



AMOS:
PREPARE
— TO MEET —
YOUR GOD

Part 4
Seek Me and Live



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 5 begins like a funeral. Before Israel has actually fallen, Amos sings a **lament** over her as though her death has already happened: "Fallen, no more to rise, is maiden Israel." But remarkably, in the middle of this funeral song comes an invitation: "**Seek me and live.**" Amos warns the people not to look for security in the great religious centres of Bethel, Gilgal, and Beer-sheba. Their temples, traditions, and pilgrimages cannot save them. The God whom they seek in these holy places is calling them instead to seek God. Even while Amos announces judgement, the possibility of return – and of life – remains open.

I wonder what it means to "seek God" rather than simply to practise our religion.



As the chapter continues, Amos makes clear what seeking God looks like. Israel's religious life is flourishing, but so are injustice and exploitation. The poor are being pushed aside, the vulnerable are being mistreated, and justice in the courts has been corrupted. Amos therefore brings together things we can be tempted to separate: **our worship of God and the way we treat one another**. God rejects Israel's festivals, offerings, and songs when they exist alongside injustice. Instead, Amos calls the people to "seek good and not evil," and gives us one of the Bible's great prophetic images: "**Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.**"

I wonder what our treatment of other people has to do with our worship of God.



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.*

Amos 5:1-15, 18-24

Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation,

O house of Israel:

Fallen, no more to rise,
is maiden Israel;
forsaken on her land,
with no one to raise her up.

For thus says the Lord God:
The city that marched out a thousand
shall have a hundred left,
and that which marched out a hundred
shall have ten left.

For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel:

Seek me and live,
but do not seek Bethel,
and do not enter into Gilgal
or cross over to Beer-sheba,
for Gilgal shall surely go into exile,
and Bethel shall come to nothing.

Seek the Lord and live,
or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire,
and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.
Ah, you who turn justice to wormwood
and bring righteousness to the ground!

The one who made the Pleiades and Orion
and turns deep darkness into the morning
and darkens the day into night,
who calls for the water of the sea
and pours it out on the surface of the earth,
the Lord is his name,
who makes destruction flash out against the strong,
so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

*Circle every time Amos
uses the word "seek."
What are the people told
to seek - and not to
seek?*

The one who made the Pleiades and Orion
and turns deep darkness into the morning
and darkens the day into night,
who calls for the water of the sea
and pours it out on the surface of the earth,
the Lord is his name,
who makes destruction flash out against the strong,
so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

They hate the one who reproves in the gate,
and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.
Therefore because you trample on the poor
and take from them levies of grain,
you have built houses of hewn stone,
but you shall not live in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards,
but you shall not drink their wine.
For I know how many are your transgressions
and how great are your sins—
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe
and push aside the needy in the gate.
Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time,
for it is an evil time.

Seek good and not evil,
that you may live,
and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you,
just as you have said.
Hate evil and love good,
and establish justice in the gate;
it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts,
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!
Why do you want the day of the Lord?
It is darkness, not light,
as if someone fled from a lion
and was met by a bear
or went into the house
and rested a hand against the wall
and was bitten by a snake.
Is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light,
and gloom with no brightness in it?
I hate, I despise your festivals,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings
and grain offerings,
I will not accept them,
and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals
I will not look upon.
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
But let justice roll down like water
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

What does God reject?

What does God desire?

Seek me and live

Reading Scripture through the *Theological Lens*.

Amos says something shocking to people who thought themselves faithful worshippers: God hates their festivals, rejects their offerings, and refuses to listen to their songs. The problem is not that worship is unimportant, but that **worship has become separated from life**. We turn our face toward God so that we can turn our face toward the world. Our prayers, hymns, sacraments and gatherings are practices through which God transforms us for life in the world.

I wonder what God desires our worship to do to us.



Amos therefore refuses to separate loving God from loving our neighbour. "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Amos is not asking us to replace worship with social action. He asks whether worship can truly be worship if it leaves us unmoved by our neighbours' suffering. If we receive God's mercy but remain indifferent to those who are mistreated, or sing of God's love without learning to love, Amos asks us to examine what our worship has become. **The test of faithful worship is what happens after we leave the sanctuary.**

I wonder how our worship changes the way we see and respond to our neighbours.



More than 2,700 years after Amos, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used these words to challenge Christians who remained comfortable while Black Americans suffered segregation and racial injustice. In his 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech, King proclaimed Amos's vision: **"We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."** Like Amos, King insisted that faith could not remain safely inside churches while neighbours suffered outside them. Amos's words had become prophetic again, confronting another generation with the same question: **Can we worship the God of justice and remain indifferent to injustice?**

I wonder where Amos might be trying to shake the Church out of our apathy today.



Sharing

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

I wonder what the world would look like if justice really did “roll down like waters.”

I wonder what Amos reveals about the relationship between worship and God's kingdom.

I wonder where we can already see signs of God's justice flowing in the world around us.

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

I wonder who we might fail to see when we leave the sanctuary.

I wonder where our worship is changing the way we live — and where it has not changed us yet.

I wonder what one act of justice or love God might be calling us toward this week.

You may close in prayer.



The Parish of St. Mark – Ocean Park