

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*Judgment on Injustice*  
Amos 3:9—4:3; 5:10-15; 6:4-7; 8:4-6

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:**

Although the home church materials are designed to share leadership from week to week, the church may decide to ask one person to teach the Bible study for each of the

five sessions on Amos. That would allow for more in depth study of a complex and difficult book which is unfamiliar to many believers.

**Worship Time Leader:**

**Music Sources:**

**Open My Eyes That I May See**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #443; CCLI #68003 Public Domain

**What A Mighty God We Serve**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #64; CCLI #4397553

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

**Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #534; CCLI #390 Public Domain

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Judgment on Injustice*****Focal Text**

Amos 3:9—4:3; 5:10-15; 6:4-7; 8:4-6

**Background Text**

Amos 3:1—4:3; 5:1-17; 6:1-14; 8:4-14

**Main Idea**

God condemns economic practices that mistreat the poor and powerless.

**Question to Explore**

Does God care about economics?

**Teaching Aim**

To lead the class to identify economic practices that God condemns and how these apply to current life.

**Gathering together:**

Sing **Open My Eyes That I May See**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #443; CCLI #68003 Public Domain

**First thoughts:**

An economic crisis is gripping many countries in the world as this lesson is written. It has been going on for over two years and though things have improved for some countries, others are facing new or renewed problems. No easy answers exist either for the cause of the crisis or its resolution. But it is obvious that many affluent countries have grown accustomed to a very high standard of living. There is a sense of “entitlement”. Someone in authority should fix the situation so that we may return to the ease of life. The reality is that most people of the world have never enjoyed this high standard of living and as was true in the days in which Amos wrote, the wealth of the few was bought with the work and sacrifice of the many. How will Christians adjust our standards of living to not only “survive” the crisis but live victoriously with a new sense

of the need to share with others? The study of Amos is an examination of an ancient people, but its message is very, very current. Seek God, do good, not evil, and live.

### **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.

## 2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

**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

#### *Judgment on Injustice*

##### **Focal Text**

Amos 3:9—4:3; 5:10-15; 6:4-7; 8:4-6

##### **Background Text**

Amos 3:1—4:3; 5:1-17; 6:1-14; 8:4-14

##### **Main Idea**

God condemns economic practices that mistreat the poor and powerless.

##### **Question to Explore**

Does God care about economics?

##### **Teaching Aim**

To lead the class to identify economic practices that God condemns and how these apply to current life.

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

Although the home church materials are designed to share leadership from week to week, the church may decide to ask one person to teach the Bible study for each of the five sessions on Amos. That would allow for more in depth study of a complex and difficult book which is unfamiliar to many believers. If, however, you are teaching this material for the first time, you will need to read the entire book of Amos (only nine chapters!). Review the first lesson in the series. Remember that Amos was a layperson. He had a message of condemnation, but also a message of hope – seek good, not evil that you may live.

#### **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.

## **Focusing on the Meaning:**

**Amos 3:9-4:3**

***Proclaim to the fortresses of Ashdod and to the fortresses of Egypt: “Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria; see the great unrest within her and the oppression among her people.”***

***“They do not know how to do right” declares the Lord, “who hoard and plunder and loot in their fortresses.”***

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

***“As a shepherd saves from the lion’s mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an ear, so will the Israelites be saved, those who sit in Samaria on the edge of their beds and in Damascus on their couches.”***

***“Hear this and testify against the house of Jacob” declares the Lord, the Lord God Almighty.***

***“On that day I punish Israel for her sins,  
I will destroy the altars of Bethel;  
the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground.  
I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house;  
the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished,” declares the Lord.***

***Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria,  
you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, “Bring us some drinks!”***

***The Sovereign Lord has sworn by his holiness:  
“The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks,  
the last of you with fishhooks.  
You will each go straight out through breaks in the wall and you will be cast out toward Harmon.” declares the Lord.***

In Amos 3:1 we read, ***Hear this word the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel – against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt:***

This would indicate that Amos is speaking not only to Israel, but to Judah. All twelve tribes came out of Egypt together. Many years later they split into two kingdoms.

