

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*It's for You*  
Amos 2:4-16

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

## Leaders' Responsibilities:

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## Prior to this Coming Session:

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

### **Bible Study Leader:**

You may wish to ask for a copy of the photo of the village of Tekoa where Amos was born and worked as a shepherd. It is found at the bottom of the "Introduction" to the

study of Amos. Download it and copy it from this series of studies (Amos) on the Home Church Online website.

Two lists are given in the material. One is a list of the nations surrounding Israel, their sin and their punishment. The other is a list of Israel's sins. The second list you may want to use in other lessons in this unit.

You can make copies of these lists from the final pages of this session or you may need to write them on a large piece of paper or whiteboard.

### **Worship Time Leader:**

If you choose to use the words to **Take Time to Be Holy** to close the worship time, you will need to make a copy or copies of it.

### **Music Sources:**

**Yes, Lord, Yes**, *The Worship Hymnal* #445, CCLI # 12224

**Thy Word**, *The Worship Hymnal* #342, CCLI # 14301

**Take Time to be Holy**, *The Worship Hymnal* #587, CCLI #93748 Public Domain

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***It's for You*****Focal Text**

Amos 2:4-16

**Background Text**

Amos 1—2

**Main Idea**

We, like ancient Israel, must first be concerned about our sins and our acts of injustice, rather than being preoccupied with other's sins and acts of injustice.

**Question to Explore**

On whose sin does God really want us to focus?

**Teaching Aim**

To help the class acknowledge the need to focus on their sins and their part in our society's injustices.

**Gathering together:**

Choose a song or songs to sing from the suggested list or another that expresses the majesty and power of God or the power of His written word, the Bible.

**First thoughts:**

The overarching theme for the five lessons we will have in the book of Amos is **A God Who Roars**. This is certainly an intriguing title and one which gives a clue to the nature of the book. Amos 1:2 states ***“He (Amos) said: The Lord roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up, and the top of Carmel withers.”***

It is obvious that this book pictures a righteous God who is weary of a religion of hypocrisy and deceit. Though it is addressed to people living sometime around 788 B.C., (about 2,800 years ago), it speaks to us today. The teaching aim for our session

today states that we are to acknowledge the need to focus on our own sins and our part in society's injustices.

Amos is considered a minor prophet, but he gave a major message which has endured through the ages. May our study lead us to righteous living.

### **Closing the Gathering Time:**

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## **Teacher Preparation**

### ***It's for You***

#### **Focal Text**

Amos 2:4-16

#### **Background Text**

Amos 1—2

#### **Main Idea**

We, like ancient Israel, must first be concerned about our sins and our acts of injustice, rather than being preoccupied with other's sins and acts of injustice.

#### **Question to Explore**

On whose sin does God really want us to focus?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To help the class acknowledge the need to focus on their sins and their part in our society's injustices.

### **Introduction to your personal study:**

One of the interesting realities about the book of Amos is that its writer, the prophet Amos, was not a priest or leader of the Israelites, but a shepherd. The book begins with the words “***The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa***”. Tekoa was a small village located 12 miles south of Jerusalem and about 5 miles southeast of Bethlehem, at the edge of the Judean desert. The surrounding area consists largely of barren hills, but some fertile valleys exist between the hills. The word translated *shepherds* is found only one time in the Bible. It is related to an Aramaic word that means “a keeper of a kind of small sheep”.

Later, when the priest Amaziah challenged Amos, Amos gave a little more information about his occupation (Amos 7:12). He said he was not a professional prophet or a prophet's son (student). He was ***“a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs”***. In 7:15, Amos said God ***“took me from following the flock”***. Flock refers to sheep or goats. A shepherd would have been familiar with a lion's roar which led to the imagery used by Amos.

The word “sycamore figs” occurs seven times in the Bible, always referring to a tree that grew in abundance in Israel. The overall picture given is that Amos was not a religious teacher, but a very ordinary working person. In fact, his work might have been considered a very menial kind of work.

Like so many topics, even the small town where Amos was born and raised (Tekoa) has a number of excellent websites where you can see picture albums of the town and articles about it as it is today and when Amos lived there. Two interesting sites are:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tekoa,\\_Gush\\_Etzion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tekoa,_Gush_Etzion) (the photos of the town can be enlarged to great detail so you can really get a feeling of the area).

and: <http://www.tekoa.org.il/> Or, simply Google the name Tekoa and choose.

Some of you who are leading the Bible Study for this session are doing so for the first time. Others have taught before, but do not consider themselves trained or competent to teach. The amazing reality is that God has always used people to do his work who did not fit the description of “adequately or properly prepared”. Amos was willing to carry God's message to the people. He did not have to determine what that message would be: that was given to him by God. As you teach today, rejoice in that reality. You are a willing messenger of God to the people who are gathered with you.

