



CENTRAL truth

If we ignore God and His truth, sooner or later, we will face His judgment.

01 session 1 JUDGMENT DECLARED



EXPLORE scripture AMOS 2:4-16

AMOS 2:4-8

4 The LORD says: I will not relent from punishing Judah for three crimes, even four, because they have rejected the instruction of the LORD and have not kept his statutes. The lies that their ancestors followed have led them astray. **5** Therefore, I will send fire against Judah, and it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem. **6** The LORD says: I will not relent from punishing Israel for three crimes, even four, because they sell a righteous person

for silver and a needy person for a pair of sandals.

7 They trample the heads of the poor on the dust of the ground and obstruct the path of the needy. A man and his father have sexual relations with the same girl, profaning my holy name. **8** They stretch out beside every altar on garments taken as collateral, and in the house of their God they drink wine obtained through fines.

AMOS 2:9-11

9 Yet I destroyed the Amorite as Israel advanced; his height was like the cedars, and he was as sturdy as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath. **10** And I brought you from the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness in

order to possess the land of the Amorite. **11** I raised up some of your sons as prophets and some of your young men as Nazirites. Is this not the case, Israelites? This is the LORD's declaration.

AMOS 2:12-16

12 But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets, "Do not prophesy." **13** Look, I am about to crush you in your place as a wagon crushes when full of grain. **14** Escape will fail the swift, the strong one will not maintain his strength, and the warrior will not save his life.

15 The archer will not stand his ground, the one who is swift of foot will not save himself, and the one riding a horse will not save his life. **16** Even the most courageous of the warriors will flee naked on that day — this is the LORD's declaration.



EXPLORE options

1. Which One?

Before your group meets, make a list of absurd choices your students will not likely need to make (i.e., “Which would you choose: a lifetime without caffeine or a lifetime without sugar?”). When your group meets, ask them to choose between the options you came up with and ask them to give reasons for the choices they made. Point out that the choices we make reveal what we care about most. Today we’re going to talk about what God’s people cared about most in the days of the prophet Amos, and how their priorities impacted the way they behaved. We will also discover the consequences of ignoring God and His truth so that we can avoid the kind of judgment Israel faced.

2. Represent

When your group meets, ask your students to think of a time when they participated with a smaller group of people from a specific church, family, school, or community (e.g., a choir or worship band from a specific church, a team from a specific school, siblings from a specific family, youth group members from a specific church). Ask them to remember their behavior and the behavior of their group, consider the way they interacted with others, and consider the conclusions outsiders may have drawn about the leadership of that school, family, church, or community based on what they observed. Ask a few of your students to share their experiences. Today, we’re going to talk about the bad behavior of God’s people, Judah and Israel. We will consider the consequences of ignoring God and His truth so we can learn from their mistakes and avoid the judgment they experienced.



LET’S talk

Have you ever been surprised by your own behavior?

What kind of person do you want to be? How does this kind of person treat others?



THIS WEEK’S focus

Deep down, we all know that God deserves honor and that it’s wrong to mistreat people, but knowledge alone isn’t enough to keep us from doing things that surprise even us. Behavior is a heart issue. We make choices according to what we care about most, not just what we know. If we care more about pleasing ourselves than doing what is right, we are going to make selfish choices. This was certainly true of Judah and Israel in the days of the prophet Amos. The problem is, we can’t serve God and make selfish choices at the same time. If we don’t respond to God’s grace and repent of our selfish ways when He tells us to, sooner or later, we will face judgment like Judah and Israel did.



CONVERSATION questions

READ AMOS 2:4-8.

4 The LORD says: I will not relent from punishing Judah for three crimes, even four, because they have rejected the instruction of the LORD and have not kept his statutes. The lies that their ancestors followed have led them astray. **5** Therefore, I will send fire against Judah, and it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem. **6** The LORD says: I will not relent from punishing Israel for three crimes, even four, because they sell a righteous person

for silver and a needy person for a pair of sandals.

7 They trample the heads of the poor on the dust of the ground and obstruct the path of the needy. A man and his father have sexual relations with the same girl, profaning my holy name.

8 They stretch out beside every altar on garments taken as collateral, and in the house of their God they drink wine obtained through fines.

