

Part 5

I Am No Prophet

Inspire
CHRISTIAN FORMATION

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 hearts. You can do this through personal journaling or by sharing with the group. If sharing in a group, try to keep your reflections brief so that everyone has an opportunity to be heard.



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**. There is a little more context on page 4, following the Scripture. Read that first, then return here to mark and note the Scripture.*

Chapter 7 gives us a rare glimpse of Amos not simply delivering a message from God, but responding to what God shows him. In the first vision, Amos sees a swarm of locusts devouring the crops just as they begin to grow. In the second, he sees a great fire consuming the land. Both visions point toward the destruction Amos has been warning Israel about. But Amos does not rejoice to see his warnings coming true. Instead, he pleads with God: "**O Lord GOD, forgive, I beg you! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!**" And remarkably, God relents. The prophet who speaks to the people on behalf of God also speaks to God on behalf of the people.

I wonder what Amos's prayers reveal about the heart of a prophet.



The third vision is different. Amos sees the Lord standing beside a wall with a plumb line, an instrument used to determine whether something has been built straight and true. God declares that a plumb line is being set in the midst of Israel: the nation is being measured, and its sanctuaries and royal house will not stand. This time Amos does not ask God to relent. The pattern of the first two visions has been broken. Something has changed. After repeatedly calling Israel to return, Amos now sees a moment when the consequences of the people's choices can no longer simply be turned aside.

I wonder whether there comes a time when we have to face the consequences of the choices we have made.



Scripture *(mark and note)*

Scripture invites us to slow down and listen. Read the passage aloud three times, perhaps with a different reader each time, allowing a moment of silence between readings. As you listen, underline or make notes about what catches your attention. ***First Reading — What catches your attention?*** *I wonder what words, images, or ideas stand out to you.* ***Second Reading — What challenges you?*** *I wonder what troubles you or raises questions.* ***Third Reading — What connections do you notice?*** *I wonder where this passage echoes other parts of Scripture, reminds you of Jesus, or speaks to your own life.*

Circle Amos' words & underline God's actions & words. What do you notice?

Amos 7:1-17

This is what the Lord God showed me: he was forming locusts at the time the latter growth began to sprout (it was the latter growth after the king's mowings). When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said,

"O Lord God, forgive, I beg you!
How can Jacob stand?
He is so small!"
The Lord relented concerning this;
"It shall not be," said the Lord.

This is what the Lord God showed me: the Lord God was calling for judgment by fire, and it devoured the great deep and was eating up the land. Then I said,

"O Lord God, cease, I beg you!
How can Jacob stand?
He is so small!"
The Lord relented concerning this;
"This also shall not be," said the Lord God.

This is what he showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said,

"See, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will spare them no longer;
the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam
with the sword."

Circle the words associated with speaking: "said," "prophesy," "word," "preach." Who is speaking, who is being told to speak, and who is being told to stop?

Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said,

'Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land.' "

And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there, but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."

Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am no prophet nor a prophet's son, but I am a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'

"Now therefore hear the word of the Lord.
You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel,
and do not preach against the house of Isaac.'
Therefore thus says the Lord:
Your wife shall become a prostitute in the city,
and your sons and your daughters
shall fall by the sword,
and your land shall be parceled out by line;
you yourself shall die in an unclean land,
and Israel shall surely go into exile away
from its land."

Highlight what Amos says he was doing and what God called him to do.

More Context *(read and reflect)*

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

The vision leads directly to a confrontation with Amaziah, the priest of Bethel. Bethel was not simply a local place of worship; it was one of the great sanctuaries of the northern kingdom and closely connected with the king. Amaziah hears Amos announce judgement against Israel and the house of King Jeroboam and reports him to the king: "**The land is not able to bear all his words.**" He then orders Amos to leave Israel, return home to Judah, and prophesy there instead. Amos has brought an unwelcome word into a place where religious and political power meet — and those who belong there want him gone.

I wonder what happens when the words God calls us to hear threaten the institutions we depend upon.



Amaziah assumes that Amos is a professional prophet who has come to Israel to earn his living: "**Go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there.**" Amos's answer gives this study its title: "**I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son.**" Amos had not chosen prophecy as a profession. He had been a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees until God took him from following the flock and said, "**Go, prophesy to my people Israel.**" Amos speaks not because an institution has given him authority, nor because anyone has invited him to speak, but because he believes God has called and sent him.

I wonder how we recognize a prophetic voice when it comes from someone we did not expect.



I am no prophet

*Reading Scripture through the **Theological Lens**.*

When Amaziah tells Amos to go home and earn his living as a prophet there, Amos responds, "**I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son.**" Amos did not choose prophecy as a career or claim the role for himself. He was tending his animals and trees when God called him and sent him to Israel. There is a humility in knowing the work God has — and has not — given us to do. Humility does not mean making ourselves smaller or refusing God's call. It means **knowing our limits and living faithfully within them**. Amos speaks because God has called him to speak, no more and no less.

I wonder how we discern what God has — and has not — called us to do.



But speaking is only part of Amos's prophetic calling. When Amos sees visions of Israel's destruction, he does not celebrate being proved right. He intercedes: "**O Lord GOD, forgive, I beg you! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!**" A prophet is not a finger-wagging moralist standing above everyone else. **The prophet stands before the people on behalf of God, and before God on behalf of the people.** Amos speaks hard truths because he cares what happens to the people to whom God has sent him.

I wonder whether we can speak hard truths to people without also holding them in prayer.



Perhaps this is why a prophetic voice is something to receive with humility rather than something to claim for ourselves. Amos does not possess a prophetic voice; **he has been entrusted with one**. God calls him to speak, but also to love, pray and plead for the people who need to hear him. Prophetic ministry is not about being right, winning an argument, or condemning those who are wrong. It is about faithfully carrying God's concern for God's people — even when the words we are given are difficult ones.

I wonder what would change if we understood prophetic speech as an act of love.



Sharing

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

I wonder what God's kingdom would look like if those with power understood it as a calling rather than a possession or right.

I wonder what place truth-telling and intercession have in God's kingdom.

I wonder where God's kingdom might be breaking in through voices we did not expect to hear.

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

I wonder where God may be calling us to speak, even when it would be easier to remain silent.

I wonder how we can discern when love calls us to speak and when love calls us to remain silent.

I wonder who God might be calling us to hold in prayer, especially when we disagree with them or believe they are wrong.

You may close in prayer.