THE BOOK OF AMOS

The King with the Plumb Line

Amos, Unfiltered

For teens who think they've heard it all

BILL McLEOD

Papa Bill Books

THE OLD TESTAMENT FOR TEENS

The King with the Plumb Line: The Book of Amos, Unfiltered

Part of The Old Testament for Teens series.

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In the author's own text, pronouns referring to God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are capitalized for reverence. Scripture quotations follow the WEB Protestant Edition exactly, including its capitalization.

AI Disclosure. This book was written by Bill McLeod with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools for drafting, research, and editing. All content was reviewed and approved by the author, who takes full responsibility for it. Readers are encouraged to open the Scriptures and study them for themselves.

A WORD TO THE READER

Before You Start

Imagine a farmer from a small town in the countryside showing up at the most exclusive church in the richest city in the country. He's got dirt under his fingernails and calluses on his hands. He's never been to seminary. And he stands up in the middle of a packed worship service and says, God hates your songs.

That's Amos. He was a shepherd and fig farmer who God sent to the wealthy northern kingdom of Israel, at a time when business was booming, the churches were full, and everyone felt blessed. But underneath the success, the poor were being crushed. The rich were cheating, bribing judges, and selling people into debt slavery for the price of a pair of sandals. And they were still showing up to worship every week as if nothing was wrong.

Amos says that God cares about how we treat people at least as much as how we sing on Sunday. His most famous line, about justice rolling on like rivers, has been quoted by civil rights leaders, carved into monuments, and shouted at protests. If you've ever cared about fairness, about people who get overlooked, or about religious people who say one thing and do another, Amos is for you.

Let's go.

How This Book Works

This book walks through Amos in five chapters: the trap closes (Amos 1-2), chosen means accountable (3-4), let justice roll on like

rivers (5-6), the plumb line and the priest (7-8), and rebuilding David's fallen tent (9).

Before chapter 1, a section called Setting the Scene explains who Amos was, when he lived, and what life was like in Israel at the time. Read it first.

Each chapter ends with a Key Verse quoted word for word from the World English Bible (WEB), Protestant Edition, a public-domain modern translation used for every Scripture quotation in this book (Scripture is quoted exactly as the WEB prints it; in the rest of the book, pronouns for God are capitalized out of reverence); Real Talk questions to think through alone or talk over with someone you trust; and a Try This challenge.

On questions where sincere Christians disagree, such as how Amos's call for justice applies to politics today, I'll try to be fair and leave the decision to you, your family, and your church. This book quotes Amos in places and explains it mostly in my own words, so keep a Bible open next to it. Don't take my word for it. Take His.

FOR THE ADULTS

A Note for Parents and Youth Leaders

Thank you for putting this book in a teenager's hands. It's the thirtieth book in The Old Testament for Teens, a companion to the New Testament for Teens series, written for readers who can smell a sermon coming a mile away. I've tried to write honestly, directly, and with real respect for what these readers can handle.

Amos is the Bible's great prophet of social justice. This book explains his background as a shepherd and sycamore-fig farmer from Tekoa, his mission to prosperous Israel under Jeroboam II around 760 BC, and archaeological evidence of the earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1.

It highlights Amos's central message: that God rejects worship paired with injustice, and that being chosen by God means being accountable. It explains Amos 5:24 and notes how Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. quoted it in the civil rights movement. Where Christians differ on how biblical justice translates into specific policies today, this book avoids partisan politics and focuses on the clear biblical call to care for the poor, act honestly, and refuse to exploit others.

Real Talk boxes address privilege and responsibility, fairness, comfort and complacency, honest business, speaking truth when it's unwelcome, and hope. One box gently addresses teens whose families are struggling financially, encouraging them to talk with a trusted adult.

The closing section, Where This Points, shows how James quoted Amos 9:11-12 at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 to welcome Gentiles into Jesus' family, and how Jesus united true worship with care for the poor. Wherever Scripture is quoted directly, the wording is from the World English Bible (WEB), Protestant Edition, a public-domain translation.

My prayer is that every reader will seek God and live, and let justice roll on like rivers in their own corner of the world.

Grace and peace,

Bill McLeod

Papa Bill Books

BEFORE YOU OPEN THE BOOK

Setting the Scene

A Blue-Collar Prophet

Amos wasn't a professional prophet or a priest. He was a working man from Tekoa, a small town in the hills of Judah, about ten miles south of Jerusalem, on the edge of the wilderness. The book calls him one of the herdsmen of Tekoa. Later, he says he also took care of sycamore-fig trees. These trees produced small, cheap figs that ordinary people ate. To help the fruit ripen, workers had to pinch or slit each fig by hand. It was humble, seasonal labor. Amos may have traveled to the lowlands to do it. He knew hard work, open fields, wild animals, and rural poverty. And God sent him from the south to preach in the north.

Two Years Before the Earthquake

Amos 1:1 dates his preaching to the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. That was around 760 BC. The earthquake must have been unforgettable. Two hundred years later, the prophet Zechariah still referred to it, saying people fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Archaeologists have found evidence of a major earthquake around that time at several sites in Israel, including Hazor and Gezer, where walls collapsed, tilted, or cracked. Some geologists estimate it was one of the strongest earthquakes in the region's history.

Boom Times in Israel

Under Jeroboam II, the northern kingdom was at the height of its power and wealth. Assyria was temporarily weak, so Israel expanded its borders. Trade flourished. The rich built winter homes and summer homes, decorated with carved ivory. Archaeologists have found hundreds of beautiful ivory carvings in the ruins of Samaria, Israel's capital, from around this period. But the wealth wasn't shared. Small farmers fell into debt. The powerful took their land. Judges took bribes. And the poor were sold into slavery for tiny debts.

Religion Everywhere

Israel was very religious. People flocked to shrines at Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba. They offered sacrifices, gave tithes, sang songs, and celebrated festivals. They were sure God was on their side and looked forward to the Day of the LORD, when they believed He would defeat their enemies. Amos had to tell them that their religion was empty, because it didn't change how they treated people.

What Happened Next

About thirty-five years after Amos preached, Assyria rose again, conquered the northern kingdom, and destroyed Samaria in 722 BC. The people were scattered, just as Amos had warned. His words were remembered and written down, and they became part of The Twelve, the scroll of the Minor Prophets.

The Map

Chapter 1 (Amos 1-2): The trap closes.

Chapter 2 (Amos 3-4): Chosen means accountable.

Chapter 3 (Amos 5-6): Let justice roll on like rivers.

Chapter 4 (Amos 7-8): The plumb line and the priest.

Chapter 5 (Amos 9): Rebuilding David's fallen tent.