## **Background:**

Please ask for and read the information contained in the **“Introduction”** article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

The book of Amos was written in the middle of the eighth century BC, as identified in Amos 1:1. The message God gave him concerned the Northern Kingdom that had split away from Judah. Amos identified the times in which he preached as (1) the days of Uzziah king of Judah (2) the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel and (2) two years before the earthquake. Uzziah ruled over Judah for 52 years (2 Kings 15:1-2, 13). Jeroboam ruled over Israel for 41 years (2 Kings 14:23). Their reigns overlapped for many years. During those years, both Judah and Israel achieved their greatest times of prosperity as separate nations. Uzziah and Jeroboam II together ruled over almost the same territory Solomon had ruled at the height of his empire. Their economies were thriving. Their armies were unchallenged. Their people lived in peace, and the privileged class enjoyed ease and luxury.

During those years of luxury, Israel's rulers and people indulged in flagrant, brazen, pervasive idolatry and sin. They replaced the worship forms God had taught them with self-made religious rituals. They were content with their lifestyle and seemed oblivious to the reality of God's displeasure.

The earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1 must have been well known to the people as having been extremely devastating. Zechariah mentioned it in his prophecy (Zechariah 14:5). He lived about 250 years later, after the Israelites had returned from captivity.

## Focusing on the Meaning:

### Judgment on surrounding nations

The first chapter of Amos deals with prophecies concerning surrounding nations. Amos uses a familiar descriptive form which emphasizes the serious nature of his proclamation. Ancient people thought of three as a round number, indicating completeness. "Three transgressions" meant that they had completely filled their lives with transgressions. "Four" meant that their sins had overflowed all bounds. The point is not that each of these nations had committed only four transgressions. The point is that each nation had committed more than enough sins for God's patience to run out and for judgment to come. Amos did not claim to name all their transgressions, but he named one that was typical of many sins committed by each nation.

In his statement about each nation, Amos followed a four-point outline: (1) He stressed that the words he was about to speak came from the Lord. (2) He directly quoted the Lord's specific charge against the nation to whom he was speaking (3) He quoted the Lord's description of the punishment He would send that nation and (4) finally, he reaffirmed that the words came from the Lord.

Before you begin the study of the various nations to which Amos refers, follow the link <http://www.drshirley.org/geog/geog10.html> to examine a map showing the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah and the surrounding countries to which Amos refers.

The first nation to be condemned was Damascus (Amos 1:3-5) which was the capital of the Arameans, who lived in the area now occupied by Syria. The Arameans have disappeared as a people, but the city of Damascus still exists.

The Arameans had tried to conquer some of the land in Gilead belonging to Israel and in doing so had ***"threshed Gilead with implements of sharp iron"***. Probably those words meant that the Arameans tortured and killed their Gilead captives by running over them with a threshing machine – a machine equipped with jagged iron spikes. God promised to punish this barbaric activity by allowing a conquering army to enter Damascus. The people and their rulers would be carried into captivity. II Kings 16:5-9 tells how this prophecy was fulfilled exactly when Rezin was Aram's king and Tiglath-Pileser III was Assyria's ruler. It is important to note here that the prophecies of God's



punishment were sometimes carried out by ungodly rulers. God, however, was in charge – allowing things to happen.

The second nation to be mentioned is Philistia (Amos 1:6-8). The Philistines lived along the Mediterranean Sea, in the area that is called the Gaza Strip today. Philistia consisted of five city states, the largest and southernmost of which was Gaza. The specific charge God entered against the Philistines was that on some unspecified occasion Gaza had carried a complete group of captives to Edom, apparently to sell them as slaves. We assume the captives were Israelites and that they included women and children.

The Philistines' punishment was that their palaces would be destroyed. Both the common people and the rulers would be killed and those remaining alive would eventually perish. These awesome words announced the complete destruction of the Philistine nation. The Assyrian kings conquered, plundered and subdued all the Philistine city states. The Philistine nation survived for a time afterward, but it gradually declined and disappeared. The Philistine people no longer exist. They have left behind only the name Palestine.

It is important to note that the act of taking slaves and selling them was condemned in Philistia and in Tyre. Human trafficking is an evil which exists today and to which the church is addressing its concern.

Damascus was to the northeast of Israel; Philistia to the southwest. The third area to be mentioned is Tyre (Amos 1:9-10) which is a city in the area called Phoenicia which joined Israel at its northwest corner. This is present-day Lebanon. Tyre delivered a whole group of captives to Edom, apparently as slaves. The Lord added that they had not remembered the brotherly covenant ***“Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood”*** (Amos 1:9). The covenant they ignored may have been the covenant Hiram, king of Tyre, made with Solomon (1 Kings 5:12). Although Solomon ruled from 962-922, his rule was so lasting and his wisdom so great that the impact of his reign continued. Whatever the covenant had been, it must have indicated that Tyre would give some protection for the Israelites.

