

# The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, Teacher's Guide

## Lesson 7: Seek the Lord, Seek Righteousness, Seek Humility

### Zephaniah 2:1-15

#### Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson handles the turn from warning to invitation and the oracles against the surrounding nations. Two doctrinal anchors matter. First, the universal sovereignty and justice of God: He rules and judges every nation, not Judah alone. This guards against any provincial notion that God's concern or reach is limited, and it undergirds the gospel that goes to all nations. Second, the great biblical reversal, God resists the proud and exalts the humble, the meek inherit while the self-exalting are brought low. Trace this from the prophets to the Beatitudes and show that the refuge promised to the meek ('ye shall be hid') is ultimately found in Christ. Keep the nations-judgment material from becoming a mere historical survey; its point is the moral order God enforces everywhere, especially against pride.

The formational aim centers on two movements of the heart: seeking and humility. The chapter's opening imperative, 'seek the Lord, seek righteousness, seek meekness,' is one of the clearest calls in the prophets to active, earnest pursuit of God, set against the drifting complacency exposed in chapter 1. Aim to move your students from passive religion to active seeking, and to expose the pride, in speech, in self-sufficiency, in careless security, that quietly competes with God. The promise that the meek will be hidden in the day of anger gives the seeking its urgency and its hope.

Hold invitation and warning together. The chapter both opens a door (seek and be hidden) and displays the ruins of those who would not (Nineveh's desolation). Let students feel the kindness of the invitation and the seriousness of the warning, and point throughout to Christ, who is both the refuge for the humble and the perfect model of the meekness we are called to seek.

#### Question 1

##### Student Question:

*Zephaniah urges, "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth... seek righteousness, seek meekness" (Zephaniah 2:3). Why does Scripture join the seeking of God to the seeking of righteousness and humility, and what does this teach about what it truly means to pursue God?*

#### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 3 issues a threefold imperative: 'seek ye the Lord... seek righteousness, seek meekness.' Begin by noticing that all three are commanded together, and that 'seek' implies active, intentional pursuit, not passive waiting. The verb assumes effort and direction.

Teach why the three belong together. Seeking the Lord is seeking the Person Himself, relationship and communion. Seeking righteousness is seeking His character expressed in our conduct, holiness in how we live. Seeking meekness is seeking the humble, teachable lowliness of heart that makes the other two possible. You cannot truly seek God while refusing His righteousness, and you cannot seek either without humility, because the proud admit no need.

Correct a common reduction. Some reduce seeking God to a feeling or an experience; others reduce it to moral effort. Zephaniah joins communion and character and humility. To pursue God rightly is to want Him, to want to be like Him, and to come low enough to receive Him.

Apply it practically. Ask what active seeking would look like this week in each dimension: time spent with God Himself, a specific area of righteousness pursued, a specific place of pride surrendered. Seeking is concrete, not vague.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Seeking God as active, intentional pursuit, not passive drift.
- The unity of seeking the Lord (communion), righteousness (character), and meekness (humility).
- Humility as the precondition of seeking: the proud admit no need.
- Guarding against reducing seeking to either mere feeling or mere moral effort.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it look like to actively seek God rather than wait passively?
- Why can you not truly seek God while refusing His righteousness or clinging to pride?
- What is one concrete way you will seek God, righteousness, and humility this week?

## **Question 2**

### **Student Question:**

*The prophet pleads with the nation to gather and seek God “before the decree bring forth,” before the day of anger comes (Zephaniah 2:1-2). Where is God calling you to act now rather than later in seeking Him, and what tends to keep you drifting instead of earnestly pursuing Him?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This self-examining question draws on verses 1-2: gather and seek God ‘before the decree bring forth,’ before the day of anger comes. There is urgency here; the invitation has a window.

Help students confront the gap between intention and action. Most believers intend to seek God more earnestly someday; few do it today. Zephaniah’s ‘before’ presses against our chronic postponement. The time to seek the Lord is while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6).

Diagnose what keeps us drifting. Common culprits are busyness, comfort, distraction, and the quiet assumption that our current spiritual coasting is good enough. Naming the specific drag helps us address it.

Move to immediate, concrete action. Invite each person to identify one way they will begin seeking God more deliberately this week, a renewed time of prayer, a return to the Word, a specific repentance, and to start now rather than waiting for a better season that may never come.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The urgency of seeking God now, while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6).
- The gap between good intentions and present action.
- Identifying what keeps us drifting: busyness, comfort, distraction, presumption.
- Beginning concrete pursuit today.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Where is God calling you to seek Him now rather than later?
- What keeps you drifting instead of earnestly pursuing God?
- What one step of seeking will you begin this week?