Contents

Setting the Scene .....

1 The Trap Closes *1–2* .....

2 Chosen Means Accountable *3–4* .....

3 Let Justice Roll On Like Rivers *5–6* .....

4 The Plumb Line and the Priest *7–8* .....

5 Rebuilding David's Fallen Tent *9* .....

Where This Points .....

CHAPTER 1

The Trap Closes

Amos 1–2

Amos begins with a roar. "The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the pastures of the shepherds will mourn, and the top of Carmel will wither."

A shepherd like Amos knew what a lion's roar meant. It meant danger was close. And God was roaring.

Then Amos does something brilliant. Picture him standing in a public place in Israel, maybe at the shrine in Bethel, with a crowd gathered around. He starts preaching against Israel's enemies.

"For three transgressions of Damascus, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron."

> BACKGROUND CHECK **For Three, Yes, for Four**
>
> The phrase for three transgressions, yes, for four is a Hebrew way of saying, Their sins have piled up and overflowed. It's like saying, They've done it again and again and again, and this is the last straw. It doesn't mean they committed exactly four sins. In each case, Amos names one especially terrible crime, the one that tipped the scales. Proverbs uses a similar pattern: There are three things, yes, four.

Damascus was the capital of Aram, or Syria, Israel's enemy to the northeast. Its army had brutally attacked the region of Gilead, part

of Israel. Threshing with iron sledges meant crushing people like grain. The crowd would have cheered. Yes! God's going to punish Damascus!

Then Amos turned to Gaza, a Philistine city to the southwest. Gaza had "carried away captive the whole community, to deliver them up to Edom." They had captured entire villages and sold them as slaves. More cheering.

Then Tyre, the rich Phoenician city to the northwest, which had also sold whole communities to Edom and broken a "brotherly covenant." More cheers.

Then Edom, to the southeast, which "pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity." Edom was descended from Esau, Jacob's brother, so the Edomites were relatives of Israel. And they had been merciless.

Then Ammon, to the east, which had committed horrific war crimes against pregnant women in Gilead just to expand its borders. Then Moab, which had desecrated the bones of the king of Edom. Notice that Moab's crime wasn't against Israel at all. God cares about cruelty no matter who the victim is.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **The Map of Judgment**
>
> If you trace Amos's speech on a map, something interesting happens. He starts with Damascus in the northeast, jumps to Gaza in the southwest, then Tyre in the northwest, then Edom, Ammon, and Moab in the southeast and east. He's circling around Israel, getting closer and closer. Then he moves to Judah, Israel's brother nation to the south. And finally, he lands right in the middle of the circle: Israel itself. The crowd didn't realize they were standing in the center of a target.

None of these nations had the law of Moses. But God still held them accountable for basic human decency: not selling people as slaves, not breaking treaties, not slaughtering civilians, not showing hatred to relatives. They knew those things were wrong. Every human being has a conscience.

> **REAL TALK** **Everyone Knows Some Things Are Wrong**
>
> The nations in Amos 1 didn't have the Bible, but God still judged them for cruelty, slavery, and violence. That's because some things are written on every human heart. Paul says in Romans that people who don't have God's law still have a conscience that tells them right from wrong. You've probably noticed this. Even people who say there's no such thing as right and wrong get angry when someone cheats them or hurts someone they love. Deep down, we all know that cruelty, exploitation, and betrayal are wrong. Amos shows that God takes those things seriously, everywhere, for everyone.

Then Amos turned south. "For three transgressions of Judah, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have rejected the LORD's law."

The northern crowd probably cheered even louder. Judah was their rival. And Judah's sin was different. They had God's law, and they rejected it. More knowledge meant more responsibility.

Seven nations. Seven judgments. In the Bible, seven often stands for completeness. The crowd might have thought Amos was done. They had heard their enemies condemned and their rivals rebuked. Surely that was the end.

Then came number eight.

"For three transgressions of Israel, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals."

The trap closed. The crowd had been cheering for God's justice. Now that justice was pointed straight at them.

> **REAL TALK** **Cheering for Judgment**
>
> It's easy to cheer when someone else gets called out. We love seeing a bully get caught, a cheater get exposed, or a celebrity get canceled. Amos's audience felt that way about their enemies. But then the spotlight swung around to them. Jesus warned about this when He talked about noticing the speck in someone else's eye while ignoring the log in your own. Before you celebrate someone else's downfall, it's worth asking: Is there anything in my own life God might want to talk to me about?

What were Israel's sins? They weren't mainly about idols this time, although that was part of it. They were about how people treated each other.

They sold innocent people into slavery over small debts. "The needy for a pair of sandals" may mean that a poor person could be sold to pay off a debt as small as the price of shoes. Or it may refer to bribes as cheap as sandals. Either way, human beings were being treated as worth less than footwear.

"They trample the heads of the poor into the dust of the earth and deny justice to the oppressed." The powerful pushed the poor around and blocked their path in court.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Debt Slavery**
>
> In ancient Israel, a person who couldn't pay a debt might be forced to work for the lender, or even sell family members into service. The law of Moses allowed this only under strict limits. Debt servants were to be treated fairly and set free after six years, and every fifty years, in the Year of Jubilee, land was supposed to return to its original families. These laws were meant to keep poor families from being trapped in poverty forever. Amos shows that

the rich were ignoring those protections and using debt to grab people and land.

Amos also condemned sexual exploitation and religious hypocrisy. People lay down beside altars on clothing they had taken from the poor as security for loans. The law said a poor person's cloak had to be returned by nightfall, because it might be their only blanket. Instead, the rich were using those cloaks at their religious feasts. And they drank wine bought with fines unfairly collected from the poor, right in the house of their God.

REAL TALK **How We Treat People Is Spiritual**

Some people think faith is mainly about what happens at church: singing, praying, and listening to sermons. Amos says God also cares about what happens at school, at work, online, and in your neighborhood. How you treat the kid nobody likes, how you talk about people behind their backs, how you handle money, whether you're honest, whether you take advantage of people who are weaker than you, all of that is spiritual. Your faith isn't just what you believe. It's how you live.

Then God reminded Israel of everything He had done for them. He had destroyed the powerful Amorites who once lived in the land. He had brought them out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness. He had raised up prophets and Nazirites, people specially dedicated to Him, from among their young men. "Isn't this true, you children of Israel?"

But they had pressured the Nazirites to break their vows and drink wine, and told the prophets, "Don't prophesy!"

