

An In-Depth Book-by-Book Study of the Bible

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

HOSEA,
AMOS,
JONAH:
REVEALING
THE HEART
OF GOD

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE
FOR THE DEAF

EXPLORING THE BIBLE

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Send questions/comments to

Explore the Bible: DEAF
Nashville, TN 37234

By email to
explorethebible@lifeway.com

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Accepting Christ?



Amelia Cedrez

I had a good job working in the National Bank. I had many different boyfriends. I went to parties and dances, smoked, and drank. When I broke up with a boyfriend, I would find another one. Sometimes I would live with my boyfriend.

After I worked at the bank for 33 years, I retired. I thought life would be wonderful away from all the problems at work. There was so much arguing and jealousy at the bank. I enjoyed my life of retirement.

I decided to take a two month trip to Canada to visit my three brothers—two are Deaf and one is hearing. Then I returned to my home in Uruguay. At first, I was happy staying at my house, but my sons and I started arguing and I became depressed.

I felt emptiness inside. It felt like everything was black. I didn't have

any idea what to do or where to go. Then I remembered my sister's birthday. I sent her a text. She responded that she was angry. I did not understand. She told me her daughter had leukemia. I became more depressed because I didn't know what was happening in my family.

I visited my sister the next day. At first, we only talked about general things. Finally, I admitted that I was depressed. My sister was a Christian, so she suggested that we pray.

One week later, my sister invited me to a Franklin Graham Crusade. There was a preacher and a lot of people. I went and sat with a lot of hearing people, but I noticed a group of Deaf people. I went there and ran into Mary Swanner (International Mission Board missionary). There were interpreters, and I began to understand what they were saying.

I realized I needed to ask forgiveness from God. I needed to give my life to God. I knew that He would bless me if I gave my life to Him. I made the decision that day.

My sister helped me to understand some things about God. I went with her to church every Sunday, but there were no Deaf people. Little by little, I learned. Then I remembered the Deaf church in a different neighborhood in Montevideo.

I visited the Deaf church and understood everything. My life changed. God handled my problems.

It's wonderful what God can do in your life. If you feel emptiness and darkness in your life, you can have this same change. You can trust God to handle your problems.

First, confess that you are a sinner (Romans 3:23). Second, believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sin and ask Him to forgive you. Invite Him to live in your heart (Romans 10:9). Now you are a new, changed person. Go and tell someone what happened in your life.

How to Use the Lessons

Use your Bible to read all the verses. These lessons may be used for weekly Bible study and reading at home.

Read **Accepting Christ?** on page four to find out how to become a Christian. If you are already a Christian, show this to a friend.

The **Lesson Material** outline gives verses for you to read in your Bible.

The **Bible Truth** will help you to understand the lesson better.

What These Verses Tell Us explains in a few words what the lesson teaches. Read it first to help you understand the lesson.

Before you read each part of the lesson, read the Bible verses for that part. Study the lesson and the verses to find the answers to the **Study Questions**. Write your answers and bring them to the Bible study.

The **Leader Guide** is for the teacher. The sections on **The Bible in Context** and **Explore...** offer additional study related to each lesson.

Pray for your teacher, members of your Bible class, and lost Deaf people. Pray for God to use you to share Christ with other people.

We use the New Century Version® in these lessons. Many Deaf people like this version because they can understand it easily. We understand the New Century Version is no longer in print, but copies seem to be available from many sources. If your local Christian bookstore does not have it in stock, check online for new and used copies. You can also see this translation and others online at www.BibleGateway.com.

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INTRODUCTION

HOSEA, AMOS, JONAH

Revealing the Heart of God

Hosea

Twelve of the books of prophecy are called the “Minor Prophets.” This is not because they are not important, but because their writings are short. Hosea was the first of these Minor Prophets. Of course, we do not have everything these prophets said or wrote. We only have the words God chose for us to have in His Word.

Hosea was a prophet during the same time as Amos in Israel and Isaiah and Micah in Judah. The events recorded in Hosea cover a period of 60 years, about 784-722 B.C. His writings began soon after the first captivity (2 Kings 15:29).

The theme of Hosea’s preaching was this: Israel is like a wife committing adultery against her husband. His message is presented in the names of his children. *Lo-ammi* means “not my people,” and *Ammi* means “my people.” Israel is sinful. That sin is greater because of Israel’s relationship with God. *Jezreel* means “God sows.” Hosea referred to how God works throughout history. God’s hand is always involved in what happens to His people.

Several times, Hosea’s writings are quoted in the New Testament. Hosea 11:1 is quoted in Matthew 2:15. Jesus quoted Hosea 6:6 in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7. Paul quoted Hosea 2:1, 23 and 1:10 in Romans 9:25-26. In 1 Corinthians 15:55, Paul quoted Hosea 13:14. Peter quoted Hosea 1:9 in 1 Peter 2:10.

Amos

Amos was written about 790 B.C. He was from Judah, but God called him to prophesy in Israel. Other prophets in Israel had escaped to Judah because they feared the kings of Israel.

Amos was a farmer. He was well educated. He wrote with skilled use of Hebrew poetry forms. The illustrations in his sermons often come from nature. Some of his illustrations are strange. He wrote about “clean teeth” and meant the people had nothing to eat (4:6).



Amos wrote and preached about the sin of Israel. Their big sin was because they worshiped idols (5:26; 8:14). This was against the agreement God made long ago with His people. Another sin was related to money. Rich people took advantage of poor people. Some poor people were sold into slavery. People used money in sinful ways. Amos called the rich women “cows” because they thought only about themselves. They did not care about the poor people.

When Stephen was on trial before he was stoned, he preached and quoted from Amos 5:25-27 (Acts 7:42-43). James quoted from Amos 9:11-12 when he spoke to other leaders about Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:16-18).

Jonah

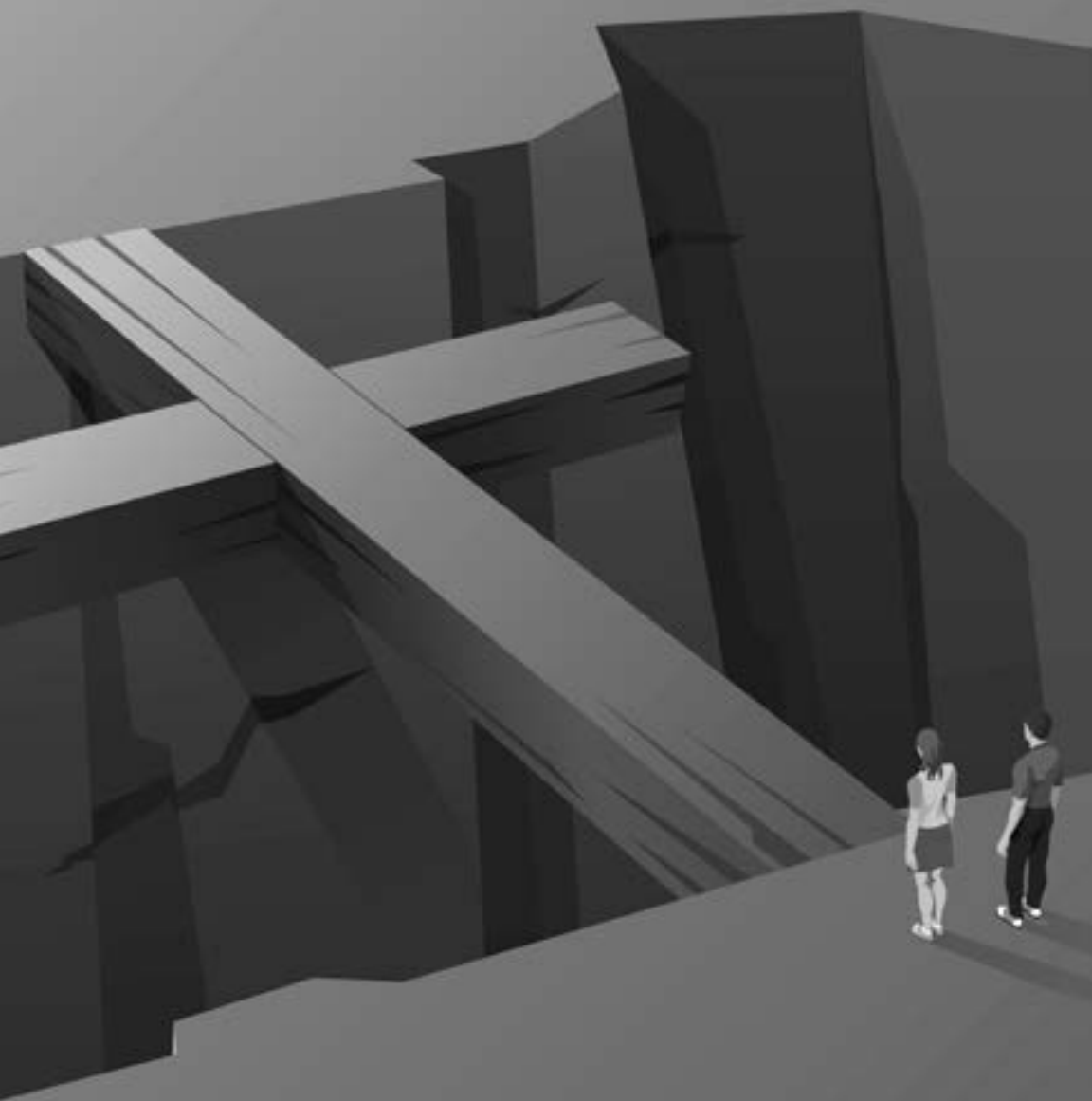
We know the story of Jonah is true because Jesus spoke about it (Matt. 12:39-41). Jesus said Jonah’s salvation through the great fish was a picture of His death, burial, and resurrection. 2 Kings 14:25 reports how Jonah’s prophecy came true. Jesus also said Nineveh’s repentance shows how God is the God of all people, not just the Jews.

Jonah was not a volunteer. God drafted him. He did not want to go preach to the Gentiles. But the Gentiles in Nineveh responded to God better than the Jews did!

Jonah prophesied and wrote about 810-862 B.C. Nineveh repented when they heard Jonah’s message. Later, however, they turned away from God again. The book of Nahum explains how God destroyed Nineveh in 612 B.C. The city was never rebuilt.

Many people reject the story of Jonah because they do not think a person could live in a fish. The Bible said God prepared a great fish. If God prepared the fish for Jonah, then Jonah would be safe in it.

Unit 1



HEART OF A REDEEMING FATHER

Hosea 1:1–14:9

The lessons in this unit focus on God's redeeming love for His people. The book of Hosea is the source for five of the six lessons in this unit. God used Hosea's life and his family as a teaching example for the people of Israel.

God wanted the people of Israel to understand how they broke their relationship with God. He told Hosea to preach about the results of sin and the coming punishment. Hosea emphasized

how God would forgive the nation of Israel. God would restore them to a right relationship with Him if they would repent.

God punished the nation of Israel for their sins exactly as Hosea warned.

A Christmas evangelistic message is also part of this unit. The centerpiece of that lesson is the wise men and their search for the new King of the Jews.

Meet the Writer

Jeremy Parks grew up in Dickinson, Texas, in a Christian family. His parents taught him to love God. He accepted Christ as Savior before he was ten years old. But, he says, a few years later he started ignoring God and running away from church and Christianity. In the summer of 1993, he realized he was wasting his life and rededicated himself to God. Since then, God has used him as a Sunday School teacher and as a missionary in the Czech Republic and Venezuela. He and his wife Stacy now serve with the International Mission Board as missionaries to the Deaf in Ecuador. They have three children.

Exposing a Broken Relationship



Background Study Verses:

Hosea 1:1–3:5

Lesson Material:

Hosea 1:1-2; 2:2-5;
3:1-5

Bible Truth

When people sin,
the result is broken
relationships
with God.

Have you ever visited a classroom at school and watched the teacher? Each teacher has different methods for explaining things to the children. Some teachers are very active. Other teachers use drawings. Each teacher works hard to help the children understand the lesson. If you watch long enough, you will see almost every teacher say “for example.”

Many times, teachers will use examples from the children’s lives. Maybe the teacher will talk about families or going to the store. Teachers use things the children already understand as a tool to teach new ideas.

In today’s lesson, we will learn how God used Hosea and his family as an example to teach the people of Israel an important lesson. Other prophets before Hosea tried to teach God’s people the same lesson, but the people would not learn. Hosea’s life and marriage were examples to God’s people to help them understand.

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **Something's Not Right Here (1:1-2)** – God told the prophet Hosea to marry a sinful woman as an example to the people of Israel.
2. **Your Sins Will Come Out (2:2-5)** – Hosea used the example of his sinful wife to teach the people of Israel.
3. **Redemption Carries a Price (3:1-5)** – Hosea showed love and forgiveness to his adulterous wife just as God would someday forgive the people of Israel for their sin.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What did God use as an example of the unfaithful people of Israel?
2. List the three punishments God would use to discipline Israel.
3. List the three steps Hosea used to reunite with his wife, Gomer.
4. When did Hosea do most of his preaching?
5. In chapter three, how much did Hosea pay for his wife?

Today's Lesson

Hosea was a prophet from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He worked in the last half of the eighth century B.C., between 784 and 722 B.C. Most of Hosea's prophecies covered the time between 750 and 722. In 722 B.C., the Assyrian armies conquered Israel (the Northern Kingdom), but left Judea (the Southern Kingdom) untouched. You can read about the conquest and the reasons for it in 2 Kings 17:7-18.

Hosea's writing and teaching style are very hard for some people to understand. He used examples and symbols to teach. For example, Hosea compared Israel to an adulterous woman and compared God to a faithful husband. Many of the symbols follow this pattern. We need to remember these symbols and examples. This will help us to understand Hosea's lessons better.

1. Something's Not Right Here (1:1-2)

Verse 1. God began to talk to Hosea. Verse 1 lists the important kings of Israel and important kings of Judea who ruled during the time God used Hosea. The first four kings in verse 1 were from the Southern Kingdom of Judea. The last king, Jeroboam, was a king from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Scholars use the kings listed as a way of finding out the dates of Hosea's ministry.

Verse 2. One of the first things God told Hosea to do was to find a wife. God had a very specific person for Hosea. God wanted Hosea to marry a woman He called "an unfaithful wife." The children from Hosea's marriage would be "unfaithful children."

Many different Bible scholars have ideas about Hosea's wife, Gomer. Some people think Gomer was a woman who was already sinning sexually before she married Hosea. Some scholars believe Gomer did not sin sexually before she married Hosea, but God

knew she would commit adultery later.

GOD WANTED

TO SHOW HIS PEOPLE

THEIR SIN

Others say Gomer was a temple prostitute involved in worshipping Baal. For our lesson, we will use the last idea. Gomer was probably a woman involved in sexual sin before she married Hosea. Gomer continued sinning sexually even after she

married Hosea, perhaps as a prostitute in the temple of Baal.

The phrase "unfaithful children" does not mean Hosea's children were unfaithful. This part of verse 2 probably means the children were from their unfaithful mother, Gomer. This might mean the children were not Hosea's children, but the Bible is not clear about that.

Hosea obeyed the Lord's commands, even though the commands were hard. Could you marry someone you knew would become unfaithful? God had a plan for Hosea and his family. God wanted Hosea to set a stunning example for the people of Israel. God's goal was not to hurt Hosea. Instead, God wanted to show His people their sin. He would not ignore their sin any more.

2. Your Sins Will Come Out (2:2-5)

The style in chapter 2 changes from a narrative (story) to a poem. Chapter 2 does not look like a poem to us because the poem follows a Hebrew pattern. Chapter 2 also begins to connect Hosea's

marriage to Gomer with the behavior of the Israelites. Do you remember the teaching examples we learned about earlier? Now we will see how God used the example of Hosea and Gomer to teach the people of Israel.

Verse 2. Hosea told his children to say things to their mother, Gomer. Hosea wanted the children to carry a message from him to Gomer. The message is this: Hosea is not her husband any more. Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea and committed adultery. Hosea said Gomer behaved like a prostitute, and he wanted her to stop.

Hosea asked his children to plead with their mother. This means God was pleading with Israel. The word *plead* is a strong word. It means much more than just to ask. It tells us how much God wanted His people to come back to Him. God asked them again and again.

Hosea told his children to accuse his wife. This word *accuse* in the Hebrew language means “to say in legal language someone did something wrong.” Hosea not only said his wife did something wrong.

Hosea was formally accusing or pressing charges against his wife. It is like he filed some papers in court to prove she was unfaithful.

**GOD WANTED THE
ISRAELITES TO CHANGE
THEIR BEHAVIOR AND
WORSHIP HIM AGAIN.**

Some people think Hosea was trying to divorce Gomer when he said, “I am no longer her husband.” We can see that is not true. The second half of verse 2 shows Hosea begging his wife to stop her behavior. If Hosea divorced his wife, he would not care if she continued to sin or what she did. Hosea probably meant his marriage did not function like a marriage any more. Gomer was not living as his true wife.

Remember, this is an example of the relationship between God and Israel. Gomer was a bad wife, but she was only an example of the people of Israel. In the book of Exodus, there are many laws binding Israel to God. The words and phrases in the law were very similar to legal contracts. Hosea accused the people of breaking their contract (covenant) with God. Another example is the legal marriage between husband and wife. Gomer, like Israel, broke her contract. Using the examples of legal charges and marriage contracts, Hosea accused the people of Israel of being unfaithful to God.

Verses 3-5. Hosea listed three severe punishments for Gomer. Remember, Hosea is listing punishments for the people of Israel,

but the punishments seemed to be for Gomer, Hosea's unfaithful wife. God used Hosea to give examples of punishments.

The first punishment was God stripped his wife, Israel, naked. God embarrassed and humiliated Israel. This is similar to Hosea kicking his wife out of the house and stripping her naked in the front yard. If Gomer wanted to share her body with other men, Hosea could make it happen by throwing her out of the house without clothes.

The second punishment was God made his wife, Israel, dry like the desert. The Israelites knew water made the land fertile and capable of producing fruit. God said He would make his wife infertile and unable to have children.

The third punishment was God would ignore His wife's children. Hosea and Gomer had three children. Some people think Hosea was the father of all three children, while others say Gomer's boyfriends were the fathers of her children. People in Israel usually ignored or put aside children of an unfaithful wife. The wife's guilt

REDEEM: TO SAVE

SOMETHING BY PAYING

A PRICE

shamed the children. The example of Hosea's children being embarrassed by their mother was a picture of the people of Israel being embarrassed by the actions of the entire nation.

The last part of verse 5 mentions the unfaithful wife running after her lovers. Her lovers gave her food, drink, and clothing. In the same way an adulterous wife got good things from her lover, God's people believed they would get blessings from Baal. In the example, God was Israel's husband. Baal was Israel's lover—the one promising food and clothes.

This section about punishment does not mean God was finished with the people of Israel. Verse 3 starts with the phrase, "If she refuses ..." God would only punish Israel, as Hosea might punish Gomer, if His people refused to change. God wanted the Israelites to change their behavior and worship Him again.

3. Redemption Carries a Price (3:1-5)

Chapter 3 changes from the style of a poem in chapter 2 back to a narrative (story). In chapter 3, God spoke to Hosea instead of talking to His people.

Verse 1. God told Hosea to love an unfaithful woman again. Most experts say the unfaithful woman was his wife, Gomer, not a different unfaithful woman. God sent Hosea to reunite with his wife. Again, God compared Gomer to the nation of Israel. Just as Hosea loved Gomer even though Gomer was an unfaithful wife, God loved Israel even though His people worshiped other gods.

The people of Israel often ate a special kind of raisin cake as part of their worship of Baal. God mentioned the raisin cakes here as a way of saying the people of Israel worshiped false gods and enjoyed the pagan food (raisin cakes) and pagan rituals (temple prostitutes).

Verse 2. Hosea bought his wife, Gomer, for a very high price. The Bible does not say who owned Gomer or why. It probably means Hosea was required to pay the temple priests for her freedom. All we know is Hosea paid a very heavy price for a woman who was already his wife. This means Hosea redeemed his wife. *Redeem* means “to save something by paying a price.” Hosea saved his wife and brought her home by paying a price.

Verses 3-5. Hosea restored his relationship with Gomer. The renewed relationship was an example of God’s plan to restore His relationship with Israel.

First, Hosea told Gomer she must wait for Hosea in some way. Second, Hosea said Gomer would stay faithful to him and would not have other lovers. Third, Hosea said he would stay faithful to Gomer.

This was a picture of how God and Israel would reunite. First, the people would not have a king for many years. They would not have a place to offer sacrifices or worship God. After many years passed, the Israelites would return to God. God would accept them again as His people. The people of Israel would obey the Lord. They would follow a king from the family of David. They would love, respect, and obey the Lord. The Lord would bless them. This was all part of God’s plan to save the people of Israel.

What About You?

Hosea obeyed the Lord when most others did not. Even when God planned to use Hosea's family as an example for others, Hosea obeyed. Could you sacrifice your family or your happiness to obey the Lord?

Hosea preached to people who had a wrong relationship with God. They sinned and rejected God. They believed nothing would happen to them. Do you have sin in your life, hidden from others? What will happen to you because of that sin?

Applying the Lesson

Think about these questions. Circle your answer "yes" or "no."

1. Was it fair for God to use Hosea's family to give a message to Israel?
Yes No
2. Would you let God use you and your family in some unusual way?
Yes No
3. Do you think churches today would accept Hosea and his wife as members?
Yes No
4. Could you be a friend to people like Hosea and his wife, Gomer?
Yes No
5. Like Hosea, are you faithful to God's command to witness to others and help them believe in Him?
Yes No

A verse to remember: "After this, the people of Israel will return to the Lord their God and follow Him and the king from David's family. In the last days, they will turn in fear to the Lord and He will bless them" (Hosea 3:5).

Rebuking Destructive Behavior

**Background
Study Verses:**
Hosea 4:1–7:16

Lesson Material:
Hosea 4:1-6,12-14

Bible Truth
God clearly showed
His people the sinful
attitudes and sinful
behaviors they
must avoid.



In America, many people are overweight. Experts wonder why so many people are overweight. They want to find the cause. Sometimes parents do not feed their children correctly. Many adults eat when they are lonely or depressed. Some folks eat the wrong kinds of food. Because people do not exercise properly, they gain weight.

The doctors tell us, “You need to eat better. You need to eat less. You need to exercise more.” We do not like it, but the doctors must tell us our mistakes so we can improve our health.

This is very similar to what we will study in today’s lesson. God, through Hosea, told the people about their sin. He scolded His people for their foolishness. He warned them about serious consequences of their sin. The people did not like the scolding, but God needed to tell His people what they were doing wrong.

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **Spiritual Decay (4:1)** – God forced the people of Israel to face their terrible sin and disobedience.
2. **Lawless Society (4:2-3)** – The sin of the people of Israel caused social and environmental damage to the promised land.
3. **Failed Leadership (4:4-6)** – God condemned Israel's spiritual leaders for rejecting His law and failing to guide the people.
4. **Sick Religion (4:12-14)** – God scolded the people of Israel for their idol worship and immoral behavior.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the sins of the Israelites mentioned in chapter four?
2. What would happen to the sons of the priests after their fathers died?
3. What happened to the land of Israel as a result of the Israelites' sin?
4. What main sexual sin did the people of Israel commit?
5. Why did the people of Israel have no knowledge of God?

Today's Lesson

Today's lesson begins where the lesson from December 2 ended. The example of Hosea's marriage is finished. A new section of the book begins. Chapter four is similar to a legal document. God presents a case against the people of Israel for their behavior. God's case against His people seems mean or harsh, but this was an important part of bringing His people back to Him. Sometimes, we must see the problem clearly before we can look for a solution.

1. Spiritual Decay (4:1)

Verse 1. God's first accusation related to the spiritual condition of Israel. The people were sinful and were not loyal to God. They did not even know Him. This was the same nation God brought out of

Egypt. God gave them their laws and their nation. He loved Israel and protected their nation. None of that was important to the people of Israel. They did not know Him anymore.

God expected Israel to love Him like a wife loves her husband. God also expected Israel to know Him like a wife knows her husband. The people of Israel did not know God. They were not loyal to Him. God accused the Israelites of allowing their relationships with God to decay, or crumble, and fall apart.

We can still see the example of a marriage, like Hosea and Gomer, from the last lesson. Even though the rest of the book does not mention Hosea's marriage, the people at that time knew about Hosea and Gomer. We need to remember the example of Gomer's unfaithfulness to Hosea.

2. Lawless Society (4:2-3)

Verses 2-3. God's second accusation listed the ways Israelite society changed from something good to something terrible. Bad language, killing, dishonesty, adultery, and theft filled the Israelite culture. All these things were the result of the spiritual decay we read about in verse 1. Spiritual decay and disloyalty to God bring more and more sin.

