

# 03

AMOS 5:4-15

## JUSTICE SERVED



### THIS WEEK'S **focus**

Because sin has been around since the garden of Eden, most of us are used to watching it play out around us. Often, we only fight it when it affects us or those we love. But God expects more from us. When we let evil happen, we become participants in that evil. We give others the impression that the God we serve is okay with the way people hurt each other. When we serve justice, we show the world who He really is. When we worship God by standing against evil and doing the good deeds He has prepared for us to do (see Eph. 2:10), we paint a clear picture of Him—one this world needs to see. The Israelites in Amos's day didn't worship God in this way, and they suffered the consequences.



### CENTRAL **truth**

God wants us to seek Him and show the world who He is.



EXPLORE

# scripture

AMOS 5:4-15

## AMOS 5:4-9

**4** For the LORD says to the house of Israel: Seek me and live! **5** Do not seek Bethel or go to Gilgal or journey to Beer-sheba, for Gilgal will certainly go into exile, and Bethel will come to nothing. **6** Seek the LORD and live, or he will spread like fire throughout the house of Joseph; it will consume everything with no one at Bethel to extinguish it. **7** Those who turn justice

into wormwood also throw righteousness to the ground. **8** The one who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns darkness into dawn and darkens day into night, who summons the water of the sea and pours it out over the surface of the earth — the LORD is his name. **9** He brings destruction on the strong, and it falls on the fortress.

## AMOS 5:10-13

**10** They hate the one who convicts the guilty at the city gate, and they despise the one who speaks with integrity. **11** Therefore, because you trample on the poor and exact a grain tax from him, you will never live in the houses of cut stone you have built; you will never drink the wine from the lush vineyards you have

planted. **12** For I know your crimes are many and your sins innumerable. They oppress the righteous, take a bribe, and deprive the poor of justice at the city gates.

**13** Therefore, those who have insight will keep silent at such a time, for the days are evil.

## AMOS 5:14-15

**14** Pursue good and not evil so that you may live, and the LORD, the God of Armies, will be with you as you have claimed. **15** Hate evil and love good; establish

justice at the city gate. Perhaps the LORD, the God of Armies, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

# 03

AMOS 5:4-15  
CONVERSATION

## questions

▶ READ AMOS 5:4-9.

**.01** Why is it so much easier for us to go through the motions of worship in a church service than it is to worship God by treating people the way He tells us to?

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**.02** What are some ways we continue to take what God established for His glory and use it instead for our own pleasure?

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**.03** What kinds of things give us a false sense of security today when it comes to God's judgment?

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### HISTORY

Joseph was the great-grandson of Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. The eleventh son of his father Jacob, Joseph was his father's favorite child, and his jealous brothers sold him into slavery (see Gen. 37). However, he matured into a humble servant of God and rose to a position of power in Egypt that made it possible for him to help his family during a severe famine (see Gen. 41-47). Joseph's family settled in Egypt and eventually became Egyptian slaves. Before Joseph died at 110, he told his brothers that God would deliver them from Egypt to the land God had promised their forefathers. He made them promise to bury his bones in this promised land (see Gen 50:24-26). They did, and the twelve tribes of Israel were named after him and his eleven brothers. Joseph served as a model of faith in God, and his life served as a reminder of God's sovereignty (rule and authority) and redemption.

▶ READ AMOS 5:10-13.

**.04** Read John 3:19. Why can darkness seem more appealing to us than light sometimes?

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**.05** Why did the Israelites assume that God was okay with the evil they were practicing? What are some examples of ways this still happens in our world today?

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**.06** What might motivate us to excuse or defend the evil practices of another person? Why is it wrong to do so?

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▶ READ AMOS 5:10-13.

**.07** In what ways does our modern justice system reflect God's divine nature? In what ways does it not?

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**.08** The Bible says that true wisdom begins with "the fear of the LORD" (Prov. 9:10). What does this mean?

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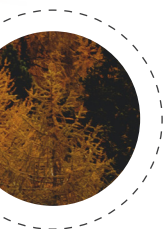
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**CULTURE**

Amos used the phrase "the days are evil" (v. 13) to describe the condition of society in his day. Time itself was not evil, but people were spending their time doing so much evil that it characterized the entire time period they lived in. Amos's observation was a warning to the wise to refrain from doing evil so they didn't face the same judgment as everyone else. The apostle Paul used the same phrase in his letter to the church in Ephesus. Paul warned the Ephesians not to get used to the evil practices of those around them or follow their bad habits, but to learn God's will for their lives and actively pursue obedience to Him (see Eph. 5:8-17). Because people are not righteous by nature, Paul and Amos's observations are still true, and we do well when we follow their advice to walk in the light.





# 03

AMOS 5:4-15  
NOW  
what?