BACKGROUND CHECK **Nazirites**

A Nazirite was a person who took a special vow of dedication to God, described in Numbers 6. Nazirites didn't drink wine or eat anything from grapes, didn't cut their hair, and avoided contact with dead bodies. Samson

and Samuel were Nazirites from birth. John the Baptist may have been too. Nazirites were living reminders that some people were completely devoted to God. When the people pressured them to drink, they were trying to silence that reminder.

REAL TALK **Don't Pressure People to Compromise**

Israel pushed the Nazirites to break their vows. Peer pressure isn't new. Maybe you've seen people push someone to drink, vape, cheat, or do something they had decided not to do, just because their choice made others uncomfortable. If someone has decided to live differently, respect that. And if you're the one being pressured, remember that you don't owe anyone an explanation for keeping your convictions. A true friend will respect your no.

The chapter ends with a warning. Judgment was coming, and no one would escape it. Not the fastest runner, not the strongest warrior, not the best archer, not the rider on the swiftest horse. Even the bravest soldier would flee naked on that day.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Who Was Amos Talking To?**

Amos was from Judah, the southern kingdom, but God sent him north to Israel. That made him an outsider. Imagine a farmer from a small country town traveling to a rich city in a rival state and telling its most powerful people that God was angry with them. Some would have laughed at his accent. Others would have said, Who does he think he is? Amos had no money, no political connections, and no fan club. All he had was a message. That's part of why his trap in chapters 1 and 2 was so clever. He got the crowd on his side before he told them the hard truth.

REAL TALK **Value Is Not a Price Tag**

Israel treated poor people like products that could be bought and sold. Our world does something similar in quieter ways. People get ranked by followers, likes, brands, grades, and bank accounts. Someone with nice shoes gets more respect than someone with worn-out ones. But God's view of people never depends on what they own. Every person you meet is made in

> His image and worth more than anything money can buy. When you treat people with dignity no matter what they have, you're seeing them the way God does.

Think about how carefully Amos built his message. He didn't start by yelling at Israel. He started with things everyone already agreed were wrong. He let the crowd's own sense of justice grow stronger and stronger. By the time he reached Israel, they had already agreed with every principle he would use against them. It's a lot like the way the prophet Nathan confronted King David with a story about a rich man stealing a poor man's lamb. David was furious at the rich man, until Nathan said, You are the man.

Good confrontation often works like that. It helps people see the truth for themselves. But it's not a trick to win arguments. Amos wasn't trying to embarrass Israel. He was trying to wake them up before it was too late. God's warnings are always a form of mercy, because a warning gives you time to change.

KEY VERSE

The LORD says: "For three transgressions of Israel, yes, for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals;

Amos 2:6 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think Amos started with Israel's enemies before talking about Israel?
2. Why did God judge nations that didn't have His law?
3. What did it mean to sell the needy for a pair of sandals?
4. Where are you tempted to cheer for someone else's judgment while ignoring your own faults?

TRY THIS *This week, notice one person who is overlooked or treated unfairly at your school or in your community. Do one specific thing to treat them with dignity.*

CHAPTER 2

Chosen Means Accountable

Amos 3–4

Chapter 3 begins with one of the most surprising verses in the Bible. "I have chosen only you of all the families of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for all of your sins."

Wait. You'd expect it to say, I have chosen you, therefore I will protect you no matter what. Instead, it says, I have chosen you, therefore I will hold you accountable.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Chosen**
>
> The word translated chosen in Amos 3:2 is the Hebrew word yada, which means to know. Literally, God says, You only have I known. It's the language of close relationship, like a marriage. God had a special, personal relationship with Israel that no other nation had. But that relationship came with expectations. Israel was chosen not to be better than everyone else, but to show the world what God is like. When they misrepresented Him, their privilege made their guilt greater, not smaller.

The people of Israel thought being God's chosen people was like having a VIP pass. They could do whatever they wanted, and God would still be on their side. Amos says it's the opposite. Privilege means responsibility.

REAL TALK **Privilege Means Responsibility**

Jesus said, "To whomever much is given, of him will much be required." If you've grown up in a church, had a Bible, been taught about God, or had parents who love you, those are huge gifts. But they aren't a free pass. They're a responsibility. The same goes for other advantages, like a good education, money, talents, or popularity. The question isn't just, What do I have? It's, What am I doing with it? People who've been given much are called to give much, serve much, and love much.

Then Amos asks a string of questions, the kind a shepherd from the country would ask. "Do two walk together, unless they have agreed? Will a lion roar in the thicket, when he has no prey?" Does a bird fall into a trap if there's no bait? Does a trap spring shut if nothing has been caught? Does a city hear a warning trumpet without being afraid?

Each question has an obvious answer. Every effect has a cause. And Amos's point is that his preaching has a cause too. "The lion has roared. Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken. Who can but prophesy?" Amos wasn't preaching because he wanted to. He was preaching because God had spoken, and he couldn't keep quiet.

Then Amos does something shocking. He invites Israel's enemies to come and watch. "Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria, and see what unrest is in her, and what oppression is among them." It's as if he's saying, Even the Philistines and Egyptians would be appalled at what's happening in God's own nation.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Houses of Ivory**

Amos 3:15 says God would strike "the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory will perish." Wealthy Israelites had separate homes

for different seasons, a sign of incredible luxury. Archaeologists excavating Samaria found more than five hundred pieces of carved ivory, used to decorate furniture and walls, dating to around this period. The carvings show lotus flowers, sphinxes, lions, and other designs, many in Phoenician and Egyptian styles. These are likely the very kind of luxuries Amos condemned, built on the backs of the poor.

Amos says that when judgment came, only scraps would be left of Israel, like when a shepherd rescues two leg bones or a piece of an ear from a lion's mouth. In the law of Moses, a shepherd who lost a sheep to a wild animal had to bring back the remains as proof. That's all that would remain of the wealthy people lounging on their couches in Samaria.

Then, in chapter 4, Amos gets even more blunt. "Listen to this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who tell their husbands, Bring us drinks!"

BACKGROUND CHECK **Cows of Bashan**

Bashan was a region east of the Sea of Galilee, famous for its rich pastures and well-fed cattle. Calling the wealthy women of Samaria cows of Bashan was a sharp insult, but it also meant they were pampered and overfed while others went hungry. Amos, as a herdsman, would have known exactly what a fat Bashan cow looked like. His point wasn't to mock their appearance, but to expose a lifestyle of luxury paid for by oppressing the poor. Their comfort came at someone else's expense.

REAL TALK **Where Does It Come From?**

Amos challenged people to think about the cost of their comfort. Today, it's worth asking similar questions. Who made the clothes you're wearing? Were they paid fairly? Who grew the food you eat? It's not possible to know everything, and you don't have to feel guilty about every purchase. But Amos invites us to care about the people behind the products. You can learn about

fair trade, support companies that treat workers well, avoid wasting food, and give generously to people in need. Caring about the poor isn't just about what you give. It's also about how you live.