SPIRITUAL DECAY AND
DISLOYALTY TO GOD
BRING MORE
AND MORE SIN.

Consider the example of a marriage. When a husband and wife have a healthy relationship, their marriage will survive. If the husband starts spending too much time with his friends, the relationship between husband and wife will decay. This means it will begin to fall apart. Imagine what happens if the wife starts spending all her time talking to people on VP. Now, the decay in their relationship gets worse. The husband and wife talk less to each other. They start ignoring each other. What happens? The relationship decays even more.

This is a picture of what happened to Israel. As they began to disobey God, the people of Israel started to drift away from Him. As they drifted, they sinned even more. The sin hurt their relationship with God more and more.

We can also see something interesting in this list of sins. Do you remember how God gave the original law and commandments to

Moses? The Ten Commandments were part of what God gave Moses. Read Exodus 20:1-17 to see the entire list. Four items from God's accusation in Hosea are in the Ten Commandments: stealing, murder, adultery, and dishonesty. The Israelites truly had a lawless society.

The people's sin caused the land to suffer. Some translations say the land already suffered, while other versions say the land would suffer in the future. The suffering would come upon them through a terrible drought. The land would dry up. The people and animals would die.

This is hard for us to understand because we usually think of the land following natural laws while people follow God's laws. Remember, God can use the natural world to punish His people. We cannot say every natural disaster is the result of sin, but verse 3 shows us how sin can influence the world. Do you remember the story of Noah and the flood? The sin of God's people brought destruction through the flood. God caused the flood to happen because of sin.

**HIS PEOPLE DID NOT HAVE
THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE
OF HIM.**

Sin today can influence any part of our lives. Sin can destroy a marriage and ruin families. Sin can cause problems for our churches. Sin can cause health and emotional problems. We can even see how

some sins can ruin our environment. Sin destroys everything. The Israelites could not understand that. Can you?

3. Failed Leadership (4:4-6)

Verses 4-6. These verses together are a rebuke to Israel's leaders. We already learned about Israel's lawless and disloyal society. Now we will see how God responded to the leaders of that society.

In the laws God gave to the Israelites through Moses, priests and parents were responsible for teaching the next generation about God and His laws. The people of Israel during Hosea's time did not have the right knowledge of God because the priests and prophets did not teach the people. Parents did not teach their children to obey God. His people did not have the right knowledge of Him. God would destroy them because of their ignorance (verse 6).

For a moment, think of lessons you know from the Bible. Most of us know other stories about how leaders failed to teach the next

generation. In Judges 2:10-15, one generation of parents died and did not teach their children about the Lord. The kids grew up and did not know God. What did God do? He punished His people for their sin. The Book of Judges is about this pattern: the people of Israel forgot God, God disciplined His people, and they returned to Him.

In Hosea, God also said the priests and the people refused to learn about Him. Because the priests refused to learn, God would refuse to accept them as priests. Verse 6 also says God would forget the children of the priests because the priests forgot the teachings of God. This probably means God would not allow the children of the priests to grow up and become priests themselves. From the time of Moses, the children of the priests grew up to become priests. Now, God would not let that happen because the priests would not do their duty as priests.

If we think of other Bible lessons, we can see a pattern. In the story of the priest Eli and his sons, Eli did not teach his sons properly and the sons sinned as priests. God promised to end Eli's family because Eli did not do his duty. Eli did not stop his sons from sinning while they worked as priests (1 Sam. 2:27-36).

THE ISRAELITES DID
THINGS TO HONOR

The Israelites' sins were not new sins. They made these same mistakes in the past. God's words were not new words. He said all these commands before. God's punishments were not all new. God had rejected other priests. This time, however, God would take His people away from their land. This time was different.

FALSE GODS AND IDOLS.

4. Sick Religion (4:12-14)

In the final section of today's passage, God rebuked and scolded the nation for their religious habits. His people stopped worshiping God and honoring Him. Instead, the Israelites did things to honor false gods and idols.

Verses 12-13. The sins of the people were many. The people asked fortune-tellers for information about the future. The people prayed to wooden idols for guidance. The Israelites forgot about worshiping God. Instead, God's people went to temples to worship Baal. Temples and altars to Baal were often on tops of hills or among certain kinds of trees. At these temples, God's people burned sacrifices and went to temple prostitutes.

In various forms of idol worship, many temples had temple prostitutes. Some passages in the Bible call them shrine prostitutes. Men went to prostitutes as a way of asking Baal for fertile crops and many children. The women of Israel were guilty of being temple prostitutes. They not only were unfaithful to their husbands, they were also part of worshipping idols. Many women visited male prostitutes at the temple, too. Both men and women were guilty of being temple prostitutes.

Verse 14. This verse can be confusing. When we read the verse, we might think God is saying He will not punish the women for their actions. We know from history how both men and women in Israel suffered God's punishment, so verse 14 cannot mean God would not punish the women for their part in temple prostitution.

Some scholars say God was making an important point. The women were guilty of sinning sexually. The women were also guilty of idolatry and adultery. We need to remember something important: if the men never went to the prostitutes, the women would not be as guilty. Do you understand? The women were wrong for their actions, but they were doing these sins with the men. So both men and women were guilty.

Consider drug use in America. Many men and women use drugs. Many children learn to use drugs by watching their parents. Children learn drugs are acceptable. Later, when the children are older, they continue to use drugs. Who is to blame for these young adults using drugs? In some ways, the young adults choose to use drugs. In other ways, it is the parents' fault for being bad examples. The parents will answer to God for teaching their children about drugs.

This is similar to what Hosea said. God would punish the women for being temple prostitutes, but in some ways, the men were to blame a little more. The men gave their business to the prostitutes and led their families to accept prostitution as something normal.

Temple prostitutes were a part of pagan worship. We do not have temple prostitutes today, but we do have bad habits in our churches. God may not like some of the ways we worship. Can you think of anything we do in churches today to show dishonor to Him?

What About You?

Much of today's lesson focused on how the people of Israel refused to learn about God and honor Him. They had a weak and dirty kind of religion. Their religion was false and did not honor Him.

What about your faith? Is your faith in God something to make the world better around you?

Do you carefully consider how your faith can influence your friends, neighbors, and children?

Applying the Lesson

Think about your role as a parent, grandparent, or church member. Do you teach your children or friends about God?

List some ways you can teach people around you about God.

What do you do to set a good example for your children?

What spiritual mistakes do you copy from your parents?

How do you try to help your children learn from your mistakes?

A verse to remember: "The people are not true, not loyal to God, nor do those who live in the land even know him" (Hosea 4:1b)

Deciding on Discipline



**Background
Study Verses:**
Hosea 8:1–10:15

Lesson Material:
Hosea 8:1-3,7-10;
9:7-8; 10:10-12

Bible Truth
God disciplines His people when they sin. His goal is to restore His people to faithfulness and godly living.

Go to a park and watch the parents and children. If you watch the family long enough, you might see one of the kids do something wrong. You can see the parents stand up suddenly and start yelling at the kids. Sometimes, the kids continue doing wrong. They do not obey their parents. The moms and dads will walk toward the kids. Maybe the parents will shake their heads or point their fingers. Finally, the parents will go to the children and punish them. Maybe the kids need to sit down or stop playing. You can see the whole situation. You know how to help the kids avoid punishment. The kids don't understand, however, and they cause trouble for themselves.

In today's lesson, we will see how the Israelites ignored God's warnings. We will study how they were blind to their problems and how this caused trouble for them.

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **Check Your Relationship (8:1-3)** – The Lord chose to discipline the nation of Israel because they did not have a right relationship with Him.
2. **You Reap What You Sow (8:7-10)** – Israel made bad decisions and chose to depend on other nations instead of depending on God.
3. **Heed a Warning When You Hear It (9:7-8)** – Prophets and men of God warned the nation many times, but the people did not pay attention to the warnings.
4. **Realize What Time It Is (10:10-12)** – God said He would punish His people for their sins and crimes until His people were ready to repent and return to Him.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What nation would defeat the people of Israel?
2. Why did God plan to punish His people?
3. How did Israel react to prophets who warned them?
4. What would God do if His people repented?
5. Whom did Israel depend on to help them in times of trouble?

Today's Lesson

Chapters 8-10 of the book of Hosea are difficult chapters. These chapters focus on how God would strongly discipline the entire nation of Israel. God planned to use the nation of Assyria as a way of disciplining the people of Israel.

Discipline has two meanings. The first meaning is “to change someone’s behavior through punishment.” For example, we discipline our dogs by spanking them with a newspaper to change their behavior of chewing on shoes. The other definition of discipline is “to focus on a goal.” For example, football players discipline themselves to eat right and exercise during the off season. In today’s lesson, God disciplined His people to help them change their behavior.

1. Check Your Relationship (8:1-3)

Verse 1. God tolerated the sin of His people for a long time. Finally, God was ready to discipline and punish Israel for their sin. God would send a powerful army from another nation to conquer Israel. Like an eagle, the enemy army would attack the nation.

What was God's reason for punishing His people? We can see His reasons in verse 1. The Israelites broke their agreement with God. They ignored His teachings. The Israelites were part of the agreement, or covenant, between the people and God. They made the agreement with God at Mount Sinai with Moses. After many centuries, the people stopped obeying God. They broke their promise to worship only Him. God would use the invading army to discipline His people and punish them for their sin.

When we study the history of Israel during this time, we can see how God used the Assyrian army to conquer Israel. The Assyrians took many people out of Israel and scattered them among different cities. Later, the Assyrians brought people from other nations to live in the land of Israel. We can see an interesting pattern. When the Israelites made their agreement with God, He gave them their own nation. When they broke their agreement, He took their land away from them and gave it to someone else.

Verses 2-3. Israel tried to defend itself against God's accusations. The people said they knew God well. The Israelites told God they worshiped Him. God answered His people. He told the Israelites their actions did not match their words. His people claimed to obey Him, but their actions did not honor God. Today, we call people like that hypocrites. They say one thing but their actions say something different.

Suppose the people listened to God when He accused them of sin. Do you think God would have punished His people anyway? Many places in the Bible tell us about how God reminded individuals of their sin. Do you know the story of David and Bathsheba? When the prophet Nathan accused David of sinning, David admitted his sin and reunited with God (2 Sam. 11:1–12:25). David often made mistakes, but he also repented and truly worshiped God. Unlike David, the people of Israel during the life of Hosea did not admit their sin. They refused to admit their relationship with God was not right.

THEIR ACTIONS
DID NOT MATCH
THEIR WORDS.

2. You Reap What You Sow (8:7-10)

The phrase “reap what you sow” is a common phrase in the Bible. The phrase refers to farming as an example. The word *sow* means “to plant seeds.” The word *reap* means to harvest. This phrase is an example of farmers who plant (sow) wheat seeds and then harvest (reap) wheat. Farmers who sow apple seeds will one day reap apples. For today’s lesson, the phrase means people who obey the Lord will receive the Lord’s blessing—on earth or in heaven. But God will punish people who ignore Him. We will all get back exactly what we have done.

Verse 7. Israel did not depend on God for their plans. They made their own plans. They did not listen to Him. Hosea said the foolish plans of the Israelites were like planting wind. It was a waste of time. Instead of getting something useful, the Israelites would only harvest a destructive storm. Hosea was using a poetic example to show how the Israelites were acting foolishly.

Hosea also compared the Israelites’ plans to a stalk of wheat with no seeds (grain). Wheat stalks had the seed at the top of the plant. Without seeds, the plant was useless. Hosea compared the plans of the people of Israel to wheat stalks with no seeds at the top. Like the stalks without seeds, the plans of the Israelites were wasted.

PEOPLE WHO OBEY
THE LORD WILL RECEIVE
THE LORD’S BLESSING.

Both examples from Hosea referred to the Israelites wasting their time on foolish things. The Israelites made plans without including God. They did not consider what He would think. The Israelites chose their own path and, in the end, their path always led to punishment.

Verses 8-10. Many times in the Old Testament, the Israelites were called “the people who were set aside by God.” This means God chose the people of Israel to become His people. God wanted His people to be set apart from other nations. The people of Israel did not obey God. They mixed with other nations. Sometimes they mixed by copying the religion of other nations. Other times the Israelites married people from other nations.

The Israelites tried to make their nation strong by joining with the nations of Assyria and Egypt. Hosea compared the Israelites to a wild donkey. Wild donkeys were independent and did not obey anyone.

Wild donkeys ran where ever they wanted. Like the donkeys, Israel did not obey the Lord. They ran to Assyria and Egypt for help.

God promised to separate Israel from other nations. After Israel was unable to depend on Assyria, God would use Assyria to conquer and crush Israel. Instead of being able to depend on Assyria, the Israelites would suffer from the Assyrian army.

3. Heed a Warning When You Hear It (9:7-8)

Verses 7-8. Israel faced a terrible punishment. They could not avoid it. God decided to punish His people for their sin. He wanted to help them change their behavior and return to Him. How could Israel avoid this terrible punishment? The people could avoid punishment if they listened to the warnings from the prophets and returned to God.

Hosea reminded the people of Israel of a painful fact: God sent many prophets in the past to remind His people of their sins. The Israelites did not listen. Hosea was one of the last prophets to preach to the nation of Israel. The prophets before him tried to warn the nation, but no one listened. Instead of listening, the Israelites called the prophets fools. The Israelites said spiritual people were crazy. The Israelites refused to listen to God's prophets. The people of Israel sinned when they mocked God's prophets.

THE ISRAELITES DID
THINGS TO HONOR
FALSE GODS AND IDOLS.

God sent prophets to serve as watchmen for the nation. A *watchman* is "someone who stood on the wall of the city and warned the people of danger." The prophets were watchmen, warning people about their sin and about God's anger. No one listened to the prophets.

Instead of learning from the prophets, the people of Israel ignored God's warnings. Instead of becoming saved, the people faced danger. God would not save them. God prepared traps for the Israelites. He made sure they had no way to escape their punishment. Hosea said the people of Israel were God's enemies.

4. Realize What Time It Is (10:10-12)

After all the warnings from Hosea, the Israelites still did not understand or listen to Hosea. They did not understand God's anger.

The people of Israel did not pay attention to the warnings from God. They did not realize the time for change and repentance had arrived.

Verse 10. God announced His plan to punish the nation of Israel. He would use the armies of other nations to punish the Israelites. God would come when He was ready. The Israelites did not understand what time it was. It was time to face God's anger.

Verse 11. Hosea used an example of a cow to help God's people understand what God was going to do. Hosea said Israel was like a young cow who liked to thresh grain. Threshing grain was an easy job. The cow only had to pull an easy load. The cow could also eat some of the grain while working. Of course, any cow would like such an easy job!

God said the cow would have a new job, a harder job. Instead of threshing grain, the cow would plow. Plowing was hard work because the cow had to pull the plow through the dirt. If the dirt was too dry, the plow would not sink into the ground. If the dirt was too wet, the plow would stick in the mud.

Hosea taught the people of Israel about God's discipline. In the past, God took care of the Israelites. They must obey Him, but God's laws were not hard. That easy life was finished now. God would make life hard for them. He would take away the good things. He would make them suffer.

Verse 12. Hosea wanted God's people to obey the Lord and do good things. Hosea used the same examples of planting and harvesting. He wanted the Israelites to plant goodness, to obey God, and do good things. Hosea wanted God's people to work hard for God. If God's people listened to Hosea, God would bless the nation. Hosea used an example of God pouring blessings on people like someone pouring water. What a wonderful way to end a terrible time of punishment!

What About You?

How good is your relationship with God? Are you aware of His commands?

We can easily criticize the people of Israel for not understanding their own sin, but we often do not see our sin. We also miss God's warnings for us to change.

Remember your actions will lead to results. If you honor Him, you will see the results of your obedience. If you fail to honor God, you will see results of disobedience.

Applying the Lesson

Write the letter in the space to match the definitions with the words from the lesson:

_____ someone who says one thing, but does something different

_____ wasting time on foolish things

_____ the prophets told God's warnings, but the people ignored them

_____ the Israelites when they disobeyed God and copied other nations.

A. "watchmen on the wall"

B. "wheat stalks with no seed"

C. "wild donkey"

D. "hypocrites"

Do you believe we reap what we sow today?

If God is telling you about sins you need to give up and repent, talk with your pastor or a mature Christian and ask that person to pray with you.

A verse to remember: "Plant goodness, harvest the fruit of loyalty, plow the new ground of knowledge. Look for the Lord until He comes and pours goodness on you like water" (Hosea 10:12).

Seeking the Savior

**Background
Study Verses:**
Matthew 1:18–2:18

Lesson Material:
Matthew 2:1–15

Bible Truth
God promised to send
a Savior, and He sent
His son, Jesus.



It was Christmas Eve. John sat in his easy chair and looked at the bright lights on the tree. He saw the many presents under it for the children. Tomorrow the children would become excited about all their new toys. They would want to tell everyone what they got for Christmas. But John was not excited. He had been thinking all day about what the next year held for him. He wanted more from his life. He was not happy with his job and his boring life. He took his Bible and found the Christmas story to read to the children before they opened their gifts the next morning. He thought about what that story meant. He realized he must become excited every time he read about God's great gift of His son, Jesus Christ. John prayed. He promised God he would tell more people about God's great gift.

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **What Are You Looking For? (2:1-2)** – Wise men from the East came to Jerusalem looking for the newborn King of the Jews.
2. **What Is Your Motive? (2:3-8)** – Herod told the wise men to come back and tell him what they found.
3. **How Will You Respond? (2:9-12)** – The wise men followed the star and found Jesus. They worshiped Him and gave Him gifts.
4. **Who Is This Christmas Child? (2:13-15)** – Joseph was warned in a dream and took Mary and Jesus to Egypt.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Where was Jesus born?
2. How did the wise men know where to go to look for the new king?
3. Why did Herod want to know where to find the new king?
4. Why did the wise men go home a different way and not tell King Herod?
5. Why did Joseph take his family to Egypt?

Today's Lesson

1. What Are You Looking For? (2:1-2)

In chapter 1, Matthew wrote about the family of Jesus. He traced the family line all the way back to Abraham. He explained how there were 14 generations from Abraham to David and 14 generations from David to the time the Jews were taken to Babylon. There were 14 more generations from Babylon to Jesus. Why was that important? This information helps us to understand how Jesus was truly the Messiah.

Then Matthew told about how an angel talked to Joseph and helped him understand how Mary was carrying a baby from the Holy Spirit. This helps us to understand how Jesus was truly the Son of God.

Verse 1. In chapter 2, Matthew wrote about how the wise men came from the East. This helps us to understand how Jesus was

not only the Messiah for the Jews. He is the Savior for all people everywhere. He will save people who seek Him.

The Gospel of Luke gives us more information about how Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Joseph went with Mary to Bethlehem. Why? King Herod told everyone to go to their home town and register for taxes. Bethlehem was a small town about six miles from Jerusalem. King Herod ruled that area for 37 years. Jesus was born in the last year of Herod's reign.

The men from the East are identified as wise men. Another word we see is *Magi*. They were more like astronomers (people who study the stars), than kings. They were probably from a tribe with some experience with early Judaism. They came from the family of Keturah, Abraham's wife after Sarah died. She had six sons who started Arab tribes south and east of Canaan (Gen. 25:1-6).

The wise men were probably familiar with the first five books of the Old Testament. They may have studied Numbers 24:15-19. In these verses, the prophet Balaam told about a Messiah who will come in the future. "I see someone who will come someday, someone who will come, but not soon. A star will come from Jacob; a ruler will rise from Israel" (Num. 24:17).

WE ARE TRULY WISE
WHEN WE SEEK JESUS.

Because of what we read in verse 16, about Herod wanting to kill all the baby boys under 2 years old, we know the wise men came to see Jesus at least a year and possibly 2 years after Jesus was born. By that time, Joseph and Mary probably had a house in Bethlehem. We do not know why Joseph did not return to his home to Nazareth after he registered for the tax. It seems he stayed in Bethlehem.

Verse 2. The wise men followed a star from their home to the land of the Jews. They went to Jerusalem, the capital, to see the king. They were looking for a king, so they went to a king to ask where this new king was born. They did not understand what kind of king Jesus was. They expected this new king to sit on the throne like David.

Many people today look for something important in their life. We are truly wise when we seek Jesus. He is the one who can give us joy and peace in our life. If you are seeking joy and peace, talk with someone who can share with you the wonderful story of Jesus the Savior.

2. What Is Your Motive? (2:3-8)

In these verses, we find Herod also seeking Jesus, but for a different reason. His motive (reason for doing something) was to kill anyone who wanted to become king. He killed some of his sons and wives so they could not take his kingdom away from him.

Verses 3-4. Matthew does not tell anything more about other people in Jerusalem who were troubled along with King Herod. This may mean the important priests and teachers (scribes). Herod called these Jewish leaders together because the wise men said they were looking for the king of the Jews. These Jewish leaders hated and feared King Herod.

Verses 5-6. They knew nothing about the birth of Jesus, of course, but they did remember a verse from the Old Testament. This verse is Micah 5:2, “You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are too small to be among the army groups from Judah, from you will come one who will rule Israel for me. He comes from very old times, from days

WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVE
FOR WANTING TO KNOW
MORE ABOUT JESUS?

long ago.” Matthew wrote the verse in a different form from the Old Testament verse. The difference is because the Old Testament is translated from Hebrew. Matthew wrote in Aramaic, so Matthew 6 is translated from Aramaic.

Both verses give the same truth. This always helps us to know how God keeps His Word alive. The truth is the same, no matter what translation we read!

Verse 7. After Herod talked with the Jewish leaders, he met with the wise men again. He asked them when they first saw the star. Why did he want to know that? Because he knew that was the day this new king was born. He knew how old the baby was when he talked with the wise men. That helps us understand why King Herod killed all the baby boys under two years old in the area around Bethlehem.

Verse 8. Herod was a murderer and a liar. He lied when he told the wise men he wanted to worship the new king. He wanted to kill the new king and anyone else powerful enough to take his kingdom away from him.

The wise men had a strong motive for visiting the new king. Herod had an evil motive. What is your motive for wanting to

know more about Jesus? Our motive must be to worship Him as our Savior and Lord.

3. How Will You Respond? (2:9-12)

The word *respond* means “to do something because of what we have seen or learned.” In these verses, we see how the wise men responded with joy and with generous gifts to Jesus.

Verse 9. The wise men left Jerusalem, and the star continued to lead them to Jesus. We can learn something from this verse. If the wise men did not stop in Jerusalem to talk with other people about this, the star would have led them to Jesus. We need to be careful we do not go to the wrong people and places to learn about Jesus. We need to go to the Bible. The Bible will lead us to Jesus in the same way the star led the wise men.

Verse 10. The wise men saw the star was still there to lead them. They rejoiced. We, too, can rejoice every time we go to God’s Word and learn something more about Jesus.

When we read more of the Bible, we learn more about Jesus.

GOD SPOKE
AND THE WISE MEN
OBEYED.

Verse 11. The wise men came to the house and found Jesus with His mother and Joseph. Joseph had moved his little family from the stable to a house in Bethlehem. We do not know how old Jesus was. Bible teachers believe he was only a few weeks old. Herod wanted to make sure, so he killed all the baby boys under two years old.

The three gifts show us three things about Jesus. The gold shows He was a king. The frankincense shows He was divine, and the myrrh shows He would suffer. It is also necessary to realize how Joseph could use these things to pay for his trip to Egypt. God always provides for His people!

Verse 12. Herod told the wise men to report back to him, but God was in control. God told the wise men to go a different way. God spoke and the wise men obeyed God rather than the king.

When God speaks to your heart, how will you respond? When you read the Bible and understand what God wants, will you obey? When we meet Jesus, we know we need to obey Him.

4. Who Is This Christmas Child? (2:13-15)

Verses 13-14. Matthew again quoted from the Old Testament (Hosea 11:1) when he wrote about the trip to Egypt. God spoke to Joseph and told him to go with his family to Egypt. God spoke, and Joseph obeyed.

Verse 15. Joseph continued to obey God and stayed in Egypt until he knew King Herod was dead. Then he went back to his home in Nazareth. That town is where Jesus grew up.

In verse 16, Matthew said Herod was very angry. The word Matthew used is a strong word. More than 300 years later a man named Macrobius wrote about this terrible killing. He said Herod killed his own son who was under two years old! The Jews had a saying, "It is better to be Herod's pig than to be his son." Herod killed several of his sons, but as a Jew, he would not touch or kill a pig! Matthew quoted from Jeremiah 31:15-17 about the weeping of the Jews at the time they were taken to Babylon and compared it with the weeping when these babies were killed.

Who is this Christmas child? Through all of Matthew's words, we can see God's hand as He takes care of His son. God guided the wise men. God guided Joseph to take his family to Egypt.

During this week, take time to look into God's Word and let God guide you to understand more about Jesus, our Savior. Then obey God as He leads you to do His work today.