The punishment God announced for Tyre was that fire would burn its walls and its palaces. God did not say that Tyre's people would be carried into captivity or that the city would cease to exist. When Sennacherib, king of Assyria, conquered Israel, he also conquered Tyre after a five year siege, but he seems to have left the city intact. Later, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, besieged the city for 13 years, but apparently did not conquer it. Still later, Alexander the Great of Greece besieged the city for seven months. He built a mile-long causeway to the city's fortress, which was located on an island. He did not give up until he had conquered the fortress. The city survived and is still in existence today.

Edom (Amos 1:11-12) was located south of the Dead Sea on the east side of the Arabah, a deep depression that runs from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akabah. The

depression is a part of the upper “Jordan Rift Valley” which separates the earth’s tectonic plates of Africa and Arabia. The Valley contains the lowest point on the earth’s land masses, the bottom of the Dead Sea at 2,625 feet (800 metres) below sea level.

The Lord called Israel Edom’s brother because Jacob, the founder of Israel, was twin brother to Esau, the founder of Edom (Genesis 36:1) The conflict between the two brothers passed to their descendants and continues today in the struggles between Jews and Arabs. The Lord charged Edom with the sin of vicious, unrelenting hatred and warfare against Israel.

God said that fire would burn Teman and Bozrah’s palaces. Evidence seems to indicate that Teman was a tribe and district in Edom and that Bozrah was Edom’s capital. The Bible does not describe how the Assyrian kings treated Edom. Assyrian records indicate that Edom was subject to Assyria and paid tribute during the entire time of Assyria’s empire. Edom no longer exists as a nation and the Edomites have been absorbed as part of the Arab peoples. Its territory is located within the country of Jordan today.

Ammon (Amos 1:13-14) was located east of the Gilead plateau. The charge God levelled against Ammon was that they had ripped open pregnant women in Gilead. The punishment God pronounced was that Rabbath, their capital city, and its palaces would be destroyed and their king and princes would be carried into captivity. The location of Rabbath on a high, flat-topped hill made it difficult to conquer and both Biblical records and existing Assyrian records are silent about how the Assyrian kings treated Ammon. The Ammonites have ceased to exist or have been absorbed among the Arab peoples. Today Ammon’s territory is located within Jordan. Rabbah’s modern name is Amman, Jordan’s capital.

Moab (Amos 2:1-3) was located on the east side of the Dead Sea, across from Judah. The sin of these people was that they had burned the bones of Edom’s king into lime. Since God charged Moab with burning the king’s bones, not his body, likely the Moabites dug up the dead king’s bones and burned them to show their contempt for him. Perhaps this Edomite king had attacked or subdued the Moabites at some previous time. Later, when the Moabites had opportunity, they invaded Edom’s territory and exacted this revenge. We have no record to show when this atrocity occurred. It would seem that this one act was symbolic of the violent nature of this people.

God promised that fire would destroy the palaces of Kiriath, one of their principal cities and perhaps their capital. The nation would die as a result of a raging battle. The judge (king) and his princes would be carried into captivity. The Bible does not record how Moab fared under the Assyrian kings. Assyrian records tell that Assyria subjugated Moab, but there are not details. Later, when Babylon ruled the area, Moab still existed, but was in subjection. Today the Moabites have ceased to exist or have been absorbed into the Arab peoples. Moab’s territory now lies within Jordan. We are familiar with Moab because of the story of Elimelech and Noemi who left Judah in a time of famine and went to Moab. Their sons married Moabite women, one of whom was named Ruth.

After Elimelech and the sons died, Noemi wished to return to Judah. Ruth made the trip with her and eventually married Boaz and thus was a grandmother of David who became King of the Israelite nation. (See Ruth, chapters 1 and 4).

## Judgment on Judah

In the focal text for the day, Judah is discussed. ***“This is what the Lord says: For three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath, Because they have rejected the law of the Lord and have not kept his decrees, because they have been led astray by false gods, the gods their ancestors followed, I will send fire upon Judah that will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem.*** (Amos 2:4-5).

Judah was the southern of two nations that formed when Israel divided after Solomon's death. Judah was Amos' homeland. The judgement of God on Judah relates to spiritual attitudes and actions. The nations previously discussed were not nations which acknowledged God as supreme. The sin of Judah was that the people despised the law of the Lord and turned to the lies of idolatry. The people of the six pagan nations had sinned against what should have been a common moral code of all nations. The Lord held them accountable for breaking that common moral code. Judah was a part of God's chosen people. Their heritage went back to Abraham. The covenant with Abraham promised God's blessings on his descendants but contained a requirement or a promise from the people ***“Obey my voice and keep My covenant”*** (Exodus 19:5). How much more accountable were the people of Judah than the pagan nations. The Lord had given Judah and Israel His law for moral guidance. If the pagan nations were guilty, how much more guilty were the people of Judah!