Then Amos mocks their religion with sarcasm. "Go to Bethel, and sin; to Gilgal, and sin more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days." In other words, Go ahead, keep up your religious routines. It doesn't impress God. They even bragged about their offerings, making sure everyone knew how generous they were. "For this pleases you."

REAL TALK **Religion for Show**

The people in Amos 4 loved religion because it made them look good. They offered sacrifices and announced their generous gifts so everyone would notice. It's possible to do that today, too. You can post about your faith, volunteer for the photo, or pray loudly to impress others. Jesus warned against practicing your righteousness in front of people to be seen by them. Real faith isn't about looking spiritual. It's about loving God and loving people, often in ways no one else will ever see.

Then God lists all the ways He had tried to get their attention. He had sent famine, so their teeth were clean because there was no food. Yet you haven't returned to me. He had held back the rain. Yet you haven't returned to me. He had sent crop diseases and locusts. Yet you haven't returned to me. He had sent plagues and war. Yet you haven't returned to me. Some of them had been nearly destroyed, like a burning stick pulled out of a fire. Yet you haven't returned to me.

Five times, the same sad refrain. God had been calling them back, over and over. And they never came.

So God says, "Therefore I will do this to you, Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, Israel."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Prepare to Meet Your God**

Today, the phrase Prepare to meet your God is sometimes painted on signs by the side of the road. In Amos, it's a warning. Israel had refused to come back to God through all His warnings. Now God was coming to them. Many Christians also hear in it an invitation. Everyone will one day stand before God. The question is whether you'll meet Him as a friend or as someone who refused His call. Amos follows it with a description of God's power: He forms the mountains, creates the wind, and knows our thoughts. The God of Armies is His name.

REAL TALK **Has God Been Getting Your Attention?**

Sometimes hard things happen in life, and we wonder why. Amos 4 describes God using hardships to call Israel back. That doesn't mean every hard thing in your life is a punishment. Many hard things happen in a broken world for reasons we don't understand, and Jesus warned against assuming people suffer because they're worse sinners. But difficult seasons can be a time to pause and ask, God, is there anything You want to say to me? Is there an area where I've drifted? If you're going through something really hard right now, please talk to a trusted adult about it. God cares about you, and so do the people around you.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Life Under Jeroboam II**

Jeroboam II ruled Israel for about forty years, from roughly 793 to 753 BC. Second Kings says he restored Israel's borders from Lebo Hamath in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. Assyria was temporarily weak, and Syria had been defeated, so Israel enjoyed peace and trade. Wealth flowed into Samaria. But the money didn't spread evenly. A small group at the top got richer, while many farmers lost their land through debt. Archaeologists have noticed that, over time, homes in some Israelite towns changed from similar sizes to a mix of large mansions and small huts. That's the kind of gap Amos saw.

Amos's message in chapters 3 and 4 can sound harsh. But notice why God was so upset. It wasn't that He disliked Israel. It was that

He loved them and had given them so much. He had rescued them from slavery, given them a land, sent them prophets, and called them to show the world His character. When people who know God treat others cruelly, they don't just hurt their victims. They also give the world a false picture of what God is like.

That's still true. When Christians are dishonest, unkind, or proud, people sometimes walk away from God because of it. When Christians are humble, generous, and fair, people get a glimpse of Jesus. You may be the only picture of Jesus some of your friends ever see. That's not pressure to be perfect. It's an invitation to let His love show through you.

> **REAL TALK** **When You Feel Like You've Blown It**
>
> Reading Amos 4 might make you think about times you ignored God, maybe for a long time. If that's you, here's the good news. The refrain yet you haven't returned to me means God was still waiting for them to come back. The door was open. It's still open today. You don't have to clean yourself up first. You can simply say, God, I'm sorry. I want to come back. He's not waiting with crossed arms. Like the father in Jesus' story of the prodigal son, He runs to meet those who return.

KEY VERSE

I have chosen only you of all the families of the earth.
Therefore I will punish you for all of your sins.

Amos 3:2 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why does being chosen by God mean more responsibility, not less?
2. What gifts or advantages have you been given? What might God want you to do with them?
3. Why do you think Amos used such strong language, like cows of Bashan?
4. What does the repeated line yet you haven't returned to me reveal about God's heart?

TRY THIS *Make a list of five privileges or advantages you have. Next to each one, write one way you could use it to serve someone else this month.*

CHAPTER 3

Let Justice Roll On Like Rivers

Amos 5–6

Chapter 5 begins with a funeral song. "The virgin of Israel has fallen; She shall rise no more." Amos was singing a lament for Israel as if it were already dead. It was a shocking thing to do in the middle of a boom economy. Everyone else thought Israel was thriving.

But then, right in the middle of the funeral, comes an invitation. "For the LORD says to the house of Israel: Seek me, and you will live." And again: "Seek the LORD, and you will live."

Notice what God doesn't say. He doesn't say, Seek Bethel. Seek Gilgal. Seek Beersheba. Those were the popular religious shrines where people went to worship. God says, Don't seek the places. Seek Me.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba**

Bethel was where Jacob had dreamed of a stairway to heaven, and where King Jeroboam I had set up a golden calf. Gilgal was where Israel camped after crossing the Jordan into the promised land. Beersheba, in the far south, was connected with Abraham and Isaac. These were places with deep spiritual history. But the people had turned them into religious tourist sites, places to perform rituals without real devotion. Amos says God isn't found in famous places. He's found when people seek Him.

REAL TALK **Seeking God, Not an Experience**

Some people chase spiritual experiences: the perfect worship night, the big conference, the summer camp high. Those things can be great. But it's possible to seek the experience instead of God Himself. When the excitement fades, so does their faith. Amos says, Seek the LORD, not the place, not the feeling, not the event. You can seek God on an ordinary Tuesday in your bedroom, on the bus, or in a hospital waiting room. Seeking Him means wanting Him more than any experience He gives.

Amos describes the God they should seek, the one "who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning." The Creator of the stars was the one calling them back.

But the people had done something terrible. They had turned justice into wormwood, a bitter, poisonous plant. Justice should be sweet, like fresh water. They had made it bitter.

They hated anyone who told the truth in court. "They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks blamelessly." They took bribes and pushed the poor aside. They built beautiful stone mansions and planted lovely vineyards, all with money squeezed from the poor. So Amos says they would never get to live in those houses or drink that wine.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Justice at the Gate**

In ancient Israel, the city gate was more than an entrance. It was like the town square, the courthouse, and the business center all in one. Elders sat there to settle disputes, judge cases, and witness business deals. If you had been cheated, the gate was where you went for justice. That's why Amos keeps talking about the gate. When the gate was corrupt, the poor had nowhere else to go.