He is speaking to God's chosen people.

***“You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.”***

Amos' message was not an agreeable one. His prophesy of doom and his criticism of the life the Israelites were living would not have earned him an invitation to speak in synagogues or in the temple. He was a street preacher; stopping to give his message where people congregated or passed by. What he said needed to be said sharply and quickly. Thus the words we read may seem disjointed and repetitive. His audience was continually changing, but his message was the same.

In verse 9 God through Amos invites the people of Egypt and Ashdod to bear witness to the evil within Samaria. In the Old Testament the kingdom of Samaria and the kingdom of Israel were essentially the same. Later, in the time of Jesus, Samaria was the name of the middle province of Palestine, situated between Galilee and Judea. ***Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria; see the great unrest within her and the oppression among her people.*** God essentially invites the enemies of Israel to see just how evil they had become. In fact, he declares ***“They do not know how to do right who hoard and plunder and loot in their fortresses.”***

Only a few verses earlier God had said ***“You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth”***. This then, is the brokenhearted father, the creator of the universe, who invites ungodly people to see just how ungodly his own creation and chosen people had become. Parents who have struggled with rebellious and ungrateful children can understand this anguish.

In verses 11 and 12, the description of the punishment is clear. An enemy will overrun the land. What will be left of the people can be compared to that saved by the shepherd after a lion has devoured a sheep – two leg bones or a piece of an ear. Amos, inspired by God, certainly lacked nothing in descriptive phrases!

The ones devoured are those who are at ease – sitting on the edge of their beds and on their couches. Unfortunately, as is so often the case, the whole nation must suffer from the sins of the leaders. Innocent people, as well as those most guilty, may perish.

In verse 14, the religious capital at Bethel is destroyed. The horns of the altar would be cut off and allowed to fall to the ground. Holding to the horns of the altar granted the right of asylum to those who grasped them (see 1 Kings 1:50-51). In other words, no refuge would be available for the people of Israel when this judgment came.

God would also bring ruin on the king's winter house in Samaria and on his summer house in Jezreel (see 1 Kings 21:1). The palatial houses of the rich, with ivory inlaid on walls and furniture, would be destroyed. These luxuries had been trophies enjoyed by the king and by the wealthy since Ahab's time (1 Kings 21:25: 22:39) but God would



bring them all to an end. Ahaz was king of Judah so it is evident that the prophecy included both Judah and Israel.

All these words came true when Shalmanesar's armies defeated and destroyed Israel only a few years after Amos preached this message (see 2 Kings 17:1-8)

Amos also had a message for some rich women of Samaria. His colourful and descriptive words "cows of Bashan" would have reminded the people of the high plateau east of the Jordan which contained lush pastures and was famous for its fine cattle. The women to whom he spoke were like the fine cattle in Bashan because they lived in wealth, luxury and ease. Their husbands were rulers or powerful men in the capital city. They had no thought for the less fortunate. In fact, they exploited the needy and increased their wealth. This pictures reminds us of absentee landlords who rent overpriced apartments and do nothing for the upkeep of those apartments. They become wealthier and wealthier with no thought for the existence of those who rent their apartments. This reality exists in most major cities of the world today. So much of what Amos says resonates with our world condition today.

Amos would not have much of a chance to preach to these wealthy ladies. But we can picture him standing outside the Bethel temple as a group of these women approached, with their servants leading the plump sacrifices they had brought to offer on the altar. As they approached the temple in hypocritical pretense of worship, Amos could not remain silent.

In Amos 4:2 God swore by his own Holiness that He would punish them for their self-centered lives. The picture he gives is of chained captives led forth as animals to prison or to slavery. They would be led through crowds of people celebrating their capture. They would be led out through the breaks in the wall which they had thought to be their protection.

The tragedy of this is that these were God's own people – his chosen people who had turned from him. Unlike Damascus, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab, these people had once known to do right. How sad then is the truth of Amos 3:10 **"They do not know how to do right"**.

The message in Amos 4:1-3 is one of the shortest of Amos' messages. No doubt the haughty women to whom he spoke had no time or interest in the "shepherd" who spoke to him. Nonetheless, the prophecy would come true only too soon.

