

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, Oct. 7, 2012

Passage: Amos 5:1-17

Memory Passage: Romans 8:1-30 (Review)

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Amos 5:1-17.** What is a “lamentation” (v. 1)? When does a lamentation (or elegy, dirge, funeral song) usually take place in relation to the event lamented, and how does this fact make Amos’ (God’s) lamentation even more striking?

(b) Why does Amos refer to Israel as a nation who has “fallen, no more to rise?” Of what does Amos intend for us to think by calling Israel a “virgin?” What sad ironies do you find in v. 2? How does v. 3 function in relation to v. 2 (the “for” in v. 3)? What hope do you see in v. 3, even in the midst of this devastation? What emotions might Amos have felt as he spoke vs. 1-3?

(c) If God were to take up a lament over His 21st century church today, over what things would He mourn? Are you personally complicit in or the cause of any of these sins? If so, how can you address these areas through the application of the Scriptures in your own life? How can our church address/avoid these issues through the application of the Scriptures?

(d) *Family:* Show this cartoon clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdCuw-zwBC0> and ask questions about what is happening in the clip. Try to get them to describe for you all the emotions the dog feels when he thinks he killed Bugs Bunny. Then ask, “Have you ever heard of the word ‘lament’ or ‘lamentation,’ and what do you think it means?” (a passionate expression of grief or sorrow, especially over someone’s death). Then **Read Amos 5:1-2** and explain that Amos speaks for God as He laments over Israel because their sin will cause their death/destruction (in fact, Amos speaks as if it has already occurred). Explain that Amos mourns because Israel is God’s bride, or possibly a daughter whom He loves dearly (“virgin,”), she has been given the land as an inheritance but now she will be forsaken on the same land, and that not even God will raise her up (because it is God who is punishing her for her sin, just as He promised to do). But also explain that we will see signs of hope in this chapter as well, because God is constantly calling Israel back to Himself.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Amos 5:1-17.** If you are a Bible marker, underline or circle every occurrence of the word “seek” in 5:1-17. What is Israel commanded to “seek” in vs. 4-6? What are they commanded *not* to seek, and why would this command be given (5:5 & 4:4)? Find Beersheba on one of the maps in your Bible. Do you see why they are not to “cross over to Beersheba?”

(b) Why were the people “seeking” Bethel, “entering” Gilgal, and “crossing over” to Beersheba? From God’s point of view, what was wrong with these actions?

(c) Explain what it means to “seek the Lord” (be concrete, giving actual examples of how to do this). In what ways are you tempted to pursue a place, tradition, or action (“seeking Bethel”) instead of pursuing Christ? What people, places, things, actions, or traditions (those things that will “come to nothing” [v.5]) have become idols to you because you worship them more than Christ? What remedy does Amos offer for this kind of seeking, and how will you implement this remedy this week?

(d) *Family:* Prior to this lesson, prepare a description of 2 imaginary families and how they prepare for and attend worship. One family should be marked by false, man-centered worship practices and motives, and the other with true, God-centered practices and motives. Be drastic in your descriptions! One wants to go only so dad can meet a certain business prospect or mom can deliver/take orders for her home-based business; they complain about the preaching, the music, people in the church, etc.; they only go when they don’t have something else to do; dad prepares an answer for only one question on the green sheet, not the entire lesson, so he can look like he knows what he is talking about in Sunday school; they tear apart the pastor at lunch on Sunday, etc. The other family prepares for worship throughout the week (including Saturday night and preparing as a family for worship), they rejoice in worshipping with the saints, they discuss and apply the sermon and SS class at lunch on Sunday, they serve others in the body, etc. Then, prepare a worksheet that includes bullets of all of the characteristics you will mention in this description (mixed up, not in order) with a blank space next to each one. Then **Read & teach Amos 5:4-7** and explain the false worship attitudes and practices going on in Israel (wrong place of worship, seeking to be religious without being devoted to and seeking God, their worship not affecting their life [i.e. they have gotten rich by oppressing the poor, they neglect justice]). Then have your family fill in the blank beside each action/attitude with “seeking Bethel” or “seeking God.”