Amos wasn't like the other prophets of his day, who belonged to a guild funded by the king. Amos was a shepherd by profession, and he traveled from his home—about ten miles south of Jerusalem, in Judah—to the city of Bethel in Israel to deliver the message God had given him. Bethel was a center of idol worship and the place from which Israel's king, Jeroboam II, reigned. It took great faith and courage for an ordinary man like Amos to leave the source of his income to challenge a popular king on his own turf, but Amos knew that the God who had called him to the task deserved to be obeyed (see Amos 7:15).

KEY QUESTION

.01 What qualified Amos to prophesy, even though he wasn't a member of the prophet guild? What qualifies you to do what God tells you to do?

In verses 1-3, Amos had delivered a message of God's judgment on Israel's neighbors—Syria, the Philistines, Tyre, Edom, the Ammonites, and Moab—who were all guilty of serious sin against God. Starting here in verse 4, Amos delivered a similar message to Judah and Israel. Unlike their neighbors, who were only held responsible for the moral law that God puts in the heart of every person, Judah and Israel also knew God's covenant law. They had agreed to obey it and were responsible for it (see Ex. 19–20). They had also experienced God's favor. But instead of showing proper reverence for God by obeying Him and allowing Him to reveal His character to the world through them, Judah and Israel disregarded God's law and behaved like the pagan nations around them. They showed utter disregard for their fellow human beings, taking advantage of the poor and engaging in acts of sexual immorality.

We have new animated videos! Check out video 1 on why Amos and Jonah matter in the lives of students at goexplorethebible.com/students.

Need more commentary? Use discount code EXPLOREFALL22 at logos.com/explorethebible to download more Bible commentary on Amos for free.



SCRIPTURE commentary

.02 How did the behavior of God's people affect His reputation among the nations in Amos's day? How does this still happen today?

.03 Which makes more sense to you, God's judgment of Israel's neighbors and enemies or God's judgment of Judah and Israel? Explain.

Because Judah and Israel knew God, but had still chosen to act like the nations that did not know Him, God judged them along with those nations. If they would not show the world who God was by obeying Him, God would show the world who He was by punishing them for their disobedience.



HISTORY | How did Israel take advantage of the poor in Amos's day?

The Israelites were showing utter disregard for their fellow human beings by selling people who couldn't pay back their debts into slavery. Those they didn't sell, they manipulated and mistreated for their own purposes. The law allowed Israelites to take the cloak of someone who borrowed money from them as collateral for a debt. However, they were supposed to give that cloak back at night so the debtor didn't freeze (see Ex. 22:25-27), and the Israelites weren't doing this. In addition, some Israelites were charging random fines that the poor couldn't contest and then collecting wine from them as payment. Then they got drunk on that wine in places of worship during festivals meant to honor God.



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ITEM 6 | The prophets of the Bible completed their assignments with varying degrees of efficiency. To review Amos's performance, see the poster "**These Prophets Understood the Assignment.**"

AMOS 2:4-8

2:4. All the Gentile nations were accused of crimes against humanity, but *Judah* was charged with unfaithfulness to its covenant with Yahweh as described in the law. The *lies* mentioned here are idols.

2:5. The threatened judgment on Judah was *fire* of the sort with which Tyre and Edom were threatened in chapter 1 (see 1:10,12). Being "God's people" does not create immunity to the judgment of God but in fact increases accountability. Their guilt placed them alongside those foreign nations who perpetrated atrocities on fellow human beings.

2:6. Selling *a needy person for a pair of sandals* probably refers to selling a debtor into slavery over an insignificant sum of money.

2:7-8. This text describes outrages committed at the religious shrines. Men had sexual relations with shrine prostitutes, even going to the point of *a man and his father* sharing the same woman; they did this while lying on *garments* that they had taken from poor people as *collateral* for loans; they did this at pagan altars all over the countryside; and they combined this with drinking bouts at the shrines, using *wine* they had taken from powerless people.



CONVERSATION questions

READ AMOS 2:9-11.

9 Yet I destroyed the Amorite as Israel advanced; his height was like the cedars, and he was as sturdy as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath. **10** And I brought you from the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness in order to possess the land of the Amorite. **11** I raised up some of your sons as prophets and some of your young men as Nazirites. Is this not the case, Israelites? This is the LORD's declaration.