What About You?

This lesson is about the birth of Jesus and what it meant to the wise men.

What does Christmas mean to you? Is it just another holiday? Is it just a time for families to get together and share gifts? Or is it a time when you remember how God sent His only son to become your Savior?

Applying the Lesson

Think of some of your friends, or people you work with, or people who live near you. Are any of them still seeking a Savior? Think about people that live in other parts of the world who do not know Jesus. Use this Christmas time to remind them who Jesus is and why He came.

Mark the things that you can do this year to help them to know Jesus:

_____ Invite them to church.

_____ Write your personal testimony in the Christmas cards you send.

_____ "Adopt" a needy family in Jesus' name and give them special Christmas gifts.

_____ Give money to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering to support missionaries in other countries.

A verse to remember: "When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy" (Matthew 2:10).

Remembering Compassion



**Background
Study Verses:**
Hosea 11:1-12:14

Lesson Material:
Hosea 11:1-11

Bible Truth
God's loving
compassion continues
even when people are
unfaithful to Him.

Every Friday night, J.T. and his teenaged friends went to a party and drank beer. One Friday night, J.T. drank too much. He went home very drunk. His father knew J.T. was drunk and decided to teach him a lesson. The father said, "You know I don't like alcohol, but you drink anyway. I have been patient with you. Now, my patience is finished."

The father took J.T. outside at 1:00 a.m. He forced J.T. to wash the car and then rake some leaves. J.T. learned a hard lesson that night because he saw true compassion in his father's punishment. The goal of the punishment was for J.T. to learn something to help him live a better life.

In the Old Testament, God sometimes used hard lessons to discipline His people. He wanted them to learn and come back to Him. Today, we will study God's judgment and compassion.

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **Compassion Though Unrecognized (11:1-4)** – Many times God is compassionate toward us even if we do not see it.
2. **Compassion amid Judgment (11:5-7)** – God’s judgment is part of His compassionate plan to bring us closer to Him.
3. **Compassion over Anger (11:8-9)** – God was firm with the Israelites, but He also showed compassion and pity.
4. **Compassion with Purpose (11:10-11)** – God had a compassionate plan to restore the Israelites to a right relationship with Him.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Whom did God call out of Egypt?
2. What kind of relationship did God and Israel have?
3. Who would make Israel slaves again?
4. What poetic thing did God say about His love for Israel?
5. What would God do after He finished disciplining the nation?

Today’s Lesson

We have studied about God’s patience. He was patient for many years while the Israelites ignored Him. Finally, God decided to punish the Israelites. What comes after punishment? In today’s lesson, we will study God’s compassion for His people. We will see how God forgives His people after they are willing to change their ways.

1. Compassion Though Unrecognized (11:1-4)

The word *compassion* means “deep love.” *Unrecognized* means “not known or not identified.”

In this section, God compared the difference between His actions and Israel’s actions. God first showed what He did and then showed what the Israelites did. The Book of Hosea repeated this pattern as a way of teaching the Israelites. As you read this chapter, remember God is the person speaking. Hosea wrote down God’s words.

Verses 1-2. Jacob was the grandson of Abraham. God changed his name to Israel. When he went to Egypt with his family, the Israelites were only a family. God compared this small group of people to a

child. God loved his son, Israel, very much. Many years later, the Israelites grew to several thousand people in several tribes (family groups). Then, God led Israel out of Egypt. God loved His people. He showed compassion for them by saving them from slavery.

How did the people of Israel respond to God's call? They neglected God. They worshiped idols and sacrificed to false gods. Yes, the Israelites did worship God for many years, but most of the time the people struggled to obey the Lord. God was kind to them, but the people did not understand or see God's compassion for them.

Many years later, Matthew quoted Hosea 11:1. Matthew said Jesus was God's son, just like Israel was a kind of son of God. This verse points toward the past and the future. Compare the nation of Israel to Jesus. Both Israel and Jesus went to Egypt during a time of danger. Both Israel and Jesus grew strong in Egypt. God called both Israel and Jesus out of Egypt. However, the Israelites did not continue to obey the Lord. Jesus always obeyed His Father.

GOD SHOWED

COMPASSION FOR THEM

BY SAVING THEM

FROM SLAVERY

Verses 3-4. God gave an interesting picture in these verses. He compared Himself and Israel to a father and child. Imagine watching a daddy and a little boy playing in the park. The daddy picks up his son and helps the son stand up. The boy does not have

good balance and he wobbles while standing in place. The daddy stays close and helps the little toddler take a step. Together, the daddy and boy slowly walk along. The daddy loves that boy and helps him learn to walk, ride a bike, and write his name.

Like a father, God taught the Israelites the basic things in life. God helped the Israelites make the first steps toward becoming a nation and worshiping Him. God saved His people from slavery in Egypt. He gave them food and water. He provided laws for His people and explained how to avoid sin, war, and illness. The people still did not understand. They did not see how God helped them and cared for them.

God also used a different kind of comparison. He compared His people to a cow. God tied the cow using ropes of love, not harsh ropes. Farmers tie their cows for two reasons. One reason is to control the cow. An untied cow might run away or damage crops. Another reason to tie a cow is to protect it. Cows sometimes

wandered into the mud and got stuck. An untied cow could fall into a hole, or fall into a river, or wander too far from home. In the comparison, God tied His people, His cow, with gentle ropes. The Lord guided and protected His people with His gentle ways.

God also took the heavy load away from the cow (the Israelites) and cared for the cow. People in the ancient world used cows the way we use trucks today. Cows hauled wood and stones. Cows pulled trees down and helped uproot stumps. God tried to show His people how He had been gentle with them, like taking a heavy load away. He gave them food. What amazing compassion!

God helped the Israelites. He taught His people. He was gentle with them. After God did all these things for His people, they still did not understand. He was compassionate, but His people were blind to His love.

2. Compassion amid Judgment (11:5-7)

The word *amid* means “during the time of, or in the middle of.” God showed His compassion while He pronounced judgment on His people.

Verse 5. God announced His plans for His people. The Israelites would become slaves again, just like they were slaves in Egypt. This time, Egypt would not take the Israelites away. A new nation, Assyria, would invade Israel. The Assyrian army was powerful during that time.

Most of the residents of Israel were taken away with the Assyrian army to new homes outside of Israel. Other people moved into the Israelite cities. Just like during the years before Moses, the people became slaves in a foreign nation. They did not have a nation of their own.

Verses 6-7. God clearly explained what would happen to Israel. Armies would invade the nation. The Assyrians would destroy the cities in Israel. Many people would die. God used the Assyrians to punish the people of Israel for their refusal to obey Him. The Assyrians were mean to their enemies. They killed women and children. The judgment against Israel was going to become terrible.

God was patient for many years. He sent the prophets to preach to His people. God’s servants tried to teach the Israelites about

GOD’S SERVANTS TRIED
TO TEACH THE ISRAELITES
ABOUT THEIR SIN.

their sin. Even though the prophets taught the people of Israel, they ignored God. They chose to serve false gods.

How does this section fit with the last one? Judgment is difficult and painful. Where was God's compassion? God showed His people compassion before judgment by being patient with them. He showed compassion by sending prophets to teach His people the same lessons again and again.

God's judgment was also a part of His compassion. How? God did not punish His people just because He was angry. The Lord punished His people so they would worship Him again. God truly wanted His people to become holy and happy. Only through discipline would the people return to God. What would happen after the discipline was finished?

3. Compassion over Anger (11:8-9)

GOD SAID, "MY HEART
BEATS FOR YOU
AND MY LOVE
STIRS UP MY PITY."

Verses 8-9. In these verses, we can see exactly how God felt. He loved His people, the Israelites, even though He was angry with them. He disciplined His people, but He could not give them up.

The two towns, Admah and Zeboiim, were in the valley close to the Jordan River. These towns were close to Sodom and Gomorrah. Most scholars believe God destroyed Admah and Zeboiim along with Sodom and Gomorrah. God mentioned these cities to His people. Why? God told the Israelites He did not want to destroy Israel forever as He destroyed Admah and Zeboiim. Even when He was angry, God loved the Israelite people deeply.

Read the second part of verse 8 again. God said, "My heart beats for you and my love stirs up my pity." That verse looks like part of a love song! His heart beats for His people. We know God is spirit and does not have a real, physical heart. God was using phrases we can understand. We can also see how strong His love is. God's love is strong enough to overcome His anger. In the last few lessons, we have studied how hurt and angry God has been. Now we see His love is greater than His anger.

God gave His people a promise. He promised His people His anger would go away some day. He would remember His love for Israel.

God destroyed other cities completely, but He would not destroy Israel completely. In the end, compassion would overcome anger.

4. Compassion with Purpose (11:10-11)

What was God's purpose (goal)? We learned His plans for discipline for His people. What were God's plans for showing His compassion for His people?

Verses 10-11. After the Assyrian army conquered Israel, the Israelites would suffer. They would live in nations outside Israel as a part of God's punishment. When His people were ready to obey and worship God, He would call them home.

God would roar like a lion. Many times, the Bible uses the image of a lion to show strength. With his strength, God would find a way to bring the people of Israel home. The people would come back to Israel like a flock of doves. Have you ever seen a flock of birds covering a yard? When the birds leave, there are so many birds you can't see the sky. In a similar way, the Israelites would come rushing back home to Israel. God would prepare the way for them. He would settle them in their homes.

God was trying to bless His people, Israel. God wanted to have a new relationship with the Israelites. Just as God needed to discipline Israel so they would learn, God also wanted to have compassion on Israel. Without compassion, they could never return home and have a right relationship with Him.

This lesson focuses on compassion. God had compassion while He warned His people of judgment. God was angry because of the nation's sin, but He still had compassion. When the time of judgment arrived, God disciplined His people in anger and compassion. God truly wanted His people to give up their evil habits and turn to Him. In the end, God promised to welcome His people home because of His great love and compassion.

What About You?

We can see two different lessons in these verses. The first lesson helps us understand the great compassion and love God has for His people. God shows compassion to us by forgiving our sin. Have you confessed your sin and asked God to forgive you?

The second lesson shows us how we must act toward others. Just as God shows great love and compassion for people, we must also show love and compassion for others. Do you show God's kind of love to everyone you meet?

Which lesson means the most to you today?

Applying the Lesson

Can other people see God's compassion in your life?

Look in your neighborhood. Can you find people living near you who need your love?

Look at the people who live near your church. Can you see someone who needs your love?

Make a prayer list of people you know who need your love.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Ask God to show you how to love them.

A verse to remember: "I am God and not a human; I am the Holy One, and I am among you. I will not come against you in anger" (Hosea 11:9).

Restoring the Repentant

**Background
Study Verses:**
Hosea 13:1–14:9

Lesson Material:
Hosea 13:4-6; 14:1-9

Bible Truth

When people repent of their sin and turn to God, He forgives them and makes them whole.



A man went to see his doctor. The man did not feel right. His back and knees hurt. He could not sleep well. He could not breathe well. The doctor examined the man. He did many tests and asked questions. Then the doctor said, “I found the problem. You need to lose 50 pounds.”

The man decided to lose weight. He lost 50 pounds. The man felt much better. His body did not hurt any more. He slept better. His breathing was fine. He made a wise decision to lose weight.

The man experienced four things. He saw the need to lose weight. He heard his doctor tell him to lose weight. He saw the results of losing weight. He understood the wisdom of losing weight.

Hosea tried to help the Israelites understand their need for repentance. Would they listen to Hosea like the man listened to his doctor?

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **Need of Repentance (13:4-6)** – When our actions and attitudes are sinful, we need to repent and reunite with God in the right way.
2. **Call to Repentance (14:1-3)** – When we sin, God encourages us to come to Him in repentance.
3. **Results of Repentance (14:4-8)** – If we come to God with a repentant heart, He will forgive us, renew our relationship with Him, and give us a fresh start.
4. **Wisdom of Repentance (14:9)** – We need to understand how repenting of our sin opens the door to pleasing God and living His way.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What was the main sin in Israel?
2. What did Hosea tell God's people to do?
3. God wanted His people to learn He was the _____ source for help.
4. What kind of examples did Hosea use to show God's future blessings for the nation?
5. What kind of person did Hosea say would listen to the words of God?

Today's Lesson

What now for the Israelites? Hosea showed the people of Israel their sin. God told them about His anger. God promised compassion for the future. What comes after compassion? Today we will study repentance and restoration. *Repentance* is “turning away from sin and turning toward God.” *Restoration* is “returning to a whole and healthy relationship with God.”

1. Need of Repentance (13:4-6)

In the first three verses of this chapter, Hosea described the sins of Israel. The main sin was idol worship. The Israelites made idols from silver. They kissed the idols. They offered sacrifices

to the idols. Because of their sin, God would punish His people and destroy them. The people and their sin would disappear like the morning dew. Where does the dew go each morning? Dew is only water. It evaporates in the hot morning sun. Just like the dew simply disappears, the sinful Israelites would just fade away like they had never existed.

Verses 4-6. God reminded His people of some important facts. We will look at these facts carefully.

First, God reminded His people how long He was their God. From the time His people were in Egypt, the Lord had been their God. The Israelites left Egypt somewhere between 550 and 700 years before Hosea worked. God was their Lord for a long time.

Second, God told His people they were wrong to have other gods during the 550-700 years. The Law of Moses was clear: worship only the Lord. The people agreed to the Law. They knew to worship only God, but they did not obey.

Third, God reminded His people of His great salvation. Only God can save us. The people of Israel knew God could save them.

He showed them many times, but the people forgot. Many times in the Old Testament different leaders built altars and memorials. These

memorials were reminders of the great things God did for Israel. Even with the reminders, God's people forgot His great salvation.

Fourth, God cared for the Israelites in many ways. He gave His people food. You can read about the manna from heaven in Exodus 16:1-18. This was a kind of bread for people to eat. God gave them water. You can read about how God made water flow from a rock in Exodus 17:1-7. This was not the only time God gave them food and drink.

Finally, God reminded His people of their own actions. They forgot God and refused to obey Him. They were disobedient.

We can see from this list how much God did for His people. We can also see how wrong the Israelites were. The people needed to repent and return to God.

THE ISRAELITES NEEDED
TO REPENT AND
RETURN TO GOD.

2. Call to Repentance (14:1-3)

Verse 1. Hosea called the people of Israel to return to God. Hosea reminded the people of an important fact: their sin caused their own fall. He did not want them to give up or quit. Hosea wanted them to return to God. How could they come back to Him? Hosea answered that question in the next few verses.

Verses 2-3. Hosea encouraged the Israelites to begin their return to God with prayer. He wrote words for the Israelites to say to God. The prayer is simple. God's people needed to honestly ask God to take away their sin so they could honor Him.

The prayer had five parts. Part one was to ask God to take away their sin. Part two asked God to receive His people back to Him. Part three was a guarantee to keep their old promises to Him. Part four included

ALL GOD'S PEOPLE
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a promise to depend only on God.

Part five showed the Israelites learned their lesson. They promised not to worship idols any more.

Hosea was probably not telling God's people to pray the exact prayer, or use exactly the same words.

The words for this prayer are not magical or special. The prayer shows

a changed heart and a new commitment to honor the Lord. The changed heart and new commitment were more important than the exact words of the prayer.

Does this prayer sound familiar? Many pastors use this prayer to lead people to Christ. Some people call this the "sinner's prayer." Hosea led the people to pray to the Lord in exactly the same way we teach people to pray for salvation. The ideas behind the sinner's prayer are written here in the book of Hosea.

3. Results of Repentance (14:4-8)

Verse 4. If the Israelites repented and returned to God, God would surely accept them. God promised to forgive His people for leaving Him. God said He would love His people freely. When we leave our sin (repent) and turn to God, He will always accept us in love.

Today, many people struggle with the idea of free forgiveness and loving acceptance. When we share with others the lesson of God's

grace and love, many people do not accept it or understand it. Why? One reason is because people do not love each other freely and cannot understand how God could do that.

Verses 5-7. These three verses are a beautiful and poetic expression of what God would do for His people. God used examples and picture words His people would easily understand.

God said He would become like dew to the people of Israel. As a result, the people would blossom like a lily. In some places in Israel, the only water for plants is the dew in the morning. The dew is the only way the lily can grow. The land gets only a small amount of rain and the rivers are far away. The dew is the only water to keep the flowers alive and growing.

God meant He would cause Israel to grow and become beautiful like a lily. How would God do this? He would supply what His people needed. God would become the only source of help for Israel. Just as the dew was the only water, God would become the only way for Israel to grow and become a wonderful nation.

GOD PROMISED HIS
PEOPLE THEY WOULD
ENJOY ALL OF GOD'S
BLESSINGS BECAUSE
HE FORGAVE THEM.

God also said the nation would grow and become strong. They would become as strong as the cedar trees in Lebanon.

The nation of Lebanon was famous for its wonderful trees, including cedar trees. The cedar trees in Lebanon were truly large and strong. God used the picture of a cedar tree to illustrate the future strength of the people of Israel.

God would make the people grow beautiful like olive trees. Olive trees are common in Israel and the neighboring nations. These trees were tough and could grow in difficult areas. God promised He would make the nation of Israel grow strong and tough in their nation.

God also promised His people they would grow grain on the flat lands and would expand to cover all of Israel. The flat lands in the nation of Israel are closer to the coast line. During the early years in the land, the Israelites only controlled the central and eastern portions of the nation. This area was mostly hills and mountains. The Philistines controlled the flat land, called the plains. God promised the Israelites He would give them total control over the entire nation, including the plains. On the plains, the Israelites would be able to grow grain without worrying about other nations stealing their crops.

Finally, God said His people would bloom like a grapevine and would become famous. This simply means the people would grow. The nations around them would see how God blessed the Israelites. The nation and people of Israel would become famous for being successful while depending completely on Him.

God promised His people they would enjoy all of God's blessings because He forgave them. His forgiveness would become complete. His blessings would have no limit. What a wonderful God!

Verse 8. This section ended with a reminder. God told His people again He was the only one who could bless them and protect them. Idols could not do what God could do. Just as in 13:4, God wanted His people to remember there was only one God. Only the Lord could do all these wonderful things for His people. God wanted the Israelites to learn their lesson and not worship idols again.

4. Wisdom of Repentance (14:9)

Verse 9. Hosea ended his book of prophecy with words of encouragement. Hosea said wise and understanding people would know what to do and would learn. What does the word *wise* mean to you? Many times we talk about having wisdom or the need to make wise decisions. What does this mean?

The word *wise* in the Bible means “skilled in living.” A wise person is someone who has skills to get through life and make good decisions. A wise woman understands important lessons. Hosea meant wise people would become able to understand the lessons about sin, discipline, and repentance. The Bible often tells people to develop wisdom. This means people must learn how to live well.

Other places in the Bible describe how to gain wisdom. We must simply ask God for wisdom, and He will give it (James 1:5). Solomon wrote, “Wisdom begins with respect for the Lord, and understanding begins with knowing the Holy One” (Proverbs 9:10). Respecting God is the first step toward knowing how to live.

Wise people obey God's laws. People who are not wise disobey God's laws. The last verse in the book is a great promise. “The Lord's ways are right. Good people live by following them” (Hosea 14:9).

What About You?

Repentance is a common theme in the Old Testament. Repentance is also common in the New Testament. Sin is always with us. We all need to repent. Christians know they must continue to repent daily because they struggle with sin every day.

When you struggle with sin, do you remember to confess that sin and repent? God is ready to listen to you. He will forgive your sin and bless you if you will repent.

Please do not delay. If you know about sin in your life, repent today.

Applying the Lesson

Write a list of sins to avoid.

Write a list of sins to confess to God.

Keep this list secret from other people, but look at it when you pray. Ask God to help you give up those sins and repent from them.

When you sin, is it easy for you to repent? _____

A verse to remember: "The Lord's ways are right. Good people live by following them, but those who turn against God die because of them" (Hosea 14:9b).

Unit 2



HEART OF A RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

Amos 1:1–9:15

The four lessons in this unit come from the book of Amos. Amos clearly showed the reason for God's judgment of Israel. God sent Amos to warn the rich Israelites about their lifestyles and empty religion.

Amos wrote about his five visions from God. The visions focused on Israel's failures and God's decision to punish them.

The unit closes with God's promise of a better future for Israel. The nation would suffer greatly, but

God would save a faithful group of people from the family of Jacob.

The unit includes a "Sanctity of Human Life" lesson. The first section is about God's creation of people. The second section recalls the actions of the Hebrew midwives in Egypt. The third part focuses on David's praise of God's role in conception and birth. The final portion reminds us of Jesus' interaction with children.

Unseal the Indictment!



Background Study Verses:

Amos 1:1–4:13

Lesson Material:

Amos 1:1-2; 2:6-8;
3:6-8,13-15

Bible Truth

When people mistreat others, they show they do not have a right relationship with God, and God will judge them.

You have probably seen a court trial many times on television. The judge enters the courtroom. A man stands in front of the judge. The judge tells what things the man did wrong. Maybe he was driving while drunk, or maybe he had drugs. The judge calls witnesses and the police to testify about the person's crime. Then several people come to the judge and tell what kind of person this man is.

At the end of the trial, the judge announces a verdict: the man is guilty. No matter what the man said, or what others said about him, the judge will punish him. The judge is fair. The law is correct.

In today's lesson, we will see something similar. God used a simple man to announce the crimes of the nation of Israel. The people were guilty. God is a fair judge. He will punish His people.

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **Hear Ye! Hear Ye! (1:1-2)** – God uses people to show us how to live.
2. **Sinful Actions Are Evident (2:6-8)** – God knows all our sins, even secret sins, and He will judge us.
3. **You’ve Been Warned (3:6-8)** – God warns us of our sins in many ways, and we are responsible to obey His warnings.
4. **Accountability Comes Knocking (3:13-15)** – God will keep His promises to punish and promises to forgive.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Amos was from _____ but worked in the nation of _____.
2. What was the sexual problem Amos talked about? _____.
3. Amos compared prophets who preached God’s word to _____.
4. God said He would destroy the altar in which city? _____.
5. Amos criticized what group of people again and again? _____.

Today’s Lesson

Amos was a shepherd from the town of Tekoa, which was about 10 miles south of Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Amos also tended sycamore trees, which may have been a little far from his home. Amos probably had a good life because of his two jobs, but he was not rich.

Amos prophesied and preached to the people of Israel, the Northern Kingdom. He did not spend much time preaching in his own nation of Judah. God sent Amos to the Northern Kingdom to preach for about one year, around 762 B.C. Amos probably preached before Hosea.

The Northern Kingdom was wealthy during this time. Other nations around Israel were weak. The Israelites were able to do their business without worrying about armies and bandits. The Israelites’

religion was not truly spiritual. They depended on their money more than on God. The Israelites did not believe anything bad could ever happen to their nation because God would protect His people.

1. Hear Ye! Hear Ye! (1:1-2)

Verses 1-2. From his home town of Tekoa, Amos traveled to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He went to Israel to preach to God's people about God's judgment. Amos provided some important information to help us know approximately when he worked in Israel. He listed the names of the kings in Israel and Judah. He also mentioned an important historical event—an earthquake. We can trace the history of Amos' work because of these important time markers.

The picture of a roaring lion in verse 2 was a common way to symbolize an angry God. Hosea used the same symbol of God as an angry, powerful lion. Lions often roar as they attack their prey.

Their roar is frightening. Often the smaller animals are so afraid, they actually stop running.

GOD PUNISHED THEM

FOR SINNING AGAIN AND

AGAIN IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

God's roar, as a part of His judgment, would dry up the nation. Remember that Israel depended on agriculture and farming for food and

money. The pastures south of Jerusalem would dry up. This would mean the grass would die. Without grass, the sheep would die.

North of Jerusalem, the slopes and land around Mount Carmel would also dry up. This was the most fertile land in the entire area. Without water, this rich land would not support farm crops. The plants would die. The people would starve.

Amos painted a sad picture of drought and death through the entire land of Israel. We often think of drought and heat as being hard on our lawns and flowers. In Amos' time, drought meant dying sheep and brown plants. Without sheep, there was no wool. Without plants, there was no food. God certainly knew how to get the Israelites' attention! Natural disasters like hurricanes or earthquakes are not always sent to punish sin, but God has a way of using nature to bless us or punish us.

2. Sinful Actions Are Evident (2:6-8)

Amos preached the words of the Lord to the people of Israel, but many of his comments were for others, too. In chapter 1, most of Amos' prophecy related to other nations. Amos 1:3-5 is a prophecy for the people of Aram, north of Israel. The prophecy in 1:6-8 is about the Philistines who lived along the southern coast. Amos continued this pattern, preaching also to the people of Edom, Ammon, Moab, and Judah. These were all nations around Israel. God would punish them all for their sins. The last nation, Judah, was also evil. God promised to punish that nation, too.

To help us understand why God punished the people of Israel, we will carefully study each part of the next three verses. Read these verses in your Bible.