Even though this was a time of prosperity and relative peace, the people gave no thanksgiving to God for his providential care. They refused to obey the laws of God and accepted the “lies” of their fathers. Those “lies” probably consisted of worshipping through calf idols, as their fathers had done at Sinai (Exodus 32:1-8, 1 Kings 12:26-30).

The punishment for Judah was much like the punishment to be suffered by the other nations. God promised to set fire to the palaces of Jerusalem. Eight years after Shalmaneser V conquered Israel and carried the remnant of its people into captivity (2 Kings 18:9-12), Sennacherib tried to do the same to Judah (2 Kings 13). Because Judah repented, the angel of the Lord invaded the Assyrian camp and smote its army. That night 185,000 Assyrian soldiers died. Sennacherib gave up his siege of Jerusalem and returned to his own land (2 Kings 18:13-19:37).

This marvellous deliverance shows that the punishment God announced through Amos could be averted if the guilty would repent and rest in God's mercy and grace. Later, Judah's rebellion became more set and determined. God allowed Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to conquer Jerusalem and to carry the remnant of Judah into captivity in Babylon (2 Kings 25:1-26). Seventy years later, king Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon and allowed the captives to return to their land (Jeremiah 25:8-14; 29:10; Ezra 1:1-11).

See studies in Isaiah, Biblical Teaching #14, [www.HomeChurchOnline.com](http://www.HomeChurchOnline.com) .

## **Judgment on Israel**

***This is what the Lord says:***

***'For three sins of Israel,  
even for four, I will not turn back my wrath,  
They sell the righteous for silver,  
and the needy for a pair of sandals.  
They trample on the heads of the poor  
as upon the dust of the ground  
and deny justice to the oppressed.  
Father and son use the same girl  
and so profane my holy name.  
They lie down beside every altar  
on garments taken in pledge.  
In the house of their god  
they drink wine taken as fines.***

***I destroyed the Amorite before them,  
though he was tall as the cedars  
and strong as the oaks.  
I destroyed his fruit above  
and his roots below.***

***I brought you up out of Egypt,  
and I led you forty years in the desert  
to give you the land of the Amorites.  
I also raised up prophets from among your sons  
and Nazirites from among your young men.***

***Is this not true, people of Israel?"  
declares the Lord.***

***'But you made the Nazirites drink wine  
and commanded the prophets not to prophesy.***

***Now then, I will crush you  
as a cart crushes when loaded with grain.  
The swift will not escape,  
the strong will not muster their strength,  
and the warrior will not save his life.  
The archer will not stand his ground,  
the fleet-footed soldier will not get away,***

***and the horseman will not save his life.  
Even the bravest warriors  
will flee naked on that day,”  
declares the Lord. (Amos 2: 6-16)***

When Amos condemned the other nations, he listed only one typical sin of each nation. However, in condemning Israel he lists many different sins. The text is also much more individually oriented. The pagan nations are held responsible as nations, but the meaning of the judgment on Israel is that while they are responsible as a nation, they are also responsible as individuals. ***“Is this not true, people of Israel?” declares the Lord.***

“The word “sold” in verse 6 is often used in the Old Testament of someone being sold into slavery. For example, this was the word used when Joseph’s brothers sold him as a slave (Genesis 37:27-38). Debtors who could not pay their debts were sometimes sold as slaves by their rich creditors. These particular debtors are referred to as ‘righteous.’ This means that their cause was righteous and that they were treated unjustly. Probably the rich creditors had used a position of wealth and power to influence everything to their own even greater profit” (Dean, R.J., Fowler, J.B. and Taulman, J.E. *13 Ready-To-Teach Bible Study Lessons, Broadman Comments July-September ’95*, Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994).

The righteous discussed here would mean the innocent. These people were not guilty of any crime that merited the injustice they were receiving.

***They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground*** pictures the rich figuratively walking on the poor and crushing their heads into the dust as they took advantage of their helplessness. Amos’ descriptive language paints a picture of ruthlessness almost beyond understanding. These were prosperous days in Israel; the rich should have been caring for the poor. Certainly they should not have been oppressing them further.

***Father and son use the same girl  
and so profane my holy name.  
They lie down beside every altar  
on garments taken in pledge.  
In the house of their god  
they drink wine taken as fines.***

This is an ugly picture for a people who served a holy God. It is a description of gross sexual immorality. Many commentators feel this is a description of a man and his son participating in false worship together by having sex with a temple prostitute. Perhaps this was a sin that was even more sinister. Since God mentions this offense among examples of social injustice, the accusation may infer that the father and son were taking advantage of a helpless girl when they committed this gross offense. Thus, they added abuse to immorality. Apparently, this vulgar act was not an isolated incident but

a common practice. It reflected not only on one evil family, but also on the whole nation. Using poor or defenceless girls for sexual advantage has been a practice of evil men in every age, but God always condemns it.