## **Amos 5: 10-15**

***"Seek me and live;  
do not seek Bethel,  
do not go to Gilgal,  
do not journey to Beersheba,  
For Gilgal will purely go into exile,***

***and Bethel will be reduced to nothing.  
Seek the Lord and live,  
or he will sweep through the house of Joseph like a fire;  
it will devour,  
and Bethel will have no one to quench it.***

***You who turn justice into bitterness  
and cast righteousness to the ground  
(he who made the Pleiades and Orion,  
who turns blackness into dawn  
and darkens day into night,  
who calls for the waters of the sea  
and pours them out over the face of the land –  
the Lord is his name-  
he flashes destruction on the stronghold  
and brings the fortified city to ruin),  
you who hate the one who reproves in court  
and despise him who tells the truth.***

***You trample on the poor  
and force him to give you grain,  
Therefore, though you have built stone mansions,  
you will not live in them;  
though you have planted lush vineyards,  
you will not drink their wine.  
For I know how many are your offenses  
and how great your sins.***

***You oppress the righteous and take bribes  
and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts.  
Therefore the prudent man keeps quiet in such times,  
for the times are evil.***

***Seek good, not evil,  
that you may live.  
Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you,  
just as you say he is.***

***Hate evil, love good;  
maintain justice in the courts.  
Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy  
on the remnant of Joseph.***

This powerful passage continues to encourage the people to seek the Lord in order to live. Although their sins were many they still have the option of repentance. They are reminded of the God they once worshipped –he created the planets, controls the day

and night; ordains the tides. These are powerful examples of the way the Lord intervenes in their daily life. How could the people of God have forgotten this?

But they have forgotten God through daily acts of selfishness. They hate the one who gives a just testimony in court; they take the grain of the needy poor; they take bribes and there is not hope that a poor person will be given justice in court. Even those who would oppose such practice must prudently remain quiet. Or perhaps the prudent man is the one who knows the destruction and punishment is just.

They are urged to give up the empty forms of worship represented by going up to Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba where temples of false worship existed.

The Lord addressed Israel as “the house of Joseph”. A tribe had come from each of Joseph’s two sons: Ephraim and Manasseh. Both of those tribes were in the Northern Kingdom. Ephraim was the largest and most powerful of the northern tribes; so people often called the northern nation “Ephraim,,: Since Ephraim was Joseph’s son, they sometimes called the northern nations “Joseph”.

The punishment of the Lord will be like a fire destroying everything in its path.

This passage includes another plea to hate evil and love good. The prophets always held out the hope that people would repent.

#### **Amos 6:4-7**

***You lie on beds inlaid with ivory  
and lounge on your couches.  
You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves.  
You strum away on your harps like David  
and improvise on musical instruments.  
You drink wine by the bowlful  
and use the finest lotions,  
but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph.  
Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile;  
your feasting and lounging will end.***

This is a clear description of the opulent lifestyle which had no interest in the “ruin of Joseph”, Joseph himself was true to God all the days of his life. He could have chosen the very lifestyle described in this passage. In fact, he may have lived quite luxuriously at times. It is not just the luxury that is the problem. The luxury is, however, far more important that remembering the heritage of the Israelite people. They were chosen by God to be a blessing to others. These people have totally forgotten that.

#### **Amos 8: 4-6**

***Hear this, you who trample the needy***

***and do away with the poor of the land,  
saying,***

***“When will the New Moon be over  
that we may sell grain,  
and the Sabbath be ended  
that we may market wheat?” –  
skimping the measure,  
boosting the price  
and heating with dishonest scales,  
buying the poor with silver  
and the needy for a pair of sandals,  
selling even the sweepings with the wheat.***

The Israelites could hardly wait for each new moon and each Sabbath to end so they could go back to buying and selling. The Sabbath was the seventh day of each week. It commemorated God's creation of the world. God reserved Sabbaths for worship and rest. He forbade any work on the seventh day of each week (Leviticus 23:2-3).