Verses 6-8. God promised to punish the Israelites for their many crimes. God did not punish the nation for a few mistakes. He punished them for sinning again and again in different ways.

The first crime was selling innocent people. Israel had many wealthy people. These people loaned money to poor people who needed help. When the poor people could not repay the money, the wealthy Israelites sold the poor people as slaves. How much money did the poor owe? Amos said poor people were sold for about the price of a pair of sandals.

God gave Moses many laws about poor people. God expected rich Israelites to help care for poor people (Deut. 15:7-11). Amos said the wealthy Israelites were taking advantage of the poor because of greed.

The second crime related to legal issues. Wealthy people were mistreating the poor in court. Poor Israelites could not get a fair trial because the wealthy people controlled the courts.

The third crime was about sex. Fathers and grown sons had sex with the same woman. This probably means fathers and their adult sons had sex with temple prostitutes.

The fourth crime is not as easy to understand. Amos said the wealthy were lying down on clothes taken from the poor. This probably means the wealthy loaned money to poor people. The poor had to give something to the lenders as security until the money was

GOD USED THE PROPHETS
TO WARN HIS PEOPLE
ABOUT IMPORTANT
EVENTS.

paid back. When the poor people repaid their loans, the wealthy would give the clothes back. The law from God said this was wrong. “If a poor person gives you a coat to show he will pay the loan back, don’t keep it overnight. Give the coat back at sunset, because your neighbor needs that coat to sleep in” (Deut. 24:10-13). The wealthy ignored the law and mistreated the poor.

The final crime was an old crime: the Israelites worshiped false gods and idols. The people did this many times.

3. You’ve Been Warned (3:6-8)

Amos tried to show how we can see most things before they happen if we will look for warnings. An example from today would be when

we see a traffic light change from green to yellow. We know the light will soon change to red. We need to understand the warnings around us to know what will happen.

WE OFTEN DEPEND
ON GOD TO KEEP HIS
PROMISES TO FORGIVE
US, BUT WE MUST ALSO
REMEMBER GOD PROMISES
TO PUNISH SIN.

Verse 6. Most cities during Amos’ life had watchmen. These men stood on the walls of the city to watch for armies or trouble.

When the people heard the watchman blow the trumpet, they

knew trouble was coming. A trumpet was an easy way to warn all the people about problems outside the city. The people could react after they heard the trumpet. Amos wanted to make sure everyone understood the truth: God warned Israel many times about judgment and punishment.

Who would cause the trouble to come to the people of Israel? Amos said God would cause the trouble. Amos did not say what kind of trouble, but we know God controls all things. Trouble could be something natural, like what God did to the Egyptians during the life of Moses. Trouble could come in the form of an invading army. Hosea warned the people God would use the coming Assyrian invasion to punish them. God can use anything to discipline His people because He is a powerful God.

Verses 7-8. Just as we see warnings before things happen, the people of Israel had warnings also. What were these warnings?

Many times God warned His people before something big

happened. God used the prophets to warn His people about important events. The prophet Ahijah predicted the split between Israel and Judah (1 Kings 11:29-39). Elijah predicted the deaths of the evil King Ahab and Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 21:17-24). These are only two examples, but there are many more in the Old Testament. In verse 7, Amos reminded the people of God's habit. God always used the prophets to tell people about His plans.

When God gives the warning, His people usually do not have time to change His plans. Just as a lion always roars and then attacks, God also always warns and then acts. Today, we are responsible to read His word and understand the message. We have a duty to listen to our pastors and teachers and understand the lessons they teach us.

4. Accountability Comes Knocking (3:13-15)

Verse 13. God called the nation of Israel by their old name, the family of Jacob. God asked Amos to become a witness to God's warnings and actions. The word *witness* here means "to see and report, like a witness to a crime." Amos would prove God warned His people about punishment, and He also punished His people.

Verses 14-15. God promised to punish Israel for all their sins. He also specifically talked about destroying an altar. The altar in the town of Bethel was a popular religious site in Israel. Jerusalem and the temple were part of the Southern Kingdom, so the northern kings set up a place of worship in Bethel.

The altar in Bethel had four horns, one for each corner. People who were guilty of crimes could go to the altar and hold onto a horn. This was a way of asking for protection from anyone chasing them. God said He would destroy the altar and cut off the horns. This was a way of saying no one can hide from His judgment.

God also said He would destroy the fancy homes of the wealthy. Israel was a greedy nation. Rich Israelites had a summer home and a winter home, just like a king might have. These homes were fancy and had the most expensive decorations. God said He would completely destroy these homes and take away the wealth.

We often depend on God to keep His promises to forgive us, but we must also remember God promises to punish sin. God keeps all His promises. The Israelites would learn this lesson.

What About You?

God knows all our sins. We cannot hide our sins from Him.

When you read your Bible, do you feel God speaking to you about your sin?

Do you want to repent and change? Pray right now and ask God to forgive you and give you strength to change.

Do you have any secret sins? Pray for God's guidance to help you understand how to change and obey Him.

Applying the Lesson

Fill in the blanks.

1. God uses P _____ to show us in how to live.
2. God knows all our s _____, even secret s _____, and He will judge us.
3. God w _____ us of our sins in many ways
4. We are r _____ to obey His warnings.
5. God will keep His p _____ to punish and p _____ to forgive.

A verse to remember: "Before the Lord God does anything, he tells his plans to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

Value All Human Life

Background Study Verses:

Genesis 1:26-31; Exodus
1:8-22; Psalm 139:13-16;
Mark 10:13-16

Lesson Material:

Genesis 1:26-27; Exodus
1:15-17; Psalm 139:13-
16; Mark 10:13-16

Bible Truth

God created human life in His image. We must value life and protect it as a sacred gift from Him.



Rita was a teenage girl. She was not married. She learned she was pregnant. She was afraid to tell her parents. A Christian friend told her about a center in her town to help her. The counselors at the pregnancy care center gave her some helpful information about her pregnancy. They helped her talk with her parents. They helped her and her parents make plans to deal with the pregnancy and with the new baby. The young girl said she did not feel alone because of help from the center. There are centers like this all over America. They help with information, spiritual encouragement, and medical counseling. They offer biblical alternatives to abortion. Churches can show they value all human life by helping girls like Rita face their situation with faith and encouragement. Church members can show they value the life of both the mother and the unborn child.

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **Affirm Life's Value (Genesis 1:26-27)** – God created man and woman in His image so they can know and serve Him on earth.
2. **Respect and Protect Life (Exodus 1:15-17)** – Two Hebrew women obeyed God instead of the king and refused to kill newborn baby boys.
3. **Celebrate Life's Purpose (Psalm 139:13-16)** – David praised God for the wonder of His creation and purpose for David's life.
4. **Follow Jesus' Example (Mark 10:13-16)** – Jesus showed how He loved and valued children.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be in "God's image?"
2. What did the Egyptian king want the nurses to do?
3. What did the nurses do?
4. What did the disciples tell the children to do?
5. What did Jesus do for the children?

Today's Lesson

Today's lesson is not from the book of Amos. It is a special lesson. In many churches today, special emphasis is made about the value of human life. We live in a time when it seems many people do not place a high value on human life. People seem unconcerned about issues such as abortion, problems of elderly people, poverty, and other situations giving the idea a person's life is of no value.

The first verses emphasize the value of human life as a gift from God. The other three sections look at how we can show we truly do value the lives of people. As you study these verses, let God speak to your heart about what you can do to support efforts in your church and community to reach out to those who are considering abortion, victims of child abuse and other violence, and others whose lives may be in danger.

1. Affirm Life's Value (Genesis 1:26-27)

The word *affirm* means “to show support or to defend.”

Verses 26-27. After the rest of the creation, God created man and woman. This creation is different from all the others because God created people in His image. In verse 31, we find these words, “God looked at everything He had made, and it was very good.” Everything God made was good, including people.

Today's lesson is not about “where did man come from?” The answer is clear in these verses. God made man!

These verses also tell us how God gave people the responsibility to rule over all the other creation. This means God saw people as more important than anything else He made.

God wants us to use things, love people, and honor Him. Too often, today, we read about someone loving things, using people, and ignoring God. This is not God's plan.

Because human life was made in God's image, we must value all people as sacred or holy. This includes life from the moment of conception through all of life, until a natural death.

EVERYTHING GOD MADE
WAS GOOD,
INCLUDING PEOPLE.

Because we have the responsibility to rule over God's creation, we must see the beauty of that creation, and especially the beauty of human life itself.

2. Respect and Protect Life (Exodus 1:15-17)

The Book of Exodus begins at the time when Jacob's family moved to Egypt where Joseph had much responsibility in the Egyptian kingdom. After many years Joseph died, but the family of Joseph continued to grow larger and larger with each generation. Then a new king began to rule in Egypt. He did not know about Joseph and the special plans for Jacob's descendants. He became afraid the Israelites would turn against him, and he could not control them.

Verses 15-16. This new king had a plan to keep the Israelite nation from growing. He would have the midwives (nurses who helped when a baby was born) to kill all the baby boys born to the Israelites. The king said they could let the baby girls live, but they must kill all the boys. The nurses were Israelites (Hebrews), not Egyptians.

Verse 17. Bible teachers believe Jacob's descendants had grown to more than 600,000 people by this time. This would require many more than just two midwives. We have in this verse a report of only two, but perhaps the others acted in the same way. Some Bible teachers think these two may have been the leaders, and so the others would do the same as these two. We do know from this story that these nurses refused to obey the king's order. They knew it was not right to kill a baby. The Bible explains how these nurses feared God. The word *fear* in this sentence means "to respect and honor." They obeyed God rather than obeying the king.

In the next verses, we learn the nurses told the king the Hebrew women had their babies too fast. The nurses could not get there in time. God blessed these nurses because they were faithful to him. Read the rest of this story in verses 16-22.

What does this story tell us? It reminds us how, from the beginning, God said human life is important to Him. Because God has a special love for people, they are holy to Him. This means He set people apart from all the rest of creation. He gave people a special place of honor.

**"YOU KNIT ME TOGETHER
IN MY MOTHER'S WOMB."**

We must be ready to show our devotion to God and our commitment to His view of the value of life. We must seek ways to

respect and protect people who are especially weak and need our support and encouragement. We are also to vote for persons who respect life and oppose laws when they do not respect life.

3. Celebrate Life's Purpose (Psalm 139:13-16)

Read the first 12 verses in this psalm. It is almost like a hymn of praise. This psalm begins with the words, "Lord, you have examined me and know all about me."

These verses prepare us for David's praise to God about how God has a purpose for every life, even before that person is born.

Verse 13. This verse reminds us how life begins while the baby is still inside the mother's body. Today, we understand much more about how a baby is formed and grows inside the mother. David's knowledge was much more limited. Yet, David knew how God put the baby together inside the mother. One translation has the words,

“You knit me together in my mother’s womb.” This is a more exact translation of the Hebrew words. David knew how a woman could knit a piece of string until it fit together to make a sweater. He used that “picture word” to express how he understood God put together all the cells into a human body.

No matter how much, or how little, we understand about conception and the growth of the baby inside the mother, we must recognize God’s hand in forming each person.

Verse 14. With that knowledge, we must praise God. David used the words *amazing* and *wonderful* to describe this.

Verses 15-16. David said God saw his bones being formed. But David also said God has a plan for that baby even while it is being formed inside the mother. God has a plan for all the days that person will live. All those plans were made before David was one day old!

Do you understand how God has a plan for your life? He made that plan before you were born. He has a plan for every life. That is why we must celebrate life and the purpose for each life. We must place the highest value on human life—our own life and the life of everyone.

JESUS GAVE US A GREAT
EXAMPLE ABOUT HOW TO
VALUE HUMAN LIFE

4. Follow Jesus’ Example (Mark 10:13-16)

These verses are in the middle of some of the teachings of Jesus recorded by Mark. It shows us the difference between how Jesus saw children and how His disciples saw them. Perhaps sometimes, we are guilty of seeing a child like the disciples saw them.

Verse 13. Can you see this situation as it developed? Jesus went into a house after teaching. His disciples asked Him some questions about what He had said. While they were talking, some people brought some children to Jesus. They wanted Jesus to touch them or bless them. The disciples were busy with their own questions. They didn’t want anyone to bother them. They didn’t want these people bothering Jesus when He was teaching. We can understand that because that is exactly how we might have acted! It becomes a matter of what we think is most important.

Verses 14-15. Jesus scolded His disciples. Jesus said something to them, and it is difficult for us to understand. Did Jesus mean only

children can go to heaven? Of course not. He explained that in verse 15. What He meant was people must come to Him and trust Him just like little children trusted Him. Other child-like characteristics of those who come to Jesus are humility (not proud), and innocence (turning from sin). The one who comes to Christ must have that kind of attitude and seek the salvation Christ wants to give.

Verse 16. Jesus took the children into His arms and blessed them. Jesus loved the little children. Can you imagine one of those children, several years later when he had become a man, remembering that day when he was in the arms of Jesus?

From this, we learn how we must always love, protect, and take care of little children. We must do the same for people who are weak, alone, and need someone to help them. Perhaps one day in the future, that child or that weak person, may remember our love and kindness and give thanks again to God for someone who cared for him.

A beautiful picture of this kind of love happened one day when a missionary was on the way to church. He reached down to pick up a small child playing in the mud and hugged that child and smiled at him. We see this when a man reaches out to take the hand of another man in a homeless shelter.

Jesus gave us a great example about how to value human life. We must treat all people with the same love and care Jesus showed to those children. Because we value their life, we must not get so busy with our own plans we cannot take time to help others.

What About You?

Do you know some people who need your special love and care? Look around you.

Think of Deaf people in your community who need special help. Perhaps they are not as able to handle the problems of life as you are. Show them the caring love Jesus wants you to show.

Look around you. Ask the Lord to show you people who need your love and care.

Applying the Lesson

Make a list of some of the special people who need your help. Think of ways you can help them. It may be financial help, but more often the little things we do from our kindness make the difference for them.

Read the list of ways you can help. Check the activities that you could do that will help others and show that you think life is important:

____ Donate clothes or food to your church or community "clothing closet" or "food pantry."

____ Volunteer at your church or community "clothing closet" or "food pantry."

____ Volunteer to answer the crisis phone for the pregnancy center.

____ Plan a party or special event for your local children's home.

A verse to remember: "So God created human beings in His image. In the image of God He created them" (Gen. 1:27).

Court Is in Session!



Background Study Verses:

Amos 5:1–6:14

Lesson Material:

Amos 5:4-6, 18-24;
6:1a, 4-7

Bible Truth

Empty religious activity and self-centeredness displease God and can never replace right living and godly concern for others.

Suppose your car needs some repairs. You go online and use Google to find a mechanic in your area. You talk to the mechanic. He seems to know a lot about cars. He has many tools. He has many replacement parts. He looks like a real mechanic. You leave your car for the mechanic to repair it.

After two days, your car is still not fixed. The mechanic does not do the work. He looks like a good mechanic, but does not like cars. He does not truly know what to do. Is he truly a good mechanic?

Amos faced a similar situation in his life. The people of Israel looked like they knew God. The Israelites had all the right actions and rituals, but they did not truly know God. Just like the false mechanic, the Israelites were fakes. We will learn how God responds to fake worship.

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **Looking for Life in Wrong Places? (Amos 5:4-6)** – We, like the Israelites, will find true and meaningful life only by knowing and obeying God.
2. **Longing for a Rescue Day? (5:18-20)** – If we do not live properly and show concern for others, we cannot please God.
3. **Substituting Rites for Right Living? (5:21-24)** – If we have many religious habits and traditions but do not live in a right relationship with God, we are wasting our time.
4. **Caring About Self But Not Others? (6:1a,4-7)** – We can find true happiness and safety when we depend on God instead of depending on our wealth, status, or abilities.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What were the names of the worship places God planned to destroy?
2. What was the Day of the Lord?
3. What did the Israelites do that God rejected or hated their actions?
4. Whom did Amos warn in chapter six?
5. The wealthy leaders of Israel would become the first Israelites taken to become _____.

Today's Lesson

1. Looking for Life in Wrong Places? (Amos 5:4-6)

The first three verses in this chapter are a lament. A *lament* is a “sad song expressing deep sorrow.” This is also called a *dirge*. Most people know about sad songs used at funerals to show sorrow. Who is singing the lament in chapter 5? These are God’s words of sorrow for what will happen to Israel.

Verses 4-6. In these three verses, God twice called His people to come to Him. Each time, God said, “Come to me and live” and then told what will happen to people who do not come to Him. God meant for His people to change their hearts and obey Him. God said

true life is having a right relationship with Him. The only way to avoid His judgment is to obey the Lord and do what is right.

In verse 5, God warned His people not to go to Gilgal, Bethel, or Beersheba. The people of Gilgal would become captives and Bethel would become nothing. Why did He mention these three places?

Gilgal was the place where the Israelites entered the promised land for the first time. Joshua was the leader of the people when they crossed the Jordan River and camped in the land for the first time. Joshua told the people to stack 12 stones as a way of remembering how God took care of them when He led them into the promised land (Josh. 4:1-9).

The people in Israel remembered their history. They knew about Joshua and Moses. They learned about Gilgal and the entry into the promised land. When Amos preached, God changed the meaning of the place. From this time on, Gilgal would not be a memorial of their entrance into the land. God said Gilgal would become known as the place where people left the land as captives.

We studied Bethel in the lesson two weeks ago. Bethel was the place in Israel where many people worshiped. The Israelites said they were worshiping God, but truly they worshiped false gods. Bethel would become an unimportant place after God destroyed the land.

"COME TO ME AND LIVE."

Beersheba was a place in southern Judah. Many years before, Beersheba was an important place for Abraham and his family. Apparently, many people in Amos' time went from the northern nation of Israel all the way to southern Judah to worship at a place dedicated to the important ancestors of the Jewish people. God would make Beersheba unimportant, also.

In these three verses, God emphasized the right thing to do. The people must worship only God and obey Him. Important places and temples to false gods were not important. Only God could save His people. When we have a right relationship with God and honor His commands, we can have truly wonderful lives.

2. Longing for a Rescue Day? (5:18-20)

The word *longing* means "to hope for or want very much to have."

The next section talks about the day of the Lord or the Lord's Day

of judging. The day of the Lord was something the Israelites did not understand clearly. They believed the day of the Lord was a time of punishment for Israel's enemies. The people thought the day of the Lord was a wonderful day for Israel. These three verses teach the truth about the day of the Lord.

Verses 18-20. Amos scolded the Israelites. He did not understand why the people of Israel wanted the day of the Lord to arrive. Amos said the day of the Lord was not a wonderful day. It would become a terrible day. The Israelites did not understand.

Amos gave an example of what the day of the Lord would feel like for most Israelites. Imagine, Amos said, you are walking along, and you see a lion. You turn and run away from the lion. While you are running, you bump into a bear. You run away from the lion and the bear. You run all the way home and enter your house. Safe! Then you accidentally put your hand on a snake, and the snake bites you.

Amos tried to explain “the day of the Lord” to the people. The day of judgment was not a day when

God would punish the enemies of Israel. Instead, God would punish the enemies of God. From this time on, Israel was God's enemy, and God would not protect Israel. God would punish Israel. The people of Israel

earned their punishment by refusing to live properly. They refused to obey God by loving the people around them.

THE PEOPLE WERE NOT
WORSHIPING GOD
IN THEIR HEARTS.

3. Substituting Rites for Right Living? (5:21-24)

The title of this section compares the word rite (a religious ceremony) with right (correct, proper). God does not approve of our ceremonies when we do not live the way He wants us to live.

Verses 21-23. The people of Israel had many feasts, sacrifices, and rituals for their worship. The rituals and feasts were part of the law God gave to Moses. During Amos' time, the Israelites were doing many of the rituals Moses told them to do. How did God feel about these traditions? God expressed His feelings in clear words.

God hated their feasts. He rejected their worship from those feasts. The burnt offering of animals was an important part of worship, but God refused to accept them. Read Leviticus 1 to learn more about

the burnt offerings. The grain offerings were also holy to God, but He refused to accept those, too. Read Leviticus 2 to learn more about the grain offerings. God did not want other offerings from the Israelites. He hated their music. He did not want to hear the worship songs any more. How could God hate their worship songs?

The people sacrificed the right animals in the right way. They sang the right songs. The Israelites had the right feasts. These were all good things, but their actions were empty. The people were not worshipping God in their hearts. They did not truly mean what they said. God rejected their sacrifices, feasts, and songs because their worship was not real.

Verse 24. Now we can see what God truly wanted. He did not want empty worship and fake rituals. He wanted fairness and justice. God wanted the Israelites to behave in a holy way every day. God said the Israelites' goodness must be like a never-ending stream, flowing without stopping.

THE PEOPLE SINNED
BECAUSE THEY DID NOT
CARE ABOUT
THE POOR PEOPLE.

4. Caring About Self But Not Others? (6:1a,4-7)

Verse 1a. Amos identified in verse 1 the people who must listen to this next section. Amos was talking to people in Jerusalem and Samaria.

Jerusalem was the capital city of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Samaria was the capital city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Amos truly wanted the kings and wealthy leaders to listen to what God said.

Verses 4-7. Amos had an important message for the wealthy people in both nations. Amos described the life these people had. The leaders had the fanciest furniture. They ate the most expensive food. Instead of working, these wealthy people sat around and made up songs. The rich leaders drank large amounts of wine and used the most expensive lotions.

Amos said the rich people and leaders of Israel would become the first people captured by the invading armies. Why would God select these leaders to become the first people He punished? Is it a sin to be rich?

We learned in the lesson two weeks ago about how the wealthy people abused the poor people. Amos explained again how the rich

were wrong. It is not a sin to have money. The people sinned because they did not care about the poor people. The leaders had all they needed. They did not care about the many Israelites living in poverty.

Another problem was the Israelite leaders depended on their money. They used their money to buy what they needed instead of asking God. They stopped depending on God's power. Instead, they depended on their own money to solve problems. When troubles came, the leaders asked other nations to help instead of asking God for guidance.

If these two problems were not enough, there was a third issue. The leaders of Israel had a strong duty to lead the nation in the right path. God demanded the leaders set a good example. Instead, the leaders were greedy. They set the worst example. For all these sins, God said the leaders would be punished first.

In today's world, we have people like that. Open the pages of a popular magazine and you will see pictures of wealthy people. Some of these people wear the most expensive clothes and only eat the fanciest food. They buy expensive watches and jewelry. These famous people spend more money in one month than many people spend in an entire year. Some wealthy people do help others, and they set a good example. Many do not.

Are we different from these rich and famous people? Sometimes we are not. We think we can solve our own problems without asking God for help. We take care of our own families and never think about the poor. We set a bad example for our children and other church members. God expects us to learn from the Book of Amos so we will not repeat the mistakes of the Israelites.

What About You?

How real is your faith? We cannot decide how real our faith is by how often we go to church. Our tithe money cannot prove we are good Christians. How do you know your faith is true and real?

Amos gave us the answer: We show real faith when our lives show true concern for others and for God. Going to church and saying the right words means nothing to God if our heart is not right. True Christians show their faith through their actions in daily life.

How do you show your faith?

Applying the Lesson

Answer True or False

1. T F We can find true and meaningful life only by knowing and obeying God.
2. T F God is pleased when we do not live properly and do not show concern for others.
3. T F Religious habits and traditions are good, but we must live in a right relationship with God.
4. T F We can find true happiness and safety when we depend on God.
5. T F I want to have a faith that is real and depend on God.

A verse to remember: "But let justice flow like a river, and let goodness flow like a stream that never stops" (Amos 5:24).

Can I Get a Witness?

Background Study Verses:

Amos 7:1-17

Lesson Material:

Amos 7:4-17

Bible Truth

God uses obedient Christians to pray for people and share God's message with others.



Suppose you went to work on a new job. This was a good job with good pay. Your coworkers were nice to you. The job was not hard. Then one day at work, you saw something terrible. Your boss stole a lot of money from the company, and you saw the whole thing.

Later, you are in the courtroom. You are a witness against your boss. What will you do? If you tell the truth, your boss will go to jail. That is good, right? But if you tell the truth, some of your coworkers will not like you. You might lose your job. Your family might suffer. What do you do?

Amos was a witness for God to the people of Israel. Amos had a hard message to share. Some people did not like his message. What kind of witness was Amos? Was he a faithful honest witness?

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **Interceding Witness (7:4-6)** – Witnessing to people about God and salvation includes praying for people and their salvation.
2. **Truth-Telling Witness (7:7-9)** – To become good witnesses for God, we must be willing to tell the truth about both His salvation and His judgment.
3. **Opposed Witness (7:10-13)** – When we witness for God, we need to be ready for people to oppose us.
4. **Obedient Witness (7:14-17)** – As Christians, we have a responsibility to honor God by spreading His message to all people.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How many visions did Amos have?
2. How did the Lord respond to Amos' prayers?
3. Who opposed Amos' preaching?
4. Where did Amaziah tell Amos to go?
5. Why did Amos become a prophet?