### **Question 3**

#### **Student Question:**

*Judgment falls on Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush, and Assyria, showing that God is sovereign over every nation, not Judah only (Zephaniah 2:4-15). What does this teach about God's universal rule and justice, and how does it correct any notion that some people or powers are beyond His reach?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Verses 4-15 pronounce judgment on the nations surrounding Judah: Philistia (west), Moab and Ammon (east), Cush (south), and Assyria (north). The sweep is deliberate, covering all directions. The lesson is that God's sovereignty and justice extend to every nation, not Judah alone.

Teach the universal rule of God. He is not a tribal deity concerned only with His own people; He is the Lord of all the earth who holds every nation accountable. This is consistent with the whole Bible's witness (Psalm 22:28; Acts 17:26). No people, however powerful or distant, lies outside His authority.

Draw out the corrective. We can fall into a provincial view in which God seems concerned only with us and our circle, and the powerful of the world seem to operate beyond His reach. Zephaniah corrects this: the empires and nations that loom large in the headlines all stand under God's judgment.

Apply it to perspective and mission. Because God rules all nations, no power is ultimately beyond His justice, which steadies us when ungodly powers seem to dominate; and because He is the God of all peoples, the gospel rightly goes to all nations. Invite students to let this enlarge both their confidence and their concern for the world.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- God's universal sovereignty and justice over every nation (Psalm 22:28; Acts 17:26).
- God as the Lord of all the earth, not a tribal deity.
- Correcting a provincial view that God concerns Himself only with us.
- No power beyond God's justice; the gospel for all nations.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- How does it change your perspective to know God rules and judges every nation?
- Where are you tempted to think some power is beyond God's reach?
- How should God's rule over all peoples shape your concern for the world?

### **Question 4**

#### **Student Question:**

*Moab and Ammon are judged for their pride and for taunting and reproaching God's people (Zephaniah 2:8-10). Where does pride show itself in the way you speak about or treat others, and how is God calling you toward humility in your words and attitudes?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Verses 8-10 give the reason for Moab and Ammon's judgment: 'they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border.' Their sin was pride expressed in taunting, reviling, and reproaching God's people. God takes such contempt personally.

This self-examining question turns the spotlight on our speech. Pride often reveals itself most clearly in how we talk about and to others: contempt, mockery, condescension, gossip, the subtle elevation of self by the diminishment of someone else. Moab's sin was, at root, a sin of the proud tongue.

Teach that God hears how we speak of others. 'Magnifying ourselves' against others, treating them as beneath us, is not a small fault; it is the pride God specifically opposes. Jesus warned about contemptuous speech (Matthew 5:22), and James about the tongue that blesses God and curses people made in His image (James 3:9-10).

Move toward humble speech. Invite each person to examine where pride shows up in their words, who they tend to speak about with contempt or condescension, and to ask God for a humble tongue that honors others as image-bearers.

## **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Pride revealed in contemptuous, taunting speech (Moab and Ammon).
- God taking personally how we treat and speak of His people.
- The proud tongue: mockery, condescension, gossip (Matthew 5:22; James 3:9-10).
- Seeking a humble tongue that honors others as image-bearers.

## **Discussion Prompts**

- Where does pride show up in the way you speak about or to others?
- Whom do you tend to speak of with contempt or condescension?
- What would humble, honoring speech look like for you this week?

## **Question 5**

### **Student Question:**

*God promises that a humble remnant of His people will possess what the proud nations lose (Zephaniah 2:7, 2:9). How does this reversal, the meek inheriting and the proud being brought low, run through all of Scripture and find its fullest expression in the teaching of Jesus (Matthew 5:5)?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Verses 7 and 9 contain a quiet but profound promise: 'the remnant of the house of Judah' and 'the residue of my people' shall possess what the proud nations lose. The humble remnant inherits; the self-exalting are brought low. This is the great biblical reversal in miniature.

Trace the reversal through Scripture. It runs from Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:7-8) and the Psalms through the prophets and reaches its clearest expression in Jesus: 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth' (Matthew 5:5). The kingdom of God consistently overturns the world's order, lifting the lowly and humbling the proud (Luke 1:51-53).

Teach why this is so. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (James 4:6) because pride is self-sufficient and refuses grace, while humility is open to receive it. The reversal is not arbitrary; it follows from the nature of grace, which only the empty-handed can take.

Apply it to where we locate our hope. The world says the assertive and self-promoting win; God says the meek inherit. This frees us from the exhausting competition of self-exaltation and invites us into the security of those who receive everything as grace. Invite students to consider how this reversal reorders their ambitions.