The new moon was the first day in each month because Israelites began their months with the arrival of the new moon. In the law, God commanded the Israelites to blow silver trumpets and to offer certain sacrifices on the first day of each month (Numbers 10:10; 28:11-15). He did not command them to cease from working on new moons. Apparently, the Israelites were going beyond God's commands and observing a rest day on new moons.

In spite of their zealous observance of religious rituals, the Israelites in Amos's time did not willingly cease from work on either Sabbaths or new moons. The merchants had no interest in worship. They resented the practice of honouring God instead of making money on these special days. They were eager for the new moon and the Sabbath to end so they could get back to business.

The merchants used bushel measurements that were too small and shekel weights that were too heavy. The weights were used to measure the gold, silver and perhaps other metals that people exchanged for their purchases. The merchants cheated people two ways in making them pay more for their purchases, which were worth less because they were not measured honestly.

These dishonest merchants also bought the helpless for money, sometimes for as little as the price of a pair of shoes. They were ruthless slave traders. Also, they sold as good wheat what ordinarily would be thrown away – bran or husks. They probably mixed it with good wheat in order to make more profit. They charged full price for trashy wheat.

Integrity was forgotten. Compassion was abandoned. Love for others did not exist.

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

Your goal as the facilitator of this study will be to help the group understand that sin is sin. “Hamartia” (sin) simply means falling short of God’s glory and perfection as Paul put it in his writings. God does not classify sin into greater and lesser categories as we tend to do. You either hit God’s perfection or you miss it. A near hit is still a miss. Sin is Sin! Yes, Jesus did teach that those who murder a person, destroy a marriage by sexual sin, or destroy another’s reputation or good name—cannot enter Heaven. But He still condemned all sin of whatever type.

Help your congregation to see that this is why God’s forgiveness is necessary for each and every one of us. We all sin. Then help the group to understand that sinning always ends in consequences. There is no sin that does not have a bad ending sooner or later—even if it is postponed until Judgment Day.

Finally, through the lesson provided for this session, help the group to see that judgment came to the Israelites for condoning, ignoring, or even just not speaking out against the sins being committed by their fellow Israelites. Every person was made accountable for the sins they tolerated—equally with those who committed the sins. Many years later, Jesus would condemn the “covert” sins that people commit just as He condemned active, overt sin.

## **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)

### ***Judgment on Injustice***

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.

**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 3:9—4:3; 5:10-15; 6:4-7; 8:4-6

#### **Background Text**

Amos 3:1—4:3; 5:1-17; 6:1-14; 8:4-14

#### **Main Idea**

God condemns economic practices that mistreat the poor and powerless.

#### **Question to Explore**

Does God care about economics?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead the class to identify economic practices that God condemns and how these apply to current life.

### **Guide the Study:**

**Important note to the leader:** Since a number of passages of Scripture (Amos 3:9—4:3; 5:10-15; 6:4-7; 8:4-6) are involved in today's lesson, it will be necessary to summarize the core teaching from each passage fairly quickly. The passages are examples of the way in which Israel has failed to be the people of God. They repeat the offenses and it is this repetition which makes Amos' book powerful. Point out that Amos was a street preacher and he is repeating the same message over and over in different venues.

You may want to use a whiteboard or large piece of paper on which to briefly summarize the main point of each passage. To same time, have the references written on the board ahead of time.

**Have someone read Amos 3:9-4:3.**

Ask: Who will see the sin and the ultimate fall of the Israelites? (*the fortresses of Ashdod and to the fortresses of Egypt*: that is, their enemies)

Inquire: When there is sin in the church today, who knows about it? (Instances of clergy abuse, fraud in the church and hateful attitudes are part of news information broadcast around the world on a regular basis).

Ask: What is the Lord's evaluation of his own people in this passage? (They do not know how to do right).

Then ask: What word picture is used to describe the destruction of God's people? (That which remains of an animal which has been devoured by a lion – two leg bones and a piece of an ear).

Discuss the meaning of the horns of the altar being cut off. (Holding to the horns of the altar granted the right of asylum to those who grasped them (see 1 Kings 1:50-51).

Explain to the group: If the horns of the altar are cut off, no one can find refuge in the place of worship).