Today's Lesson

In chapters 3-6, Amos clearly explained why God would punish His people. Amos listed the sins and crimes. He gave examples of ways the people violated the laws God gave to Moses. In chapters 7-9, Amos changed his message. These three chapters list five visions. The visions are about how God will completely destroy the people and the nation of Israel.

1. Interceding Witness (7:4-6)

Verses 4-5. The second vision from God showed terrible destruction. God would call for fire. The fire would fall from the sky like rain and burn everything in the land. Even the water would burn; the streams and rivers evaporate.

The Bible often uses fire as a symbol of God. Isaiah used fire as a symbol of God's anger. In Exodus, God led His people with a column of fire. The Holy Spirit in the New Testament was a flame.

In Amos' vision, the heat dried the grass and trees on the land. Fires began to spread. All the rivers were dry. No one could fight the fires. Everything burned.

Amos begged for mercy. Just as in the first vision in verses 1-3, Amos again asked God not to destroy the land. Amos loved Israel and its people deeply. He prayed for God to change His mind.

Verse 6. Just like in the first vision in verses 1-3, God listened to Amos. He decided not to destroy the land through fire. This was not the first time someone asked God for mercy. In the story about Abraham and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham bargained with God for the cities (Gen. 18:17-33). Another time, the people made a golden calf, and God decided to destroy His people because of their sin. Moses begged for God to have mercy, and God did not destroy them (Ex. 32:1-14).

Amos was an intercessor. This means he stood between God and the people. He prayed for God's mercy. Part of witnessing to people is telling them of God's love and mercy. Another part of being a faithful witness is to pray for people. Amos stood between God and the people and prayed for the people. He begged God to save Israel. If we are faithful witnesses to other people, we must follow Amos' example. We need to tell people the truth and pray for them faithfully.

AMOS PRAYED FOR GOD
TO CHANGE HIS MIND.

2. Truth-Telling Witness (7:7-9)

God used a plumb line as part of an example to Amos. A plumb line is something carpenters and builders use to measure whether a wall is perfectly straight. If the wall is not perfectly straight, sometimes builders must rebuild the entire wall. How did God use a plumb line as an example?

Verses 7-8. Amos had another vision from the Lord. In his vision, Amos saw God standing next to a straight wall. God was holding a plumb line. God and Amos talked about the plumb line.

God planned to measure the people of Israel. God knew the people of Israel were crooked. The Bible often uses the word crooked to mean not good or not right. The writers of the Bible said straight things were better than crooked things. For example, a straight path is easier to follow than a crooked path. Straight rows in a garden are

better than crooked rows. A straight wall is good for building, but a crooked wall is worthless.

If we remember this picture of straight and crooked, we can understand what God said to Amos. The people of Israel were like a crooked wall. They were worthless. God measured the nation. Israel was not straight (good). For a long time, God knew the people were bad, but He looked away from their sin and let them continue living in the land. God told Amos the time for looking away was finished. Now, God would make His people straight.

Verse 9. How would God react to the sin of His people? The Book of Judges is about God punishing the nation of Israel for their sin. In the Books of 1 and 2 Kings, God punished the nations of Israel and Judah for their sin. If God punished His people in the past, what was different about this time when Amos was the prophet? Why did God make a big deal about not ignoring the sin of His people this time?

The punishment would be harder than the other times. The entire nation would become destroyed. The family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) would be gone. Their holy worship places would become destroyed. The royal family would die. This time, the punishment for sin would be terrible.

GOD WOULD MAKE HIS PEOPLE STRAIGHT.

This was the third vision Amos had from God. In the first and second visions, Amos saw a terrible future for Israel. Amos begged God both times for God to show mercy. This time, Amos did not. Amos knew God would punish Israel. Amos continued to preach the truth of God's message. The people sinned. God would discipline. God would save His people if they would repent.

3. Opposed Witness (7:10-13)

This section of chapter 7 tells about a conflict between Amos, the prophet, and Amaziah, a priest. Unlike the last two sections, this is not a vision. Amos and Amaziah had a real conflict about Amos' message.

Verses 10-11. Amaziah was the chief priest at Bethel. When the northern tribes of Israel split from the southern tribe of Judah, Israel lost access to the temple. The temple was in Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom. Many Israelites went to the temple in Jerusalem to worship. The kings of Israel did not want their people traveling to Judah to visit the temple. Instead, the kings of Israel set up a royal

place of worship in the town of Bethel. The new worship center replaced the temple for the Israelites. Amaziah was the chief priest of that worship center during this time.

Amaziah opposed Amos. He tried to cause trouble for Amos with the king of Israel, King Jeroboam. Amaziah accused Amos of stirring up trouble among the people. He said Amos' preaching would tear the nation apart. Amaziah said Amos did not preach God's message. Amaziah accused Amos of predicting Jeroboam's death as a way of attacking the king.

Verses 12-13. After Amaziah sent the letter to Jeroboam about Amos, he attacked Amos with words. Amaziah told Amos to go home to his own nation of Judah and work there. Amaziah continued to say Amos did not preach God's message. He accused Amos of preaching just to earn money. Amaziah said, "Seer, go back right now to Judah. Do your prophesying and earn your money there."

Amaziah also tried to order Amos away from Bethel. He did not want Amos prophesying or preaching in the area around the worship center. Amaziah said the worship area belonged to the king and to the nation.

Amos was not allowed to preach about God's judgment of the king and nation at the worship center any more.

**AMOS WAS
OBEDIENT TO GOD.**

The conflict between a priest and a prophet gives us the chance to evaluate the two men. In the last vision of the plumb line, God evaluated the people of Israel. Now, we can evaluate Amaziah and Amos. Amaziah failed the test. He was not a true and faithful servant. Amaziah was crooked. He opposed Amos for political reasons. How did Amos respond? Did Amos fail the test as Amaziah failed?

4. Obedient Witness (7:14-17)

In these verses, we will study Amos' response to Amaziah. We will learn what it means to become an obedient witness like Amos. We will also see what happens to people who twist God's words for their own purposes.

Verses 14-15. Amaziah accused Amos of being a prophet for the money. He was wrong. No one paid Amos to preach or prophesy. Amaziah had a ministry job. He was the priest. Unlike Amaziah, Amos did not minister for money. Do you remember what jobs

Amos had? Read 1:1 and 7:14. Amos was a shepherd, and he took care of sycamore trees. If Amos already had a job in Judah, why was he preaching in Israel?

Amos was a good man, working near his home in Tekoa. God called Amos to work for Him. God called Amos away from the sycamore trees and the sheep. He sent Amos to another nation to preach about discipline, sin, and repentance.

Amos was not a preacher or missionary before God called him. He was just a normal man doing a normal job. Just like Moses, Amos worked with animals. God called Amos, just like He called Moses, Abraham, Samuel, David, Daniel, and many others. Like all those others, Amos obeyed God's call.

Verses 16-17. Amos proved he was not a prophet for the money. He was obedient to God. Even though Amaziah pretended to worship God, he was not interested in obeying Him. Amaziah wanted Amos to stop preaching about God's anger and discipline. Amaziah made a terrible mistake.

Amos ended the conflict with Amaziah by predicting the future. Amos said Amaziah would die as a captive in a foreign land. All Amaziah's children would die violent deaths. His wife would work as a prostitute to earn money. Amaziah's land would belong to other people. In the end, most of the Israelites must leave their nation and live in other places. These were terrible punishments.

Why would all these things happen to Amaziah and his family? Read the first part of verse 17. Amos said these terrible things would happen because of what Amaziah said to Amos. Amaziah wanted Amos to stop preaching the words God gave to him. Amaziah opposed God's prophet, so God would punish Amaziah, his wife, his children, and the entire nation of Israel.

Amaziah was probably a powerful man who had important friends. He could have made a lot of trouble for Amos. Amos was not afraid, though. Amos was obedient to God's calling. Even when the situation was difficult, Amos was an obedient witness for God.

What About You?

Amos was an excellent witness for the Lord. Do you use Amos as your plumb line to measure your way of witnessing for God. Do you tell God's complete message?

Do you understand God's teaching about discipline and sin but also about God's mercy and forgiveness?

Do you share God's Word with others and pray for them?

Applying the Lesson

Can you answer yes to each of these statements?

1. I witness to people about God's salvation and pray for them to become saved.
2. I tell other people the truth about both God's salvation and His judgment.
3. When I witness for God, I am ready for people to oppose me.
4. I know I have a responsibility to honor God by spreading His message to all people.

A verse to remember: "Then the Lord said, 'See, I will put a plumb line among my people Israel to show how crooked they are. I will not look the other way any longer'" (Amos 7:8b).

Let the Verdict Be Read!



**Background
Study Verses:**
Amos 8:1–9:15

Lesson Material:
Amos 8:11-12; 9:8-15

Bible Truth
Only God can promise
a good and fair future
for His people because
only God is above
all things.

A Deaf man, Joe, was arrested for stealing some money from his employer. Another employee accused Joe, and the boss agreed that Joe did it. Joe knew he was innocent, but he was taken to jail. He was released the next day on bail. His boss fired him, so he was not able to work.

Joe got an attorney and with an interpreter told his side of the story. He said he knew the money was missing, but he did not know who took it. He knew he was innocent.

Joe's attorney found some other employees who said they did not think Joe was guilty. They thought the man who accused Joe probably took the money.

Finally, the day of the trial came. The judge listened to all the witnesses. He listened carefully when Joe told his side of the story. The judge made his decision. The verdict was "not guilty."

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **Trust Comes by Hearing (8:11-12)** – We learn to trust God by studying His word and obeying His commands.
2. **Sovereignty Cuts Two Ways (9:8-10)** – We need to rejoice because God uses His sovereign power to punish sin and forgive people.
3. **True Hope Rests in God (9:11-15)** – We need to stay faithful to God because we can have hope for a fair and blessed future only through Him.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What would the people of Israel look for in all the land?
2. What did God say He would completely destroy?
3. Who would God save?
4. Who would re-build the cities?
5. What was the final blessing from God to His people?

Today's Lesson

In 2009, a large earthquake destroyed many homes and buildings in Haiti. The United Nations worked to set up many camps for homeless people. At one camp, many Deaf people lived in tents close to each other.

The United Nations sent soldiers to help. These soldiers made the rules for the camps. They set up rules for water sharing, for food lines, and for bathrooms. The soldiers had complete authority.

At first, some of the Deaf people did not like obeying the soldiers. Later, the Deaf people realized something important. The soldiers used their authority to set rules, but they also used their authority to help people. Criminals could not come into the camps. Mobs did not invade the camps. The soldiers used their authority to shelter and protect people.

Amos worked to teach the people about God's complete authority in the world. The Israelites did not accept His authority. They did not obey Him. Today's lesson is about trusting in God's complete control over the world.

1. Trust Comes by Hearing (8:11-12)

In chapter 8, Amos shared another vision from God. This vision involved a basket of fruit harvested at the end of the summer. God used this picture of the end of summer to show His people their time was finished. God would punish them for their many sins. Rich people would become poor. Happy festivals would turn into sad funerals. Joyful songs would become sad hymns. God was going to take everything wonderful away from Israel because of their sin.

The title of this section means we learn to trust through hearing. This does not mean only hearing people can learn to trust God. Biblical authors assumed people who listened to a message would learn. Amos wanted people to pay attention and learn to trust God. A better way of saying this is, “Trust comes through learning.”

Verses 11-12. God planned to discipline the entire nation of Israel. He would send armies from other nations to conquer, steal, kill, and destroy. The nation of Israel would have no food or crops. Sheep and goats would be missing. Cities would become empty.

“TRUST COMES
THROUGH LEARNING.”

After the physical punishment, God would also send a spiritual punishment. He would cause people to hunger and thirst for spiritual feeding. People would seek God and His truth. Israelites who

stayed in their nation would truly want to know God, but God would not feed them spiritually.

God told Amos how people would wander the length and width of the nation of Israel looking for some sign of God. People would search from the Dead Sea on the east side of Israel to the Mediterranean Sea on the west side. They would look from the southern tip of Israel, near Egypt, all the way to the northern part near Lebanon. No matter where people looked, they would not find God. God would make His people hunger for Him, but He would not satisfy their hunger.

This is a challenging idea for us today. We teach people, “If you seek God, He will answer you.” God told Amos something different. God said He would make the Israelites hunger for Him and later would refuse to satisfy their hunger. The Israelites ignored God for too long. It was too late for them. Do you think God ever decides it is too late for people in our world today?

How do we avoid this problem ourselves? We can avoid this same unsatisfied hunger by always learning. When we learn about God, we learn to trust Him. When we pay attention and obey God, He will not ignore us. He will help and guide us.

2. Sovereignty Cuts Two Ways (9:8-10)

Sovereignty means “complete authority.” In the Bible, this word refers to God’s complete and total control of all things in the universe. The title of this section means God is above all things. We will learn how God used His total authority in the Israelites’ lives.

To help us understand this section, we need to read all three verses very carefully. Then, we need to rearrange the order of the phrases just a little bit. We take the second part of verse 8 and study it last.

Chapter 9 starts with the fifth and final vision from God. Amos saw an image of God standing next to the altar. God gave orders for the temple to become destroyed. Anyone who escaped from the temple would die in battle with the invading armies. No matter where people went and what they did, God would find them and punish them.

GOD WOULD DESTROY
THE NATION,
BUT SAVE HIS PEOPLE.

Verses 8a, 9-10. The Lord gave the last warning of punishment and destruction in these verses. This is Amos’ final message of justice.

God said the Kingdom of Israel would end. We know from studying history the truth of God’s statement. Assyria invaded Israel and destroyed cities and towns. The kings of Israel were gone. The people of Israel left the nation as captives. The nation disappeared. The land was empty for a while, but later other non-Jewish people lived there.

God sent the Assyrian army to do His work. They were pagan people, but God used them to punish Israel. He punished every sinner and idol-worshiper. All the arrogant people who believed they would never be punished were killed or taken as captive.

God compared the punishment to straining wheat and grain. When the Israelites harvested grain, they had to separate the wheat from pieces of dirt, rocks, leaves, and weeds. They used a special strainer to remove all the unwanted dirt and rocks. Farmers

would work hard to get every bad piece of dirt or grass out of the good grain. God said He would take out every sinner, every idol-worshiper, and every rebellious person. No one would escape. God was sovereign. He was above all people. He would use His great power to punish people who refused to obey.

Verse 8b. This little part of verse 8 is different from the rest of this passage. We can see a different view of God's complete control in the phrase, "but I will not completely destroy Jacob's descendants." What did God mean? How does this fit with the rest of the section?

God talked about two different things in verse 8. In the first part of verse 8, God mentioned the Kingdom of Israel. In the last part of verse 8, God talked about the people who came from the family of Jacob. God said He would destroy the nation, but save His people. How is that possible?

God destroyed the nation of Israel. The cities were gone. The kings and princes died. The local governors and mayors went away. The temple stopped offering sacrifices. The nation of Israel did not exist anymore. The people of the family of Jacob were still alive, however. Many of those people went away to live in captivity.

Others escaped the Assyrian invasion and continued to live in the land.

God promised many years before to make sure the family of Jacob never ended. God ended the nation, but He spared some individuals.

Why is verse 8b different from the rest of this passage? In verses 8-10, we can see God's total control over His people and the land. He used His sovereignty to punish the nation for their sin. In verse 8b, God used His total authority to show mercy for a small group of survivors. God's sovereignty works in different ways. Sometimes He uses it to punish. Other times, God uses it for mercy and love. God decides how to react to sin and to people. His sovereignty is complete. We can be happy about His authority. He uses it to punish evil people and to bless those who honor Him.

3. True Hope Rests in God (9:11-15)

Verses 11-12. After the people of Israel learned their lesson about idolatry, God would bring them home. He would re-establish the nation of Israel. He would rebuild their cities and fix the ruined buildings. The Lord would give the nation all its land and territory back. God would show grace to the nation and restore the nation to its original condition.

Verses 13-15. God was not satisfied with simply giving His people their land back. God wanted to bless them. He wanted to give them everything they could ever need.

God said their crops would grow quickly. He said His people would still be harvesting when the soil was ready for a new crop. The wine-makers would be juicing grapes and must plant more grapes. The crops would become so plentiful the land would burst with food. God would do all these things for His people again.

God also said His people would rebuild the cities. This does not seem to match verse 11. In verse 11, God said He would rebuild the cities. This probably means God would make everything work out perfectly so His people could return home to rebuild. God uses His people to accomplish His goals, but God is the one who makes it all possible.

We know from the Book of Exodus how God gave the people of Israel a wonderful nation. We also know the people wasted God's gift. Now, at the end of their punishment, the people would get their wonderful fertile nation back. If the people had obeyed the Lord instead of rebelling against Him, they would have experienced centuries of blessings instead of punishments.

We will never have perfect lives. God does not promise to take away all our troubles. If we live like the Israelites, we will have more problems than we can imagine. Only by obeying the Lord can we hope for a blessed future.

What About You?

When you consider God's relationship to people, what do you think of? Do you imagine a Father-child relationship? Amos taught the people to remember something valuable about God: He is sovereign.

How well do you accept the absolute control and authority of God in your life? As a Christian, you must accept His authority. You must also be glad God is above all things. God saves us through His power and control over this world.

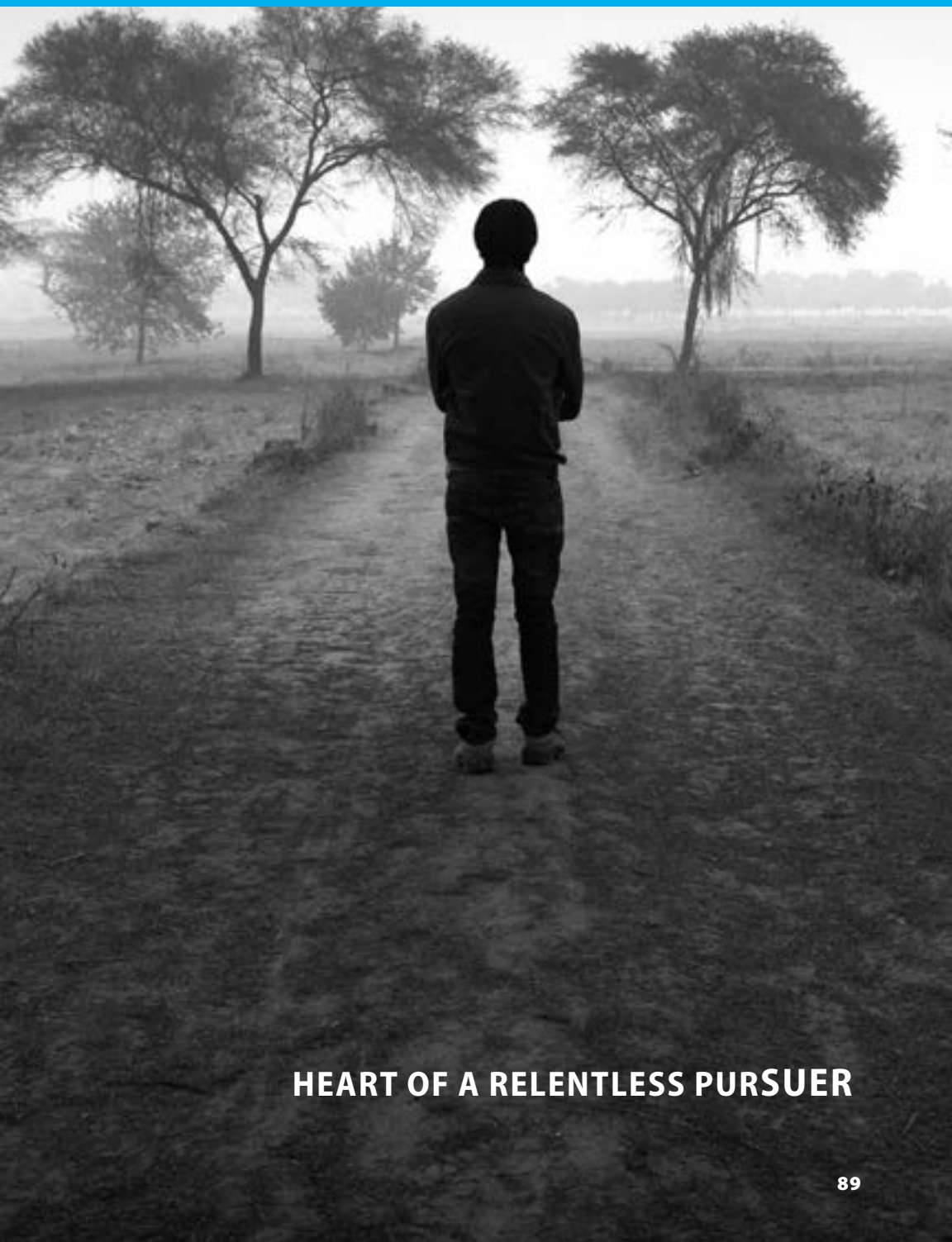
Applying the Lesson

Fill in the blanks.

1. We learn to t _____ God by studying His W _____ and obeying His commands.
2. We need to rejoice because God uses His sovereign p _____ to punish sin and forgive people.
3. We need to stay f _____ to God because we have hope for a fair and blessed future only through Him.
4. Christians can help people see how God's sovereignty is a w _____ thing.

A verse to remember: "The Lord God says: The days are coming when I will cause a time of hunger in the land. The people will not be hungry for bread or thirsty for water, but they will be hungry for words from the Lord" (Amos 8:11).

Unit 3



HEART OF A RELENTLESS PURSUER

Jonah 1:1–4:11

This short unit only has two lessons from the Book of Jonah. Jonah's message focused entirely on repentance from sin and divine punishment for sin. Most of the book focuses on Jonah's life instead of Jonah's message. The book shows God's interaction with a sinful man as an example of how God interacts with a sinful nation.

God called Jonah to travel to the city of Nineveh and preach about

repentance. We will study God's desire for all people to know Him and His compassion for the people of Nineveh after they repented.

The book of Jonah is important to us as we consider our own relationship with God. We, too, are sinners and need to repent. How do we respond to God? And what will God do if we are willing to leave our sins and turn to Him?

Pursuing Those Called to Tell

**Background
Study Verses:**
Jonah 1:1–2:10

Lesson Material:
Jonah 1:1-4,7-12,17;
2:1-4

Bible Truth
God expects His people to carry His message to other people, including people groups other than their own.



A teenage girl prayed to God, “Please use me, God. Just don’t make me a missionary.” She studied hard in school. She studied her Bible. She felt God pulling her toward missions. The girl found all the reasons why she could not become a missionary. She wasn’t old enough. She did not have enough education. Later, she realized God wanted her to work in missions. She prayed, “I will obey you, God. I will become a missionary. Just please don’t send me to Africa.” Later, God called the young woman to Africa. She tried to resist, but she was never happy. After several years of trying to avoid missions, the woman finally became a missionary to a nation in Africa. She finally obeyed God. She was very happy.

Today we will study about someone who refused to become a missionary. He did not obey God’s call. Was he happy?

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **Which Way Are You Going? (1:1-3)** – We have a responsibility to obey God when He calls us to participate in missions.
2. **What Will It Take? (1:4,7-12)** – We need to repent of our unwillingness to obey God when He calls us to take His message to others.
3. **To Whom Will You Turn? (1:17-2:4)** – If we repent and turn to God, He will forgive us and restore us to a place of service.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Where did God send Jonah?
2. Who asked Jonah about his God?
3. Whose fault was the storm?
4. Who saved Jonah?
5. Where was Jonah going on the boat?

Today's Lesson

Jonah was a prophet from a town in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. We know when Jonah lived, because 1 Kings 14:23-25 mentioned Jonah making predictions during the reign of King Jeroboam II. Jonah worked about the same time as Hosea and Amos. He probably knew about the two men and their preaching.

Unlike the books of Hosea and Amos, most of the book of Jonah is a narrative of Jonah's actions. One small part of the book records a prayer in a poetic format, but the rest of the book is the story of Jonah's actions. Jonah's sermon to the people of Nineveh is not in the book. The book was for the people of Israel to read. This is an important idea we will study later in the unit.

1. Which Way Are You Going? (1:1-3)

Verses 1-3. God commanded Jonah, one of His prophets, to travel to the city of Nineveh and preach there. Nineveh was the main city of the nation of Assyria. Assyria was a powerful nation with a strong

army. The city of Nineveh was far from Israel. Jonah would travel for about a month to arrive in Nineveh.

God knew about the sin of the people. He wanted Jonah to preach to them. Jonah did not obey. Instead, Jonah went to the coast to a city named Joppa. He found a boat traveling to a city far from Nineveh. Jonah paid for a ride. Jonah chose to run away from God and His command.

