

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

GOODNESS & JUSTICE **THE BOOK OF NAHUM**



NAHUM: GOD'S GOODNESS AND JUSTICE

People are obsessed with upset victories. We love them so much that a whole genre of movies is dedicated to underdogs overcoming the odds. In the 90s, people flocked to theaters to watch a ragtag underdog hockey team win the Olympics in the movie *Miracle*. Crowds cheered when Rocky Balboa, an amateur boxer from a poor family in Philly, knocked out the world heavyweight champion in *Rocky*. Children screeched when a Golden Retriever somehow learned to play basketball and win a championship in *Air Bud*. (That's a literal underdog story.)

In this study, we will unpack the prophecies of Nahum, a minor prophet from the Southern Kingdom. Assyria was the undisputed world champion of war when Nahum was pastoring his rural congregation in ancient Israel. The soldiers of Assyria were among the best on the planet. This extraordinary army conquered more nations than the Patriots have won Super Bowl trophies. Unstoppable in their zeal and ruthless in their warfare, they pillaged, tortured, and slaughtered any nation that stood in their way.

Humanity collectively cowered at the mention of Nineveh, the capital city. It stood as a monument of corruption, bloodshed, and wealth. As far as everyone was concerned, Assyria was number one, and the rest of the world was ready to wave the white flag. They couldn't lose. However, the prophet Nahum wrote a short book to say something that raised a few eyebrows and blew a few minds. Assyria was going to be defeated by an underdog.

READ: Nahum 1:3-4a; 7-8

The Lord is slow to anger but great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and dries it up; he makes all the rivers run dry. The Lord is good, refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him, but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into the realm of darkness.

Word for word, Nahum describes the graphic defeat of Assyria, a Kingdom that hated God and loved violence. He's not vague either. Bluntly, he states that they will be crushed, and the world will notice. Not too long after this prophecy was written, it

actually happened. Nineveh fell in 612 BC, within Nahum's lifetime. God's Word proved true. How cool is that?

Almost every prophetic book in the Bible has the same theme: repent now or face the consequences. While Nahum brings the same core message, his method is distinct. First, he doesn't write to warn Israel. Instead, he is speaking to a different nation — a nation that had listened to a prophet before. Remember Jonah? Nineveh was the same land where he was called to serve. Second, Nahum emphasizes God's character to explain why justice will happen. Let's dissect Nahum's message and learn what that means for us. These are the three characteristics of God that provide comfort in times of conflict.

God's Power

Nahum opens with a passage on the extravagant power of God. The earth moves, shakes, and changes at His command. Nahum teaches, "His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and dries it up" (Nahum 1:3). Our prophetic pal wants the readers to know something; God is powerful.

Imagine the most spectacular sight you've ever seen — the Grand Canyon, the vast ocean, mountain ranges, or elephants. (How impressive are elephants?) While all those things are mighty, they are basically miniatures to God. He's has power over the biggest, mightiest, and greatest things we can comprehend. God can summon a storm, and God can calm a storm. God can bring rain, or God can extend a drought. In the grand scheme of things, the clouds in the sky are merely the dust on His feet.

This opening section is designed to help the rebellious nation understand that they are unmatched in the presence of God. Their totalitarian governments may be mighty, but God is far mightier. Their monuments tower, but God is higher. God is the greatest power in the universe; don't you want to be on His side?

God's Goodness

Nahum compares the power of God with the personal goodness of God. In verse seven, he writes, "The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him." God may be mighty, but He is also empathetic. The Creator of the

Universe protects those who trust in Him. He's like a bunker in the middle of a war. He's like a shelter during a storm.

God's goodness is the core tenant of Israel's faith. No matter how often they sinned, stumbled, and struggled, God's goodness caught them. The same is true for us. No matter how many missteps God's people make, He defends them. He will protect you. He will shield you. He will advocate for you. Holding on to the goodness of God is like climbing into a bulletproof bunker made just for you.

Our powerful God wants to get personal with us. Turn to him in times of terror. Lean on Him when all seems lost. Hang on when life feels hopeless. His voice forms the universe, calms raging seas, and controls cosmic catastrophes. If He can do all that, imagine what He can do with whatever you're facing.

God's Justice

When reading this section of scripture, you see the wrath of God all over the place. However hard it is to comprehend, God's wrath is an expression of His goodness. Why? Because punishment for one is protection for another.

Imagine there is a schoolyard bully that torments you every day. They harass you, steal from you, and mock you. One day, they get called to the principal's office in order to be punished. Ultimately, the complaints stacked up, and they were expelled from school. Their punishment protected you. They encountered wrath, but you encountered renewed peace whenever you walked to the playground.

Bad news for Assyria was good news for Israel. The bully was punished, so others didn't have to live a life of fear. While Nahum's prophecies are horrible for Nineveh, they're hopeful for Israel.

Nahum's name literally means "comfort." I hear you asking, how is this comfortable? Earthquakes, locusts, famine, and destruction are all themes in this little book. Nahum's message seems like a far cry from comforting, right? Not exactly. God's people can find comfort in the calamity of anything that comes against them. We often feel like underdogs in life, but there is good news. God loves to advocate for the underdog — including you.

What circumstances feel like they're overpowering you? Does sickness knock at the door of your loved ones? Trust God; He will protect your family. Is heartbreak backing you into a corner? It's getting so overwhelming that you are losing sleep? God, your advocate, will help you find rest and restoration. Are cycles of sin sending you down a destructive path? God wants to put a stop to anything that comes between Him and His children; turn your battle over to God. In the right time, He will prevail.

When life feels unfair, find comfort in the words of Nahum. God makes things right at the right time. God's greatness, goodness, and justice will prevail. Everything is going to work out in God's will and right on time.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week and what was the lowest part of your week?

Q1: What's one thing that stood out to you from tonight's message?

Q2: What does Nahum reveal about the character of God in Nahum 1:3-4; 7-8?

Q3: Why is it important to grasp just how powerful God really is?

Q4: How have you seen proof of God's goodness?

Q5: What can we learn from Nahum about facing people or situations that make us feel like underdogs?

Application: What's one situation in your life that makes you feel like you're trying to defeat something that seems so much bigger than you? What can you pray to God for every day this week to help you in that situation?

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Nahum 1:1-6

Nahum 1:7-11

Nahum 1:12-15

Nahum 2:1-4

Nahum 2:5-13

Nahum 3:1-11

Nahum 3:12-19

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.