

# PROPHETS TO JUDAH

MICAH; NAHUM; HABAKKUK; ZEPHANIAH



**KEY PASSAGE:** Psalm 145:9

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** What is God like? God is holy, good, and loving.

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** God sent prophets to His people to warn them to repent of their sin and turn to God. Jesus gave the same message, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” When we trust in Jesus, we are restored to a right relationship with God and have the hope of eternal life.

**STORY POINT:** God sent prophets to tell the people to repent of their sins.



## PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

# LEADER Bible Study

While the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been destroyed by Assyria, the Southern Kingdom of Judah remained. During the years prior to Babylonian captivity, God continued to send prophets to Judah who called the people to repent of their sin. Even though the prophets pronounced the impending captivity, they also offered hope to the people: God would restore His people and provide salvation.

The prophet Micah spoke to the leaders of Israel regarding their ill-earned wealth. Micah called the leaders of Israel to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Micah also shared a message of future hope: one day, God would send a new King who would be born in Bethlehem and rule over the restored people of God.

Nahum was another prophet sent to testify to God's judgment on sin. Nahum described how God would judge Assyria for its bloodshed, evil, and injustice. Nahum's message was a reminder to be faithful to God and a warning to not act like other evil nations, like Assyria.

Zephaniah begged the people to turn away from sin while there was still time. He showed that God will judge all the evil nations along with Judah.

Habakkuk spoke directly to God, asking Him why He would not stop the violence and sin of the people of Judah. God told Habakkuk that He will indeed judge the people and will bring destruction to the nation through Babylon. While Babylon would destroy Judah, Habakkuk also said he would celebrate in the Lord. Even in desolation and despair, God's people could rejoice in the hope of salvation.

God sent prophets to share the message of judgment, repentance, and restoration. Jesus willingly took on our judgment so we could turn from our sin and be restored to Him. When we trust in Jesus we are restored to a right relationship with God.

This week, encourage kids to see God's goodness through His Word. Like the prophets to Judah proclaimed a message of hope, the Word of God shares good news: Jesus died and rose again to save people from sin and death. Rejoice in the God of salvation.



## PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



## WELCOME

10-15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



## LEARN

25-30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



## LOVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



## LIVE

15-20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



## PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

## GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



### WELCOME

#### Activity Page

- "What's the Message?" activity page

#### Session Starter (Option 1)

- balloon
- straw
- cup
- pitcher of water
- pipette
- small paint brush
- tongs



### LOVE

#### Review & Bible Skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



### LIVE

#### Activity Choice (Option 1)

- paper plate
- metal brad
- paper clip
- construction papers, 4

#### Reflection and Prayer

- Bible story coloring page



### LEARN

#### Introduce the Session

- countdown video
- Story Point Poster

#### Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

#### Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

#### Tell the Bible Story

- "Prophets to Judah" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

#### Questions from Kids

- "Unit 15, Session 2" Questions from Kids video

#### Missions Moment

- world map

#### Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "The Lord is Good (Psalm 145:9)" song
- worship song of your choice (optional)



## WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

| **SAY** “Have you ever fixed something that was broken? What was it?”

### 1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “What’s the Message?” activity page.

| **SAY** “You all did a great job unscrambling the prophets’ message! In today’s story, we’ll learn how God sent prophets to tell the people to repent so they could be restored to God.”

### 2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

#### OPTION 1: A BETTER WAY

Perform the demonstrations below and ask kids if they know a better way to do each task. Invite kids to share their ideas, or use the suggested answers below.

- Inflate a balloon using a straw. (use your mouth or a helium pump)
- Fill a cup with water by transferring water from a pitcher using a pipette. (pour the water into the cup directly from the pitcher)
- Use a very small paint brush to paint an entire piece of paper. (use a larger paint brush)
- Use tongs to fold paper into an airplane. (use your hands)

| **SAY** “Each of these tasks had a better way to do them. Today, we will see how the prophets of God called the people to a better way. The prophets told the people to repent and turn to God. Following God and worshiping Him is not only a better way to live; it is the best way.”

#### OPTION 2: THE MINOR PROPHETS



Provide each kid with a Bible. Tell kids that you will call out a book from the Minor Prophets division of the Old Testament. Explain that when they hear the book, they should find the book in their Bible. Remind kids they can use the table of contents for help. Begin calling out one of the Minor Prophet books such as Nahum. Once every kid has found the book, call out the next book. Encourage kids to help their neighbor, if needed. Tell kids to close their Bible before they begin the next round.

| **SAY** “These 12 books are not less important, but because they are shorter, they are referred to as the Minor Prophets. Today, our story focuses on four of these prophets: Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. We’ll see how **GOD SENT PROPHETS TO TELL THE PEOPLE TO REPENT OF THEIR SINS.**”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





## INTRODUCE the Bible Story

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### 1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

**SAY** Welcome, kids! My name is [your name], and I'm glad you're here to learn from God's Word. If you have a Bible with you, will you hold it up? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] Today, we will learn about prophets God sent to His people in Judah.