Our Christian witness has been sorely impacted by publicity related to clergy – both priests and pastors – who have taken advantage of those in their realm of responsibility by having sexual relations with them. The immorality of the sexual act has been compounded by the broken trust which existed between a person of influence and power (pastor, priest, teacher, youth leader) and the person of lesser power (church member, youth, child, student).

Not only was there sexual immorality, but there was gross disregard for Jewish law. God expressly had forbidden an Israelite to keep overnight a garment taken for collateral. This commandment protected a poor person who had only one piece of cloth to use as a coat in the daytime and a blanket at night. It ensured that the person would not have to sleep without a cover on cold nights (Exodus 22:26-27; Deuteronomy 24:13). The Israelites were not merely ignoring this commandment; they were doing so before God's altars.

They were drinking in God's house wine that had been taken from people who had been fined in court for small offenses (Amos 2:8b). Court officials used the forfeited wine, not to support the courts, but to entertain themselves and their friends in drunken feasts at God's altars. Rituals of sacrifice that God had ordained to represent spiritual commitment had become occasions for drunken revelries. Meals in the temple that God had intended to represent sharing one's blessings with God and His people had become occasions for stealing from the oppressed.

Sexual immorality, dishonouring worship places and practices and taking advantage of the poor combine to make this picture of Israelite behaviour abhorrent.

A further sin indicated in these verses (Amos 2:9-12) is the sin of ingratitude. These people had forgotten that God had led them out of Egypt and given them the land in which they lived. God had allowed them to conquer the people living in the land (the Amorites were the strongest and most prominent of those groups).

God had called their young men to be prophets and Nazirites (2:11). Nazirites were people who had devoted themselves wholly to God for a specified period of time or for life (see Numbers 6:1-21). As a sign of their dedication, they were not to cut their hair, eat any form of grapes, or touch any dead body.

Amos indicates that the blessing of calling young people into dedicated service is as great a blessing to the Israelites as the subduing of their enemies. The Israelites did not see that. They were so ungrateful that they commanded the prophets not to preach and encouraged the Nazirites to violate their vows by drinking wine (2:12). When people disrespect preaching and righteous living, they have reached the height of ingratitude to God.



This is an interesting concept for the church today. What do we do to nurture our children and youth in the faith so that serving God becomes a primary desire for them? As parents, do we spend more time encouraging children to excel in athletics and academic studies than in spiritual growth? Do we make the sacrifice of time and energy it takes to make sure children and youth are in Bible study, special activities and camps as well as modeling prayer and Bible study in the home? Does the church REJOICE when youth are called to missionary service or ministry?

### **Israel's punishment**

***Now then, I will crush you  
as a cart crushes when loaded with grain.  
The swift will not escape,  
the strong will not muster their strength,  
and the warrior will not save his life.  
The archer will not stand his ground,  
the fleet-footed soldier will not get away,  
and the horseman will not save his life.  
Even the bravest warriors  
will flee naked on that day,"  
declares the Lord. (Amos 2: 6-16)***

Israel's punishment involves a defeat so complete that no one would be able to escape. The swiftest dodgers, the strongest musclemen, the fiercest fighters, the most skilful bowmen, the fastest runners, the most experienced horsemen and the bravest soldiers – all would be trapped. ***"Flee away naked"*** would describe a warrior abandoning his weapons and outer garments in an effort to escape. Fleeing from a battlefield in panic is a warrior's ultimate disgrace.

This prophecy of doom was fulfilled completely when Shalmanesar V overran Israel's capital, Samaria, after a three year siege. After his victory, he carried all Israel's survivors to captivity in Assyria (2 Kings 18:9-12).

This defeat was not the end of the Jewish people or of their place in God's service. Later, Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon and allowed the captives to return to their own land. Some returned to rebuild the Israelite nation. They established their capital in Jerusalem, not Samaria. Jerusalem ruled the entire land, south and north. About 600 years later, the Romans drove the Israelites out of the land again in A.D. 70. The siege of Jerusalem by the Romans was a bloody one which killed many people and carried many others into captivity as slaves. On May 14, 1949, Israel re-established itself as a nation – as one nation with its capital in Haifa and later in Jerusalem. The Northern Kingdom has never existed as a separate nation since Assyria overthrew it. (The writer is indebted to material included in the unpublished Expository Notes which accompanied the January Bible Study for 199\_ published by LifeWay entitled *Amos: Repentance or Ruin.*)

Amos closes this section by empathically stating ***“Thus says the Lord”***. These words of judgment came not from Amos, the herdsman, but from God Himself. Amos was an obedient messenger.