We know Jonah was a prophet. Why did Jonah run from God? Why not obey the Lord? One reason was probably because Jonah knew about the Assyrians. The Assyrian army conquered many nations. Each time the Assyrians won, the soldiers tortured and crippled many captives. The Assyrians were famous for their terrible actions. Perhaps Jonah did not want to preach God's message to such terrible people.

Another reason Jonah might not want to preach to the city of Nineveh was because of prophecies. Jonah lived about the same time as Hosea and Amos. Hosea and Amos spent a lot of time telling the people of Israel about God's punishment. Whom was God planning to use to punish the people of Israel? God was planning to use the Assyrian army, the same people who lived in Nineveh. Maybe Jonah knew about Hosea and Amos. Maybe Jonah knew God would soon use Assyria to destroy his homeland. Maybe, because of all this, Jonah did not want to preach God's message to Nineveh.

**JONAH CHOSE TO RUN
AWAY FROM GOD
AND HIS COMMAND.**

God chose Jonah to take His message to Nineveh, but Jonah did not want to obey God. Jonah had his reasons just like Moses had reasons for not wanting to obey God. If we are truly His people, we cannot refuse to carry the gospel message to others. We cannot make the same mistake Jonah made.

2. What Will It Take? (1:4,7-12)

Verse 4. Jonah tried to run away from God. What a foolish decision! Jonah got on the boat, but God sent a terrible storm. The storm was rough and strong. The boat was in danger of breaking. Just as in other lessons we have studied, Jonah's sin caused problems for himself and others. God used nature to get Jonah's attention.

Would God punish Jonah or discipline him? Discipline is something God does because He wants to change our behavior. Punishment is what God uses to let us pay for our sins. Was God's plan to help Jonah change or only to make Jonah pay?

Verses 7-12. The sailors truly tried to save the boat from the storm, but they could not. Instead of saving the boat by their own work, the men began trying to understand the reason for the terrible storm. They asked Jonah about his nation and his religion. They wanted to know if the storm was Jonah's fault.

Jonah finally admitted the truth. He was a Hebrew and he was running from God. Jonah also admitted he knew the storm was his fault. After admitting his sin, Jonah announced the men must throw him into the sea.

We can see some interesting ideas in this section. Who first thought of the idea of divine punishment? The sailors were probably from Phoenicia, but they were the first people to wonder if some god was angry. Jonah was a prophet of God, but he did not think of God's anger first. Pagan men who worshiped false gods were the first to think about the idea of an angry god.

JONAH FINALLY

ADMITTED THE TRUTH.

Another idea we see here is how Jonah's actions put other people in danger. Jonah was the only man on the boat who refused to obey God, but everyone on the boat was in danger. When we sin, other people suffer. In 2 Samuel 24:1-16 you can read about a mistake by King David. As a result of David's sin, God punished the entire nation of Israel, killing 70,000 people. Jonah's actions were truly selfish.

The last idea we can see here is how Jonah finally accepted responsibility for his actions. Jonah admitted he sinned by refusing to take God's message to Nineveh.

We must not refuse to carry the gospel to other nations. When God calls us to donate money and we refuse, we are sinning. When God calls people to take mission trips and people make up excuses, those people are sinning. When God calls Christians to share their faith at work and they refuse, they are sinning. Like Jonah, we all make mistakes. We all fail to take His message to the right people. Like Jonah, we need to admit our sin and accept the consequences.

3. To Whom Will You Turn? (1:17–2:4)

Verse 17. Jonah splashed into the sea, and the storm stopped. Next, God used a large fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah remained inside the fish for three days and three nights.

In the New Testament, Jesus mentioned only four Old Testament prophets: Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and Jonah. In Matthew 12:39-41, Jesus talked about “the sign of the prophet Jonah.” Jesus was talking about Jonah being deep inside a fish for three days and nights. Many people struggle to accept the idea of a man staying inside a fish for three days, but Jesus clearly said the story of Jonah was true. If we can accept Jesus rising from the dead and God using a strong storm, we can accept Jonah staying in the belly of a fish for three days.

What did Jonah think about during his three days? The Bible does not tell us about Jonah’s entire life. All we know is what the experience did for Jonah.

Verses 2:1-2. Chapter two is a long prayer from Jonah. The prayer is the only part of this book written in a poetic form. While most of Amos and Hosea were poetic forms, only a small part of Jonah is poetic.

We can see a pattern in verse 2. **SALVATION IS FROM GOD.** Jonah admitted he was in danger. Then, Jonah said he was about to die. Jonah cried to God, and God helped him. Jonah used this pattern of danger/help to emphasize an important lesson: salvation is from God.

Verse 3. Who threw Jonah into the sea? The verse above said three sailors threw Jonah into the stormy ocean, but Jonah admitted in this verse God threw him into the sea. Jonah understood how God controlled every part of the experience. God caused the storm. God led the sailors to ask Jonah about his mistake. God led the men to throw Jonah into the sea. Jonah admitted God’s complete sovereignty in all things.

Verse 4. Jonah knew his sin separated him from God. Jonah felt like God chased him out of His presence. Sin always separates us from God. Before we know Christ, sin keeps us from His presence. After we become a Christian, sin can damage our relationship with God.

Jonah did not stop at separation. Jonah had a special hope. He hoped to reunite with God. Jonah said he hoped to “see your Holy

Temple again.” Some people believe Jonah was talking about the temple in Jerusalem. Maybe Jonah wanted to return to the temple and offer sacrifices for his sin. Other scholars think Jonah was talking about being reunited with God’s presence. No matter which way we understand Jonah’s words, Jonah wanted his sin removed. He wanted to have a right relationship with God again.

When we look at Jonah, what can we see? We see a man who admitted his sin. Jonah knew he deserved his punishment. He prayed to God, and God saved him. Jonah repented of his sin. Jonah begged to reunite with God. Later, in verse 9, Jonah said he would keep his promises to God.

Something interesting happened when Jonah admitted his sin and repented. Jonah was an Israelite, but unlike many in Israel, he was willing to face his sin. At the moment of repentance, Jonah was more like King David or Paul than like his Israelite friends. Jonah did what God wanted all Israelites to do: repent. Amos and Hosea promised a future punishment from God because the people refused to repent. Jonah’s willingness to face his sin set him apart from other Israelites.

When we sin, we damage our relationship with God. We hurt other people. But God wants to forgive. He will take away our sin if we repent. God will restore us to a right relationship with Him. God will teach us how to avoid those sins in the future, so we can continue in a right relationship with God.

What About You?

Do you think you have a responsibility to tell others about Jesus? If you are a Christian, the answer to the question is "Yes!"

God calls all Christians to share their faith with other people. God gave Jonah a special responsibility, but all Christians have the basic duty of evangelism.

Do you think you are doing a good job at sharing your faith? Do you ask God to help you do that?

Applying the Lesson

Fill in the blanks.

1. God expects His people to carry His message to o ____ _ ____ _.
2. We have a responsibility to o ____ _ ____ God when He calls us to participate in missions.
3. We need to be a w ____ _ ____ _ and obey God when He calls us to take His message to others.
4. When we r ____ _ ____ _ and turn to God, He will forgive us and restore us to a place of service.
5. Too often, we fail to share the g ____ _ ____ _ with others.
6. We must r ____ _ ____ _ for not sharing the gospel with others.

A verse to remember: "When I was in danger, I called to the Lord, and he answered me. I was about to die, so I cried to you, and you heard my voice" (Jonah 2:2).

Pursuing Those Who Need to Hear



Background Study Verses:

Jonah 3:1–4:11

Lesson Material:

Jonah 3:1-5,10; 4:1-11

Bible Truth

Christians must show compassion to all people groups because God has compassion for all people groups and wants them all to hear His message.

Imagine an airplane crashing in the desert. Ten people survive the crash, but they do not have any food or water. The group decides to spread out and look for water.

Each person goes in a different direction looking for water. Nine of the people find nothing but sand and dirt. One person finds a large lake. The water is cold and clean. The water is so clear he can see the bottom of the lake. He drinks as much water as he can. Later, he returns to the airplane and says, “Sorry. I could not find any water, either.”

That’s a strange thing to say, right? Most people would run back to the airplane yelling, “Water! Water! I’ve found a lake full of water!”

In today’s lesson, we will see how Jonah found compassion from God, but did not want to share it with others.

What These Verses Tell Us

1. **All People Have an Urgent Need (3:1-4)** – We need to have godly compassion for all people because all people are lost and apart from God.
2. **God Acts with Sovereign Mercy (3:5,10)** – Christians need to do everything possible to take the gospel to the world because God is compassionate toward those who repent.
3. **Salvation Isn't Just About Us (4:1-4)** – We must work hard to share the gospel with others because we have already experienced the beauty of God's love and salvation.
4. **Do We Care as God Cares? (4:5-11)** – We must show godly compassion toward all people as a way of becoming more and more like the God who saved us.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How large was the city of Nineveh?
2. How many days did the people have before God's punishment?
3. How did the people respond to Jonah's message?
4. Why did Jonah run from God?
5. What helped shelter Jonah?

Today's Lesson

Part of this unit focuses on God's compassion for people. Today we will start with God's compassion toward Jonah and move toward God's compassion for the people of Nineveh. Jonah and the people of Nineveh were similar—they were all sinners.

1. All People Have an Urgent Need (3:1-4)

Verses 1-2. After Jonah sinned by rebelling against God, God disciplined him. Jonah repented, and God became close to Jonah again. Then God showed great compassion toward Jonah. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh. God was willing to use Jonah again to warn the people of Nineveh about God's anger. God showed His great love for Jonah by calling him to service again.

Many times in the Bible we can see examples of God's forgiveness. Often, God continues to work through people who sinned and repented. David committed adultery, but after David repented God used him. Peter denied knowing Christ, but God used Peter later. Jonah was one more person who saw God's love like that.

Verse 3. Jonah obeyed God and traveled to Nineveh. Most scholars believe Nineveh was so far from Israel it would take Jonah about a month to get there by walking across the desert. Jonah traveled across Israel into the nation of Assyria. When Jonah arrived in Nineveh, he discovered a great city.

Most cities in the ancient world were small. Nineveh was probably about two miles wide. To us, today, a two-mile city is tiny. During Jonah's time, Nineveh was larger than most other towns. Most people lived in tiny villages.

Some Bible experts wonder why verse 3 said it took three days to walk across Nineveh. If the city was only two miles wide, someone could walk across the city in an hour or two. Why does the Bible say it took three days to cross Nineveh?

THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH WERE SINNERS AND NEEDED TO REPENT.

Nineveh had a big outer wall and a bigger inner wall. The inner wall was 50 feet wide and 100 feet high. That is a big wall! The inner wall went around the main part of

Nineveh. The outer wall was not as tall. It went around the fields, houses, small villages, barns, sheds, farms, and pastures. When the book of Jonah says it took three days to cross Nineveh, it probably includes all the area inside the outer wall.

Another reason for taking so long to cross the city was Jonah's work. Jonah was not in Nineveh to walk as fast as possible. Jonah went to Nineveh to preach. He probably walked a short distance, and then he stopped to preach. Later, Jonah walked a little more and then preached again. Jonah probably made slow progress as he walked across the city of Nineveh. He was not in a hurry. Maybe people stopped to listen to him and then asked questions. Maybe others made fun of him. Jonah just kept talking and walking throughout the city of Nineveh.

Verse 4. Jonah entered Nineveh. On his first day in town, Jonah began to preach. For the first time, we get to see God's message to the people. Jonah said, "After 40 days, Nineveh will become destroyed." God would destroy the entire city!

We know from Jonah 1:2 God was tired of the sins of Nineveh. We know the people of Nineveh were sinners and needed to repent. Jonah warned the people about God's future judgment against them if they did not repent.

Jonah went to Nineveh because God called him. God calls us today. As Christians, we know our duty. We all have the responsibility to share the gospel with people all over the world (Matthew 28:19-20).

2. God Acts with Sovereign Mercy (3:5,10)

Verse 5. There was an amazing response to Jonah's preaching: the people repented! When the people of Nineveh heard Jonah's message, they believed him. They stopped sinning. They wore rough cloth to show their sadness. The people fasted and did not eat. All different kinds of people in Nineveh did this, from the richest to the poorest. What an amazing response! Jonah preached for only a few days, but the people repented and showed sorrow for their sins. Hosea and Amos preached to the Israelites for years about the sin of Israel, but no one changed. Jonah preached for a few days to the pagan Assyrians. An entire city listened to him.

GOD HAD COMPASSION
ON THEM AND DID NOT
DESTROY THE CITY.

Verse 10. Verses 6-9 tell us how the king of Nineveh responded to Jonah's message. The king repented. The king also commanded all people in the city to fast and pray. The king wanted everyone to pray for God's mercy. He hoped God would change His mind.

In this verse, we can see the result. God did change His mind. God saw the people repent. He saw the sin stop. He had compassion on them and did not destroy the city.

What can we learn from this? God is compassionate. We must understand that. We must do all we can to take the gospel to all people, so they can repent, too. God will show compassion to all who repent and turn to Him.

3. Salvation Isn't Just About Us (4:1-4)

Verse 1-3. God was happy with the people of Nineveh, but Jonah was not happy with God. Jonah was angry. Jonah was angry because

God showed mercy to the people. Can you imagine that? Imagine your pastor offering an invitation at the end of worship. Someone comes forward and says he wants to become a Christian. Then the pastor becomes angry! Why was Jonah so angry? We do not need to guess why Jonah was angry. Jonah explained to God the reasons for his anger.

Jonah did not run away from God in the beginning out of fear. Jonah ran because he did not want God to save the Ninevites. Jonah knew enough about God's character to know what God might do. Jonah knew God was compassionate and kind. Jonah knew God might decide not to punish the Assyrians. Jonah probably knew God would someday use the Assyrian army to punish Israel. Jonah did not want to see the terrible Ninevites saved.

Jonah was a prophet, but he was also human. Jonah wanted God to save him from the sea and the fish, but he did not want God to save the Ninevites. Jonah wanted God to forgive him, but Jonah did not want

JONAH WAS SELFISH AND DID NOT WANT TO SHARE GOD'S BLESSINGS WITH ISRAEL'S ENEMY.

God to forgive the Assyrians. Jonah wanted to feel God's love, but he did not want God to love the people of Nineveh. Jonah knew all these things about God because God showed these things to Jonah. But Jonah was selfish and did not want to share God's blessings with Israel's enemy.

Jonah was very, very angry. Jonah finally prayed for death! Jonah asked God to kill him. Jonah prayed for salvation in the water and inside the fish, but now he did not want salvation. He just wanted to die.

Verse 4. God did not punish Jonah. He did not become angry. God graciously asked Jonah a simple question: was Jonah right in being so angry? God wanted to teach Jonah something important. Jonah was behaving foolishly, but God wanted to help Jonah understand the truth.

Jonah experienced God's grace and salvation, but did not want to share it with others. We cannot react this way. Christians experience so many wonderful things with God. We must try to share this as often as possible with as many people as possible.

4. Do We Care as God Cares? (4:5-11)

In this last section, God used a visual example to teach Jonah a lesson. Just as God used Hosea's family and Amos' visions, God

used something physical Jonah could understand to teach Jonah a difficult lesson.

Verses 5-8. Jonah left Nineveh and settled down in a simple shelter to wait. Nineveh was in the middle of the desert, and the sun was truly hot. God made a plant grow overnight to shade Jonah. The plant grew quickly and gave shade to the prophet. The next day, God caused a worm to eat into the stem of the plant. The plant died as suddenly as it grew. Jonah sat in the hot sun and the hot wind. He just wanted to die.

Verses 9-11. After the plant died, God started teaching Jonah. Jonah was worried about his own safety and his own shelter. Jonah enjoyed having the vine even though Jonah did not make the vine. Jonah did not plant the seed or water the vine. Jonah was upset when the vine died.

We can summarize God's response to Jonah's anger:

"Jonah, you are angry about a dead vine. You did not make the vine, but you care about it. Remember, it is only a vine, but you care for it. These people cannot understand right from wrong, and I sent you to teach them. I, the Lord, made them. I gave them families. I gave them homes. If the people all die, I will be sad. You care about the vine a little bit, but I love the people of Nineveh a lot. Do you now understand why I care about people I made myself?"

We do not know how Jonah responded. We think Jonah went home and wrote about his experience. We call those writings the Book of Jonah. We don't know exactly how Jonah felt, but we know how we must feel. We must have a heart of compassion, like God. God loved the people in Nineveh and wanted to see them saved. We must have a heart of compassion like Jesus. Jesus loved the people of Israel and wanted to hold them in His arms. We must learn how to have a loving attitude toward people like God has.

What About You?

Do you think there are people who cannot become Christians? Many Christians say God can save anyone, but they do not truly believe it.

Do your actions show you do not truly believe all people can become saved? Do you only invite certain people to church? Do you only share your faith with certain kinds of people?

Applying the Lesson

Look at the people in your Bible class. What kind of people are they? Draw a circle around the different types of people in your class.

Deaf / hearing.

Educated / not educated.

Old / young.

Very religious / living a sinful life.

From residential school / from mainstreamed school.

What kinds of Deaf people are missing from your group?

List some ways your church can include all kinds of people in your church.

A verse to remember: "When God saw what the people did, that they stopped doing evil, He changed his mind and did not do what He had warned. He did not punish them" (Jonah 3:10).

Answers to Study Questions

UNIT 1

Session 1

1. God used Gomer, the unfaithful wife, as an example of the people of Israel.
2. God said He would strip Israel naked. He would make Israel infertile. He would ignore the children of Israel.
3. First, Gomer must wait for Hosea in some way. Second, Hosea said Gomer must continue to be faithful to him. She must not have other lovers. Third, Hosea said he must stay faithful to Gomer, too.
4. Hosea preached between 750 and 700 BC, with most of his prophecies being between 722 and 750.
5. Hosea paid six ounces of silver and 10 bushels of barley.

Session 2

1. Some of their sins were bad language, murder, dishonesty, and adultery.
2. The sons of the priests would not serve as priests.
3. The land suffered from drought. Animals in the land died.
4. Women served as temple prostitutes and men visited temple prostitutes for sex.
5. The priests refused to learn about Him and could not teach the people.

Session 3

1. God would use the nation of Assyria to conquer and punish Israel.
2. Israel broke their agreement to obey God.
3. The people rejected the prophets and called the prophets foolish.
4. He would bless His people again.
5. Israel depended on other nations to help them instead of trusting God.

Session 4

1. In Bethlehem, near Jerusalem.
2. They followed a special star.
3. He wanted to kill anyone who might take his kingdom from him.
4. God warned them in a dream.
5. The Lord came to Joseph in a dream and told him to go to Egypt.

Session 5

1. God called His son, Israel, out of Egypt.
2. God and Israel had a father-son relationship.
3. The Assyrians would make the Israelites become slaves.
4. God said, “My heart beats for you and my love for you stirs up my pity.”
5. God would summon His people to come home.

Session 6

1. The main sin was idol worship.
2. Hosea told the people to pray and repent.
3. God wanted His people to learn He was the only source for help.
4. Hosea used examples of plants and trees.
5. Hosea said wise people would listen to words from God.

UNIT 2

Session 1

1. Amos was from Judah but worked in Israel.
2. Temple prostitutes.
3. Amos compared prophets to watchmen on the city walls.
4. The altar in Bethel.
5. Amos criticized wealthy Israelites.

Session 2

1. “In God’s image” means to have love and compassion for others like God has for us.
2. The Egyptian king wanted the nurses to kill the Hebrew baby boys.
3. The nurses refused to kill the baby boys.
4. The disciples told the children not to bother Jesus.
5. Jesus took the little children into His arms and blessed them.

Session 3

1. The places of worship were Bethel and Gilgal.
2. The day of the Lord was a day God would judge His people.
3. The people celebrated religious feasts and offered sacrifices, but God rejected the sacrifices.

4. Amos preached to the leaders in Israel and Judah.
5. The wealthy leaders would become the first people taken to become slaves.

Session 4

1. Amos had five visions of the future.
2. The Lord changed His mind and did not destroy His people through fire.
3. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, opposed Amos.
4. Amaziah told Amos to go home to Judah.
5. Amos was a prophet because God called him and he obeyed.

Session 5

1. People would search for spiritual food but would not find it.
2. God would destroy the nation of Israel.
3. God would save a small group of the family of Jacob.
4. God would make it possible for His people to rebuild the cities.
5. God would bless His people by giving them plenty of food.

UNIT 3

Session 1

1. God sent Jonah to Nineveh.
2. The sailors asked Jonah.
3. The storm was Jonah's fault.
4. God saved Jonah.
5. Jonah ran toward the city of Tarshish.

Session 2

1. Nineveh was so large it took three days to cross the city.
2. The Ninevites had 40 days.
3. The people repented and fasted.
4. Jonah ran because he did not want God to save the Ninevites.
5. A vine sheltered Jonah.

Vocabulary

A

Accountability – Responsibility for our actions.
Accuse, accusation – Blame.
Affirm – Agree something is true; show support.
Amid – In the middle; during an event.
Astronomers – People who study the stars.

C

Compassion – Deep love.
Covenant – Agreement.
Crooked – Not good; not right; not straight.

D

Decay – Rot.
Destructive – Causing something to be destroyed.
Dirge – Sad song that shows deep sorrow.

E

Evaporate – Dry up.
Evident, evidence – Proof.
Expose, exposing – To show.

F

Fake – False.
Fear – Respect and honor.
Frankincense – Sweet smelling perfume.

H

Heed – To pay attention.

I

Indictment – Statement of a person's wrong actions.

Interceding, intercession – Asking God not to punish.

L

Lament – Sad song that shows deep sorrow.

Lawless – Sinful.

Lifestyle – The way a person lives; the choices a person makes.

Longing – Hope for; want to have very much.

M

Magi – Wise men.

Manna – Special bread God provided for the Israelites in the desert.

Midwife – Nurses who help when a baby is born.

Motive – Reason for actions.

Myrrh – A spice used in burials.

N

Ninevites – People from Nineveh.

P

Plumb line – A measuring tool to build a straight wall.

Pursue, pursuer – To follow, to chase.

R

Realize – Understand.

Reap – Harvest.

Rebuke, rebuking – Criticizing someone for actions.

Redeem, redemption – Paying the price for freedom, salvation.

Relentless – Continuing without stopping.

Repent, repentant, repentance – Turning from sin to God.

Respond – To answer.

Restore, restoring – To make new.

Revealing – Showing.

Rites – Ceremonies with a meaning.

S

Session – Meeting.

Sovereign, sovereignty – No other power is greater.

Sow – To plant seeds.

Strainer – A tool for separating fine grain from stones and large pieces of plants.

U

Unrecognized – Unknown, not identified.

Unseal – Open.

Urgent – Important.

V

Verdict – Decision.

Daily Bible Readings

MONTH 1

1. 1 Chronicles 16:28-33
2. Psalm 67:1-7
3. Romans 13:1-7
4. Ezekiel 34:11-15
5. Mark 1:21-28
6. Colossians 2:16-19
7. 1 Timothy 5:1-8
8. John 17:20-23
9. Hebrews 13:1-6
10. 2 Peter 1:5-7
11. 1 John 3:17-20
12. Titus 1:1-4
13. Philippians 4:8-9
14. Psalm 32:6-8
15. Ephesians 1:7-12
16. Isaiah 7:14-16
17. Isaiah 40:1-5
18. Micah 5:1-4
19. Galatians 4:4-7
20. John 1:19-23
21. Zechariah 2:10-13
22. Matthew 1:18-21
23. Matthew 1:22-25
24. Matthew 2:1-6
25. Matthew 2:7-11
26. Matthew 2:12-15
27. Luke 24:44-48
28. Acts 1:6-9
29. 1 Peter 1:22-25
30. 2 Corinthians 10:7-12
31. Proverbs 25:11-13

MONTH 2

1. Acts 17:16-21
2. Mark 1:16-20
3. Acts 4:5-10
4. Luke 12:22-31
5. Romans 6:15-18
6. 1 John 3:8-10
7. Ephesians 6:10-18
8. Psalm 63:1-5
9. Deuteronomy 32:1-4
10. 2 Peter 2:18-21
11. James 1:5-8
12. Job 40:1-5
13. Genesis 35:1-5
14. Colossians 3:5-7
15. Psalm 103:11-14
16. Matthew 16:5-12
17. 1 Samuel 14:6-10
18. 1 Samuel 14:11-15
19. 1 Thessalonians 1:1-4
20. Romans 4:1-5
21. John 10:11-13
22. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27
23. Jeremiah 1:4-10
24. Galatians 1:6-12
25. 2 Timothy 1:5-7
26. Hebrews 10:19-22
27. Psalm 22:22-26
28. Revelation 21:23-27
29. Philippians 4:11-13
30. Matthew 12:34-37
31. Proverbs 10:11-14

MONTH 3

1. Isaiah 41:10-13
2. Philippians 2:5-8
3. Philippians 2:9-11
4. Colossians 1:15-17
5. Deuteronomy 11:18-21
6. John 5:1-9
7. Hosea 14:5-9
8. Romans 11:33-36
9. Proverbs 3:9-12
10. Psalm 133:1-3
11. Hebrews 11:4-7
12. 1 Peter 5:5-7
13. Ruth 2:1-8
14. Ruth 2: 17-20
15. Luke 8:22-25
16. Psalm 125:1-5
17. Galatians 5:1-6
18. Philemon 8-16
19. Daniel 6:24-28
20. James 4:11-12
21. 1 John 4:4-6
22. Judges 2:11-19
23. 2 Corinthians 5:1-8
24. Proverbs 11:1-4
25. 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4
26. Acts 4:31-37
27. John 6:24-27
28. Psalm 86:6-10

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

BIBLE STUDIES FOR THE DEAF
LEADER

Hosea, Amos, Jonah



BIBLE STUDIES FOR THE DEAF

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* Evangelistic Lesson

** Sanctity of Life Lesson

Introduction

Hosea, Amos, Jonah: Revealing the Heart of God

Hosea

Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Amos prophesied about the same time. This was from the last years of King Jeroboam's reign into the first years of King Hezekiah's reign.

