

Middle School

Teacher's Plans



May 3, 2020

Youth Topic:

Unit III. Called to God's
Work of Justice

In the End, You Win!

General Lesson:

A Vision of Restoration

Lesson 10

Background Scripture: Zephaniah 3

Print Passage: Zephaniah 3:14-20



"At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the LORD. (Zephaniah 3:20)

PREPARING TO TEACH

- **Resources Needed:** Bibles, student books, paper, pens or pencils, index cards, (**optional:** Youth Leadership Resource Kit [materials for this lesson])

LESSON OVERVIEW

Oppression of the poor and powerless seems pervasive in our world. Is there any hope for reversal of this condition? The prophet Zephaniah proclaims the day of restoration when God's people will return to righteousness, justice, and peace.

INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

STATUS UPDATE (check-in)

Before introducing your lesson, take some time to get a quick status update from your students; check in with them to see how their week has been.

Status Update: WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? "Where do you look for encouragement during times of injustice?"

It's Go Time! (illustration)

Get your students moving and thinking by using the following illustration, a game, or an activity that relates to this week's lesson.

Have the students to brainstorm examples of athletes, entertainers, and other people who struggled to reach a certain level of success, and finally

accomplished their goals. Allow about five minutes for this activity. Connect the discussion with the lesson by emphasizing the importance of having hope.

WAKE UP! (10 minutes)

Have the students read this week's contemporary story and connect it this week's lesson.

After the story is read, have the students discuss the question posed at the end of the story. Ask the students if they have ever received an unexpected gift. Allow the students to discuss the questions and their responses. Invite the students to discuss Sasha's reaction to her special blessing. Connect this idea to the special blessings that God provides for His people.

WORD UP (10 minutes)

Inspect the passage for the day. You will want to make sure that you have Bibles or copies of the passage for those who do not have a Bible with them.

Back Up! (background)

Here is some background for today's text that should be used throughout teaching this lesson—in order to set the stage for the passage.

Zephaniah is the biblical character featured in today's lesson. God used Zephaniah to warn the people of Judah that if they refused to repent, then the entire nation, including Jerusalem, would be lost. Zephaniah expressed concern because the people, who were known as God's people, were guilty of committing the same sin as their pagan neighbors. The people refused all correction and because of their disobedience, Zephaniah delivered a message of judgment. In chapter 3, Zephaniah's message shifts from being one of doom and gloom to being a message of hope. The city of Jerusalem is presented as if it were a daughter who stands in the need of protection (verse 14). Zephaniah declared God's salvation and deliverance for the faithful. God is presented as a King and warrior who protects and rescues the daughter (Jerusalem) (verse 15). Zephaniah encouraged the people to rejoice because in His own timing, the Lord would stop the hand of judgment, disperse Israel's enemies, and live among the people. Singing and rejoicing are the response to God's help; God, the warrior, will also sing and rejoice (verse 17). God will remove disaster and anything that is harmful or negative from the city of Jerusalem (verse 18). This message of hope in chapter 3 is quite different from the warnings of destruction that Zephaniah spoke to the people in chapters 1 and 2. In today's Scripture passage, Zephaniah spoke of a new day when God would restore hope to the nation and bless His people.

God gave Zephaniah a vision of the coming punishment and destruction of Judah and their neighbors. But despite God's wrath and judgment on sin, Zephaniah still believed in the future blessing of God's presence among His people.

It's Text Time! (Scripture)

Here is the New International Version of today's Scripture. However, you may consider studying another one or two translations in preparation for leading.

(Zephaniah 3:14-20)

14 Sing, Daughter Zion; shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem!

15 The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. **16** On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. **17** The LORD your

God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."

18 "I will remove from you all who mourn over the loss of your appointed festivals, which is a burden and reproach for you. **19** At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you. I will rescue the lame; I will gather the exiles. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they have suffered shame. **20** At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the LORD.

WORK OUT (10 minutes)

Examine the intersections of the passage. What is the passage about? How was it heard at the time? How does it apply now?

After the text in this section of the student book is read, tell the students, "Today's Scripture passage is very important because it reminds believers that no matter how negative a situation may appear, receiving a glimpse of hope that the situation can improve can motivate people to keep trying. In chapter 3, Zephaniah's message shifts from a tone of judgment and destruction to a message of hope. Zephaniah encourages the people to rejoice because the Lord will stop His hand of judgment, disperse Israel's enemies, and He will live among the people. Singing and rejoicing are the response to God's help; God, the warrior, will also sing and rejoice. In today's Scripture passage, Zephaniah speaks of a new day when God will restore hope to the nation and bless His people."

Inside Out (interpretation)

Work on the passage from the inside out. Allow time for the students to raise their own questions about the Scripture.

