

"MAJORING IN THE MINORS: EXPLORING THE MINOR PROPHETS" FOR THE WEEK OF JULY 21

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE: "MODERN GODS. ANCIENT WORDS"

"Our whole being by its very nature is one vast need: incomplete, preparatory, empty yet cluttered, crying out for Him who can untie things that are knotted together and tie up things that are still dangling loose." (C.S. Lewis' reflection on Zephaniah 3:14-17)

OPENING PRAYER

Most gracious Father, your Word is a lamp to guide our feet and a light for our paths (Psalm 119:105). You command us to be silent in your presence, as the day of the Lord is near (Zephaniah 1:7). Through the power of your Holy Spirit, we want to be still before you because you are God Almighty (Psalm 46:10-11). Therefore, may we be obedient to focus on your leading and sing songs of thanksgiving for your goodness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CONNECTING QUESTION

Throughout Zephaniah there is a pattern of rebellion, restoration, and rejoicing. If this book were the story of your life, in which of those three stages do you find yourself in your relationship with the Lord today? If you are comfortable, please explain.

SCRIPTURE READING

Read Aloud & Meditate on God's Word: Zephaniah 1:1-14a, 2:1-3, 3:9-10, 14-17; Luke 16:13-15

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Video Presenter: Pastor Mike Curtis

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Invite the Holy Spirit to lead as you work through the questions in this guide. Cover what your time allows and encourage everyone to finish the guide on his or her own.

1. How does Exodus 20:3-7 articulate God's expectations of those who claim to follow him? Make a list of those expectations. What does God say followers should not do?
2. What is your opinion of A.W. Tozer's definition of idolatry? It is "the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him." How do you define idolatry? What are current day examples of idolatry? Are there idols in your life that take you away from walking with the Lord?
3. Describe the completeness of God's judgment as described in Zephaniah 1:2-14a. Who will suffer the most, and why?

4. Zephaniah emphasizes the “Day of the Lord,” a common theme in prophetic literature, which describes not only a time of divine judgment but also purification and restoration. In Zephaniah 2:3, what does the prophet encourage those in Jerusalem and Judah to do that could protect them from suffering on the Day of the Lord? (Also see Deuteronomy 4:27-31; Psalm 57:1; Amos 5:4) How does this encourage you today?

5. What are the two masters described in Luke 16:13? What problems are created when one tries to serve both? What other “masters” might conflict with serving the Lord? How did the Pharisees react to Jesus’ words in verse 14? What advice and wisdom did Jesus offer in verse 15? Is there wisdom contained in these verses you could apply in your life to avoid serving two masters?

6. Zephaniah’s prophetic words also include hope for the “scattered people.” Read Zephaniah 3:9-16. What will the Lord take away? Who and what will he leave for the “remnant” remaining? What word or phrase impacts you the most from Zephaniah 3:14-17? Share why you chose it/them.

ANCIENT WORDS, ETERNAL WISDOM

“For the LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.” (Zephaniah 3:17 NLT)

“The lyric of God’s love song reminds you that God isn’t disgusted with you; he delights in you. God doesn’t just tolerate you; he celebrates you. Perhaps today, you need to tune in and hear his song. And then you can sing back to him!” (Jennifer Rothschild, “66 Ways God Loves You”)

Zephaniah encouraged God’s people to seek him first and always. Meditate on the following verses and look for others that speak to your heart. These ancient words are the Lord’s gift of wisdom to all, and with humility they become prayers of worship returned to him.

1 Chronicles 16:8-12; Psalm 5:11-12, 27:4-6; Isaiah 55:6-7; Matthew 6:33, 7:7-8; Acts 15:12-18; Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16-17; Hebrews 11:6; Revelation 15:3-4

SCRIPTURES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Romans 1:25; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5; 1 John 5:21

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, if only we could remember and follow the ancient words the Old Testament prophets shared. If only we could avoid falling into the trap of worshiping anyone or coveting anything but you. It appears we cannot, yet the Father demonstrates both his mighty power and tender affections toward us through you. Your life, death, and resurrection proved that he wants to save us from our sinful selves. We are his people in every generation through your sacrifice, his one and only Son. You are our Savior. We praise and thank you that you forgive us, redeem us, and have welcomed us into God’s forever family. It is in your everlasting name we pray. Amen.

Our Father...

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