



SEE ME AND LIVE

Lesson 5

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DEVOTIONAL

*"For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel:
'Seek me and live.'"
—Amos 5:4*

I have four children that range in age from 5 to 16. The younger two love to play games like tag and hide and seek. They are always begging me to play with them, especially hide and seek. It's a classic game, but one that is a bit harder for me to play than it is for them. My 5-year-old son is a little under 4 feet tall and probably 45 pounds. I on the other hand, am about 6 feet tall and 230 pounds. Needless to say, it is a bit easier for him to hide than it is for me! Despite the fact that I know that I am going to be found quite quickly, I love to play with them. And I love it when they hide and I can hear them say, *"Find me!"* According to the rules and point of the game, they shouldn't want to be found, but the reality for them is that they do want me to find them. I see their faces light up when I finally do find them—I know that they love it.

The same is true with God. When He tells Israel that He wanted them to seek Him, He wanted to be found. He was not trying to stay hidden. He didn't want them seeking after false gods or idols, instead He wanted them to seek Him, because in finding Him, they would *get* Him. Throughout the Old Testament, God had very specific requirements for Israel to seek Him. There had to be a proper sacrifice, prepared in a certain way. It's not that God needed the sacrifice. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10) and does not eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats (Psalm 50:13). If that is the case, then why did God tell the Israelites to make such sacrifices? C.S. Lewis theorized that the *"essence of the sacrifice was not really that men gave bulls and goats to God, but that by their so doing God gave Himself to men; in the central act of our own worship of course this is far clearer – there it is manifestly, even physically, God who gives and we who receive."*¹ He goes on to summarize it by saying, *"it is in the process of being worshiped that God communicates His presence to men."*²

God desires that we seek Him—not because He needs it, but because He wants to give us something greater than anything we can imagine—Himself. And then from there, He wants us to live and behave like Him so that others might seek Him in the same way and experience the same joy of knowing and being known by Him. Which is why we are to perform justice and ensure that others receive justice. The temptation is to seek after other things because we believe that we will find joy there. The problem is that such a joy and life doesn't exist. Such a path can only end in discipline, judgment and sorrow. God loves us so intensely that He gave His Son to bring us to Himself, and He commands us to seek Him so that we might find true and abiding life and then live in such a way that others might seek and know Him. As we study Amos, let's keep in mind that God is not there to bring us pain, but to turn us away from futile things to Him and do that which is pleasing in His sight so that He might give us true joy and the pleasure of knowing and being known by Him.

¹C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1958), pp. 92-93.

²Ibid.

OPEN IT

1. Who is your favorite superhero and why?

READ IT

Amos 5:4-6:14

EXPLORE IT

2. How many times did God tell the Israelites to seek in vv. 5-14?
3. What had Israel done to the poor in v. 11?
4. What was Israel guilty of in v. 12?
5. What did God command in v. 15?
6. How did Amos describe “the day of the LORD” in vv. 18-20?
7. God is angry in with Israel in vv. 21-23 but commands a remedy in v. 24. What is it?
8. Amos 6:4-16 lists a variety of things the Israelites had done. God warns them about one thing they didn't do. What was it?

APPLY IT

WHAT IS BIBLICAL JUSTICE?

While justice can be used to talk about retributive justice in which a person is punished for their wrongdoings, most of the time the Bible uses the word justice to refer to restorative justice, in which those who are unrightfully hurt or wronged are restored and given back what was taken from them. Taken this way, the combination of righteousness and justice that God dictates means a selfless way of life in which people do everything they can to ensure that others are treated well and injustices are fixed.³

9. In v. 5, God tells the Israelites not to go to the false temples of Bethel, Gilgal, or Beersheba. Where are the false places we go to rather than God for help?

10. The Israelites hate anyone who “reproves in the gate” and “who speaks the truth” (5:10). Why do we have such a hard time listening to those who tell us we are wrong and who speak truth to us?

Amos said that God knew all of their transgressions and how great their sins are. In our day, we seem to have a low view of sin. Rather than call the evil we do “sin” we say such things are “struggles” or “bad habits.”

11. Why do we have such an allergic reaction to calling sin, “sin”? Does our low view of sin affect how we understand the crucifixion of Jesus and what it means?