Then Amos gives a simple command. "Seek good, and not evil, that you may live." And: "Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in

the courts. It may be that the LORD, the God of Armies, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph."

> **REAL TALK** **Hate Evil, Love Good**
>
> Amos says to hate evil. That doesn't mean hating people. It means being genuinely bothered by things like cruelty, cheating, bullying, racism, abuse, and lies, instead of shrugging them off. It means not laughing along when someone is being mocked. And it means loving good: honesty, kindness, fairness, courage. It's easy to become numb to evil when you see it all the time online. But God calls you to keep your heart soft, to care, and to do what you can to make things right.

Then Amos confronts the people who were looking forward to the Day of the LORD. They thought it would be a great day when God would defeat their enemies. Amos says, "Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light."

He gives a vivid picture. It would be like a man running from a lion, only to run into a bear. He escapes into his house, leans against the wall in relief, and a snake bites him. There's no escape from God's judgment by being religious.

And then comes the heart of the book. God says, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I can't stand your solemn assemblies." He refuses their sacrifices and offerings. "Take away from me the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps."

Imagine God saying that about your church's worship service. That's how shocking this would have sounded. The people were singing, praying, and giving. But God called their worship noise.

Why? Because their worship was disconnected from how they lived. They sang praises on the Sabbath and cheated the poor on Monday.

Then God says what He wants instead. “But let justice roll on like rivers, and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Rivers and Streams**
>
> In Israel, most streams only flowed during the rainy season. In the dry summer months, they dried up into empty riverbeds called wadis. Amos says God wants justice like a river that keeps rolling and righteousness like a stream that never runs dry. Not justice that shows up once in a while, on special occasions, and then disappears. Justice that keeps flowing, all year round, through every part of life.

In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. quoted Amos 5:24 in his famous I Have a Dream speech at the March on Washington, in the familiar wording of older translations about justice rolling down like waters. He used it again and again in his sermons and speeches during the civil rights movement. The words are carved into the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, where water flows over a stone table listing names of people who died in the struggle for civil rights.

> **REAL TALK** **Justice Today**
>
> Christians agree that God cares deeply about justice, but they sometimes disagree about how to pursue it, including which policies, programs, or political approaches are best. That’s okay. Amos isn’t a political party platform. But he does make some things very clear. God cares about the poor. He hates bribery, cheating, and exploitation. He wants fair courts. He wants His people to treat everyone with dignity. You can start right where you are: standing up for someone who’s being treated unfairly, being honest in school and work, volunteering, giving, and learning about the needs in your community.

In chapter 6, Amos turns to the wealthy leaders who felt completely secure. “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who are secure on the mountain of Samaria.”

He describes their lifestyle. They lay on beds of ivory, lounged on couches, ate the best lambs and calves, played music, drank wine by the bowlful, and used the finest oils. Nothing wrong with good food and music in themselves. But Amos says, "they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." The nation was falling apart, and they didn't care. They were too comfortable to notice.

REAL TALK **At Ease**

It's easy to get so comfortable that you stop noticing other people's pain. Maybe you scroll past news of disasters without a second thought, or don't notice the kid at school who always eats alone. Being at ease isn't the same as enjoying good things. It's about not caring. Amos challenges us to stay aware and to let other people's suffering move us to pray and act. That doesn't mean you have to feel guilty all the time. It means letting compassion be part of your comfort.

REAL TALK **If Your Family Is Struggling**

Amos talks a lot about poverty, debt, and unfair treatment. If your family is struggling financially, you might feel embarrassed, worried, or stressed. Please know that God sees you and cares about your situation. Poverty is not a sign that God loves you less. In fact, Amos shows that God is especially concerned for people who are struggling. If you're worried about food, housing, or safety at home, talk with a trusted adult, a school counselor, or a pastor. Many churches and communities have resources to help, and asking for help is nothing to be ashamed of.

Amos ends chapter 6 with a strange question. "Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plow there with oxen?" Of course not. That would be absurd. But Israel had done something just as absurd: "you have turned justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness."

BACKGROUND CHECK **Did God Hate Worship?**

Some readers wonder whether Amos 5 means God was against sacrifices, feasts, and music. After all, God Himself had commanded Israel to hold festivals and offer sacrifices. Most scholars agree that God wasn't rejecting worship itself. He was rejecting worship that was disconnected from obedience. The prophets say this again and again. Isaiah 1, Hosea 6, and Micah 6 all make the same point. Jesus said something similar: if you're bringing a gift to the altar and remember someone has something against you, go make it right first, then come back and offer your gift.

REAL TALK **Worship That Rings True**

Singing worship songs is a good thing. So is going to church, giving, and praying. But Amos shows that God listens to our lives as well as our songs. Real worship includes how you treat your siblings, how you speak to your parents, how you treat the substitute teacher, and how you respond to someone who is struggling. When what you sing on Sunday matches how you live on Monday, your worship rings true. If there's a gap, don't stop worshiping. Instead, ask God to help you close it.

Justice in the Bible is more than punishing wrongdoers. The Hebrew word mishpat includes making sure people are treated fairly, protecting the vulnerable, and making wrong things right. The word righteousness, tsedaqah, is about living in right relationship with God and others. Together, they describe a community where everyone, especially the weak, is cared for and treated with dignity.

That's why the Bible keeps mentioning widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor. They were the people most likely to be ignored or taken advantage of. God's people were supposed to notice them. The prophet Micah later summed it up beautifully: God requires His people "to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

KEY VERSE

But let justice roll on like rivers, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Amos 5:24 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think God called Israel's worship noise?
2. What's the difference between seeking a place or an experience and seeking God?
3. What would it look like for justice to roll on like a river in your school or community?
4. Where might you be at ease while others are hurting?

TRY THIS *Find one way to serve people in need in your community this month, like volunteering at a food bank, helping a neighbor, or donating to a local charity. Then do it.*

CHAPTER 4

The Plumb Line and the Priest

Amos 7–8

Chapters 7 through 9 contain five visions God showed Amos. Each one is a picture, almost like a short film, with a message about Israel's future.

In the first vision, God was forming swarms of locusts just as the late crops were sprouting, after the king's share had been harvested. The locusts would eat everything the ordinary people needed to survive. Amos cried out, "Lord GOD, forgive, I beg you! How could Jacob stand? For he is small." And God relented. "It shall not be," says the LORD.

In the second vision, God was calling for judgment by fire, a fire so hot it dried up the great deep and was eating up the land. Again Amos pleaded, and again God relented.

