

STORIES WITHIN THE TRUE STORY



Week Sixteen - Zephaniah

A Note to the Parents/Teachers

Zephaniah is one of the 12 'minor prophets' (named minor because of the size of books, not because of importance). He was a contemporary of Jeremiah and brought word to God's people as they were about to be taken into Babylonian captivity. His message sounds harsh at first: everyone will be judged! But it finishes with the promise that God will rescue His people and He even rejoices over them with singing.

- **Big Idea:** The proud will be put to shame but God rejoices over the humble

Starter

- **Evidences of Grace**

Ask kids to share ways they've seen God at work lately. Anything, big or small, which is good is from God. When a kid shares, encourage everyone to thank God together.

Sing Together

Story - from Zephaniah 1-3

The nation of Israel continued to rebel against God and worship the gods of other nations. God was about to send one of those nations, Babylon, to defeat and capture Israel in order to teach them a lesson. But before Babylon came, God spoke to His people through a few prophets. One of them was Zephaniah. Zephaniah told the people what God said He would do:

*"I will completely sweep away everything from the face of the earth—
this is the Lord's declaration.
I will sweep away people and animals;
I will sweep away the birds of the sky
and the fish of the sea,
and the ruins along with the wicked.
I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth.
This is the Lord's declaration."*

It sounded terrible. It sounded like complete and utter destruction. But if you remember, it sounded kind of like what happened back in Noah's time. A flood sent by God had wiped out all people, animals, birds, and every creature except those on Noah's boat. God saved them.

This message from Zephaniah would be the same. God was going to send judgement on the earth. First Zephaniah told them that Israel, God's own people, would be judged. Then he said that Babylon and all of the nations of the world would be judged.

But... then God told Zephaniah to share something else. He said that even though they just heard terrifying news they had a reason to sing and celebrate! Just like He had spared Noah and his family and the animals on his boat, God would rescue some from the coming judgement. Like a warrior, He would swoop in and save some! But who would be saved if everyone had rebelled against God? It would be those who recognized they needed saving! Those who are proud and arrogant and continue in rebellion would need to be swept away because their rebellion would only bring more destruction to the earth. But those who humbled themselves and recognized they needed God to be their King would be rescued. God would indeed be their King... and He is a good King!

In fact, Zephaniah said that God is such a good and loving King that not only should we sing about God's love, but God Himself sings His love over us. This promise from God through Zephaniah will one day happen. Those who trust themselves or false gods will be swept away, but those who trust Jesus to be King will rejoice forever.

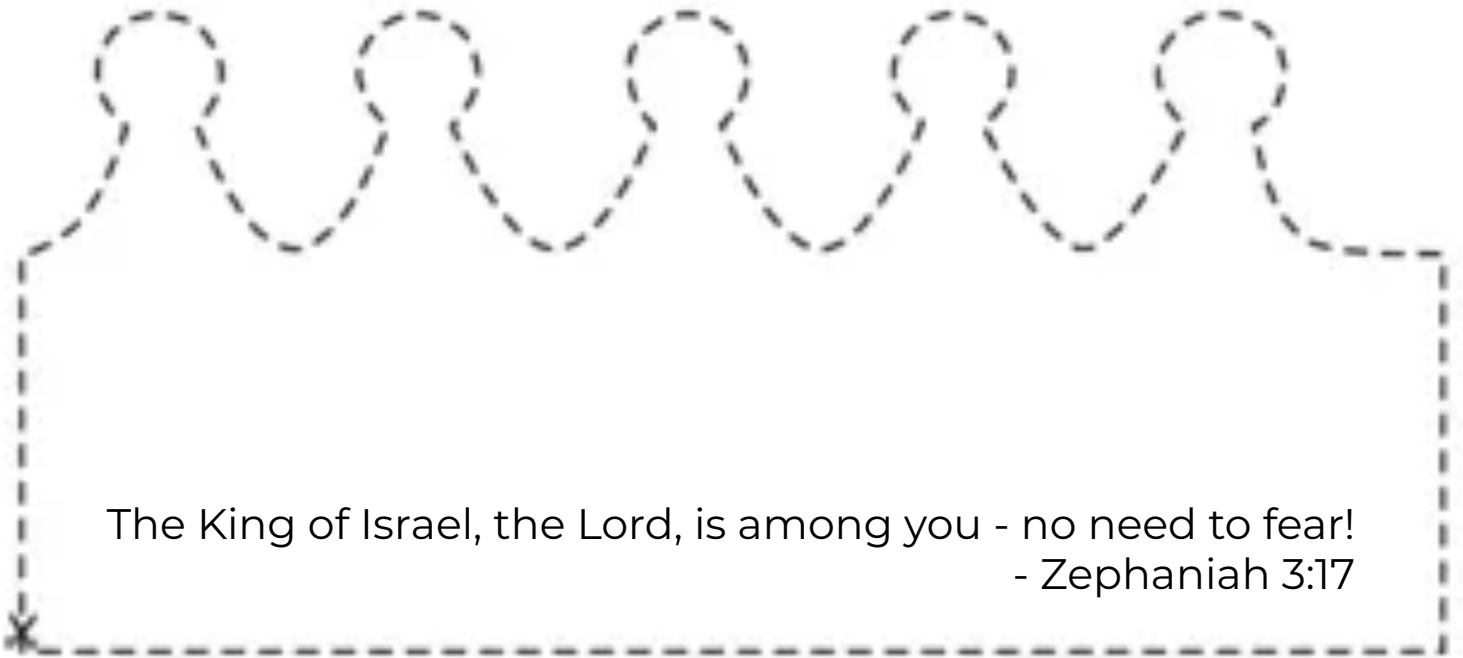
[Dialogue Questions - you may use some or all]

- Why would God bring judgement or destruction on the earth? How else would you stop all the violence and pain on earth? How could God put an end to bad things when people are the ones causing it?
- God wants to rescue His creation from evil - including humans. But those who continue to not want His rescue will be part of the evil swept away. How can we be rescued from that destruction?
- When we humble ourselves and say we need Jesus to rescue us, He is faithful to save us! What does it mean to trust in Jesus as our King?

Breakout Time

- **Prayer:**
Lord, forgive us for turning away from you. Help us to turn toward you and your love. Be our King. Rule our lives. Make us good. In Jesus' name, amen.
- **Craft:**
Use the template attached or let kids create their own crown. Use this to talk about God as the King over the earth!
- **BLESS Activity:** **For kids to do during the week**
Because this Story is true, we want to be faithful to live in it. We ask Spirit to help us Bless, Listen, Eat, Speak, and Sabbath (rest & celebrate) in ways that tell the good news of God's Story.

This week, focus on the **Bless** rhythm. Who can you and your family serve this week as an example of God's rescuing love?



The King of Israel, the Lord, is among you - no need to fear!
- Zephaniah 3:17



Cut as many templates as necessary and tape them together to wrap around the wearer's head.