In our story, we'll see how **GOD SENT PROPHETS TO TELL THE PEOPLE TO REPENT OF THEIR SINS.** [Display the Story Point Poster.] Let's pray: 'Dear God, thank You for warning people of their sin. Help us turn away from sin and follow You. Amen.'

### 2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

**SAY** Do you remember the big picture question we learned last week? [Allow responses.] **What is God like?** What was the answer we learned? [Allow responses.] **God is holy, good, and loving.**

The people of Judah continued to worship idols instead of the one true God. But God is loving and sent prophets to warn the people of Judah. The prophets told God's people to repent and turn back to God. The Bible tells us that God loves us and wants us to turn from sin. Because sin brings death, God is good to warn us so we can be saved.

### 3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

**SAY** After the kingdom split into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, God's people were led by many wicked kings who did what was evil. Last week, we learned that Judah had some good kings who did what was right in God's eyes. Yet, when the good kings died, God's people returned to worshiping idols. God even sent prophets to warn His people to turn away from their sinful ways. Eventually, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed, and the people were exiled to Assyria. Today, we will learn how God continued to send more prophets to tell the people of Judah to repent of their sins.



## LEARN the Bible Story

### 1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Micah; Nahum; Habakkuk; Zephaniah. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Prophets to Judah.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

#### PROPHETS TO JUDAH

**“**God loved His people so much that He sent messengers, or prophets, who called the people to repent of their sin so they could be restored to a right relationship with God.

**The prophet Micah said that God was going to judge the wicked leaders of His people.** They had become rich by stealing from others. **Micah warned that God would send foreign nations to destroy Israel, and called the people to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.** Micah’s message also included hope—he said that God would one day send a new king from the line of David, who would be born in Bethlehem and rule over the restored people of God.

**Years later, God gave a message for the prophet Nahum to share. The main message of Nahum’s writings is this: “God is slow to anger and great in power. He will not let the wicked go free.”** Nahum comforted God’s people and gave them hope by showing that God will punish their enemies, the evil nations and empires that love violence. Nahum’s message was also a warning to not act like these nations, and to remain faithful to God.

**Zephaniah was another prophet.** He saw that the nation of Judah was going to be judged for worshiping idols and that God would send a great nation to destroy the city of Jerusalem. **Zephaniah begged the people to turn away from sin while there was still time, so that they might be spared from God’s righteous anger against sin.** Zephaniah said that God will also judge all the evil nations and Judah because they acted like these evil nations.

**The prophet Habakkuk was also sent to the people of Judah.** Habakkuk spoke directly to God, asking Him why He would not stop the violence and sin of the people of Judah. **God responded by saying He would gather the army of Babylon to destroy Judah.** God shared that even though this disaster would come, the righteous will live by faith in Him. **Habakkuk ends his message by pleading for God to be merciful to His people. Even though God’s judgment would come, Habakkuk said:** “I will celebrate in the Lord; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!”

Christ Connection: God sent prophets to His people to warn them to repent of their sin and turn to God. Jesus gave the same message, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” When we trust in Jesus, we are restored to a right relationship with God and have the hope of eternal life. **“**

#### STORYTELLING TIPS

**Shout it out:** As you tell the story, encourage the kids to listen for the word “prophet.” When you say “prophet,” instruct them to shout, “God’s got a message!” This will remind them that a prophet brings a message from God.

**Use Bibles:** Invite kids to turn to each Bible book as you share about Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk.



## 2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

**SAY**  **GOD SENT PROPHETS TO TELL THE PEOPLE TO REPENT OF THEIR SINS.** What were some of the evil things the prophets said the people of Judah were doing? [Allow responses.] Micah said the people were mistreating the poor, loved violence, and did not do what was just. Zephaniah said the people rebelled against God. Habakkuk said the wicked people rule and have power. Nahum reminded God's people that He would punish all evil, even the sins of Assyria.

While the prophets told of God's coming judgment, they also gave the people hope. What did Micah say about the new king who would be born in Bethlehem? [Allow responses.] Micah said the new king would rule over God's people and bring them back to God. Micah brought a message of hope through the promise of Jesus Christ's coming birth. Jesus was born in Bethlehem and came to offer forgiveness so people can come back to God.

God sent prophets to His people to warn them to repent of their sin and turn to God. Jesus gave the same message, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.' When we trust in Jesus, we are restored to a right relationship with God and have the hope of eternal life. 

## 3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

**SAY**  Even though the people of Judah were sinful, God loved them and gave them hope. He made promises through the prophets about how He would send a new King who would make the way for sin to be forgiven. Jesus is the King the prophets said would come. When we trust in Jesus, we will not receive the punishment we deserve. Jesus makes us right with God and helps us follow God. 

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

## 4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 15, Session 2" Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Why were there multiple prophets in the Old Testament?
2. How does the Bible help us see our sin and need for Jesus?

## 5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Share how a woman named Rose desired to share Jesus with the people who lived in an area known as the Horn of Africa. [Point to the Horn of Africa on a world map.]

**SAY**  Rose told the leadership at her church that she wanted to be a missionary to the people in Africa. The church's leadership knew they could not send her alone or provide all of her financial needs. Rose's pastor recruited 15 other churches across Mexico and Panama to support Rose as a missionary to the Horn of Africa.