BACKGROUND CHECK **When God Relents**

Some people wonder how God can change His mind if He knows everything. Christians have explained it in different ways. Many say that God's character never changes, but His actions respond to people, including their prayers and repentance, just as He planned. God isn't wishy-washy. But He has chosen to make prayer matter. When Amos prayed, things happened. That's an amazing truth: God invites ordinary people like a shepherd from Tekoa to take part in what He does in the world.

REAL TALK **Praying for People**

Amos was sent to warn Israel, but he didn't want them destroyed. He prayed for them. He called them small, like a little brother who couldn't survive on his own. That's a great example for us. It's easy to criticize people who are doing wrong. It's harder to pray for them. Who could you pray for this week, even someone who has hurt you or someone you disagree with? Praying for someone changes your heart toward them, and God hears those prayers.

In the third vision, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. God asked, "Amos, what do you see?" Amos answered, "A plumb line." God said, "Behold, I will set a plumb line in the middle of my people Israel. I will not again pass by them any more."

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Plumb Line**

A plumb line is a string with a weight tied to the bottom. When you hold it up, gravity pulls it perfectly straight down. Builders used it to check whether a wall was straight. If a wall was leaning, it would eventually collapse, and it needed to be torn down and rebuilt. God was holding His plumb line up against Israel, and the nation was dangerously crooked. This time, Amos didn't pray for them to be spared. Sometimes, a crooked wall has to come down.

REAL TALK **God's Plumb Line**

Everyone measures themselves by something. Some people compare themselves to friends: At least I'm not as bad as them. Others measure themselves by popularity, grades, or followers. But God's plumb line is His own perfect goodness, revealed in His Word and in Jesus. Next to that standard, all of us are crooked in some ways. That could sound discouraging. But it's actually good news, because God doesn't just measure us. Through Jesus, He forgives us and starts rebuilding us from the inside out.

Then the story is interrupted. Amaziah, the priest at Bethel, sent a message to King Jeroboam II. He accused Amos of conspiracy. "The

land is not able to bear all his words." In other words, Amos is a threat to national security.

Then Amaziah told Amos to his face, "You seer, go, flee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there, but don't prophesy again any more at Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house!"

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **The King's Sanctuary**
>
> Notice what Amaziah called Bethel. Not God's sanctuary, but the king's sanctuary. That says a lot. The religion at Bethel had become a tool of the government. Its job was to support the king, bless the nation, and keep everyone comfortable. A prophet who criticized the king was unwelcome. Amaziah also assumed Amos was a professional prophet who preached for money. Go home and earn your bread there, he said. He couldn't imagine anyone speaking because God had actually called him.

Amos's answer is one of the most famous lines in the book. "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman, and a farmer of sycamore figs; and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

In other words: I'm not here because this is my career. I didn't go to prophet school. I had a real job, working with animals and fig trees. God interrupted my life and sent me here. I'm not leaving just because you don't like what I'm saying.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Prophet's Son**
>
> The phrase prophet's son probably refers to the groups of prophets, sometimes called the sons of the prophets, who lived and trained together in the days of Elijah and Elisha. These were like prophet schools or guilds. Some prophets were paid by kings and told the king whatever he wanted to hear.

Amos was saying he wasn't part of any professional group. He had no title, no training, and no salary. He had only God's call.

REAL TALK **God Uses Ordinary People**

Amos wasn't a priest, a scholar, or a professional speaker. He was a working man who took care of animals and trees. God used him anyway. You don't need a title, a platform, or a perfect background for God to use you. You don't need to be the most talented or most popular person in your youth group. God loves to use ordinary people who are willing to listen and obey. Wherever you are, whatever you're good at, God can use you to make a difference.

Amos then gave Amaziah a hard message of judgment about his family's future and Israel's exile. Speaking God's truth to power was costly. Amos didn't back down.

In the fourth vision, God showed Amos "a basket of summer fruit." God asked, "Amos, what do you see?" Amos said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then God said, "The end has come on my people Israel."

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Summer Fruit Pun**

This vision is built on a Hebrew wordplay. The word for summer fruit is qayits. The word for end is qets. They sound almost the same. It's as if God held up a basket of ripe fruit and said, This is ripe, and Israel is ripe for judgment. Summer fruit was the last harvest of the year. After it, the growing season was over. In the same way, Israel's time was running out.

Then Amos exposed the dishonest business practices in Israel. The merchants couldn't wait for the Sabbath and the religious festivals to end so they could get back to cheating people. They were "making the ephah small, and the shekel large, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit." That meant they gave people less grain than they paid for, charged more money than they should, and rigged their scales.

They even planned to "buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals," and to sell the leftover chaff mixed with the grain. Amos echoes the same sin he condemned in chapter 2.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Ephahs and Shekels**

An ephah was a unit for measuring grain, about half a bushel. A shekel was a weight used to measure silver for payment. Coins weren't widely used yet, so buyers weighed out silver on a scale. A dishonest merchant could use a smaller ephah basket to give less grain and a heavier shekel weight to demand more silver. Archaeologists have found stone weights from ancient Israel that don't all match, which suggests that this kind of cheating really happened. The law of Moses strictly commanded honest weights and measures.

REAL TALK **Honest in Small Things**

Cheating can seem small. Copying a homework answer, lying about your age to get a discount, not giving back extra change, pirating a movie, or fudging your hours at work. But Amos shows that God cares about honesty in business and everyday life. Jesus said that whoever is faithful in very little is also faithful in much. Being honest when no one is watching builds the kind of character that will matter for the rest of your life.

Then God makes one of the most chilling promises in the Bible. "I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the LORD's words." People would wander from sea to sea, searching for God's word, and would not find it.

Israel had told the prophets to stop prophesying. Now God would give them what they asked for: silence. The worst thing that could happen wasn't a lack of food. It was a lack of God's voice.

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Silent Years**

Many Christians notice that after the last of the Old Testament prophets, around 430 BC, there was a long period, about four hundred years, without a

recognized prophet in Israel. Jewish writings from that era sometimes say that prophecy had ceased. Some see a fulfillment of Amos 8:11 in that silence, though Amos's warning was first aimed at the northern kingdom before its fall. The silence was finally broken when John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preparing the way for Jesus.