### **Your Goal as the Leader of this Study:**

**Leader:** Encourage interest in the study by considering the following. The title of our lesson today is “It’s for You”. Yet the story is one which happened many years ago. The sins described seem remote and yet very much a part of modern society. All of us share to some extent to the environmental damage to our world. All of us fail to express gratitude for the blessings we have. Sexual immorality abounds. Children are sold into sexual slavery on a daily basis. People are hungry. Many have no homes. However, rich or poor the group you are leading today may be, there are sins which can be identified. Your task as facilitator is to help individuals acknowledge and identify their own failure to be all God intended for them to be. Israel’s sin was great, because the nation had fallen so far short of the great plan which God had for them to be a blessing to others. When the Lord speaks it really is for you.

### **For Personal Reflection:**

**What have I learned from this study?**

**What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

**What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**



## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### ***It's for You***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc. Children who stay with their parents in the Youth/Adult study should have the material on worship as suggested in **The Children's Corner** at the beginning of this **Unit** of studies. (Ask your leader who downloads the studies for those suggestions).

**Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.**

#### **Focal Text**

Amos 2:4-16

#### **Background Text**

Amos 1—2

#### **Main Idea**

We, like ancient Israel, must first be concerned about our sins and our acts of injustice, rather than being preoccupied with other's sins and acts of injustice.

#### **Question to Explore**

On whose sin does God really want us to focus?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To help the class acknowledge the need to focus on their sins and their part in our society's injustices.

### **Connect with Life:**

Open with this question: Can any of you think of a person who was born in extreme poverty or in a poor or desolate place who, during their lifetime, made a huge impact on their nation or world? (Encourage suggestions. You might suggest persons such as Benito Juarez who was born in a poor indigenous village in Mexico and went on to become called the Father of Mexico. Or, several presidents of the United States. Or a

famous military leader. Many influential writers and scientists were born in difficult circumstances.)

Tell the group: Today we will look at the life and message of the Old Testament prophet, Amos. He refers to himself as a shepherd from Tekoa, a small village southeast of Jerusalem. But we know him as a powerful prophet who shook up the government and religious leaders of ancient Israel and is still studied today.

## **Guide the Study:**

Explain: Although a thorough discussion of the prophecies Amos made related to six surrounding nations has been given in the background study material, it would be impossible in the time allowed to give attention to all of these. The point which needs to be established is that God was involved in the lives of these pagan nations and allowed their wickedness to continue for only a period of time. History validates the subjugation of these countries by the Assyrians and later by the Babylonians. The point Amos is making which is important to emphasize is that God is a God of all peoples and sin will be punished.

**Leader:** Follow the link given to study a map of the Divided Kingdom and the surrounding nations. You may want to provide copies of the map for participants or draw a facsimile to help participants understand the location of the various nations mentioned. This is certainly of interest since these areas are part of modern day countries which continue to be in the news.

Use the following diagram as a handout or whiteboard presentation to help participants understand the prophecies leading up to those involving God's own people – those from Judah and Israel. But use time wisely in discussing each one.

**Damascus – northeast of Israel; sin was cruelty to Gilead captives; punishment was captivity**

**Philistia – southwest of Judah, on the Mediterranean Sea; sin was selling captives as slaves; punishment was that their palaces would be destroyed and both common people and rulers would perish**

**Tyre – northwest of Israel on the Mediterranean Sea; sin was delivering a whole group of captives to Edom apparently as slaves and breaking a covenant with Israel; punishment was the burning of the wall and its palaces**

**Edom – southeast of Judah, south of the Dead Sea; sin was vicious, unrelenting hatred and warfare against Israel; punishment was to be fire which would burn Teman and Bozrah's palaces**

**Ammon – east of the Gilead plateau which is the easternmost part of Israel; sin was ripping open pregnant women in Gilead; punishment was that Rabbah, their capital city and its palaces, would be destroyed in a fierce battle and their king and princes would be carried into captivity**

**Moab – east side of the Dead Sea, across from Judah; sin was that they had burned the bones of Edom's king into lime – an atrocity indicating a violent people; punishment was that fire would destroy the palaces of Kirioth, one of their principal cities and perhaps their capital. The nation would die as result of a raging battle and the king and his princes would be carried into captivity.**

Explain: God's judgment on Judah and Israel focused on spiritual sin. The other nations had broken the common moral law which human beings understand. Judah and Israel were God's chosen people. They had the Ten Commandments and other laws of the Judaic community. Most of all they had experienced a relationship with a holy God. Yet their behaviour ignored that.

Have someone read Amos 2:4-5.

Ask: What was the sin of Judah? (they rejected the law of the Lord and had been led astray by false gods).

Inquire: What was their punishment to be? (God will set fire upon Judah and consume the fortresses of Jerusalem).

From the Teacher Preparation material explain that Judah repented and was miraculously saved, but later was judged for continued disobedience.

Share: The focus of Amos' prophesy is the nation of Israel. The remainder of the book will address the sins of Israel. Use the following list to demonstrate the enormity of their sins, but today's lesson will concentrate on those sins listed in Amos 2:6-16.