Through Amos, God reminded Judah and Israel of His faithfulness to them. Generations earlier, God had led His people out of slavery in Egypt under Moses's leadership. Then He had taken care of them for forty years in the wilderness and given them the promised land of Canaan to live in. He had even removed the Amorites—a strong and thriving people—from Canaan in order to give it to the Israelites. Now, the rebellious actions of Judah and Israel suggested they had forgotten all of this.

.04 What kinds of things can cause God's people to forget His faithfulness? Why is it wrong for people to use these things as an excuse for rebellion?

Even if Judah and Israel had forgotten about the things God had done for them generations earlier, they had no excuse for overlooking the things God was still doing for them. God was still calling children from both Judah and Israel to be Nazirites and prophets. The Nazirites served as reminders of the holiness God expected from His people, and the prophets reminded God's people of His expectations so they couldn't pretend they didn't know how to behave. Even in their rebellion, God was guiding His people back into intimate fellowship with Him, but they resisted. Like ungrateful children, they rejected God's grace and went their own way.

KEY QUESTION

.05 How did God show grace to Judah and Israel even in their rebellion? How does God show grace to His people now?



CULTURE | Who were the Nazirites, and what can we learn from their example?

Nazirites were people who took a vow to set themselves apart for God by abstaining from certain worldly things (see Num. 6:1-8). Anyone—rich or poor, male or female—could become a Nazirite for a specified period of time, usually thirty days. Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist were Nazirites for life. Today, anyone who puts their faith in Jesus for salvation becomes a Christian. God adopts us into His family and sets us apart for His own glory. He sends the Holy Spirit to live in us and help us live holy lives. The more intentionally we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, the more we stand out. Like the Nazirites, we proclaim God worthy of our worship and utter devotion.



BE VULNERABLE

Because humans are selfish by nature and transformation into the image of Jesus takes a lifetime, sometimes we all do things we know not to do. Consider telling your group about a time that you knowingly made a selfish choice that damaged God's reputation or hurt someone else. What were the results of that choice? How did you make it right? What did you learn from the experience? How did it impact your future choices?

AMOS 2:9-11

2:9-10. In verses 9-12, God gives a historical retrospective, comparing His favors toward Israel with Israel's impudent rejection of Him. Disregarding historical sequence, the conquest of Canaan (*the Amorite*, v. 9) is mentioned before the exodus and wilderness wandering (see v. 10). This is probably because the focus here is on how Israel occupied the land by virtue of God's grace, thus implying that God could just as easily expel them from the land. *Amorite* refers to the population of Palestine before Israel occupied the land. Their reputation for abnormal size and strength preceded Israel's encounter with them (see Num. 13:28,31-33). Perhaps Amos was referencing God's complete annihilation of the Amorite as an implicit warning to Israel, the present occupant of the land.

2:11. The raising up of *prophets* and *Nazirites* was a divine act comparable to the destruction of the Amorite, the exodus from Egypt, guidance in the desert, and placement in the land. The *prophets*, as those who promote God's will, and the *Nazirites*, as examples of great devotion to God, came to the Israelites as representatives sent by God to turn the people to righteousness.



CONVERSATION questions

READ AMOS 2:12-16.

12 But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets, “Do not prophesy.”

13 Look, I am about to crush you in your place as a wagon crushes when full of grain. **14** Escape will fail the swift, the strong one will not maintain his strength, and the warrior will not save his life.

15 The archer will not stand his ground, the one who is swift of foot will not save himself, and the one riding a horse will not save his life. **16** Even the most courageous of the warriors will flee naked on that day — this is the LORD’s declaration.

Not only did Judah and Israel reject God’s grace and go their own way, but they also made it difficult for the few who wanted to honor and obey God to do so. As part of their vow, Nazirites abstained from alcohol, presumably to keep their thoughts clear so they could concentrate on God. The Israelites didn’t want to be challenged or shamed by the Nazirites’ example, however, so they forced the Nazirites to drink wine. The Israelites also told the prophets not to prophesy. Not only did the Israelites not want to do what God told them to do, but they didn’t even want to know what God had to say. They could have just ignored the Nazirites and prophets, but the Israelites were more concerned with pursuing their own desires and comforts than they were about the spiritual health of others.

