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# NAHUM

A 3-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

WEEK 1 OF 3 • GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

## The LORD Is Slow to Anger and Great in Power — Nahum 1:1–15

Scripture Scope: Nahum 1:1–15 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

PARTICIPANT STUDY EDITION

Synchronized Section-by-Section with the Leader Guide Edition · Includes Group Reflection Workspace

# Nahum — 3-Week Group Bible Study (Participant Study Edition)

## Week 1: The LORD Is Slow to Anger and Great in Power (Nahum 1:1–15)

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- **The title:** The book is named for its prophet, Nahum of Elkosh (1:1). His name means "comfort." The location of Elkosh is unknown.
- **The setting:** Nahum spoke after Assyria sacked the great Egyptian city of Thebes (663 BC) and before Nineveh, Assyria's capital, fell to the Babylonians and Medes (612 BC), most likely around 660–630 BC, when Assyria still looked unstoppable. Assyria had destroyed Samaria (722 BC), ravaged Judah (701 BC), and made Judah's king Manasseh its vassal.
- **Nineveh again:** About a century earlier, Nineveh repented at Jonah's preaching and God spared it. Nahum announces judgment on a city that returned to violence. Jonah and Nahum are the only two books of the Bible that end with a question, and both questions concern Nineveh.
- **The main characters:** The LORD, the prophet Nahum, Judah (the afflicted people), Nineveh and the king of Assyria (the oppressor), a herald bringing good news, and Thebes as a warning example.
- **The structure (three parts):**
- Who God is: the hymn of the patient, powerful, and good LORD, and good news for Judah (chapter 1).
- What God will do: Nineveh falls (chapter 2).
- Why God acts: woe to the city of blood and lies (chapter 3).
- **Why it matters:** Nahum speaks to everyone who has suffered under violent, seemingly unstoppable powers. God is slow to anger but will not clear the guilty, and he is a stronghold for those who take refuge in him. Victims do not have to take revenge; God will set things right. Nahum points to Jesus, in whose cross God's mercy and justice meet, and who brings good news of peace.

### How This 3-Week Study Works

You may notice this study is shorter than our usual eight weeks. Even though we are 8weekbiblestudy.com, stretching Nahum to eight weeks would have left it thin on content, and we never want to trade quality for quantity.

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, each week of Nahum invites you to listen to a prophet named Comfort together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's chapters inside the structure of Nahum and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV. Nahum is vivid war poetry. The study retells its battle scenes and harsh images briefly in its own words and does not read them aloud, so that the focus stays on God's justice and his care for the oppressed. Nahum is not a celebration of suffering, and it is never a license to name our own enemies as Nineveh.

### Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

### Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through Nahum:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

### The 3-Week Nahum Study at a Glance

| Week | Title & Passage | Movement 1 / Movement 2 | Canonical Horizon |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **The LORD Is Slow to Anger and Great in Power** (1:1–15) | The Jealous God Who Is a Stronghold (1:1–8) / Good News on the Mountains (1:9–15) | The God of mercy and justice revealed in Christ, and the good news of peace |
| 2 | **Nineveh Falls** (2:1–13) | The Scatterer Comes Up Against Nineveh (2:1–10) / Where Is the Lions' Den? (2:11–13) | The Lamb who overcomes every predatory power and restores his people |
| 3 | **Woe to the Bloody City** (3:1–19) | Woe to the City of Lies and Plunder (3:1–7) / Are You Better Than Thebes? (3:8–19) | The Judge who ends all oppression and the Savior who wept over a city |

**WEEK 1 OF 3**

WEEK 1 SESSION GUIDE · NAHUM 1:1–15

# Week 1: The LORD Is Slow to Anger and Great in Power

Scripture Scope: Nahum 1:1–15 (ESV) • Focal Passages: Nahum 1:2–3; 1:6–7; 1:12–13; 1:15 • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

## Opening: The LORD Is Slow to Anger and Great in Power (Nahum 1:1–15)

### Opening

For a hundred years Assyria has been the terror of the world. Its armies destroyed Samaria and the northern kingdom, swept through Judah, and made Judah's king a vassal. Its kings carved their cruelty on palace walls for subject peoples to see. Nineveh once repented when Jonah preached, but the city has gone back to its violence. Now a prophet whose name means "comfort" receives a heavy word about Nineveh.