## **List of Israel's sins**

**walking over "little people" (2:7; 5:11; 8:4)  
buying and selling them like grain (2:6; 8:6)  
obstructing justice (5:12)**

**practicing prostitution (2:7)**  
**silencing the prophets (2:12; 7:12-13)**  
**their judges were taking bribes (5:12)**  
**their women were hard, cruel and drunken (4:1)**  
**their businessmen were unscrupulous, dishonest, and grasping (8:5-6)**  
**their worship services were mechanical manipulations of ceremonies to satisfy their own lusts and to placate the Lord rather than to praise him (6:6)**

*(The Broadman Bible Commentary, Volume 7. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1972, pp. 85-86.)*

Have someone read Amos 2:6.

Ask: Whose message is being given to Israel? (This is what the Lord says)

Seek a response: What is the first sin listed? (injustice to innocent, needy people).

Remind the class: This was a time of prosperity and peace for Israel; King Uzziah had reigned for many years (783-742 B.C). Israel had been a covenant community in which there was no class distinction. All men were equal before the law, God and one another. Now, wealth, power and influence determined what could be done.

Have someone read Amos 2:7a -- and describe the mental picture this verse gives.

Have someone read Amos 2:7b and 8.

Say: One might think that worship was entirely forgotten in the materialistic society of the day, but it was not forgotten, but horribly distorted. The description of the father and son having sexual relations with the same girl probably described something done at the temple with a temple prostitute.

Verse 8 refers to additional ways in which the poor were treating unjustly at the very places of worship. (See Study Materials)

Share: God reminds the Israelites of their heritage.

Have someone read verses 9-11.

Urge a response: What do these verses describe? (the exodus from Egypt and the conquering of the land of Canaan).

Emphasize: The sin described here is one of ingratitude.

Ask: Is it easy for us to forget God's blessings to us in the past? Do we consider ingratitude to God a sin?

Have someone read verses 11-12.

Comment: God considered the calling of young people into His service to be one of his blessings. However, the Israelites had failed to acknowledge this and encouraged the Nazirites to break their vows and forbade preaching of the prophets.

Explain who the Nazirites were as discussed in the Teacher Preparation materials.

Look for a brief discussion on this question: How do we encourage our children and young people to respond to God's calling in their lives?

Now raise this question: Do we value athletic or academic success more highly than spiritual growth?

Have someone read verses 13-16.

Ask: What will be the punishment for Israel?

Again: What are the descriptive phrases which Amos uses?

Note: This discussion of the judgment of Israel begins and ends with the phrases "***This is what the Lord says***" and "***declares the Lord***". Amos wants there to be no misunderstanding about the source of this judgment.

## **Encourage Application:**

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

State: "It is easy for us to condemn the practices of the Israelites so many years ago. But the reason for our study today is to focus on our own sin – both individually and as a nation."

Lead the group in prayer for sensitivity to sin in our own lives.

**Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time.** Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

# Youth!!! Take Ten

## Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

### ***It's for You*** **Amos 2:4-16**

**A youth will lead the following activity and comments.** No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

#### **God's Call—Your Response**

A very interesting sin which Amos points out to the Israelites is their failure to rejoice in God's calling of young people into his service.

***I also raised up prophets from among your sons and Nazirites from among your young men. Is this not true, people of Israel? declares the Lord.***

***But you made the Nazirites to drink wine and commanded the prophets not to prophesy.***

Amos 2: 11-12

Examine Numbers 6:1-21 for a description of what it meant to be a Nazirite. Use your computer and link to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazirite> for more information.

Although you may not be personally interested in assuming the limitations placed on the Nazirites, today's passage in Amos 2:11-12 is an interesting commentary on the fact that God considers the calling of youth into ministry to be blessing to the people. It is included in the list along with the escape from Egypt and the gaining of the Promised Land – two of the most significant events in Jewish history.

In every generation, young people bring fresh new ideas to the family of God. You bring enthusiasm, idealism and hope. May you know today that you are a blessing to the church family of which you are a part!

Copy this section for the Worship Time leader.

## **Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)

### ***It's for You*** **Amos 2:4-16**

#### **Beginning the Service:**

Sing **Thy Word**, *The Worship Hymnal* #342, CCLI # 14301

#### **Offering:**

#### **Praying for the World:**

After reading a prayer brochure that mentioned the Shahsavani Nomads, an Iranian believer drove his decrepit car high into the mountains of northern Iran looking for these tent dwellers. Finally he spotted one of their sheepskin tents. The Shahsavani speak a dialect of Azeri Turkish, but the believer spoke to them in Farsi and found that they also know Farsi. He spent three wonderful days sharing his faith with a Shahsavani man he met. The man was surprised to learn that Jesus offers the way to heaven and said that none of his relatives or friends had ever heard this Good News,

#### **Sharing Guide:**

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

### **They Do Not Know How to Do Right** **Amos 3:10**

Doing right had become a lost art for Israel. Amos 3:10 states ***“They do not know how to do right”***. This is a sad commentary about a people who had been chosen of God to be a blessing to others and who had been given the Law to teach them the way of holiness.