Comment: The theme of the destruction of the “winter house and the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory” will be repeated in the passages we study.

State: Since the outward practice of Judaism was largely done by the men, it is interesting that women are condemned as well

Ask: What was the role of some of the women in the evil being practiced.

You may need to explain the above by saying: His colourful and descriptive words “cows of Bashan” would have reminded the people of the high plateau east of the Jordan which contained lush pastures and was famous for its fine cattle. The women to whom he spoke were like the fine cattle in Bashan because they lived in wealth, luxury and ease. Their husbands were rulers or powerful men in the capital city. They had no thought for the less fortunate.

**Have someone read Amos 5:10-15.**

Ask: In this passage, how many times are the people admonished to “Seek the Lord and live”. (three times plus other entreaties to seek good, not evil and hate evil and love good).



Comment: It is important to focus on the fact that Amos was not just bringing a message of doom; he was also bringing a message of hope – seek God and live.

Have someone add to the list of sins condemned:

Hate the one who reproves in court and despise him who tells the truth;  
Trample on the poor and force him to give you grain;  
Oppress the righteous and take bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts.

**Have someone read Amos 6:4-7.**

Encourage the group to discuss the opulent lifestyle which is described.

Inquire: How does it differ from the lifestyle which is prevalent in your community?

Explain that the phrase “***the ruin of Joseph***” refers to the story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50) which was the salvation of the people from famine.

Tell the group: Joseph was faithful to God in very difficult circumstances (his selling into slavery by his brothers; false accusations and imprisonment; his long exile from his home and father). A tribe had come from each of Joseph’s two sons: Ephraim and Manasseh. Both of those tribes were in the Northern Kingdom. Ephraim was the largest and most powerful of the northern tribes; so people often called the northern nation “Ephraim; Since Ephraim was Joseph’s son, they sometimes called the northern nations “Joseph”.

**Have someone read Amos 8:4-6.**

Say: The Israelites still kept the outward practice of Judaism.

Ask: What was their heart attitude toward the Sabbath? (They could hardly wait for it to be over so they could go back to making money).

Now ask: How is the Sabbath kept in your community?

Further ask: What ways can individual families and person “keep the Sabbath” more reverently?

**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.

Review the lists you have made.

Enquire: What are the obvious sins which Amos condemned?

Discuss with the group how those sins are reflected in our own society.

Remind the class that: The theme which runs through these verses is Amos' call to "Seek the Lord and Live".

Add: As individual Christians we sometimes feel helpless to make our society a more just society.

Discuss practical ways in which we can contribute to a "just society".

Close in prayer.

**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.

### *Judgment on Injustice*

Amos 3:9—4:3; 5:10-15; 6:4-7; 8:4-6

**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.

### Getting Involved in Justice

The people of God have not always contributed to a “just society”. The Jewish people to whom Amos was speaking had become very corrupt. It is likely that your study of Christian history will reveal other times when the church as an institution did not contribute to justice for all. On the other hand, Christian principles underlie the great social movements toward justice throughout history.

Evangelical groups sometimes focus solely on individual salvation. There is truth to the understanding that when each individual comes to Christ and lives by His teaching, the society will be positively influenced. Other Christian groups feel that a more active involvement in issues such as poverty, pornography, sex slavery, and women’s oppression is imperative. You as a young person will be involved in dealing with these issues throughout the next few years.

**What can you do to make a difference?**

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Judgment on Injustice*****Amos 3:9—4:3; 5:10-15; 6:4-7; 8:4-6****Beginning the Service:**Sing **What A Mighty God We Serve**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #64; CCLI #4397553**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

Pray for the Nafusa Berber of North Africa who live in villages built with an eye on defence and are difficult to reach. Many villages have fewer than 500 people, though some have more than 1000 inhabitants. Today, the Nafusa Berbers live among the plateaus and the hills of Jebel Nafusa, and apart from the Arab-ized populations. According to Islamic law, Muslims who profess faith in Jesus Christ face persecution and possible death. For these reasons, the Nafusa Berber have been isolated and unreached with the gospel. Pray that followers of Jesus will come to live among the Nafusa Berbers to share the truth with them. Pray for a renewal of the true expression of Christ's church among the Nafusa Berber Muslims in North Africa who were once Christians. Pray that the Holy Spirit will reach into isolated villages and soften the ground that salvation may sprout and righteousness spring up.

