY “ Zephaniah told God’s people that a day is coming when God is going to punish them because they disobeyed God. But Zephaniah also told the people about a special day when God will punish sin and Jesus will return. Jesus will make everything right. ”

4 SING A SONG

Sing the song to the familiar tune of “Are You Sleeping?”

“Turn and follow, turn and follow.
Go God’s way, go God’s way.
I can choose to listen. I can choose to listen.
And obey, and obey.”

5 LEARN THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the key passage phrase marker in your Bible at Acts 3:19. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage phrase. Lead the children to repeat the phrase together. Invite preschoolers to stand, and guide them to walk around the circle while saying the phrase. Then, lead them to turn and walk in a circle in the other direction while saying the phrase.

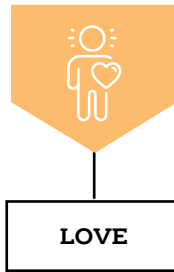
SAY “ In the Bible story, Zephaniah spoke the message that God’s people were going to be punished because they disobeyed God. Zephaniah told the people to change how they were living before it is too late. Our key passage phrase says something very similar. It says, ‘Turn away from your wrong choices.’ To turn away from your wrong choices is to change how you are living. ”

6 PRAY

Pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to make everything right.

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God because of what we learned

1 RECEIVE AND TELL MESSAGES



Lead preschoolers to form a circle. Invite a child to stand in the middle. Whisper a short message about God to the child and prompt him to say it aloud. Then, select another child to receive and tell a message. Continue the activity until all children have had an opportunity to receive and tell a message. Possible messages include “God loves you; God wants you to obey Him; God sent Jesus; God will fix everything; God takes care of you; God will be with you; God keeps you safe.”

SAY “You told everyone in the class some very important messages. God told Zephaniah about something that would happen one day. God said a day is coming when He is going to punish people because they disobey Him. Zephaniah shared this important message with the people in Judah. Then Zephaniah told the people some good news. When it was time for all the people to be punished, God would take care of the people who trust in Him. He would keep them safe.”

2 CREATE A DOT STICKER PICTURE

Print a large Z on a piece of colored construction paper for each preschooler. Lay the prepared pages and dot stickers on the table. Invite each child to select a paper. Show them how to peel the dot stickers from the backings and then stick them on the letter lines on their papers. Comment they are creating the letter Z with stickers. Help as needed.

SAY “You created a picture with dot stickers showing the letter Z. Zephaniah begins with the letter Z. Zephaniah was a prophet. He told important messages to the people. He said that God is going to punish people because they disobey God. He also told the people that God will take care of them and show them how much He loves them. Zephaniah told the people about a special day when God will punish sin and Jesus will return. Jesus will make everything right.”

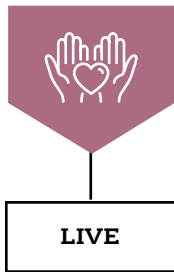
3 ASSEMBLE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE PUZZLES

Print a copy of the “Key Passage Phrase Puzzle” printable on heavyweight paper for each preschooler. Cut along the dotted lines, creating a puzzle for each child. Consider making an extra copy of the printable and leaving it uncut for preschoolers to use as a guide as they assemble the pieces. Give each preschooler a piece of construction paper and a set of puzzle pieces. Lead children to assemble their puzzles on their pieces of construction paper. Then, help them glue the puzzle pieces on the papers with glue sticks. Say the key passage phrase, pointing to each word on their puzzles. Ask them to repeat the phrase with you.

SAY “Zephaniah said a day is coming when God will punish people because they disobey God. It would be a bad, dark day with clouds. God would be angry because people did wrong things. Then Zephaniah told them when it was time for the people to be punished, God would take care of the people who trust in Him. God will make things right and it will be a happy day for God’s people.”

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE for God out of love

1 CARE FOR PEOPLE

Provide people figures for preschoolers to role-play with. Encourage children to use the people figures to role-play how they can obey God and help care for others such as helping others when they are sick or hurt, playing with friends, helping parents cook dinner, and praying for friends and family.

SAY “ You helped care for people. In our Bible story, we learned that Zephaniah told God’s people that God said a day is coming when God is going to punish people because they disobey Him. Then Zephaniah told the people some good news. When it was time for all the people to be punished, God would take care of the people who trust in Him. He would keep them safe. ”

2 FOLLOW AN OBSTACLE COURSE



Create a simple obstacle course for preschoolers to complete. Include start and finish lines and arrows taped on the floor to show where children should go next. To create an obstacle course, consider adding strips of crepe paper to the ends of a table for preschoolers to go through as they crawl under the table, line up chairs for children to go around, lay foam pool noodles on the floor for preschoolers to jump over, and place hula hoops in an area for them to jump in and out of before they finish the course. Encourage preschoolers to go through the obstacle course one at a time. Assist as needed. Talk about the parts of the course that were easy or difficult for the preschoolers. When they complete the course, show the “Adoniram Judson Photo” printable to preschoolers.