Before he says a single thing about the city, he sings about God: jealous for his people, slow to anger yet great in power, Lord of storm and sea, and good, a stronghold for everyone who runs to him. Then a messenger appears on the mountains with news Judah has waited a lifetime to hear.

## Week 1 At a Glance

| | |
|---|---|
| **Scripture Scope** | Nahum 1:1–15 (the heading, the hymn to the LORD who is jealous, patient, powerful, and good, the words of judgment to Nineveh, the promise that Judah will be afflicted no more, and the herald bringing good news of peace) |
| **Focal Passages** | Nahum 1:2–3; 1:6–7; 1:12–13; 1:15 |
| **Literary & Structural Anchor** | The book begins with who God is (1:2–8) before it says what God will do (1:9–3:19), so its theology frames its judgment. Nahum 1:3 echoes the LORD's own self-description in Exodus 34:6–7, the passage Micah celebrated just before (Micah 7:18). "The LORD is good" (1:7) stands at the center of the storm hymn. Verses 9–15 turn back and forth between Nineveh and Judah, and 1:15 closely parallels Isaiah 52:7. |
| **Big Idea** | The LORD is patient but just, mighty over every power, and a refuge for those who trust him, and he brings good news of peace to people crushed by oppression. |

## Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

| | |
|---|---|
| HEAD | **Know the God of Nahum:** Understand how Nahum holds together God's patience, power, justice, and goodness, and why Assyria's fall was good news for Judah. |
| HEART | **Rest in God's Justice:** Trust that God sees every injustice and will set things right, so that you do not have to carry revenge. |
| HANDS | **Run to the Stronghold:** Take one concrete step to bring a burden of fear or injury to the LORD, and to share the good news of peace. |

### Opening Frame: The LORD Is Slow to Anger and Great in Power

Micah ended with a hymn of wonder at the God who pardons iniquity and delights in steadfast love. Nahum picks up the other half of the same truth about God: the LORD is slow to anger, but he will by no means clear the guilty. Together the two books show one God, merciful and just. Our series also watched Nineveh repent under Jonah; after an earlier generation experienced mercy, the same city has returned to cruelty as the capital of Assyria, the empire that crushed nations and had already destroyed Israel's northern kingdom. Nahum's name means comfort, and his short book was comfort for the people Assyria oppressed. This is a 3–Week study, one chapter each week: the LORD who is slow to anger and great in power, the fall of Nineveh, and the woe on the bloody city. The question for this week: how can God's justice be good news, and what does it mean to leave vengeance to him? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

### Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

**1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question):** Tell about a time an unfair situation seemed like it would never end. What finally changed, or what helped you keep going?

Section 1.2

# Historical & Literary Context: Assyria at the Height of Its Power (Nahum 1:1–15)

### Entering the World of Nahum and Nineveh

#### 1. Historical Background

Assyria ruled from Iran to Egypt under Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal (680–627 BC). It destroyed Samaria in 722 BC and devastated Judah in 701 BC; Judah's king Manasseh became a vassal and was once taken captive with hooks (2 Chronicles 33:11). Ashurbanipal sacked Thebes in 663 BC (Nahum 3:8–10). Nahum spoke between that event and Nineveh's fall in 612 BC.

#### 2. Cultural Setting

Assyrian kings recorded mass deportations and harsh punishments of rebels in their annals and carved them on palace walls at Nineveh to frighten subject peoples. Vassal nations paid heavy tribute; breaking the yoke meant freedom from foreign rule (1:13; compare Isaiah 10:27). Runners carried news of victory from battlefields to waiting cities (2 Samuel 18:24–27).