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Amos 5:1-17.** What do we learn about God’s character in these 2 verses and why is it important at this stage of Amos’ lamentation? What contrasts do you see between the actions of man (v. 7) and the actions of God (vs. 8-9)?

(b) The idea of justice returns to Amos’ thought in v. 7 (and will again!). What do you learn about how the people exercised justice (v. 7, 10-12)? How do the people make justice bitter (“wormwood” is a plant that has a bitter extract)? How many times do you see the word “gate” and why is it important? What does “speaking the truth” have to do with justice?

(c) Why was it significant that the people would not be able to live in their houses and drink their wine (cf. Deut. 28:30, 39)?

(d) *Family*: **Read Amos 5:7, 10-12**. Make 2 columns on your white board, one headed “Bitter Justice” and one headed “Sweet Justice.” Explain that wormwood is a plant that produces a bitter oil and is used in the bible as a metaphor for bitterness. Also explain that in Biblical times the gate of the city was the place where the elders sat and made judgments that God commanded should be just. Anyone could have brought a problem to the elders at the gate seeking justice. Then **Re-read Amos 5:7, 10-12** and have your family identify each act in which the people were involved that causes justice to be bitter instead of sweet and write it in the appropriate column. Then discuss ways that each instance could have been sweet justice.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Amos 5:1-17**. Verses 15-16 contain the third call to repent. Do these calls to repent seem consistent or inconsistent with the idea of a lament? Why? What does this reveal about the character of God? Can you identify the use of remnant language in these verses?

(b) What are the rewards for seeking good and not evil? How do you explain the final words of v. 15: “as you have said?” What is one way the people could hate evil and love good (v. 15b)? What is the hope given to the people if they repent?

(c) Write down all the ways you can think of in which you seek evil or fail to hate evil. Now ask the Lord to reveal to you exact and specific ways that you can reverse these actions by understanding that these sins no longer have power over you because you now have God as your master instead of sin (Rom. 6). Write them next to each thought/activity.

(d) *Family*: **Read Amos 5:4, 14-15**. Give each of your family paper and pen and ask them to write “Seek God! Seek Good!” at the top of the page. Then spend this lesson encouraging each other with every way possible you can think of to seek God and seek good. Be sure your lists contain thoughts, motives, and actions, as well as specific ideas for all ages in your family.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Amos 5:1-17**. To what does the “therefore” in v. 16 refer? What words/phrases do you find in vs. 16-17 that one would expect to see in a lament? Why are the farmers specifically mentioned as mourning?

(b) Amos seems to be drifting between calls to repentance/promises of a remnant and pronouncements of judgment. Is he confused? Why or why not? Can both be present at the same time (sure & certain judgment and calls for repentance/promises of a remnant)? If so, how & why, and if not, why not?

(c) You have been working on memorizing Romans 8 since January, and we have made it through v. 30. Spend time writing out Romans 8:1-30, checking your Bible for anything you can’t quite remember (but only if you need to!). Then take what you have written and underline every truth that helps you understand how to apply what you learned this week in Amos 3 about seeking God, seeking & doing good, hating evil, exercising justice, repenting of sin, living as God’s chosen people, and worshiping/serving God in truth.

(d) *Family*: Lead your family through (c) above. You can recite Romans 8 as a family as you write each verse on a large piece of butcher paper, or you can have each one write out the passage on their own, or even copy off a sheet for each family member that has every 4th or 5th word of the text typed, but blanks for every other word. Then instead of having everyone think through & underline each item on their own, you can use these topics as a guide for group discussion as everyone underlines.

DATE: Oct. 7, 2012

PASSAGE: Amos 5:1-17

Seek the Lord and Live

In Amos 5:1-17 we hear Amos’ lament over Israel in which he makes six observations concerning the coming judgment.