## CENTRAL truth

God wants us to seek Him and show the world who He is.

**.09** What can we do to make sure our worship of God is sincere?

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**.10** What should we do when we are tempted to excuse or defend evil?

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**.11** Why does God care so much about justice? How might our lives and priorities be different if we cared more about justice the way God does?

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**.12** What steps can we take to pursue justice for those around us?

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# DAILY devotions

## MEMORIZE AMOS 5:4

### 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?

day 1

## AMOS 5:1-3

### DWELL

Israel thought they were strong and prosperous, but that was the exact opposite of their reality. They were on the brink of destruction. So Amos sang a funeral song for the nation that was dead in their sin and rebellion against their God. They hadn't fallen yet, but it was only a matter of time. God had declared it, and when God speaks, you can be certain it will happen.



Why did Amos talk as though Jerusalem had already been destroyed?



How can you learn to hate sin the way God does?

### MEMORIZE

Add reminders to your phone, computer, or calendar to read Amos 5:4 every morning and night this week.

### PRAY

Thank God that if we are followers of Christ, our sin has been forgiven forever.

day 2

# AMOS

## 5:4-9

### DWELL



What did God say that Israel needed to do to avoid His judgment? Why?



What does it mean to seek God? How can you do this in your daily life?

Things weren't completely hopeless for Israel. There was still a way for them to escape God's judgment: they just needed to repent! But God warned them to stay away from Bethel and Gilgal—places that had become known for their insincere worship (see Amos 4:4). These places were nothing but trouble. Israel needed to do more than simply go through the motions of bringing offerings to God—they needed to truly seek Him. If they didn't and they continued on their current path, "destruction on the strong and . . . the fortress" was certain.

### MEMORIZE

Write Amos 5:4 on a sticky note and place it on your bathroom mirror. Read it to yourself each time you brush your teeth or wash your hands.

### PRAY

Pray that God would help you to pursue justice and seek His face in every moment.

day 3

# AMOS

## 5:10-13

### DWELL



What was wrong with the way those with power in Israel were treating the poor?



What does it mean to live a life of integrity? How can we encourage each other to live like this?

Unfortunately, this description of Israel's corrupt behavior should make it clear that they were far away from seeking God. Not only were they indifferent to suffering, but they were taking advantage of the poor to satisfy their own appetites. The rich were accepting bribes instead of judging legal cases fairly, and taxing people who already didn't have enough. Our God is a God of justice, and because of Israel's sin and injustice, He was preparing to take their life of luxury away from them, violently and completely.

### MEMORIZE

Pick a song you enjoy and read or sing Amos 5:4 aloud to the beat of that song. Read the verse this way throughout the week, trying to recite more of it from memory each time.

### PRAY

Ask God to give you a love of justice the way He loves justice. Pray that He would show you how to seek justice as you go about your week.

day 4

# AMOS

## 5:14-17

### DWELL

Amos pleaded once again with Israel: turn back to God! “Pursue good and not evil!” It sounds so simple, but Israel had strayed so far from living a life of good that Amos’s warning fell on empty ears and uncaring hearts. And so, the Lord would appear in judgment, and everywhere they looked, people would be in mourning. Once upon a time, God had passed through Egypt and brought freedom to His people (see Exod. 12:12). This time the Lord would pass among His unrepentant people and bring sorrow.

↑ Why did Amos tell Israel once again that it wasn’t too late to repent, even though he knew they wouldn’t?

→ Do you ever avoid doing the thing that you know is right? Why? How can you pursue good instead?

### MEMORIZE

Write Amos 5:4 on the center of a sheet of paper, then add drawings or doodles around the edges that relate to the verse. Hang it somewhere you will see it every day.

### PRAY

Take a few moments to reflect on the times you knew what the right thing was, but you didn’t do it. Ask God to forgive you and to help you grow from those experiences. Pray that you would seek His good ways.

day 5

# MATTHEW

## 7:21-23

### DWELL

↓ Why did Jesus say that it wasn’t enough to use the name of the Lord to prophecy, drive out demons, or do miracles?

→ How do we learn the will of God? How can we be sure that we are truly following Jesus?

During His famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His followers that calling on the name of the Lord wasn’t enough: they had to mean it. It wasn’t enough to do miracles in His name, or prophecy in His name, or drive out demons in His name—if they were only doing their own will and ignoring God’s, then how could they say that they truly knew Him? If we use God’s name to justify our actions but don’t take the time to truly learn what He cares about, we cannot truly call ourselves His followers.

### MEMORIZE

Write each word of Amos 5:4 on a separate note card. Shuffle the cards and try to put them in the correct order. Do this throughout the week until you can do it without checking the answer.

### PRAY

Pray that God would grow your understanding of His will as you continue to study the words of the prophets.