Amos describes Israel's transgressions and sins as their afflicting the righteous, taking bribes, and turning aside the needy at the gate. (The gate is where people conducted business and also sought help and judgment.) All of these transgressions could all be put under the label of “injustice.”

12. What are the injustices that we could be accused of in our time?

³<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/justice/>, accessed on 27 June 2019.

13. Amos tells the Israelites to “hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate” (Amos 5:15). How can we ensure that others receive justice in our sphere of influence?

WHAT IS THE DAY OF THE LORD?

The concept of the “the day of the LORD” was likely used in Israel before Amos spoke, but Amos has the earliest reference to this as a technical term describing God’s future victory over his enemies.⁴

14. In 5:14 God declares woe to those who desire the “day of the Lord.” Why would the people have desired the day of God’s judgment?

Amos goes on to describe the “day of the LORD” as “darkness, and not light,” because he wants them to know that it is not the nations who will experience it, but Israel.

15. How would your view of God change if you knew that the day of God’s judgment would be for you and not others? What would you change about your life?

16. Israel had many feasts and assemblies and sang many songs in worship. Nevertheless, God despised all of them (5:21-23). Why? What were they missing (5:24)? And how can we ensure that we don’t repeat their mistakes?

⁴Gary V. Smith, “Hosea/Amos/Micah, *The NIV Application Commentary*, p. 325.

Amos notes that the people of Judah and Samaria were “at ease” and “secure” (6:1), living fairly luxurious lives (vv. 4-6), and thus safe from judgment. But judgment would come for them and it would be awful. God laments that they were not grieved at what was going to happen (6:6). As a church the same could easily be said of us.

17. How should we grieve at the spiritual state of the church today? What can we do to ensure that similar things will not be said of us?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? “I will deliver up the city and all that is in it”—6:8

Within about three decades, the nationwide destruction and defeat prophesied in 6:8-14 took place. The pericope (section) links the coming horrors of war, however, not so much to world development as to Israel's sin. Once again the attention of the hearer/reader is focused by Amos on the need for justice/righteousness and on Israel's complacency and arrogance (cf. 2:6-8; 4:1; 5:7; 5:10-15, 24; 6:1-6). The whole order of things was wrong. The society had adopted values and habits that were utter folly in light of its covenantal obligations to Yahweh—as foolish as trying to plow a ledge with oxen. The country's “pride” in its fortifications (v. 8) and recent military success (v. 13) represented a horrible misappraisal of reality. What was really needed was a realization that doom was coming, that the conquerors would be conquered, that the extensive territory of the nation would be extensively subdued by the enemy yet unnamed and popularly unexpected.⁵

18. God is very concerned about how the Israelites failed to ensure justice (5:7; 6:12). Why isn't justice more important to us today? We seem to be concerned about our kids, schools, jobs, and possibly our walk with God, but how concerned are we that those around us receive justice? Why is this not as big a deal to us?

19. While the United States is not Israel, we are still a nation that is responsible to God, and just as susceptible to God's judgment. As a church in the midst of a secular society, what is our responsibility? How are we to balance the preaching of the gospel and ensuring people have justice? Are they separate issues or are they one?

⁵Douglas Stuart, “Hosea-Jonah,” *Word Biblical Commentary*, p. 365-366.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? “If ten people are left in one house, they too will die.”

There are some really confusing things going on in Amos, including God's warning that “if ten men remain in one house they shall die” (6:9). God had decreed judgment. Amos is imagining ten men trying to hide from God in a house to escape His judgment, but they are all killed anyway. It was the responsibility of the family to bury the bodies of the deceased, so they would try to go and find them when they did not return home. Upon discovering the bodies, they would remove them from the home one by one. Should the one removing the bodies find a person still alive in the building, he would be so afraid that he would forbid even the mention of God's name for fear that God would finish the job with the person still alive and kill the one performing the burial rites as well.

Reading Amos, we can see that Israel was going to be judged and destroyed because of their sin. We know that God is ultimately going to judge every nation and every person (Romans 4:11; Philippians 2:10; Hebrews 9:27). We don't know when that judgment is going to take place exactly, but we do know that we are living in the end times (Acts 2:17).

20. How should that affect how we go about making disciples and conducting our Christian lives now?