The writing of Hosea is sometimes awkward to read. Chapters 1 and 3 are in prose. The rest of the book is more poetic in style. Hosea writes about curses and blessings, but he has more curses than blessings.

Hosea's name means "salvation." He was a son of Beeri, of the tribe of Issachar, one of the tribes in Israel. He preached and wrote his prophesies to Israel with some references to Judah.

One theme of Hosea is *empty sacrifices*. This means "worship that is not from the heart."

A commentary on a small portion of the Book of Hosea was found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is a discussion of Hosea 2:8-14.

Amos

Amos was from Judah but he prophesied in Israel about 776-763 B.C. Most of his preaching was during the time when Jeroboam II was king in Israel and Uzziah was king in Judah. Some of his preaching included both Judah and Israel which he called the "house of Jacob."

The name Amos means "a burden." He said he was a shepherd from the small town of Tekoa, southeast of Bethlehem and 12 miles from Jerusalem. He said he was a shepherd and he gathered sycamore (fig) fruit. From his statements, it does not seem he was very wealthy (Amos 7:14-15).

The place from which Amos preached most of the time was Bethel. This is the place where the golden calf idol was set up. Amaziah, the priest in charge of the idols attacked Amos before Amos went back into Judah.

The message Amos preached was simple: "There is only one God. He is the judge over all nations and the Savior of all nations if they repent and turn back to Him."

Amos did not offer much hope. God was angry with His people and was going to punish them. God will use war, exile, and other terrible things to punish His people and lead them to turn back to him. At the end of his writing, Amos gave the Israelites a message of hope.

Jonah

Jonah was a prophet but he ran away from God. He preached the need for the people in Nineveh to repent, then he was angry because God saved them.

The book was written in prose except for a brief prayer of thanksgiving in Hebrew poetry (2:2-9). Jonah is written in third person (he, him) rather than first (I, me), but only Jonah himself could have told the story. No other writer in the Bible tells so many bad things about himself.

This story includes only three characters: God, Jonah, and the people of Nineveh. Jonah told how he felt about Nineveh and how God felt about Nineveh. He told how Nineveh changed from rejecting God to accepting God. He told how God changed him (Jonah) and how God changed Nineveh.

The date for Jonah's writings is determined from the reference made to him in 2 Kings 14:25. This would make Jonah one of the earliest prophets. He wrote and prophesied during the time of Hosea and Amos.

The Book of Jonah is the only book of prophecy that does not mention Israel or Judah. It is only about the one city, Nineveh, and that was a Gentile city. It suggests, however, that during the time Israel and Judah refused to repent, this sinful Gentile city did repent.

Unit One

Heart of a Redeeming Father

Hosea 1:1–14:9

- As you start this new unit, help the class get an overview of the quarter. Use the material in the Introduction to the Quarter, above and from the pupil's material. Write on the board the theme for the quarter: "Revealing the Heart of God."
- Point out the three units for this quarter. Note that each of the three units is from one of the three prophets: Hosea, Amos, and Jonah. Then focus on the title for this first unit, "Heart of a Redeeming Father." This is the story of Hosea.
- Use a Bible map to show the places named in the lessons
- As you prepare to teach, read through the text several times. Look for special verses that can be applied to your Bible class. Look for opportunities to make assignments for class members to prepare and present to the class. Note these assignment ideas in your Leader Guide, and make the assignments one week ahead. Encourage them to use ASL, not read it in English form.
- Five of the six lessons focus on God's relationship with Israel as told by Hosea. The Christmas lesson is the evangelistic lesson for this quarter. It is taken from Matthew 2. Use the Christmas lesson to reach out to any unsaved in your class. Note that the other lessons in December have focused on the sins of Israel and God's love and discipline. Apply that to the reason for Jesus becoming our sacrifice so we can have salvation for our sin.
- At the beginning of each lesson, give a brief summary of the lesson to be studied that week and its relation to the other lessons in this unit. Emphasize the theme for the quarter regularly.

Meet the Writer

George Joslin became involved in ministry with Deaf people in California in 1957. He served as a missionary to the Deaf with the Baptist Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board) for seventeen years in California, Texas, and Virginia. George is now retired and lives in Springfield, Missouri. After retirement, he and his wife, Lorene, served eighteen months with the International Mission Board helping to start a Deaf church in Ecuador, South America. George is currently active in the Missouri Baptist Conference of the Deaf. He has been writing for LifeWay since 2001.

Exposing a Broken Relationship

Background Study Outline

- 1. A Prophet's Family Nightmare (Hosea 1:1–2:1)**
- 2. An Unfaithful People's Shame (2:2-13)**
- 3. A Compassionate God's Promises (2:14-23)**
- 4. A Husband's Redemptive Love (3:1-5)**

Lesson Material

- 1. Something's Not Right Here (Hosea 1:1-2)**
- 2. Your Sins Will Come Out (2:2-5)**
- 3. Redemption Carries a Price (3:1-5)**

Bible Truth

When people sin, the result is a broken relationship with God.

The Bible in Context (Hosea 1:1)

A prophet spoke for God to God's people. He received his message from God. Prophets were called and inspired messengers. "No prophecy ever came from what a person wanted to say, but people led by the Holy Spirit spoke words from God" (2 Peter 1:21). The Holy Spirit breathed into the mind of the prophet. His job was to call the people back to God and to the truth of God. The prophet warned them of the consequences of their actions and called the people to repentance. He told them what God would do if they repented.

Explore . . .

Old Testament Calendar Dates (Hosea 1:1)

We know, of course, there was no calendar giving the years in B.C. (before Christ)! In those days dates were given in relation to the years a king was on the throne. In this verse, Hosea listed several kings. When we study these kings we can determine Hosea prophesied from about 784 B.C. until the Israelites went into captivity in 722 B.C. The story of these kings is told in 2 Kings 15-18. Some translations use Amaziah instead of Uzziah. Isaiah prophesied during this same period.

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Exposing a Broken Relationship." Encourage discussion of the meaning of the concept of a broken relationship and appropriate signs for the concept. We are familiar with broken relationships in marriage. This was the relationship between God and His people.
- Ask someone ahead of time to discuss prophets from "The Bible in Context," above, and other resources from the church library.
- Ask someone else to review the discussion of the Old Testament Calendar from "Explore..." above, and other resources.
- **Make the lesson come alive!** Find a brief article or a chapter in a book about the man Hosea and ask someone in the class ahead of time to be ready to discuss this for the class—in ASL, of course.
- Use a Bible map to show the relationship between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

STEP TWO – SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT HERE (HOSEA 1:1-2)

- Use the material in the Pupil section to tell this story. It is not a pleasant story.
- Pupils may be asking, "Why would God do that?" We cannot know the mind of God. We can know God was not responsible for Gomer's sin. He only used this for His example to Israel.
- Review 1:3-11 to explain the significance of the names of the children.

STEP THREE –YOUR SINS WILL COME OUT (2:2-5)

- Discuss how God speaks to Gomer's children, but is really speaking to Israel. These are actual experiences but God is making an application to His people, Israel.
- Ask someone to sign 1 John 1:9 about confession of sin and God's forgiveness.

STEP FOUR – REDEMPTION CARRIES A PRICE (3:1-5)

- Ask someone to sign verse 5. It is a good memory verse.
- Ask someone to sign Ephesians 1:7-9 and another to sign 1 Peter 1:18-19.

STEP FIVE - CONCLUSION

- So What? Ask the class what they can use in their life from what they have learned today. Encourage discussion.
- Review the lesson using the Study Questions.
- Close with prayer that class members will examine their relationships with God and repent of any sin now blocking those relationships.

Rebuking Destructive Behavior

Background Study Outline

- 1. Without God, Chaos Reigns (Hosea 4:1-19)**
- 2. Without Godly Leaders, People Flounder (5:1-15)**
- 3. Without Repentance, Judgment Looms (6:1-11)**
- 4. Without Discipline, Rebellion Continues (7:1-16)**

Lesson Material

- 1. Spiritual Decay (Hosea 4:1)**
- 2. Lawless Society (4:2-3)**
- 3. Failed Leadership (4:4-6)**
- 4. Sick Religion (4:12-14)**

Bible Truth

God clearly showed His people the sinful attitudes and sinful behaviors they must avoid.

The Bible in Context (Hosea 4:4)

Priests are first named in Genesis. They are discussed over 700 times in the Old Testament and 80 times in the New Testament. The priest was the mediator between man and God. He offered sacrifices to God for men. Aaron was the first High Priest (Numbers 3:10). All other priests were descendants from Aaron. The activities of the priests included much ritual. The Law was very specific about how sacrifices were made and what the priests and people did at the time of sacrifice. The priests taught the Law to the people.

Explore . . .

Idols (Hosea 4:12)

All of the nations around Israel had idols. The Jews frequently adopted those gods. God told the Israelites to stay away from the Egyptians and Canaanites and their idol worship. Both nations were descendants of Noah's son, Ham. (Gen. 9:24-27). People made idols from wood. The people believed their god came and lived in that idol. David wrote of the foolishness of worshipping idols: "They have mouths, but they cannot speak. They have eyes, but they cannot see. They have ears, but they cannot hear. They have noses, but they cannot smell" (Ps. 115:5-6).

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Rebuking Destructive Behavior." Discuss the meaning and appropriate signs for this concept. (Sinful behavior, leading to God's punishment.)
- Ask the class to define the word *sin*. (It is anything that goes against what God wants His people to do. It can be sins of commission—doing something wrong, or sins of omission—not doing something right. It is attitude as much as behavior.)

STEP TWO – SPIRITUAL DECAY (HOSEA 4:1)

- Call attention to the first part of verse 1: "Listen to the Lord's Message."
- The last part of verse 1 is God's judgment against Israel. Does it apply today?

STEP THREE – LAWLESS SOCIETY (4:2-3)

- Compare the list of sins in verse 2 with some of the 10 Commandments.
- Verse 3 tells of God's judgment. We need to be careful to remember not every natural disaster is direct punishment from God.

STEP FOUR – FAILED LEADERSHIP (4:4-6)

- Ask someone ahead of time to discuss priests from "The Bible in Context," above, and other resources from the church library.
- Emphasize how God placed more blame on the leaders than on the people.

STEP FIVE - SICK RELIGION (4:12-14)

- Ask someone ahead of time to review the discussion of idols from "Explore..." above and other resources.
- **Make the lesson come alive!** Find some kind of wooden object you can bring to class as your "idol." Give it a name. Tell the class you have decided to worship this piece of wood. Ask them why that is not a good idea.
- Make the application of materialism as a kind of idolatry. People are more interested in "things" than in God and His church and work.

STEP SIX - CONCLUSION

- So What? Ask the class what they can use in their life from what they have learned today. Encourage discussion.
- Review the lesson using the Study Questions.
- Close with prayer that class members will turn away from any destructive behavior in their life.

Deciding on Discipline

Background Study Outline

- 1. Incapable of Innocence (Hosea 8:1-14)**
- 2. Bound for Exile (9:1-17)**
- 3. Covered with Shame (10:1-8)**
- 4. Time to Seek the Lord (10:9-15)**

Lesson Material

- 1. Check Your Relationship (Hosea 8:1-3)**
- 2. You Reap What You Sow (8:7-10)**
- 3. Heed a Warning When You Hear It (9:7-8)**
- 4. Realize What Time It Is (10:10-12)**

Bible Truth

God disciplines His people when they sin. His goal is to restore His people to faithfulness and godly living.

The Bible in Context (Hosea 8:1)

Two types of trumpets are named in the Old Testament: silver trumpets and a ram's horn. God instructed Moses to have two silver trumpets made for use in the tabernacle (Num. 10:1-10). The priests used the silver trumpets to call people together, or to alert them when it was time to break up camp and move on, or at a time of danger. The ram's horn was used by the priests and by shepherds and watchmen.

Explore . . . Watchmen (Hosea 9:8)

The watchmen were responsible to warn the people of any possible danger (2 Sam. 18:24-27, 2 Kings 9:17-20). If the watchman failed to warn, then he was responsible for any attack. If he warned and the people paid no attention, then they were responsible for whatever happened. The Jewish people placed watchmen on the walls of the city to warn the people of enemies (Isa. 62:6). The prophets were like watchmen, to warn the people to be careful and obey God (Ezek. 3:17-19).

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Deciding on Discipline." The emphasis is on God's decision about punishing the people of Israel.
- Ask the class if they feel like Hosea keeps repeating the same thing. He did! The people did not respond, so he continued to tell them to turn back to God.

STEP TWO – CHECK YOUR RELATIONSHIP (HOSEA 8:1-3)

- **Make the lesson come alive!** Try to find a ram's horn or a metal trumpet. You may want to make a "trumpet" from some rolled cardboard. When it is time to start teaching, pick up the "trumpet" and make a loud noise to get their attention. That is the point of the word *trumpet* in verse 1.
- Ask someone ahead of time to discuss trumpets from "The Bible in Context," above, and other resources from the church library.

STEP THREE – YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW (8:7-10)

- Ask someone to sign Galatians 6:7-8.
- Discuss Hosea's analogy of sowing wind and reaping a storm. The harvest is always much greater than the seed.

STEP FOUR – HEED A WARNING WHEN YOU HEAR IT (9:7-8)

- Ask someone to sign the first part of verse 7. It is time! God will wait no longer.
- Ask someone to sign one or two verses from the hymn, "Almost Persuaded." Almost, but lost. Next week is the evangelistic lesson. You may want to prepare the class for this today.
- Ask someone ahead of time to review the discussion of watchmen from "Explore..." above, and other resources.

STEP FIVE - REALIZE WHAT TIME IT IS (10:10-12)

- Ask someone to sign Hosea 10:12. It is a good memory verse.
- Note how God often used ungodly nations to punish His people, Israel.

STEP SIX - CONCLUSION

- So What? Ask the class what they can use in their life from what they have learned today. Encourage discussion.
- Review the lesson using "What these Verses Tell Us."
- Close with prayer that class members will accept God's discipline in their lives and turn to Him more fully.

Seeking the Savior

Background Study Outline

- 1. Joseph's Account
(Matt. 1:18-25)**
- 2. Wise Men's Quest
(2:1-12)**
- 3. Family's Escape
(2:13-15)**
- 4. Herod's Rage
(2:16-18)**

Lesson Material

- 1. What Are You Looking For? (Matt. 2:1-2)**
- 2. What Is Your Motive?
(2:3-8)**
- 3. How Will You Respond? (2:9-12)**
- 4. Who Is This Christ-
mas Child? (2:13-15)**

Bible Truth

God promised to send a Savior and He sent His son, Jesus.

The Bible in Context (Matt. 2:1)

Several kings named Herod are identified in the New Testament. In Matthew 2:1, it is Herod the Great. He ruled Palestine at the time of Jesus' birth. He was one of the cruelest dictators in all of history. The Jews despised him, though he rebuilt their temple in Jerusalem in 19 B.C. He was bloodthirsty and mean to the people he governed. He was succeeded by Herod Antipas, also called Herod the Tetrarch, who ruled over Galilee and Perea for about 30 years. He is the one who killed John the Baptist (Matt. 14:1-11; Luke 3:1,19-20). The third Herod is Agrippa, before whom Peter appeared (Acts 12:1-23).

Explore . . . Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh (Matt. 2:11)

Orientals and other cultures never visit someone of importance without a gift. That custom has continued from Old Testament times until today. They offered Jesus incense as their God, gold as their king, and myrrh used in preparation for burial and representing the humanity of Jesus. Another explanation is how they offered him things they valued and products of their own country. The gold shows God's plan to provide for Joseph and his family while they were in Egypt.

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Seeking a Savior." We take a break from the prophecy of Hosea to focus on the birth of Jesus.
- This is the evangelistic lesson for this quarter. Ask two or three pupils to be ready to give their testimony about their salvation experience at the end of the lesson. Encourage any lost pupils to read page 4 in their quarterly and to talk with you or another leader today.
- **Make the lesson come alive!** Use a map to locate Persia, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Egypt. Review the discussion of the Magi from the pupil material. Note how God used these men from Persia to bring the gold Joseph needed to take care of his family in Egypt! For the first several years in the life of the Messiah, he was supported by "foreigners" and did not live in Israel.
- Ask someone to be prepared to sign the verses from the hymn, "We Three Kings."

STEP TWO – WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? (MATTHEW 2:1-2)

- Ask someone ahead of time to discuss King Herod from "The Bible in Context," above, and other resources from the church library.
- Note that the wise men may have had some knowledge of Israelites and may have been familiar with Numbers 24:15-19. Ask someone to sign these verses.

STEP THREE – WHAT IS YOUR MOTIVE? (2:3-8)

- Contrast the motives of Herod and the wise men. The king wanted to kill anyone who might challenge his role. The wise men only wanted to worship the Messiah.

STEP FOUR – HOW WILL YOU RESPOND? (2:9-12)

- Ask someone to sign verse 10. It is a good memory verse.
- Ask someone ahead of time to review the discussion of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh from "Explore..." above and other resources.
- Call attention to the Lottie Moon Christmas offering.

STEP FIVE - WHO IS THIS CHRISTMAS CHILD? (2:13-15)

- Note this is Joseph's second dream. The first is reported in Matthew 1:18-25.

STEP SIX - CONCLUSION

- Close with prayer that class members will always seek to know more about their Savior and witness to others who are seeking Jesus.

Remembering Compassion

Background Study Outline

- 1. Kindness Met with Unfaithfulness (Hosea 11:1-7)**
- 2. Anger Overcome by Compassion (11:8-11)**
- 3. Judgment Resulting from Arrogance (11:12-12:14)**

Lesson Material

- 1. Compassion Though Unrecognized (Hosea 11:1-4)**
- 2. Compassion amid Judgment (11:5-7)**
- 3. Compassion over Anger (11:8-9)**
- 4. Compassion with Purpose (11:10-11)**

Bible Truth

God's loving compassion continues even when people are unfaithful to Him.

The Bible in Context (Hosea 11:2)

Baal was the pagan god of fertility. He was the primary male god of the Phoenicians. The plural of the word is Baalim. Baal is identified with child sacrifices to Molech (Jer. 19:5). There were many priests of Baal (1 Kings 18:19). Worship of Baal often involved male and female prostitutes in the temple of Baal. The Jews repeatedly turned from God to worship the idol of Baal. The female counterpart to Baal was Ashtoreth.

Explore . . . Yoke

(Hosea 11:4)

A yoke was a wooden beam used between a pair of oxen or other animals so they could pull together on a load. Some yokes were fitted to individual animals. A yoke was used on animals, captives, and slaves. The word *yoke* is found 53 times in the Old Testament and six times in the New Testament. The yoke became a symbol of human oppression and hard service. Yokes were used to represent bondage to sin. Christ used this symbol for Christian discipleship (Matt. 11:28-30). Paul used it as a symbol for sin (Gal. 5:1).

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Remembering Compassion." Discuss the meaning and appropriate signs for this concept. (Great love.) Relate this lesson to the unit theme, "The Heart of a Redeeming Father" and the other lessons in this unit. Make the application of God's redeeming love to people today.

STEP TWO – COMPASSION THOUGH UNRECOGNIZED (HOSEA 11:1-4)

- Note that Hosea 1:1 is the verse quoted in last week's lesson, Matthew 2:15.
- Ask someone ahead of time to discuss Baal from "The Bible in Context," above, and other resources from the church library.
- Ask someone ahead of time to review the discussion of the yoke from "Explore..." above, and other resources.
- **Make the lesson come alive!** Bring to class a short piece of string, a short rope, and a picture of a yoke on oxen. Hosea spoke of cords of human kindness and ropes of love, contrasted with the yoke as a symbol of oppression and suffering. Hosea said God removed these burdens (v. 4) but the people turned away from God to worship idols.

STEP THREE – COMPASSION AMID JUDGMENT (11:5-7)

- This is Hosea's prophecy of the captivity of Israel. Why? Because they turned away from God. Can this be a message to America today?
- Emphasize God's fairness in His judgment and His mercy in His compassion.

STEP FOUR – COMPASSION OVER ANGER (11:8-9)

- Use a map to locate Admah and Zeboiim (v. 8). Review the discussion of these from the pupil material.
- Emphasize how God is never controlled by anger. His anger is against their sin. He loves His people.
- Ask someone to sign verse 9. This is a good memory verse.

STEP FIVE - COMPASSION WITH PURPOSE (11:10-11)

- The purpose of God's compassion is for His people to return to Him.

STEP SIX - CONCLUSION

- Close with prayer that class members will understand better God's compassion and learn to show more compassion to others.

Restoring the Repentant

Background Study Outline

1. Foolishness of Idolatry (Hosea 13:1-9)
2. Certainty of Judgment (13:10-16)
3. Plea for Repentance (14:1-3)
4. Promise of Restoration (14:4-9)

Lesson Material

1. Need of Repentance (Hosea 13:4-6)
2. Call to Repentance (14:1-3)
3. Results of Repentance (14:4-8)
4. Wisdom of Repentance (14:9)

Bible Truth

When people repent of their sin and turn to God, He forgives them and makes them whole.

The Bible in Context (Hosea 13:4-6)

The history of Israel tells how the people often went into sin and God called them back because of His mercy. Nehemiah remembered how God took care of His people in the wilderness because of His mercy (Neh. 9:18-21). God called His unfaithful people to come to Him because of His mercy (Jer. 3:12-14). God's covenant with Israel was based on His mercy (Ex. 33:19; 2 Kings 13:23; Isa. 63:7-9). Paul identified God as the Father of mercy (2 Cor. 1:3-4). We can ask for forgiveness of our sin and salvation through God's Son, Jesus, because of God's great mercy.

Explore . . . Repent (Hosea 14:2)

God called for His people to come back to Him. This is the idea of repenting. Ezekiel told the people to change their hearts and stop sinning (Ezek. 18:30-32). God spoke through another prophet and said, "Come back to me with all your heart" (Joel 2:12-14). Peter told the people to "change your hearts and lives! Come back to God" (Acts 3:19). All these verses give us a picture of the word *repentance*.

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Restoring the Repentant." Discuss the meaning and appropriate signs for this concept. (When man repents, God will restore.)
- This is a powerful lesson about God's willingness to take His people back .

STEP TWO – NEED OF REPENTANCE (HOSEA 13:4-6)

- Review verses 1-3, presenting the people's sin. Then review verses 4-6, presenting God's mercy and the need for repentance. Finally study verses 8-9, God's promise of judgment.
- Ask someone ahead of time to discuss God's Mercy from "The Bible in Context," above, and other resources from the church library.

STEP THREE –CALL TO REPENTANCE (14:1-3)

- Ask someone ahead of time to review the discussion of repentance from "Explore..." above, and other resources.
- Ask, "When must we repent?" (Any time we sin.)

STEP FOUR – RESULTS OF REPENTANCE (14:4-8)

- Ask, "How do we know God will forgive?" (Because He has promised, and God always keeps His promises!)
- **Make the lesson come alive!** Do a word study in verses 5-8. Ask the class to find word pictures and discuss the meanings: Verse 5 – dew on a lily blossom (refreshing). Verse 6 – spreading branches of olive and cedar trees (shade, cooling, protection). Verse 7 – grain, vine (growth), wine (famous). Verse 8 – pine tree (source of blessings). These are picture words of the blessings God wants to give to His people.

STEP FIVE - WISDOM OF REPENTANCE (14:9)

- Ask, "What is a wise man?" (He is one who repents, turns to God, and continues to obey God.)
- Ask someone to sign verse 9. It is a good memory verse.