## **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The great reversal: the meek inherit, the proud are brought low (1 Samuel 2:7-8; Luke 1:51-53).

- Its fullest expression in Jesus (Matthew 5:5).
- God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).
- Grace received only by the empty-handed.
- Reordering ambition around God's order rather than the world's.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- How does the promise that 'the meek inherit' overturn the world's order?
- Why does God give grace to the humble but resist the proud?
- How might this reversal reorder your own ambitions?

### **Question 6**

#### **Student Question:**

*Zephaniah warns against dwelling "carelessly," secure and self-satisfied (Zephaniah 2:15). Where has comfort made you spiritually careless, and what would it look like to live with greater watchfulness and dependence on God?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Verse 15 describes Nineveh as the city 'that dwelt carelessly,' secure, self-satisfied, untroubled. This self-examining question addresses the spiritual danger of comfort: careless living that has forgotten its dependence on God.

Teach how comfort breeds carelessness. When life is easy and secure, we drift into spiritual autopilot, prayer becomes thin, watchfulness fades, dependence on God feels unnecessary. Prosperity is one of faith's subtlest tests, and many who survive adversity are undone by ease (Deuteronomy 8:11-14 warns Israel against exactly this).

Help students see carelessness in themselves. It is not dramatic sin but a slackening: a relaxed conscience, a coasting devotion, an unexamined life. The careless do not feel they are in danger, which is precisely the danger.

Move toward watchfulness. The remedy is not to manufacture crisis but to cultivate deliberate dependence and self-examination even in good seasons. Invite each person to name where comfort has made them careless and one practice of watchfulness they will renew.

#### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Comfort breeding spiritual carelessness (Nineveh 'dwelt carelessly').
- Prosperity as one of faith's subtlest tests (Deuteronomy 8:11-14).
- Carelessness as slackening rather than dramatic sin.
- Cultivating watchfulness and dependence even in good seasons.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Where has comfort made you spiritually careless?
- Why can ease be a greater test of faith than adversity?
- What practice of watchfulness do you need to renew?

## Question 7

### Student Question:

*Assyria's Nineveh boasted, "I am, and there is none beside me" (Zephaniah 2:15), claiming for itself a place that belongs to God alone. How does pride always tend toward this God-replacing self-exaltation, and how does seeking humility guard the heart against it?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Nineveh's boast in verse 15 is the essence of pride: 'I am, and there is none beside me.' This is a chilling echo, for 'I am' and 'there is none beside me' are words that belong to God alone (Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 45:5). Pride does not merely overrate self; it usurps the place of God.

Teach that all pride tends toward this self-deification. At its root, pride is the refusal to be a creature, the insistence on being our own god, our own authority, our own source. Nineveh said openly what the proud heart says quietly: I am ultimate; there is none beside me.

Show why this is the deadliest sin. Pride was the original sin, the desire to be as God (Genesis 3:5). It is the sin that makes all other sins possible, because it refuses to submit to God. This is why God opposes it so directly.

Apply it through the antidote named in this chapter: seeking humility. Humility is the deliberate refusal of the 'I am' boast, the glad acceptance of our place as creatures dependent on God. Invite students to notice where the 'I am, and there is none beside me' attitude hides in their own hearts and to seek humility as its cure.

### Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Pride as self-deification: claiming what belongs to God alone (Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 45:5).
- Pride as the refusal to be a creature; the original sin (Genesis 3:5).
- Pride as the root that makes other sins possible.
- Seeking humility as the deliberate cure for the 'I am' boast.

### Discussion Prompts

- How does pride tend toward putting self in the place of God?
- Why is pride considered the root of other sins?
- Where does the 'I am, and there is none beside me' attitude hide in you?

## Question 8

**Student Question:**

*The proud city that “dwelt carelessly” becomes a desolation where wild animals nest in the ruins (Zephaniah 2:14-15). What in your life are you building on pride or self-sufficiency that cannot last, and what would it mean to rebuild it on humble dependence on God?*

**Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This self-examining question draws on the ruin of Nineveh in verses 13-15: the proud city becomes a desolation where flocks and wild creatures lodge in the rubble. What was built on pride did not last.

Help students apply the image to their own lives. We build many things, careers, reputations, families, ministries, and they can be built either on humble dependence on God or on pride and self-sufficiency. What rests on pride, however impressive, carries the seed of its own collapse.

Teach the contrast between the two foundations. Jesus’ parable of the two builders makes the same point: the house on the rock stands, the house on sand falls (Matthew 7:24-27). The rock is hearing and doing Christ’s words in humble obedience; the sand is self-directed living.

