

Discussion Questions

Date: April 26th, 2026

Preacher: Josh Ratliff

Sermon Outline

Talking Points

The Most Severe Judgment Zephaniah 1:1-2:3

The Effects of Judah's Sins Extend Beyond Themselves (1:1-18)

- The severity of sin results in a judgment that involves all of creation. (vv. 1-3)
- **Question:** In what ways do the effects of our sins impact the people and environments around us? How does this shape what true restoration must entail?
- God exposes the specific sins of his people and the punishment they earn. (vv. 4-13)
- The people silently accept God's response to their injustice. (vv. 7, 14-18)

God Reveals a Path Forward Through Judgment and Mercy (2:1-3)

- Those who do not respond will experience the full severity of the coming judgment. (2:1-2)
- **Question:** When God disciplines us, is our response to push away from God or to draw nearer to Him? In times of discipline, how have you seen God work through your stubbornness or surrender?
- Those who do respond by seeking the Lord will survive the judgment. (2:3)

Bottom Line: God's heart in discipline is for His people to seek Him.

- * When you think of God as the Creator, do you usually see Him as a gentle gardener or a powerful (even destructive) force? How does the passage here challenge your perspective of God when it comes to His power over His creation?
- * What are some dangers of when we think of sin as only a personal or private matter?
- * Where have you seen the sin in your life affect those around you? What would it look like, or has it looked like, to move from carrying the guilt to actively seeking restoration with those you've impacted?
- * The passage here addresses syncretism, where the audience was worshipping God but also other gods equally at the same time. Where do you see this in the church today?
- * Verse 12 mentions those who are complacent, thinking God will do neither good nor bad. Why does material wealth often lead to this kind of spiritual apathy? How can we be good financial stewards without becoming slaves to our wealth?
- * Verse 2:1 commands the audience to gather together. Why do you think the Lord tells His people to gather here?
- * When you feel the discipline of God or the weight of your sin, is your first instinct to hide or to seek the Lord? Why?
- * What does it look like to seek the Lord? What is the first step? Prayer? Repentance? Confession? Is it the same for everyone? How do we as followers of Christ live this out in our daily lives, rather than only seeking the Lord in times of trouble or conviction?

Understanding Scripture

1. Read the passage aloud.

- Question: How would the original audience have understood this passage?
- Question: What was God's desire for them?

2. Reread key verse(s) aloud.

- Question: What does this teach us about the human soul, desires, or behavior?
- Question: What does this teach us about the nature, desires, or behavior of God?

3. Ask if anything is difficult to understand in the passage, or simply point it out yourself.

- Back up from the confusing verse and reread the whole section slowly—highlight the author's flow of thought.
- Ask everyone, "What are some possible interpretations?" Encourage curiosity!
- If needed, provide clarification, but admit if you don't have a satisfactory explanation, and volunteer to research answers. Share your findings over text or at the next meeting.

4. Summarize the passage in 1-3 sentences to refocus the group ("Okay, so far we've seen in Amos...")

- Question: What does this say about our relationship with God and/or each other?
- Question: How do the teachings, actions, or person of Jesus shed light on this passage?

Prayer Requests