REAL TALK **Hungry for God's Word**

Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of God's mouth." Most of us have more access to the Bible than any generation in history. It's on our phones, in our homes, and online for free. But it's possible to have a famine of hearing God's words even when Bibles are everywhere, simply because we never open them. If you want to hear from God, start small. Read one chapter of a Gospel each day. Ask God to speak to you through it. The more you read, the hungrier you'll become.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Did Amos Go Home?**

The Bible doesn't tell us what happened to Amos after his clash with Amaziah. Some later traditions claim he was attacked or killed, but there's no reliable evidence for that. Most likely, he eventually returned to Tekoa and his work with sheep and fig trees. What we do know is that his words were written down and preserved. About forty years later, his warnings came true when Assyria destroyed Samaria in 722 BC. The people of Judah kept his words because they had proven true, and they hoped to learn from Israel's mistakes.

Amos's confrontation with Amaziah shows a pattern that appears throughout the Bible. People in power often try to silence those who speak uncomfortable truths. Elijah was hunted by King Ahab. Jeremiah was thrown into a muddy cistern. John the Baptist was imprisoned for confronting Herod. Jesus Himself was crucified after challenging the religious leaders of His day.

But God's word can't be silenced. Amaziah could tell Amos to leave Bethel, but he couldn't stop what God had said. That's encouraging if you ever feel pressure to stay quiet about your faith or about

something wrong. Speaking up should be done with humility, love, and wisdom. But when God calls you to speak, you don't have to be afraid.

REAL TALK **Speaking Up Wisely**

Not every situation calls for a big speech. Sometimes speaking up means quietly telling a friend you're worried about them. Sometimes it means reporting bullying to a teacher. Sometimes it means refusing to repeat a rumor. Before you speak, pray, check your motives, and make sure you have the facts. And if something serious is happening, like abuse, self-harm, or someone in danger, always tell a trusted adult. You don't have to fix it alone.

KEY VERSE

Behold, the days come, says the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the LORD's words.

Amos 8:11 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think God answered Amos's prayers in the first two visions but not in the third?
2. What does a plumb line show? What standard do you usually measure yourself against?
3. Why did Amaziah want Amos to go home? What does Amos's answer show about his calling?
4. What would a famine of hearing God's words look like in your life?

TRY THIS *Choose one Gospel, like Mark, and read one chapter a day this week. Each day, write down one thing you think God is saying to you through it.*

CHAPTER 5

Rebuilding David's Fallen Tent

Amos 9

The fifth and final vision is the most terrifying. "I saw the Lord standing beside the altar." The altar was where people went to find forgiveness and safety. Now God was standing there to bring judgment. He commanded the tops of the pillars to be struck so the temple would collapse on the worshipers.

There would be no place to hide. Even if they dug down to the grave, or climbed up to heaven, or hid on top of Mount Carmel, or at the bottom of the sea, God would find them. It's the dark side of Psalm 139, which says there's nowhere we can go to escape God's presence. For those who love God, that's comforting. For those who refuse Him, it's terrifying.

> **BACKGROUND CHECK** **Where Was This Altar?**
>
> Amos doesn't say exactly which altar he saw in this vision. Many scholars think it was the altar at Bethel, the center of the northern kingdom's religion and the place where Amaziah had told Amos to leave. Others think it could be the temple in Jerusalem or a picture of all of Israel's worship. Either way, the message is the same. The very place where the people thought they were safe would become the place of judgment, because their worship was empty.

Then Amos describes God's power. He touches the earth, and it melts. He builds His upper rooms in the heavens. He calls for the

waters of the sea and pours them out on the earth. The LORD is His name.

Then God asks a startling question. "Are you not like the children of the Ethiopians to me, children of Israel?" says the LORD. "Haven't I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?"

BACKGROUND CHECK **Ethiopians, Philistines, and Syrians**

The Ethiopians, called Cush in Hebrew, lived far to the south of Egypt, in what is now Sudan. To Israel, they represented the far ends of the earth. The Philistines and Syrians were Israel's enemies. God's point was startling. Israel thought they were special because God had brought them out of Egypt. But God had guided the movements of other nations too. Israel wasn't God's favorite because they were better than anyone else. God cares about every nation on earth, and His choosing of Israel was meant to bless the whole world.

REAL TALK **No Favorites**

Every culture has a way of ranking people: by race, nationality, wealth, looks, or popularity. Amos 9:7 cuts through all of that. God isn't impressed by any of our rankings. He loves people from every nation, ethnic group, and background. That doesn't mean Israel wasn't chosen. It means being chosen was never about being better. If you ever catch yourself thinking certain kinds of people matter less, remember that God sees every person as made in His image. Nobody is a second-class citizen in His eyes.

God says He will shake Israel among the nations like grain in a sieve, but not a single kernel will fall to the ground. Judgment would sift the nation, but it would not destroy everyone. God would preserve a remnant.

And then, after nine chapters of warning, something completely unexpected happens. Hope breaks through.

"In that day I will raise up the tent of David who is fallen and close up its breaches, and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old."

BACKGROUND CHECK **The Tent of David**

The phrase the tent of David, sometimes translated the booth or hut of David, pictures David's royal family line as a broken-down shelter. By Amos's time, the kingdom of David had split in two, and things would only get worse. Eventually, Judah would be conquered by Babylon, and no descendant of David would sit on the throne. The tent would seem completely collapsed. But God promised to rebuild it. Many Christians understand the tent as David's dynasty, and others as the people and community connected to David's kingdom. In either view, the promise points forward to the Messiah, the Son of David.

But that's not all. God's plan was bigger than just Israel. The rebuilt kingdom would include "all the nations who are called by my name." People from every nation would one day belong to God.

Then Amos paints a picture of incredible abundance. The harvest would be so huge that the plowman would overtake the reaper. In other words, the harvest would still be going on when it was time to plow for the next season. The mountains would drip with sweet wine. God would restore the fortunes of His people. They would rebuild the ruined cities, plant vineyards, and enjoy the fruit of their own gardens.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Why Such a Sudden Turn?**

Some scholars think the hopeful ending of Amos was added later by another writer, because it's so different from the rest of the book. Others point out that almost every prophet mixes judgment and hope, and that Amos himself mentioned a remnant and mercy earlier in the book. Many Christian scholars see the whole book as coming from Amos and his message. Either way, the

ending fits a pattern found throughout Scripture. God's judgment is never His last word for those who belong to Him. Hope always has the final say.

The book ends with a promise of permanent security. "I will plant them on their land, and they will no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them," says the LORD your God.

For a book about judgment, that's a beautiful ending. The same God who held up the plumb line would rebuild what was broken.

REAL TALK **When Things Feel Broken**

Maybe something in your life feels like a fallen tent: your family, your friendships, your faith, or your sense of who you are. Amos 9 reminds us that God specializes in rebuilding ruins. That doesn't always happen overnight, and it may not look exactly like you expect. But God is a builder. He can take broken things and make them new. If you're going through a really hard time, don't keep it to yourself. Talk to a trusted adult. If you ever feel like you might hurt yourself, call or text 988 right away. If you are in danger, call 911. If someone is hurting you, call Childhelp at 1-800-422-4453.