**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.**

**The blessing and responsibility of chosenness**  
**Amos 3:2; Amos 4:13**

***You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins. Amos 3:2***

***He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, He who turns dawn to darkness and treads the high places of the earth – the Lord God Almighty is his name. Amos 4:13.***

Amos reminded the people of the message of God

***You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins. Amos 3:2.***

The Jewish people were well aware of the hand of God in their history. From the time of Abraham onward, the story of God's intervention in their story was told and retold. Each Sabbath celebration was a remembrance of this. Each Passover celebration was designed to recall to the older people of Judaism the providence of God in leading them from slavery in Egypt to the promised land. Both Sabbath celebration and special events like Passover were designed to teach younger generations these truths.

It was a blessed thing to be chosen by God.

But it was a fearful thing as well.

Amos reminds the people that they were chosen of all the families of the earth. Then he says the fateful word **therefore**.

**Therefore I will punish you for all your sins.**

They were not the only nations to be punished. We studied earlier of the punishment of surrounding nations who had done many evil things. But the punishment for the people of God would contain not only the destruction of the physical things that they were enjoying, but the eventual removal of them from the land which God had given from them. That removal would symbolize the removal of God's blessing – the blessing of chosenness.

Of course, God would not abandon his people. His continuous call throughout the verses we have examined in the book of Amos has been ***“Seek good, not evil, that you may live”***

Other Old Testament prophets and writers tell the story of God's return of his people from exile and his renewal of relationship with them. But the punishment of which Amos spoke was real and was intense. They had turned their backs on the God **who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, He who turns dawn to darkness and treads the high places of the earth – the Lord God Almighty is his name.**

This mighty God – creator of the mountains, the wind, the day and night – had revealed his thoughts to the chosen people throughout their history. They had access to the Lord God Almighty and they had squandered that privilege in sinful and selfish living. They had failed to care for their brothers who were needy; in fact, they had made life even more difficult for those brothers.

The writer of these words recently had opportunity to write a letter to her granddaughter on the occasion of her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her mother had planned a special day and night away from home to talk about growing up. Grandmothers, aunts, special friends and Sunday School teachers were asked to write letters to this young woman. This writer felt the serious responsibility of this request. How could one communicate the privilege of the call of God in her life and the responsibility that entailed without sounding pious and preachy? How could I say that the blessings this granddaughter had received of physical attractiveness, a good mind, creative abilities in art, sports and music, spiritual nurturing from family and friends and church all carried a special kind of call to commitment.

Jesus himself said “From those to whom much is given, much shall be required”. But how to communicate the blessed privilege that was and is to a thirteen year old.

The Israelite people knew that they had been chosen and blessed. They celebrated that chosenness regularly in worship. Yet their lives no longer reflected the hope and promise of God for goodness. The very fact of their faith had become to them only a hindrance to doing what they liked.

This is true of society today. Especially in those countries where being a Christian has cost little in terms of sacrifice, it has become easy to fail to value the great heritage of that faith. Society seems to glory in encouraging young people to leave behind the restrictions and responsibilities of their faith communities.

Peter understood the blessing of chosenness when he wrote in 1 Peter 2:9 ***But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belong to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*** Peter was writing not to the chosen people of the Old Testament but to those of us who by faith in Christ have been called out of darkness into light. With Christ's coming, the Jewish nation was called to enlarge its understanding of God's work in the world to include all believers in Christ as Saviour. The chosen people of today are those who believe in him.

### **Call to Commitment:**

Yet, we too, can fail to live up to the standards of that calling. The writings of the prophet Amos recall to our minds and hearts the ongoing challenge to holy living. It involves faithful worship, pure actions and thoughts and concern for others.

And the promise of reward is expressed in James 1:12.

***Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.***

### **Concluding the Service:**

Sing one or both of the following;

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

**Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #534; CCLI #390  
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