After the students ask and answer their own questions about the text, ask them the following questions: "Have you ever felt like giving up because problems seem to keep getting worse instead of getting better? Why is it important to have hope when you are going through difficult times?" Allow the students time to share their thoughts and ideas regarding the questions. Remind the students that Zephaniah's

messages went from doom and gloom to hope. Emphasize how having hope is important in order to keep moving in a positive direction.

There’s an App for That! (application)
Show how this Scripture applies to present day.

After the text in this section of the student book is read, ask the students to think of ways to increase their patience and loyalty to God as they wait on God to reveal His will regarding a particular challenge or problem. Encourage them to talk to people who are strong in the faith to share how they stay encouraged and patiently wait for God’s direction. Encourage the students to pray and ask God to build their faith to trust Him more.

WALK OUT (10 minutes)

Help the students think about how this Scripture connects to them personally.

Tell the students that it is not easy to stay persistent in your faith when situations appear to be hopeless. God does judge sin, but He also knows exactly how to use our most difficult situations to work everything out for their good. Because of His love and faithfulness, God never turns His back on those who trust Him. Encourage the students to reflect on today’s Scripture and see God’s ultimate faithfulness to His people.

Stepping Out! (challenge)
Give the students this challenge for the week. Emphasize that they can do it!

Challenge the students to pray daily that God would remember and bless those who are living without a home. Emphasize that God receives the heartfelt prayers of His people. Encourage the students to pray for the homeless they may know, as well as others who may be unknown to them.

It’s Game Time! (Answer Key)
Answers: (1) gather; (2) renowned; (3) praised; (4) restore; (5) fortunes; (6) peoples

MEDIA MISSION (after you meet!)

Finally, leave your students with a media mission. Ask them to find their own example of a Web site, video, or song that relates to this lesson.

Encourage the students to complete the “Media Mission” activity. Tell the students that the words *victory* and *winning* are used by many gospel artists as encouraging themes reflected in their music. Ask the students if they have a favorite gospel song that emphasizes believers’ victory through Christ Jesus. If time allows, invite the students to find a song using their phones or other electronic device. For outside of class, encourage the students to search YouTube or other music sites to find songs that express victory and/or winning for Christian believers.

NOTES

High School

Teacher's Plans



May 3, 2020

Youth Topic:
**In the End,
You Win!**

Unit III. Called to God's
Work of Justice

Lesson
10

General Lesson:
**A Vision
of Restoration**

Background Scripture: Zephaniah 3

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"At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the LORD. (Zephaniah 3:20)

PREPARING TO TEACH

- **Resources Needed:** Bibles, student books, paper, pens or pencils, a flip-chart, markers, a timer, (**optional:** Youth Leadership Resource Kit [materials for this lesson])
- Prior to class, prepare "True or False?" questions from the lesson for the "There's an App for That!" section.
- Prior to class, select word for the day.
- Remember to pray for God's guidance as you prepare to teach.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Oppression of the poor and powerless seems pervasive in our world. Is there any hope for reversal of this condition? The prophet Zephaniah proclaims the day of restoration when God's people shall be returned to righteousness, justice, and peace.

INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

STATUS UPDATE (check-in)

Before introducing your lesson, take some time to get a quick status update from your students; check in with them to see how their week has been.

Status Update: WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? "What is one thing you would like to rid the world of and why?"

It's Go Time! (illustration)

Get your students moving and thinking by using the following illustration, a game, or an activity that relates to this week's lesson.

Write the word *repentance* on a flip-chart. Have the students to brainstorm synonyms of "repentance" and write them on the chart. Then explain that "repentance" comes from the Greek word *metanoeo*, which means "to think differently by changing one's mind or purpose; or change the inner man particularly with reference to acceptance of the will of God."

REFLECT (10 minutes)

Have the students read this week's contemporary story and relate it back to the main points of this week's lesson.

Have the students read the contemporary story and then read and respond to the question posed at the end of the story. In preparation for the lesson, say, "In today's lesson, we will read about the promises God made to the Israelites—which is reason enough to shout and rejoice!"

INSPECT (10 minutes)

Inspect the passage for the day. You will want to make sure that you have Bibles or copies of the passage for those who do not have a Bible with them.

Back Up! (background)

Here is some background for today's text that should be used throughout teaching this lesson—in order to set the stage for the passage.

Zephaniah is a minor prophet whose name means “defended by Jehovah.” This book was written according to Zephaniah 1:1, *during the days of Josiah*, which would mean sometime before 625 BC. The purpose of Zephaniah’s prophecy is to explain the meaning of the Day of the Lord.