Move toward rebuilding on the right foundation. Invite each person to identify one area of life they have been building on pride or self-sufficiency and one way to re-found it on humble dependence on God, doing the work as God’s servant, seeking His will, holding the outcome with open hands.

**Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- What is built on pride carries the seed of its own collapse.
- The two foundations: humble obedience versus self-sufficiency (Matthew 7:24-27).
- Examining what we build, careers, reputation, ministry, and on what it rests.
- Rebuilding life on humble dependence on God.

**Discussion Prompts**

- What are you building on pride or self-sufficiency that cannot last?
- What would it mean to re-found that area on dependence on God?
- How does humble obedience make a life that stands?

**Question 9****Student Question:**

*The promise that the meek “shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger” (Zephaniah 2:3) points to the refuge God provides for the humble. How is this protection ultimately found in Christ, who shelters all who humbly take refuge in Him, and what does it mean that our security rests in Him rather than in our own strength or status?*

## **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This is the heaviest doctrinal question of the lesson, drawing out the promise of verse 3: the meek 'shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.' The chapter that warns of judgment also promises a hiding place, and the New Testament shows that this refuge is ultimately found in Christ.

Teach the theme of God as the refuge of the humble. Throughout Scripture, God shelters those who take refuge in Him (Psalm 91:1-2; Nahum 1:7, which the class met earlier). The promise is not that the humble escape all hardship but that they are kept safe in the deepest sense, hidden in God through the day of His wrath.

Show the fulfillment in Christ. The shelter from the day of the Lord's anger is found in Jesus, who Himself bore that wrath on the cross so that all who take refuge in Him are spared it. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:1). To be 'hid' in the day of anger is, in the fullest sense, to be 'in Christ,' our life 'hid with Christ in God' (Colossians 3:3).

Stress that this refuge is entered by humility, not merit. We are hidden in Christ not because we are strong or worthy but because we have humbly taken refuge in Him, abandoning self-sufficiency and trusting His provision. Consistent with sound teaching, we enter this refuge through a humble, obedient faith, believing, repenting, confessing Christ, and being baptized into Him (Galatians 3:27, 'baptized into Christ'; Romans 6:3-4), so that we are found in Him.

Bring it home. Our security in the day of judgment rests not on our own strength, status, or achievement, but on Christ alone. This both humbles us (we contribute no merit) and assures us (our refuge is unshakable). Invite students to rest their hope there.

## **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- God as the refuge of the humble (Psalm 91:1-2; Nahum 1:7).
- The hiding place from the day of anger fulfilled in Christ, who bore the wrath (Romans 8:1).
- Being 'hid with Christ in God' (Colossians 3:3).
- The refuge entered by humility, not merit.
- Entering Christ through humble, obedient faith: believing, repenting, confessing, baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4).
- Security in judgment resting on Christ alone, not our strength or status.

## **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it mean that the meek are 'hidden' in the day of the Lord's anger?
- How is this refuge ultimately found in Christ?
- Why does our security in judgment rest on Christ rather than on ourselves?

## **Question 10**

**Student Question:**

*Look back across this chapter's call to seek the Lord and its warning against pride. Name one specific way the Lord is calling you, through this passage, to seek Him, His righteousness, and a humble heart more earnestly, becoming more like Christ, who was "meek and lowly in heart."*

**Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This capstone question gathers the chapter's twin themes, seeking the Lord and seeking humility, and asks for a personal response. The aim is that students would leave not merely informed but actively seeking God with a humbled heart.

Help them name where they are. Some need to move from drifting to seeking. Some need to surrender a specific pride, in speech, in self-sufficiency, in careless comfort. Some need to rest their security in Christ rather than in self. Honor each person's starting point.

Point them to Christ as the model and the means. Jesus said, 'I am meek and lowly in heart' (Matthew 11:29), and He calls the weary to come to Him and find rest. He is both the perfect pattern of the meekness we are to seek and the refuge in whom the humble are hidden. To become like Christ is to grow in His lowliness while resting in His shelter.

Invite a concrete commitment: one way to seek God more earnestly, one pride to surrender, one area to rebuild on humble dependence. Encourage each person to name it and begin this week.

**Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Active seeking of God with a humbled heart as the goal.
- Christ as both the model of meekness and the refuge of the humble (Matthew 11:29).
- Becoming like Christ: growing in lowliness while resting in His shelter.
- A concrete step of seeking and humility.

**Discussion Prompts**

- What is the single most important way this chapter calls you to seek God?
- What specific pride is God calling you to surrender?
- How does Christ, meek and lowly, both model and enable the humility you seek?