



AMOS:
PREPARE
— TO MEET —
YOUR GOD

Part 3
Prepare to Meet Your God



The point of this study

The goal of every Inspire study is to draw closer to Jesus Christ. In this series, we will explore the role of the prophets through the ministry of Amos. Though each prophet has a unique voice and message, Amos gives us a powerful glimpse into the prophetic tradition and its call to justice, faithfulness, and readiness to encounter God. As we listen to his challenge to "Prepare to meet your God," we will discover what the prophets still have to teach us today.

This study draws on the Four Ancient Lenses of Interpretation, which are introduced in the Inspire video series **How to Read the Bible (Part 2)**. These lenses help us engage Scripture more deeply, exploring its literary, theological, kingdom, and ethical dimensions.

The check-in & opening prayer

We know that what we bring to the study can impact what we take from the study. So, let's take a moment to check in with ourselves and to ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate our heart. You can do this through personal journaling or by sharing with the group.



I wonder what was a highlight of your week.

**I wonder where you may have needed
prayer or support this week.**

I wonder where you noticed God at work this week.

I wonder what you are bringing to this study.
(questions, concerns, distractions, hopes, fears, learnings...).

I wonder what you hope to receive from God through this study.

Holy God,
open our eyes to see the world as you see it, open our ears to hear
your voice through the prophets, and open our hearts to be
transformed by your truth. Give us courage to seek your justice,
hope to trust your kingdom, and faithfulness to follow your call;
through Jesus Christ, your living Word,
our friend and helper. Amen.

Context (*read and reflect*)

*Reading Scripture through the **Literary Lens**.*

Amos has turned his attention fully toward Israel. The people who heard judgment pronounced against the surrounding nations now discover that their relationship with God does not protect them from judgment. In fact, Amos makes the startling claim that it increases their responsibility: **"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."** Amos then fires off a series of questions. Does a lion roar without prey? Does a trap spring when nothing has triggered it? Does a trumpet sound without frightening a city? Each question assumes that events have causes. Amos is preparing his hearers for a difficult claim: the troubles coming upon Israel cannot simply be dismissed as accidents of history. Israel must reckon with God.

I wonder what responsibilities come with being known and loved by God.



Chapter 4 intensifies the message. Amos looks back upon famine, drought, failed crops, disease, warfare and destruction and speaks of them as warnings through which God has been calling Israel back. After each comes the same heartbreaking refrain: **"Yet you did not return to me."** Listen for its rhythm. Again and again the words return, until suddenly they stop. In their place comes: **"Therefore... prepare to meet your God, O Israel."** And then Amos does something surprising. At the moment we might expect him to describe God's judgment, he gives us poetry about God: the One who forms mountains, creates wind, knows the human heart and walks upon the earth. Amos has brought us to the words that give this study its name. We are being invited to ask: Who is this God we are preparing to meet?

I wonder what you hear in the words, "Yet you did not return to me."



Scripture (mark and note)

Reading Scripture through the **Literary Lens**. Remember that Amos was first **heard, not read**. His words were proclaimed aloud, so repetition, rhythm, imagery, and changes in tone are part of how his message works. As you read, circle, underline, and make notes on the passage. Notice repeated words and phrases, rhythms and patterns, vivid images and metaphors, surprising words, and connections to other parts of Scripture. Throughout this study, you will begin to **hear and feel the rhythm of the prophet**. Mark the text with what you notice, what surprises you, and what you sense the Spirit drawing your attention toward.

Write the answer you
think Amos expects after
each question.

Amos 3:1-8

Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt:

You only have I known
of all the families of the earth;
therefore I will punish you
for all your iniquities.

Do two walk together
unless they have made an appointment?

Does a lion roar in the forest
when it has no prey?

Does a young lion cry out from its den
if it has caught nothing?

Does a bird fall into a snare on the earth
when there is no trap for it?

Does a snare spring up from the ground
when it has taken nothing?

Is a trumpet blown in a city,
and the people are not afraid?

Does disaster befall a city
unless the Lord has done it?

Surely the Lord God does nothing
without revealing his secret
to his servants the prophets.