Hundreds of years later, the early church faced a big question. As non-Jewish people, called Gentiles, began to follow Jesus, some believers insisted that they had to become Jewish first and keep the law of Moses. The apostles and elders met in Jerusalem to decide. James, the brother of Jesus, stood up and quoted Amos 9:11-12. He said the rebuilding of David's tent was happening through Jesus, so that people from every nation could seek the Lord.

That decision changed history. It meant that anyone, from any nation, could become part of God's family through faith in Jesus, without first becoming Jewish. If you're not Jewish and you follow Jesus, you're part of the fulfillment of Amos 9.

BACKGROUND CHECK **Acts 15 and the Greek Translation**

When James quoted Amos in Acts 15, his wording matched the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, more closely than the Hebrew text. The Hebrew of Amos 9:12 speaks of Israel possessing the remnant of Edom and all the nations called by God's name. The Greek version speaks of the rest of mankind seeking the Lord. Scholars discuss why the two differ. Either way, both point toward the nations being brought under God's name. James saw that happening as Gentiles came to faith in Jesus.

Think about what this meant for the first Gentile believers. They had grown up worshiping other gods. They didn't keep kosher, didn't observe the Sabbath, and didn't know the Hebrew Scriptures. Some Jewish believers wondered whether they really belonged. Amos 9 gave the church an answer. God had always planned to welcome the nations. The rebuilt tent of David had room for everyone.

Today, the church includes people from almost every nation and language on earth. That's not an accident. It's the fulfillment of promises God made through prophets like Amos thousands of years ago. When you worship with believers from different backgrounds, cultures, and ethnic groups, you're seeing Amos 9 come true. Revelation describes the final picture: people from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before God's throne together.

REAL TALK **Everyone Is Welcome**

Some people feel like they're too different, too messed up, or too far from God to belong to His family. Amos 9 says otherwise. God's family isn't a private club for people who grew up in church or have their lives together. It's a rebuilt home with open doors. If you've ever felt like an outsider, know that Jesus came to bring outsiders in. And if you're already part of God's family, look for ways to make others feel welcome too, like the new kid, the visitor, or the person who doesn't fit in.

KEY VERSE

In that day I will raise up the tent of David who is fallen and close up its breaches, and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old,

Amos 9:11 (WEB)

REAL TALK

1. Why do you think the book of Amos ends with hope after so much judgment?
2. What does Amos 9:7 teach about how God sees people from different nations?
3. How did James use Amos 9:11-12 to welcome Gentiles into God's family?
4. What area of your life needs God to rebuild something broken?

TRY THIS *Write a short prayer asking God to rebuild one broken area of your life or your world. Then read Acts 15:1-21 to see how Amos 9 helped open the church to everyone.*

THE END (AND THE BEGINNING)

Where This Points

Amos ends with a surprise: after all the judgment, God promises to rebuild the fallen tent of David and bring in the nations who are called by His name. Jewish readers treasure Amos as a powerful voice for justice and look to his promise of restoration. Christians believe that promise came to life in Jesus.

About twenty years after Jesus rose from the dead, the early church faced a huge question. Thousands of non-Jewish people, called Gentiles, were trusting Jesus. Did they have to become Jewish first, keeping all of Moses' law, to be part of God's family? The leaders met in Jerusalem to decide. James, the brother of Jesus, stood up and quoted Amos: "After these things I will return. I will again build the tabernacle of David, which has fallen. I will again build its ruins. I will set it up that the rest of men may seek after the Lord: all the Gentiles who are called by my name." James concluded that God had always planned to welcome the nations. Through Jesus, the Son of David, the fallen tent was being rebuilt, and it had room for everyone. And Jesus Himself lived out what Amos preached. He announced that He had come "to preach good news to the poor." He challenged religious leaders who were careful about tiny rules but neglected "justice, mercy, and faith." He said that whatever we do for the least of His brothers and sisters, we do for Him. In Jesus, worship and justice are never separated.

Here's what that means for you, as plainly as I can put it.

1 God made you, and He loves you.

God made you on purpose, and He loves you. He sees every person the world overlooks.

> *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only born Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* **John 3:16 (WEB)**

2 We've all sinned.

Amos shows that even religious people can trample others. The Bible says all of us have sinned.

> *for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;* **Romans 3:23 (WEB)**

3 Sin has a real cost.

God is holy, so He doesn't shrug off evil. The Bible says its result is death, separation from God forever.

> *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* **Romans 6:23 (WEB)**

4 Jesus rebuilt the fallen tent.

Jesus, the Son of David, died for our sins and rose again. He rebuilt David's fallen tent into a family where people from every nation are welcome.

> *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness. You were healed by his wounds.* **1 Peter 2:24 (WEB)**

5 You can't earn it. You receive it.

No one can earn God's favor by religious performance. Salvation isn't a reward for being good enough. It's a gift you receive by trusting Jesus.

> *for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast.*
> **Ephesians 2:8–9 (WEB)**

6 Seek Him and live.

Turn from running your own life, and trust Jesus as your Savior and King. Then you can know, not just hope, that you have eternal life.

> *that if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
> **Romans 10:9 (WEB)**

So what do you do with that? Amos says, Seek the LORD, and you will live. You don't need perfect words. You can talk to God right now, wherever you are. If it helps, you could pray something like this:

God, I've gone my own way. Sometimes I've treated people unfairly, ignored people in need, or acted religious without really loving You. I can't fix that myself. Thank You that Jesus, the Son of David, died for my sins, rose again, and welcomes people from every nation into Your family. Forgive me, and make me Yours. Help me worship You with my whole life, and let justice flow from me like a river. I trust Jesus as my Savior, and I want Him to be my King. In Jesus' name, amen.

If You Just Said Yes

Tell someone. A parent, a youth leader, a pastor, or a Christian friend. Start there.

Read the real thing. Read Amos 5, then Luke 4:16-21 and Acts 15:1-21.

Find your people. Get connected to a church where the Bible is taught, Jesus is honored, and the poor are cared for. Ask about being baptized.

Do justice. Look for one way this month to serve someone in need, and keep doing it.

Not Sure Yet?

Not ready? That's honest, and honesty is a good place to start. Amos was blunt, and his questions are hard. Keep asking. Keep reading. Just don't settle for "I already know all that."

Because if Amos is right, God sees every person the world overlooks, and He invites you to seek Him and live.

Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of Armies, will be with you, as you say.

Amos 5:14 (WEB)