When Rose arrived in Africa, she began to work with farmers who tend livestock. The farmers live in a harsh environment that is very dry. The area they live in also has no running water or



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

electricity. But despite the difficult environment, Rose is committed to sharing Jesus. The people Rose shares the gospel with can often be hostile to the gospel. But, by God's grace, some have trusted in Jesus. 

Pray for Rose as she shares the gospel with people who don't always want to hear it. Pray for the churches who support the mission work in the Horn of Africa.

## 6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Psalm 145:9 together.

**SAY**  Though we have sinned, God is faithful and has made the way to save us from sin. Our key passage reminds us that God has shown us love. 

Recite the key passage aloud for the kids. Explain that you are going to recite it again, but this time you are going to repeat it incorrectly. You might switch some of the words, leave some words out, or even add something silly. Tell the kids to pay close attention as they share what was incorrect. Repeat several times. Then close by leading the kids to correctly recite the key passage with you.

Lead kids to sing "The Lord is Good (Psalm 145:9)." You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

## 7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

**SAY**  Thank You, God, for not leaving us in our sin. You have made the way for us to be forgiven because of Your great love for us. Help us share this good news with others. Amen. 

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





## LOVE God by Applying the Story

### 1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to the Table of Contents. Point out the books of the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel) and the books of the Minor Prophets (the 12 remaining books). Invite kids to find the books of the Minor Prophets from the Bible story: Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk.

Consider pointing out the location of Judah (14) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Micah 5:4 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

**SAY** Micah warned God's people of the coming judgment for sin and their need for repentance. Like the people of Judah, we are all guilty of disobeying God. We deserve God's judgment for our sin.

But even though Micah shared some bad news, he also shared good news. Micah's message from God was a future promise of the birth of God's Son, Jesus. As we read Micah's words, we can rest in knowing that God's promise has been fulfilled! God has made the way for us to be forgiven of our sin because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. **”**

### 2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

**SAY** What does Nahum's message that 'God does not let the wicked go free' tell us about God's character? **”**

Explain that God is just (Deuteronomy 32:4). Remind kids that being just means doing what is right and fair. Nahum reminded the people that God always does what is right and punishes those who do evil. **God is holy, good, and loving.** God is good to punish sin because all sin goes against God's holy, good, and loving ways.

**SAY** How was the prophets' message similar to Jesus' message when He was on earth? **”**

Share how Jesus also told people to repent because the kingdom of God was near. Tell kids that the message of repentance is one of mercy and grace. When God tells us to turn from our sin, we are given an opportunity to recognize our sin and our need for Jesus. When we trust in Jesus, we are forgiven and receive eternal life.

**SAY** Why didn't God completely destroy the people of Judah for their sin? **”**

Remind kids of God's faithfulness and His truthfulness. God had promised that He would bless the world through Abraham's family. Abraham's family included the line of Judah, which included people like King David. Jesus would come from the line of Judah. Help kids understand that God is patient and that He always keeps His word. Praise God for how we can always trust Him and believe in His words.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





LIVE

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

## LIVE the Mission

### 1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

#### OPTION 1: GAME OF CHANCE

Before the session, create a spinner using a paper plate, a paper clip, and a metal brad. Punch a hole in the center of the plate and loosely secure the paper clip using the metal brad. Divide the plate into six sections and label each section with a number 1–6. Tape four pieces of construction paper to the floor in a straight line.

Direct kids to form a single line behind the construction paper. Tell kids that before you spin the spinner, they will guess what number the spinner will land on. If the kid guesses correctly, he steps on the “board.” If he does not guess correctly, he moves to the back of the line. Once a kid makes it to a piece of construction paper, he will remain in place if he doesn’t guess correctly. Kids on the “board” may need to stand side-by-side. Play until the first kid makes it to the end of the papers or as time allows.

**SAY** God’s message of Judah’s coming judgment was not a game of chance. It was going to happen as part of God’s plan for His people. We all deserve punishment for our sin, but we have the certain promise of salvation when we place our faith in Jesus. **”**

### 2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.

#### OPTION 2: PICTURE MESSAGES



Play a game of pictionary by having kids draw pictures of dangerous situations. For example, kids may draw a fire, shark-infested waters, a cliff, a thunderstorm, etc. Form kids into two teams. Choose a kid from team one to draw first. Assign her a picture to draw and challenge her team to guess within 30 seconds. Award the team a point if they guess correctly. Repeat as time allows or until every kid has had a turn to draw. The team with the most points is the winner.

**SAY** All of the pictures you drew involved dangerous situations. What would you do if you saw a friend heading toward a dangerous situation? [Allow responses.] Most likely, you would warn them and tell them to turn away from it. This is exactly why God sent prophets to His people. God loved His people and wanted them to turn away from the danger sin leads to. Unfortunately, God’s people didn’t always listen. However, when we hear God’s warnings about sin, we can turn away. When we trust in Jesus, the Holy Spirit gives us power to say no to sin and follow God. **”**