The lion has roared;
who will not fear?

The Lord God has spoken;
who can but prophesy?

Circle the verbs associated with God. Underline
the verbs associated with the people. What do
you notice?

Amos 4:1-13

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan
who are on Mount Samaria,
who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,
who say to their husbands, "Bring something to drink!"

The Lord God has sworn by his holiness:

The time is surely coming upon you
when they shall take you away with hooks,
even the last of you with fishhooks.

Through breaches in the wall you shall leave,
each one straight ahead,
and you shall be flung out into Harmon,
says the Lord.

Come to Bethel—and transgress;
to Gilgal—and multiply transgression;
bring your sacrifices every morning,
your tithes every three days;
bring a thank offering of leavened bread
and proclaim freewill offerings, publish them;
for so you love to do, O people of Israel!
says the Lord God.

I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities
and lack of bread in all your places;
yet you did not return to me,
says the Lord.

And I also withheld the rain from you
when there were still three months to the harvest;
I would send rain on one city
and send no rain on another city;
one field would be rained upon,
and the field on which it did not rain withered;
so two or three towns wandered to one town
to drink water and were not satisfied;
yet you did not return to me,
says the Lord.

I struck you with blight and mildew;
I laid waste your gardens and your vineyards;
the locust devoured your fig trees and your olive trees;
yet you did not return to me,
says the Lord.

I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt;
I killed your young men with the sword;
I carried away your horses;
and I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils;
yet you did not return to me,
says the Lord.

I overthrew some of you
as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,
and you were like a brand snatched from the fire;
yet you did not return to me,
says the Lord.

Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel;
because I will do this to you,
prepare to meet your God, O Israel!

For the one who forms the mountains, creates the wind,
reveals his thoughts to mortals,
makes the morning darkness,
and treads on the heights of the earth—
the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name!

Prepare to meet your God

Reading Scripture through the *Theological Lens*.

Amos does not make it easy for us to separate God from the troubles of the world. **"Does disaster befall a city, unless the LORD has done it?"** God says, *"I gave you cleanness of teeth," "I withheld the rain," "I struck you,"* and *"I sent among you a pestilence."* Amos lived in a world that understood God as sovereign over creation and history. If something happened, God could not simply be removed from the picture. For Amos, there is a cause and effect to the moral universe: what we do matters, injustice has consequences, and God is involved.

I wonder what you do with Amos's claim that God is involved in both the goodness and the trouble of the world.



Yet Amos does not remove **human responsibility**. Quite the opposite. Chapters 1-2 have shown us people creating terrible suffering through violence, greed, exploitation and cruelty. God does not command Israel to shrug at suffering and say, "God caused it." Amos calls people to examine the world they have made and the ways they have harmed one another. Scripture leaves us with an uncomfortable tension: **God is sovereign, and human beings are responsible**. Amos does not neatly explain how those truths fit together.

I wonder how we hold together God's sovereignty and our responsibility for one another.



Perhaps faith does not require us to protect God from the question. Scripture gives us people who protest, lament, argue with God and even blame God for what has happened. God is large enough to bear our anger and our questions. And remarkably, the God to whom we cry, **"Why did you allow this?"** is also the God to whom we cry, **"Help us."** In Amos, after every disaster comes the same longing: **"Yet you did not return to me."** The God with whom Israel must wrestle is also the God to whom Israel is invited to return.

I wonder whether we are free to be angry with God and still turn toward God.



Sharing

*Reading Scripture through the **Kingdom of God Lens**.*

I wonder what the world would look like if we truly believed that what we do to one another matters to God.

I wonder where we can see signs of God's healing and restoration in a world that is still troubled.

I wonder what it means to hope for God's kingdom when the world does not seem to be as God desires.

*Reading the Scripture through the **Ethical Lens**.*

I wonder when we are tempted to blame God for suffering that human beings have caused.

I wonder what troubles in the world God might be calling us to take responsibility for.

I wonder what it might mean for us to “return to God” this week.

You may close in prayer.



The Parish of St. Mark – Ocean Park