#### 3. Literary Structure of Nahum 1:1–15

- **Heading** (1:1)
- **Hymn to the divine warrior who is also a stronghold** (1:2–8)
- **Words to Nineveh, plotting and consumed** (1:9–11)
- **Words to Judah, afflicted no more** (1:12–13)
- **Nineveh's name cut off** (1:14)
- **The herald of peace** (1:15)

#### 4. Key Themes

God's jealousy as protective covenant love; patience and justice held together; God's power over creation; God as stronghold; the yoke broken; good news of peace.

#### 5. Theological Considerations

Nahum 1:3 quotes Exodus 34:6–7, the same self-revelation that Jonah resented (Jonah 4:2) and Micah celebrated (Micah 7:18). God's patience gave Nineveh a century after Jonah; his justice means oppression does not have the last word.

### 6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

The hymn in 1:2–8 is a partial acrostic, roughly following the Hebrew alphabet from its first letter to about its eleventh. It is a deliberate poetic device, though somewhat irregular. Peoples of the region pictured storm gods riding clouds and drying up seas; Nahum claims these powers for the LORD alone (compare Psalm 18:7–15).

### Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

**1.2 Q1:** Nahum opens with the same description of God that Micah praised, but stresses a different side: the LORD "will by no means clear the guilty" (1:3). Why do you think we need both God's mercy and his justice?

**1.2 Q2:** God spared Nineveh in Jonah's day, and about a century later Nahum announces its end. What does that say about God's patience and its limits?

**1.2 Q3:** Assyria seemed unstoppable to the people of Judah. What powers today seem that way to people who suffer under them?

Section 1.3

## Movement 1: The Jealous God Who Is a Stronghold (Nahum 1:1–8)

### Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Summary of Nahum 1:1** — The heading: an oracle concerning Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.
- **Reader 1: Nahum 1:2–3** (focal passage) — The LORD is jealous and avenging toward his adversaries, yet slow to anger and great in power; he will not clear the guilty, and storm and whirlwind are his path.
- **Summary of Nahum 1:4–5** — He rebukes the sea and dries up the rivers; the rich lands of Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon wither; the mountains quake and the earth heaves before him.
- **Reader 2: Nahum 1:6–7** (focal passage) — No one can stand before his indignation, yet the LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, who knows those who take refuge in him.
- **Summary of Nahum 1:8** — Like an overflowing flood he makes an end of his adversaries and pursues his enemies into darkness.

### Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Nahum 1:2:**
>
> The LORD is a jealous and avenging God;
> the LORD is avenging and wrathful;
>
> the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries
>
> and keeps wrath for his enemies.
>
> **Nahum 1:3:**
>
> The LORD is slow to anger and great in power,
> and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty.
>
> His way is in whirlwind and storm,
>
> and the clouds are the dust of his feet.
>
> **Nahum 1:6:**
>
> Who can stand before his indignation?
> Who can endure the heat of his anger?
>
> His wrath is poured out like fire,
>
> and the rocks are broken into pieces by him.
>
> **Nahum 1:7:**
>
> The LORD is good,
> a stronghold in the day of trouble;
>
> he knows those who take refuge in him.

### Teaching Narrative: The Jealous God Who Is a Stronghold

#### 1. A Heavy Word (Nahum 1:1)

Nahum's oracle is a burden, not a gloat. It concerns Nineveh but is given to Judah.

#### 2. Jealous and Avenging (Nahum 1:2)

God's jealousy is the protective zeal of a covenant partner, not petty envy; vengeance belongs to him as the just Judge, so victims do not have to take it.

#### 3. Slow to Anger, Great in Power (Nahum 1:3)

God's patience is not weakness. He waited a century, and he will not clear the guilty.

#### 4. Creation Obeys Him (Nahum 1:4–5)

Sea, rivers, fruitful lands, and mountains respond to the LORD. The powers that people feared as gods are his servants.

#### 5. Who Can Stand? (Nahum 1:6)

No empire, and no person, can stand before him on their own strength.

### 6. The Center of the Storm (Nahum 1:7)

The LORD is good. The same power that overthrows oppressors shelters the oppressed, and he knows by name those who take refuge in him.

### 7. The Flood (Nahum 1:8)

God's judgment overwhelms his enemies; this image returns in the river gates of chapter 2.

## Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

**1.3 Q1:** Nahum calls the LORD "a jealous and avenging God" (1:2). How is God's jealousy for his people different from human jealousy?

**1.3 Q2:** The LORD is "slow to anger and great in power" (1:3). Why does it matter that God's patience comes from strength rather than weakness?

**1.3 Q3:** The hymn pictures seas, rivers, and mountains responding to the LORD (1:4–5). What does that say to people who feel at the mercy of forces bigger than themselves?

**1.3 Q4:** "Who can stand before his indignation?" (1:6). How would you answer that question, and where does the gospel come in?

**1.3 Q5:** Right in the middle of the storm, Nahum says, "The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him" (1:7). How does knowing the LORD knows those who take refuge in him steady people in a day of trouble without requiring personal trauma to be shared aloud? (Feel free to reflect quietly or pass.)

Section 1.4

# Movement 2: Good News on the Mountains (Nahum 1:9–15)

### Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Summary of Nahum 1:9–11** — What do you plot against the LORD? He will make a complete end; trouble will not rise a second time. Like tangled thorns and drunkards, the plotters are burned like dry stubble. From Nineveh came one who plotted evil against the LORD.
- **Reader 1: Nahum 1:12–13** (focal passage) — Though the enemy is at full strength, it will be cut down. Though God afflicted Judah, he will afflict her no more; he will break the yoke and burst the bonds.
- **Summary of Nahum 1:14** — The LORD decrees that Nineveh's name will not go on; its carved and cast idols will be cut off, and its end is prepared, for it is vile.
- **Reader 2: Nahum 1:15** (focal passage) — On the mountains come the feet of one who brings good news and publishes peace. Judah may keep its feasts and fulfill its vows, for the destroyer will never again pass through.

### Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Nahum 1:12:**
>
> Thus says the LORD,
> “Though they are at full strength and many,
>
> they will be cut down and pass away.
>
> Though I have afflicted you,
>
> I will afflict you no more.
>
> **Nahum 1:15:**
>
> Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him
> who brings good news,
>
> who publishes peace!
>
> Keep your feasts, O Judah;
>
> fulfill your vows,
>
> for never again shall the worthless pass through you;
>
> he is utterly cut off.

### Teaching Narrative: Good News on the Mountains

#### 1. Plotting Against the LORD (Nahum 1:9–11)

Assyria's schemes were ultimately against God himself, and they will not rise a second time.

#### 2. Full Strength, Cut Down (Nahum 1:12)

The enemy's numbers and strength do not decide the outcome; God does.

### 3. Afflicted No More (Nahum 1:12–13)

God had used Assyria to discipline Judah, but the discipline has an end. He will break the yoke and burst the bonds.

### 4. The Name Cut Off (Nahum 1:14)

The empire that made a name through terror will lose its name, and its idols cannot save it. Retell in brief.

### 5. The Herald (Nahum 1:15)

A runner on the mountains brings the news of peace. Judah can worship again without fear. Nineveh's judgment belongs to the LORD; it is never a license for revenge or for hostility toward any people today.

### 6. Feasts and Vows (Nahum 1:15)

The right response to rescue is worship and keeping promises to God.

### Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

**1.4 Q1:** The enemy is "at full strength and many," yet God says "they will be cut down and pass away" (1:12). When oppressive forces seem overwhelming, what sustains hope that strength and numbers do not have the last word? (Personal reflection may remain private.)

**1.4 Q2:** "Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more" (1:12). How can God's discipline of his people and his promise of relief both be true?

**1.4 Q3:** God promises to break the yoke and burst the bonds (1:13). What kinds of yokes do people carry today, and what does freedom look like?

**1.4 Q4:** Nahum's herald "brings good news" and "publishes peace" (1:15). Why is the end of oppression called good news?