KEY QUESTION

.06 What makes people think they can treat people poorly and worship God at the same time? What do we need to understand?

.07 What do you think life was like for Nazirites and prophets in Amos’s day? Can you relate?

The judgment God declared over His people through Amos was just as complete as their rebellion. Because Judah and Israel had been enjoying a time of prosperity, some people were probably feeling invincible; however, God made it clear that no one would escape the punishment they deserved. Just as a heavy wagon leaves ruts in the muddy ground, God intended to crush those who disobeyed Him and jeopardized His reputation in the world. On that day, it wouldn't matter whether a person was fast, strong, talented, wealthy, or courageous. Everyone would feel the effects of God's wrath equally and stand before Him stripped of everything that had once given them a false sense of confidence.

.08 How do we sometimes behave similarly to Judah and Israel of Amos's day?

Two years after God's declaration, a great earthquake came (see Amos 1:1; Zech. 14:5). Thirty years later, Israel was overthrown by Assyria, and the survivors were deported and replaced by Assyrians (see 2 Kings 17). The God of Israel keeps His promises. He will not be mocked.



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ITEM 4 | Because Judah and Israel rejected God's grace and mistreated others, they faced God's judgment. For more details about what judgment entails, see the **10 Words in Amos, Hosea, Jonah, & Micah** poster

AMOS 2:12-16

2:12. Israel's response to God's gracious provision of spiritual leaders was a deliberate effort to prevent them from functioning. They forced the *Nazirites* to break their vows of dedication to God, and they commanded the *prophets* not to function as messengers of God. The Israelite rejection of both the prophets and the Nazirites represents their rejection of God Himself.

2:13. Amos used a metaphor from farm life to describe the method of God's judgment against Israel. As a cart overloaded with *grain* *crushes* the earth (a possible allusion to an earthquake), so God would crush His people with the same force He used to demolish the Amorites.

2:14-16. Amos described the panic that would prevail among Israel's military forces when God approached in judgment. Amos's portrait suggests total chaos and overwhelming defeat for Israel. Israel's best soldiers would drop their weapons and run. Israel expected the day of the Lord to come for them as a positive benefit (see 5:18-20; compare with Zeph. 1:14-18). Amos announced the opposite result of that day. It would be a day of God's judgment against His rebellious people. The day would bring defeat, not deliverance.



NOW What?

CENTRAL truth

If we ignore God and His truth, sooner or later, we will face His judgment.

.09 What can we learn from Amos's example? How can we imitate his faithfulness in our own setting?

.10 What can we do to make sure we don't fall into the trap of relying on ourselves like Israel and Judah did? How does relying on ourselves often lead to sin?

.11 What can we do to impact the world around us in a way that honors God?

KEY QUESTION

.12 What can we do to make sure that everyone is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve as bearers of God's image?



THE STUDENT LEADER PACK is available for purchase on lifeway.com/explorethebiblestudents. It includes valuable posters that are referenced throughout the *Leader Guide*, Family Connection guides that equip families to discuss the Bible on the go, a Midweek study of a complementary book of the Bible, a link to training audio to help leaders prepare for each session, and PowerPoint templates with graphics from the quarter study to help prepare slides for teaching.



DAILY devotions

The Bible is no ordinary book—it is God’s powerful Word and it is given to us for our good (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12-13). So we should read the Bible more carefully and thoughtfully than any other book. This is where the 7 Arrows of Bible Reading come in—these 7 questions will train you and your students to get more out of your time in the Bible and experience its life-transforming power. Your students’ *Daily Discipleship Guide* (item 005646504) contains five days of Daily Devotions built on the 7 Arrows. Here is a summary of the texts they will be studying. We encourage you to follow along and use the 7 Arrows questions to guide your own study of God’s Word.

7 ARROWS FOR BIBLE reading



What does this passage say?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage tell us about man?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?



What does this passage demand of me?

LEADER challenge

MEMORIZE

Amos 1:2

CONNECT

Send a group email or group message to your students, encouraging them to complete their daily devotions. You might also consider sharing your own insights from the daily readings as a means of encouraging them.

DAY 1 AMOS 1:1-5

DAY 2 AMOS 2:4-8

DAY 3 AMOS 2:9-11

DAY 4 AMOS 2:12-16

DAY 5 ROMANS 2:1-5