Zephaniah is a short, three-chapter book with a powerful punch. It opens with a troubling prediction of punishment and destruction for the unrepentant people of Judah who had given themselves to sin and unbelief. In chapter 2, the prophet calls the people to righteousness and humility. The book closes in chapter 3, the focus of today’s lesson, with a hopeful call for rejoicing, based on God’s faithfulness. Zephaniah’s final words in chapter 3 point forward to the last days, a time when God will bring justice, punish sinners, and reward the faithful.

Despite the opening message of destruction and judgment, God promised, through the prophet, that a new day will come—a day when God’s people will have great reason to rejoice; a day when God will hold back His hand of judgment, “turn back” Israel’s enemies, and restore the gladness of His presence with them.

God’s holiness cannot allow sin to continue without judgment. But God’s love moves Him to remain faithful to His disobedient people. God sent the people a word of restoration to assure them that despite the difficulties of divine judgment, God would never abandon them.

Zephaniah’s prophecy called the people to prayer and a changed life in God’s presence. It also offered the promise of honor, praise, and a “restoration of fortunes” (verse 20), so they would know that every blessing, turnaround, or improvement in their situation is always the work of God. Without God, things don’t just randomly get better—God is the source of every blessing we receive. Encourage the class to embrace God’s truth that the righteous will surely be rewarded.

It’s Text Time! (Scripture)

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Scripture. However, you may consider studying another one or two translations in preparation for leading.

(Zephaniah 3:14-20)

14 Sing, Daughter Zion; shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem!

15 The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. **16** On that day they will say to Jerusalem, “Do not fear, Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. **17** The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”

18 “I will remove from you all who mourn over the loss of your appointed festivals, which is a burden and reproach for you. **19** At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you. I will rescue the lame; I will gather the exiles. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they have suffered shame. **20** At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes,” says the LORD.

INTERSECT (10 minutes)

Examine the intersections of the passage. What is the passage about? How was it heard at the time? How does it apply now?

After the text in this section of the student book has been read, say, “Zephaniah, like Amos and other prophets, spoke of the ‘Day of the Lord’ and warned of the coming judgment. The ‘Day of the Lord’ is an expression that means ‘it is a time of judgment on Israel, of punishment on the nations, and of the actual coming of the Lord and salvation for those who repent.’ The Lord’s coming will be as a thief in the night and will be preceded by signs. On the ‘Day of the Lord,’ no one will be able to escape. This fact alone should motivate people to obey God, humble themselves, repent of their bad behavior, and seek God.”

Inside Out (interpretation)

Work on the passage from the inside out. Allow time for the students to raise their own questions about the Scripture.

Have the students read the text in this section (also found in the student book): “Someone has described hope as faith in the future tense—a confident expectation that your future is in God’s good hands.” Ask the students if they have ever felt like giving up when problems kept getting worse. Hope protects us from discouragement during difficult days. God can use difficult circumstances to build our faith, show us our character, show us who He is, or deliver us from a habitual sin.” Say, “Those who walk with God and follow Him closely will not miss the blessing or the lesson in their experiences!”

There’s an App for That! (application)
Show how this Scripture applies to present day.

Have the students read the text in this section (also found in the student book): “What is your first response when the circumstances of life overwhelm you? Many believers are tempted to blame or pull away from God when faced with unexplained difficulties. In times of grief, serious illness, or some other disappointment, people get frustrated when they cannot see any hope or light at the end of the tunnel. God gives us patience to endure tough times and wait without losing heart as He unfolds His purpose in our lives day by day. Even when you cannot see God at work or hear His voice, you can be sure that He is always with you.”

CONNECT (10 minutes)

Help the students think about how this Scripture connects to them personally.

Have the students read the text in this section (also found in the student book): “All of us, like the Israelites, have disappointed God and earned His judgment. God loves us despite our sins. When we turn to God in repentance and faith and trust in Jesus, we are not just saved—we are forgiven. Sometimes, God uses correction, trials, or troubles to draw us into a closer relationship with Him. We can trust God’s heart in whatever He allows.”

Stepping Out! (challenge)
Give the students this challenge for the week. Emphasize that they can do it!

The students are challenged to locate an article (newspaper or Internet) about the plight of the Israelites in Jerusalem today. They should particularly make note of how Israelites in today’s world may be in their land, but they are not yet experiencing the renowned praise as Zephaniah prophesied. Invite volunteers to share their findings during the next class session (as time permits).

MEDIA MISSION (after you meet!)

Finally, leave your students with a media mission. Ask them to find their own example of a Web site, video, or song that relates to this lesson.

The students are asked to watch the video at <https://vimeo.com/279826661> entitled “The Restoration Story.” Discuss the video and its message of speaking out against poverty and injustice. Then, have each student answer the question, “What part can you play?”

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