**1.4 Q5:** Judah is told to keep its feasts and fulfill its vows (1:15). Why is worship the right response to rescue?

Section 1.5

# Canonical Horizon: The God of Mercy and Justice Revealed in Christ, and the Good News of Peace

### Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

At the cross God shows that he is both just and the one who justifies (Romans 3:25–26); his patience is meant to lead us to repentance (Romans 2:4), the feet of those who bring good news are beautiful (Romans 10:15), and because vengeance belongs to God, his people leave room for his justice instead of taking revenge (Romans 12:19). Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

### 1. Just and the Justifier (Romans 3:25–26)

At the cross God shows that he does not clear the guilty, yet he freely forgives everyone who trusts in Jesus. Mercy and justice meet.

### 2. Patience with a Purpose (2 Peter 3:9; Romans 2:4)

God's patience gives time for repentance, as it did for Nineveh, but it is not endless.

### 3. Beautiful Feet (Romans 10:15; Ephesians 2:17)

Paul applies the herald of good news to the preaching of the gospel, and Jesus himself came and preached peace to those far and near.

### 4. Leave Room for God (Romans 12:19)

Believers are told not to avenge themselves but to leave vengeance to God—the freedom Nahum offered to the oppressed—while remembering that refusing personal revenge still permits safety, boundaries, legal justice, and restitution.

### 5. The Refuge (Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 6:18)

Christ invites the weary to come to him, and believers have fled to him for refuge.

### Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **Nahum 1:7:**
>
> The LORD is good,
>
> a stronghold in the day of trouble;
>
> he knows those who take refuge in him.

### Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

**1.5 Q1:** Paul says God is "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26). How does the cross hold together the two sides of God we saw in Nahum 1:3?

**1.5 Q2:** Paul quotes the good-news herald: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (Romans 10:15). Who brought the good news of Jesus to you, and to whom might you bring it?

**1.5 Q3:** Paul writes, "never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God" (Romans 12:19). How can trusting God's justice free someone who has been badly wronged?

### Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

| | |
|---|---|
| HEAD | The LORD is patient but just, mighty over every power, good, and a stronghold for those who take refuge in him; he broke Judah's yoke and sent a herald of peace. |
| HEART | In Christ, God's mercy and justice meet, and the good news of peace reaches us. |
| HANDS | Faith runs to the stronghold, leaves vengeance to God, and carries good news to others. |

Section 1.6

## Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

### Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

**1.6 Q1:** How can believers bring burdens of fear, injury, or injustice to the LORD as a stronghold—while still pursuing safe help and lawful protection when needed? (Personal burdens may remain private.)

**1.6 Q2:** What does leaving vengeance in God's hands look like in practice, knowing that refusing personal revenge still permits safety, legal justice, restitution, and boundaries? (No need to name anyone aloud.)

**1.6 Q3:** What kind of people around us most need to hear good news of peace, and what does sharing that peace gently look like? (Keep names private if you wish.)

### Looking Ahead to Next Week

**Recap:** In Week 1, we met the God of Nahum: patient yet just, mighty yet good, and a stronghold for those who take refuge in him, who sends good news of peace to an afflicted people.

**Transition:** The herald has announced Nineveh's end. Next, Nahum shows the city falling in rushing, vivid poetry, framed by God's care for his plundered people.

**Week 2 Overview — Nineveh Falls (Nahum 2:1–13):** Movement 1, The Scatterer Comes Up Against Nineveh (2:1–10), covers the attack on Nineveh, the LORD restoring the majesty of Jacob, the opened river gates, and the city draining away like a pool. Movement 2, Where Is the Lions' Den? (2:11–13), asks where the predator has gone and hears the LORD's verdict, "I am against you." The battle scenes will be retold in brief. The Canonical Horizon traces the Lamb who overcomes every predatory power and restores his people.

### Focal Readings to Preview

- Nahum 2:1–2
- Nahum 2:6
- Nahum 2:8
- Nahum 2:11
- Nahum 2:13

### My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

### Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

#### Closing Group Prayer

LORD, you are slow to anger and great in power. Thank you that you are good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and that you know those who take refuge in you. We pray for all who suffer under violent or crushing powers, near and far. We honestly surrender to you any desire for revenge, and we leave justice in your hands. Thank you for Jesus, in whom mercy and justice meet, and who preached peace to those far off and those near. Give us courage to carry that good news. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.