SAY “ Adoniram and Ann Judson had a difficult time traveling far away to tell people about Jesus in a different country. They experienced tropical heat, learned a new language, and did difficult work to translate the Bible to the Burmese language. Even though it was difficult, God helped the Judsons tell people about Jesus. ”

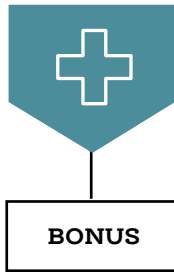
3 SNACK AND TRANSITION



Post an allergy alert. Serve the snack. As children eat, review and talk about the Bible story. When children finish their snack, lead them to complete the activity page. As they work, continue talking about the Bible story and emphasize the Christ connection.

SAY “ Zephaniah told the people about a special day when God will punish sin and Jesus will return. Jesus will make everything right. ”

Remember to communicate helpful information to the bonus teaching hour leaders. If parents are picking up children at this time, tell them something their child did well during the session. Distribute the big picture cards for families. Encourage parents to engage with the family discussion starters and family activities during the week.



TEACHING HOUR

BONUS Teaching Hour Group Time

1 BAD NEWS, GOOD NEWS

Invite children to group time. Ask them to tell the class some things that they consider “bad news,” or things that make them sad. Then, invite children to tell the class some “good news,” or things that make them happy. If a child discloses abuse or neglect, always report to the proper authorities according to your church’s guidelines and the laws where you live.

2 TALK ABOUT THE BIBLE STORY

Open your Bible to Zephaniah and tell the following Bible story

ZEPHANIAH WARNED GOD’S PEOPLE TO REPENT

- Zephaniah (ZEF uh NIGH uh) was a prophet. God told Zephaniah about something that would happen one day. Zephaniah told the people, “A day is coming when God is going to punish people because they disobey Him.”
- Zephaniah told them it would be a bad, dark day with clouds. God would be angry because people did wrong things.
- Zephaniah said, “Love God and do what He says.”
- Then Zephaniah told the people some good news. When it was time for all the people to be punished, God would take care of the people who trust in Him. He would keep them safe. The day will be such a happy day for God’s people. They will sing and be happy.
- Zephaniah said, “God will be with you. God will take care of you. He will show you how much He loves you.”

3 SING A SONG

Sing the song below to the tune of “Are You Sleeping?”

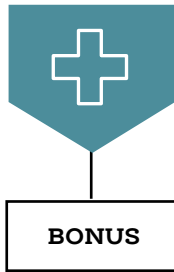
“Turn and follow, turn and follow.
Go God’s way, go God’s way.
I can choose to listen. I can choose to listen.
And obey, and obey.”

4 PRACTICE THE KEY PASSAGE PHRASE

Place the key passage phrase marker in your Bible at Acts 3:19. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Lead the children to say the phrase together. Then, instruct preschoolers to stand and hop while they say the key passage phrase.

5 PRAY

Pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to care for us and to show us that He loves us.



TEACHING HOUR

BONUS Teaching Hour Activities

6 MAKE A PAPER KEY PASSAGE PHRASE HEART



Fold a piece of copy paper in half and draw half a heart shape on the crease with a marker beginning at the top of the paper and ending at the bottom for each child. Show children how to carefully cut along the marker lines with blunt-tip scissors. Help as needed with holding the scissors or cutting. When they finish cutting along the marker lines, lead them to open their papers revealing heart shapes. Invite boys and girls to decorate their shapes using washable markers and crayons. Print the key passage phrase on each child's heart shape.

SAY “ You worked really hard on cutting and decorating your heart shape. Our key passage phrase reminds us to turn away from our wrong choices. When we love God, we want to follow and obey Him and stop making wrong choices. In our Bible story, God’s people were not following and obeying Him. Zephaniah told the people, ‘A day is coming when God is going to punish people because they disobey Him.’ Then Zephaniah told the people some good news. When it was time for all the people to be punished, God would take care of the people who trust in Him. ”

7 WORK AND FIX PUZZLES

Lay puzzles on a table or the floor. Invite preschoolers to select puzzles to work. Show them how to remove the pieces out of the puzzle bases. Guide them to keep the puzzle pieces turned with the pictures showing to make the puzzles easier to put together. Encourage them to work to put the puzzles back together in the puzzle frames. Help as needed.

SAY “ Thank you for fixing the puzzles and putting them back together. In today’s Bible story, Zephaniah told the people that God was going to punish His people for disobeying God. Zephaniah also told them that there will be a day when God will fix everything. Zephaniah told the people about a special day when God will punish sin and Jesus will return to make everything right. ”

8 SING AND BE HAPPY

Play familiar songs about Jesus on an electronic device for children to hear. Display rhythm instruments on a table or a low shelf nearby. Invite preschoolers to select instruments, and play them to hear the sounds the instruments make. Guide preschoolers to play and to sing along with the music. As an additional option, teach them how to keep a simple steady beat to the music with their instruments. Encourage children to switch instruments with friends to hear sounds the different instruments make.

SAY “ We played instruments and sang songs. Zephaniah told the people the good news that a day is coming when God will fix everything that is wrong. He will make all bad things good. This will be a happy day for God’s people. They will sing and be happy. On this day, God will punish sin and Jesus will return to make everything right. ”

Release preschoolers to parents according to your church’s security procedure. Tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session.