How to we know how to do right?

## **1. Study scripture**

We have sung ***Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path***. Those words are taken from Psalm 119:105. In this lengthy psalm, the psalmist has affirmed over and over his need for guidance from the law of God.

***Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. verse 1***

***I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. verse 7***

***How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. verse 9***

***I have hidden thy word in my heart that I might not sin against thee. verse 11***

***Praise be to you, O Lord, teach me your decrees. verse 12***

***Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders. verse 27***

There really is no short cut to learning all we need to be able to do right. Studying God's word from an early age gives us a head start. But studying it passionately if one comes to Christ as an adult can achieve those results as well. Bible study seems to be an old-fashioned, out-dated concept in our world of high tech, professionally done worship services, but there is no substitute for the on-going, intensive study of God's word if we are to grow in Christ. It may be done individually, in small Bible study groups, through preaching, or in formal classroom settings. But it must be done if we are to learn how to do right.

## **2. Seek God's guidance**

Head knowledge will never be enough to lead us to do right. The psalmist makes that clear as he beseeches the Lord to be his teacher.

***Teach me, O lord, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end. verse 33***



***You are my portion, O Lord; I have promised to obey your words. I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise. verse 57***

***The earth is filled with your love, O Lord; teach me your decrees. verse 64***

***Do good to your servant according to your word, O Lord. Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I believe in your commands. verse 65-66***

The psalmist asks for knowledge and good judgment – two essential elements in knowing and doing right. He beseeches the Lord to be his teacher; we must do that as well.

### **3. Learn from others**

The books of 1 and 2 Timothy are letters from Paul to Timothy who he calls “***my true son in the faith.***” Among the admonitions which Paul gives Timothy are these

***Avoid false teaching and false teachers. 1 Timothy Chapter 1***

***Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. 4:12***

***Watch your doctrine and life closely. 4:16***

***But you, man of God, flee from all this (love of money) and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. 6:11***

***What you have heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you – guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. 2 Timothy 1:13***

We should be both learners and teachers all of our lives. We need to seek mature Christians with whom to fellowship and study; we need to be always aware of weaker Christians who need our guidance and love.

### **4. Share what we know**

Just as we are to learn from others, we are to be teachers as well. Paul continues in his teaching of Timothy to say

***And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. 2 Timothy 2:2***

Paul refers to the teachings Timothy received from his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois when he says ***But as for you continue in what you have learned***

***and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:14-17.***

How then to we learn to do right? We learn Scripture- from birth to death- we are in the process of understanding God's message to us. We ask God for his Spirit to teach us so that head knowledge is heart knowledge which can be lived out in a needy world. We learn from wise teachers and we share that knowledge with others.

The Israelites had been a holy people – steeped in God's word and committed to following him. It was not always an easy thing for them to do. After experiencing a miraculous deliverance from slavery in Egypt, they despaired in the wilderness and turned from God. God sent the ten commandments and Moses led them for many years. They settled in the Promised Land and little by little left out teaching the Law to their children and they failed to obey it precepts. Amos brings the dire prediction of their destruction because ***“they did not know how to do right”***. We might phrase it another way – they chose not to do right. But basic to that failure in choosing was a failure in learning God's way, following it and teaching it to others.

### **Call to Commitment:**

Most of us live in a very secular society. Even if Christian principles were taught in earlier generations, those principles are often ignored in teaching today. If the principles of moral behaviour are taught, they are divorced from the relationship with God the Father and Christ the Son. They are moral precepts without the holy guidance necessary for us to live them out. May we pray that it not be said of our nation or our family ***“They did not know how to do right.”***

### **Concluding the Service:**

You may want to sing **Thy Word** again or sing an older song **Take Time to be Holy**.

The words to **Take Time to be Holy** are given at the end of this session if you want to use them as a reading.

## Take Time to Be Holy

Take time to be holy, Speak oft with thy Lord.  
Abide in Him always And feed on His word.  
Make friends of God's children, Help those who are weak,  
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy, The world rushes on;  
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.  
By looking to Jesus Like Him thou shalt be;  
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy, Let Him be thy guide,  
And run not before Him Whatever betide.  
In joy or in sorrow Still follow thy Lord  
And looking to Jesus, Still trust in His Word.

Take time to be holy, Be calm in thy soul;  
Each thought and each motive Beneath His control;  
Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love,  
Thou soon shalt be fitted For service above.

William D. Longstaff; Music: George C. Stebbins Public Domain.

## **Countries surrounding Israel – their sin and punishment**

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**Philistia – southwest of Judah, on the Mediterranean Sea; sin was selling captives as slaves; punishment was that their palaces would be destroyed and both common people and rulers would perish**

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