STEP SIX - CONCLUSION

- Encourage class members to read the book of Amos before next week and the information about Amos in the Introduction to the Quarter.
- Close with prayer that class members will turn from any sin in their lives and seek closer walks with Christ.

Unit Two

Heart of a Righteous Judge

Amos 1:1–9:15

- Review the information about the Book of Amos in the Introduction to the Quarter in the pupil material and this Leader Guide. Ask a class member to discuss the man Amos and another to discuss the book that records his prophecies.
- Prepare to use Bible maps to locate places named in the lessons.
- The “Sanctity of Human Life” lesson is included. This departs from the study of these Minor Prophets. Use this lesson to lead your class in a discussion of this vital issue. Ask your pastor about any special emphasis during the worship service.
- The four lessons from the Book of Amos follow the theme for the quarter, “Revealing the Heart of God.” The unit theme is, “The Heart of a Righteous Judge.” Most people do not like to think about God’s judgment. We would rather focus on His mercy. But judgment and mercy are both aspects of God’s righteousness. His mercy lets Him forgive our sin. His judgment is necessary when people do not repent and turn from sin.
- Always look for ways to involve your class members. Ask them to read a verse, report on one of the articles under “Explore...” and “The Bible in Context,” sign a hymn, or any other way to encourage them to study the lesson ahead of time and to participate in the discussion.
- To offset some of the heavy emphasis of God’s judgment, ask one class member each week to tell “Why I am glad I am a Christian.” Encourage them to talk about God’s blessings they have received.

Unseal the Indictment!

Background Study Outline

- 1. Warnings for Surrounding Nations (Amos 1:1–2:3)**
- 2. Warnings for God's People (2:4-16)**
- 3. Charges Against God's Wayward People (3:1-15)**
- 4. Folly of Unheeded Warnings (4:1-13)**

Lesson Material

- 1. Hear Ye! Hear Ye! (Amos 1:1-2)**
- 2. Sinful Actions Are Evident (2:6-8)**
- 3. You've Been Warned (3:6-8)**
- 4. Accountability Comes Knocking (3:13-15)**

Bible Truth

When people mistreat others, they show they do not have a right relationship with God.

The Bible in Context (Amos 1:1)

Amos had a vision about Israel when God called him. Isaiah had a glorious vision of God and His angels at the time of his call (Isa. 6:1-5). Other prophets reported similar visions (Ezek. 11:24; Dan. 8:1-14; Nah. 1:1). God helped the prophets understand what all the events meant and gave them a message to give to the people. The prophets looked to God for insights and then reported what God showed them.

Explore . . . Greed (Amos 2:6)

Greed is a very old sin! Just like in Old and New Testament times, people today often value themselves and others by the things they have. The Bible does not teach things are bad, but it is wrong to want things more than we want God. The prophets often spoke against being greedy (Jer. 6:13; Ezek. 33:31; Mic. 2:2). Peter spoke of people who taught their hearts to be greedy (2 Peter 2:14). One of the Ten Commandments is against greed or coveting (Ex. 20:17). Judas' greed led him to betray Jesus (Matt. 26:14-16). See also Col. 3:5-7.

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Unseal the Indictment!" Discuss the meaning of this courtroom concept and appropriate signs to express it.
- **Make the lesson come alive!** Make a small scroll using a sheet of paper and two pencils (or small dowels) to roll it together into the middle. Paste a red circle (like a seal) across the scroll to hold it closed. Use this to explain the significance of the title to this lesson. This is God's indictment (judgment) against His people Israel.

STEP TWO – HEAR YE! HEAR YE! (AMOS 1:1-2)

- Ask someone ahead of time to discuss Amos' Vision from "The Bible in Context," above, and other resources from the church library.
- Note how verse 1 identifies the date in relation to a disaster and two kings.
- Verse 2 is the announcement, much like the "town criers" many years ago. We need to add the first part of verse 3, "This is what the Lord says." Listen up!

STEP THREE – SINFUL ACTIONS ARE EVIDENT (2:6-8)

- Note the different groups of people to whom God's judgments are announced. This is against Israel and their greed. Locate these on a Bible map: Aram, Philistia, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Israel, and Judah.
- Ask someone ahead of time to review the discussion of greed from "Explore..." above and other resources.

STEP FOUR – YOU'VE BEEN WARNED (3:6-8)

- This continues the judgment against Israel. Amos prepares them for the messages to follow. They cannot say they did not know about it.
- Ask someone to sign verse 7. This is a good memory verse.

STEP FIVE - ACCOUNTABILITY COMES KNOCKING (3:13-15)

- Encourage discussion of *accountability*. How about the person who has not been to church and has not read the Bible?

STEP SIX - CONCLUSION

- Close with prayer that class members will seek right relationships with God.

Value All Human Life

Background Study Outline

1. **Crown of Creation**
(Gen. 1:26-31)
2. **Opposing Views;
Different Actions**
(Ex. 1:8-22)
3. **Praise to God for Life
and Purpose**
(Ps. 139:13-16)
4. **Blessing of the Chil-
dren** (Mark 10:13-16)

Lesson Material

1. **Affirm Life's Value**
(Gen. 1:26-27)
2. **Respect and Protect**
(Ex. 1:15-17)
3. **Celebrate Life's Pur-
pose** (Ps. 139:13-16)
4. **Follow Jesus' Exam-
ple** (Mark 10:13-16)

Bible Truth

God created human life in His image. We must value life and protect it as a sacred gift from Him.

The Bible in Context (Gen. 1:26-27)

Some concepts in the Bible are difficult to understand, but God wants us to understand. These verses are about the image of God. Paul used the words *fullness of God* or *fullness of Christ*, meaning “to become more and more like Christ” (Eph. 3:19; Col. 2:9-10). Jesus said we must become perfect as God is perfect (Matt. 5:48). Paul also wrote about being changed to the image of the Son of God (Rom. 8:29). God’s image is our goal as we grow spiritually.

Explore . . . Kingdom of God (Mark 10:14-15)

The kingdom of God is the central theme of the teaching of Jesus. Immediately after His baptism, Jesus went into Galilee, preaching the Good News from God. The message of Jesus was that the kingdom of God is near (Mark 1:14-15). Jesus used many parables to explain the kingdom. In Matthew 13 Jesus compared the kingdom with a farmer (v. 24), a seed (v. 31), yeast (v. 33), a treasure (v. 44), a pearl merchant (vv. 45-46), and a net (vv. 47-48). The kingdom of God means making Jesus Lord of our life.

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Value All Human Life." Note this is a special lesson on the "Sanctity of Human Life."
- **Make the lesson come alive!** Bring a large mirror to class. Place it so class members can see themselves as they come into the classroom. Place a sign at the top, "Are you living in the image of God? Do you know everyone is made in the image of God?"

STEP TWO – AFFIRM LIFE'S VALUE (GEN. 1:26-27)

- Ask someone to sign Genesis 1:26-27. This is a part of the story of creation.
- Ask someone ahead of time to discuss the image of God from "The Bible in Context," above, and other resources from the church library. Call attention to the mirror as you start this lesson. These verses tell us we are in the image of God!
- Ask someone to sign verse 27 again. This is a good memory verse.

STEP THREE – RESPECT AND PROTECT (EX. 1:15-17)

- Ask someone to sign verses 15-17. Review the discussion of these verses from the pupil material.
- Emphasize the need to respect and protect human life.

STEP FOUR – CELEBRATE LIFE'S PURPOSE (PS. 139:13-16)

- Ask someone to sign verses 13-16. Call attention to the emphasis that God has a plan for each one, from before we are born.
- Encourage discussion of how we can know God's purpose in our life.

STEP FIVE - FOLLOW JESUS' EXAMPLE (MARK 10:13-16)

- Ask someone to sign verses 13-16. Discuss how natural it was for the disciples to try to protect Jesus' time and strength, but they did not have respect for the spiritual needs of the children.
- Ask someone ahead of time to review the discussion of the kingdom of God from "Explore..." above, and other resources.

STEP SIX - CONCLUSION

- Close with prayer that class members will become more aware of opportunities to value all human life.

Court Is in Session!

Background Study Outline

1. Rampant Evil
(Amos 5:1-17)
2. Hypocritical Worship
(5:18-27)
3. False Security (6:1-7)
4. Selfish Pride (6:8-14)

Lesson Material

1. Looking for Life
in Wrong Places?
(Amos 5:4-6)
2. Longing for a Rescue
Day? (5:18-20)
3. Substituting Rites
for Right Living?
(5:21-24)
4. Caring About Self
But Not Others?
(6:1a,4-7)

Bible Truth

Empty religious activity and self-centeredness displease God and can never replace right living and godly concern for others.

The Bible in Context (1 Kings 5:21)

The Jewish people celebrated many feasts and special days. These were to remind the people of God's blessings, but they forgot the meaning. The major festivals were Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Booths. In addition, the Israelites observed the Sabbath every week and the Feast of the New Moon every lunar month. The feasts were lessons about sin, judgment, forgiveness, the need for thanking God, and the importance of trusting God rather than their possessions.

Explore . . . Indifference (Amos 6:6)

Indifference to God's call is not just a problem today. It has always been a problem. Jesus called some people. They heard Him, but they went on about their own work (Luke 9:57-62). Joshua challenged the people to enter the promised land and not wait any longer (Josh. 18:3). Priests had a responsibility to collect money to rebuild the temple, but they did not do it (2 Chron. 24:4-6). The prophets told the people what God wanted them to do. The people heard them. They even enjoyed the "sermons," but they did not obey God's call.

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Court Is in Session." Again, this is something we hear in a courtroom. This fits the unit theme, "The Heart of a Righteous God."
- Review the Bible Truth for this lesson.

STEP TWO – LOOKING FOR LIFE IN WRONG PLACES? (AMOS 5:4-6)

- **Make the lesson come alive!** Use a Bible map to locate the towns and mountain named in today's lesson. Show how these relate to the lesson, following the discussion in the pupil material. Locate Beersheba and Gilgal (5:5), Bethel (5:6), and Mount Samaria (6:1).
- Encourage discussion of how this applies to Christians and churches today (Emphasizing the place and format of worship rather than the spirit of worship.)

STEP THREE – LONGING FOR A RESCUE DAY? (5:18-20)

- Discuss the judgment that came on Israel. (Captivity.) How does God show His judgment on us today? (Withholds blessings) Ask, "What do you think God would do in our church if we truly worshiped Him?"

STEP FOUR – SUBSTITUTING RITES FOR RIGHT LIVING? (5:21-24)

- Ask someone ahead of time to discuss Jewish feasts from "The Bible in Context," above, and other resources from the church library.
- Ask someone to sign verse 24. It is a good memory verse.
- Encourage discussion of why God did not like their worship activities. (Because the people were not sincere.) God's preference is a sincere heart.

STEP FIVE - CARING ABOUT SELF BUT NOT OTHERS? (6:1A,4-7)

- Ask someone ahead of time to review the discussion of indifference from "Explore..." above, and other resources.

STEP SIX - CONCLUSION

- Close with prayer that class members will seek to be more sincere in worship.

Can I Get a Witness?

Background Study Outline

- 1. Vision of Locusts
(Amos 7:1-3)**
- 2. Vision of Fire (7:4-6)**
- 3. Vision of a Plumb
Line (7:7-9)**
- 4. Encounter with an
Opponent (7:10-17)**

Lesson Material

- 1. Interceding Witness
(Amos 7:4-6)**
- 2. Truth-Telling Witness
(7:7-9)**
- 3. Opposed Witness
(7:10-13)**
- 4. Obedient Witness
(7:14-17)**

Bible Truth

God uses obedient Christians to pray for people and to share God's message with others.

The Bible in Context (Amos 7:4)

Fire is a picture word used in the Bible to describe God's anger against unfaithfulness. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with a rain of fire and brimstone (sulfur) (Gen. 19:23-29). Later the Israelites were threatened with the same punishment if they broke their covenant with God (Deut. 29:22-25). Isaiah prophesied fire against Assyria and Edom (Isa. 30:30-32; 34:5-13). Other prophets used this same word picture. Fire and brimstone are used as symbols of God's punishment in Revelation 19:20; 20:10; 21:8.

Explore . . . Sycamore Fig Tree (Amos 7:14)

A sycamore tree in Egypt is used for lumber, but the sycamore fig tree is an evergreen fruit tree. It grows to 65 feet high and has large leaves that provide shade. It grows along rivers and streams in thickets. The fruit grows in clusters and can be harvested during several months of the year in some places. The sycamore is also mentioned in 1 Chronicles 27:28; 1 Kings 10:27; Psalm 78:47; Jeremiah 24:1-2; and Luke 19:4.

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Can I Get a Witness?" Relate this title to the other lessons in this unit with the theme "The Heart of a Righteous Judge."
- Ask if any class member has been called as a witness in court. In this lesson, Amos was the true witness and Amaziah the priest was the false witness.

STEP TWO – INTERCEDING WITNESS (AMOS 7:4-6)

- Ask someone to discuss fire from "The Bible in Context," above, and other resources from the church library. The Holy Spirit came onto the apostles like flames of fire, representing power.
- Note verses 1-3 have the same experience for Amos as verses 4-6. Encourage discussion of the expression, "The Lord changed His mind." This is a test for Amos, not for God. God is omnipotent, so He knew what He would do.

STEP THREE – TRUTH-TELLING WITNESS (7:7-9)

- Ask someone to sign verse 8. It is a good memory verse.
- **Make the lesson come alive!** Bring a plumb line to class. If you cannot find one, make one by fastening a thread to the eraser of a sharpened pencil. Use a pin in the center of the eraser so it hangs straight down. Demonstrate how builders used this to make sure a wall is straight. Find a definition of the two terms important to a builder: plumb and square.
- Amos received God's word about the future for Israel.

STEP FOUR – OPPOSED WITNESS (7:10-13)

- Use the material in the pupil section to discuss these verses.
- (Note there was also a king in Judah named Amaziah.)

STEP FIVE - OBEDIENT WITNESS (7:14-17)

- Encourage discussions of how the prophets lived.
- Ask someone ahead of time to review the discussion of the sycamore fig tree from "Explore..." above and other resources.

STEP SIX - CONCLUSION

- Close with prayer that class members will be obedient witnesses to their faith in Jesus Christ.

Let the Verdict Be Read!

Background Study Outline

1. **Vision of the End (Amos 8:1-14)**
2. **Vision of Horror (9:1-6)**
3. **Message of Judgment (9:7-10)**
4. **Message of Hope (9:11-15)**

Lesson Material

1. **Trust Comes by Hearing (Amos 8:11-12)**
2. **Sovereignty Cuts Two Ways (9:8-10)**
3. **True Hope Rests in God (9:11-15)**

Bible Truth

Only God can promise a good and fair future for His people because only God is above all things.

The Bible in Context (Amos 9:8)

God said "I will not completely destroy Jacob's descendants." A *remnant* is "something left over after making a garment." God used the term to mean a group of people who would one day return to Israel. God saved a few people at the time of the flood (Gen. 6:11-18). God promised Abraham his descendants would be preserved. Jacob's family was kept alive in Egypt (Gen. 45:7-8). God promised He would preserve a small group of His people to return to Israel (Ezek. 12:1-16). Jeremiah preached that a remnant would return (Jer. 23:3, 30:1-3).

Explore . . . God's Sovereignty (Amos 9:8-10)

Job has a beautiful description of God. It begins with the creation and tells of God's power in all the earth (Job 38-41). Job was in awe of God while God spoke to him. He knew he stood before the Sovereign Lord. Moses felt this at the burning bush (Ex. 3:1-6). Joshua also felt this reverence (Josh. 5:13-15). The prophet Habakkuk reminds us, "The Lord is in His holy Temple; all the earth should be silent in his presence" (Hab. 2:20).

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Let the Verdict Be Read!" Relate this theme to the other lessons in this unit, using the idea of a court in session.
- Note this is the last lesson in the study of the prophecy of Amos. Encourage discussion of what truths class members have learned from this study.

STEP TWO – TRUST COMES BY HEARING (AMOS 8:11-12)

- Ask someone to sign verse 11. This is a good memory verse.
- Ask someone else to sign Matthew 5:6. This is Jesus' statement about spiritual hunger and thirst.

STEP THREE – SOVEREIGNTY CUTS TWO WAYS (9:8-10)

- Ask someone ahead of time to review the discussion of God's Sovereignty from "Explore..." above and other resources. Use the material in the pupil section to encourage discussion of God's sovereignty.
- **Make the lesson come alive!** Ask the class to give you signs that help describe God. Write the words on the board. Encourage discussion of how God wants us to know Him, but we have difficulty understanding because it is so different from what we really know. End with a discussion of God's sovereignty, as in today's lesson.
- Ask someone else to discuss the remnant from "The Bible in Context," above, and other resources from the church library.

STEP FOUR – TRUE HOPE RESTS IN GOD (9:11-15)

- Emphasize this is a promise of what God would do after the people were punished by being taken captive to Assyria.
- Use a Bible map to locate Edom. This is a reference to all the land that once belonged to Israel. Edom had taken some of it. Assyria and Babylon would take it all, but God would give it all back to His people.

STEP FIVE - CONCLUSION

- Ask class members to read the short Book of Jonah this week. The final two lessons for this quarter come from this book.
- Close with prayer that class members will trust God for all their needs in the future.

Unit Three

Heart of a Relentless Pursuer

Jonah 1:1–4:11

- These two lessons emphasize God's desire to let all people hear about Him and glorify Him. The goal of this unit is to lead believers to join God in his urgent, compassionate outreach to all people.
- The missions theme of these lessons will be made more personal if you secure information from the International Mission Board about missionaries reaching out to Deaf people in other nations. (Go to www.imb.org.) Try to get information from one or more of these missionaries.
- During the past few months your church has probably had an emphasis on the Lottie Moon offering for world missions. It may help to review what your church has done, and look ahead to the Annie Armstrong offering for North American missions coming up in March and April. Encourage class members to consider giving sacrificially to support missions around the world. Discuss any possible opportunities for mission trips for your Deaf class.
- Encourage class members to read all four chapters in this small book so they have the background for the verses selected for the two lessons.
- Use a Bible map to locate Joppa, Tarshish, and Nineveh, the three cities named in this book. Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about Nineveh. It was an interesting city.
- Apply these lessons to your church and Deaf group. Learn about the area where you serve. Ask your associational missions office for statistics about areas where new churches are needed. Consider with your class if a Deaf ministry is needed in another town near you. Is the area around your church a mission field your group needs to look at more closely? Is there another area in your state where a Deaf ministry is needed and your Deaf group could help start it?

Pursuing Those Called to Tell

Background Study Outline

- 1. Fleeing God
(Jonah 1:1-3)**
- 2. Accepting Blame
(1:4-16)**
- 3. Praying for Help
(1:17-2:10)**

Lesson Material

- 1. Which Way Are You
Going? (Jonah 1:1-3)**
- 2. What Will It Take?
(1:4,7-12)**
- 3. To Whom Will You
Turn? (1:17-2:4)**

Bible Truth

God expects His people to carry His message to other people, including people groups other than their own.

The Bible in Context (Jonah 1:1)

The city of Nineveh is first mentioned in Genesis 10:8-12. It was built by Nimrod, the son of Cush, and a descendant of Noah's son, Ham. Later, Nineveh became the capital of Assyria (2 Kings 19:36). At one time it had a population of 175,000 people. The people of the area are called Cushites in some Bible translations. Jesus commended the people of Nineveh because they repented when Jonah preached to them (Matt. 12:39-41; Luke 11:29-32). Many years later, just as Nahum predicted, Nineveh was totally destroyed (Nah. 1:1).

Explore . . . Casting Lots (Jonah 1:7)

Casting lots is mentioned 70 times in the Old Testament and seven times in the New Testament, but little is known about the actual lots themselves. They may have been sticks of various lengths, flat stones like coins, or some kind of dice. This practice was used in the division of the land under Joshua. Joshua cast lots to decide which tribe went to each of the areas in the Promised Land (Josh. 18:8-10). Aaron cast lots to decide which of two goats became the sacrifice (Lev. 16:5-10). The soldiers cast lots to see who got Jesus' robe (Matt. 27:35).

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Pursuing Those Called to Tell." Discuss the meaning and appropriate signs for this concept. (Following the people God has called as witnesses.)
- Ask class members if they remember hearing any missionary talk about his "call" to missions. Encourage discussion of the different ways God calls people to do His special work.

STEP TWO – WHICH WAY ARE YOU GOING? (JONAH 1:1-3)

- Use a Bible map to identify Joppa, Tarshish, and Nineveh, the three cities in today's lesson. Ask someone ahead of time to learn what they can about Joppa and Tarshish. Ask someone ahead of time to discuss Nineveh from "The Bible in Context," above, and other resources from the church library.
- **Make the lesson come alive!** Ask a class member to interview your pastor or other staff member, or a missionary about his experience with God's call to the ministry or to mission work, and then report this to the class.

STEP THREE – WHAT WILL IT TAKE? (1:4,7-12)

- Encourage discussion of how God used His great power to change Jonah's mind. Ask, "What does God need to do to keep us fully obedient to Him?"
- Ask someone ahead of time to review the discussion of casting lots from "Explore..." above and other resources.

STEP FOUR – TO WHOM WILL YOU TURN? (1:17-2:4)

- Tell the story in verses 13-16.
- Many people say the story of Jonah is not true, but Jesus spoke about Jonah as a true event (Matt. 12:39-41; Luke 11:29-32).
- Ask someone to sign verse 2. It is a good memory verse.
- Emphasize Jonah's commitment to the Lord after his experience in the fish. Ask someone to sign verse 9. It summarizes Jonah's commitment to be faithful to God in the future.

STEP FIVE - CONCLUSION

- Review the lesson using "What About You?" and "Applying the Lesson."
- Close with prayer that class members will be willing to carry God's message wherever God leads them.

Pursuing Those Who Need to Hear

Background Study Outline

1. **Second Opportunity**
(Jonah 3:1-4)
2. **Urgent Repentance**
(3:5-10)
3. **Lesson in Compassion**
(4:1-11)

Lesson Material

1. **All People Have an Urgent Need**
(Jonah 3:1-4)
2. **God Acts with Sovereign Mercy** (3:5,10)
3. **Salvation Isn't Just About Us** (4:1-4)
4. **Do We Care as God Cares?** (4:5-11)

Bible Truth

Christians must show compassion to all people groups because God has compassion for all people groups and wants them all to hear His message.

The Bible in Context (Jonah 3:5)

The Bible has many examples of fasting. Going without food or drink is one way a person can focus on God, with nothing else to interrupt. In the New Testament, the members of the early church often fasted as they sought God's leadership (Acts 13:2-3). Fasting must be a private act, not public (Matt. 6:16-18), but it can include many people (Joel 1:14; 2:12). Moses fasted while he was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments (Ex. 34:28). Jesus fasted (Luke 4:1-2).

Explore . . . East Wind (Jonah 4:8)

The east wind in the Middle East is known for its power. It comes suddenly and with great heat to injure or destroy most plants. It is often described as a fire. In one of the 10 plagues against the Pharaoh of Egypt, Moses caused a great east wind to blow and bring locusts (Ex. 10:13-15). The east wind divided the waters so the Israelites walked across on dry land (Ex. 14:21-22). Ezekiel used the picture word of the east wind to describe God's power to destroy evil (Ezek. 17:10). God sent that same east wind to burn up the vine that cooled Jonah.

STEP ONE – OVERVIEW

- Remind the class this is the end of our study of three Minor Prophets. What have class members learned from this study?
- The title and theme of today's lesson is "Pursuing Those Who Need to Hear." Compare this title to last week's lesson, "Pursuing Those Called to Tell."

STEP TWO – ALL PEOPLE HAVE AN URGENT NEED (JONAH 3:1-4)

- Ask, "What was Jonah's message?" (You must repent.)
- Ask, "If you said that to someone, what would you expect?"

STEP THREE – GOD ACTS WITH SOVEREIGN MERCY (3:5,10)

- Discuss verse 5. "How did the people respond?" (They repented). Encourage discussion of why the people may have been ready to repent. (God's Holy Spirit may have already been working. That is why God sent Jonah.)
- Ask someone ahead of time to discuss fasting from "The Bible in Context."
- Ask someone to sign verse 10. It is a good memory verse.

STEP FOUR – SALVATION ISN'T JUST ABOUT US (4:1-4)

- Emphasize how Jonah's pride was hurt.
- Ask someone to sign verse 4. When we become angry, we need to ask the question, "Is it right to be angry?" (It is if it's God's kind of anger.)

STEP FIVE - DO WE CARE AS GOD CARES? (4:5-11)

- Ask someone ahead of time to review the discussion of the east wind from "Explore..." above and other resources.
- **Make the lesson come alive!** Bring to class a small plant. Also bring a globe or world map to put beside the plant. On the plant, place a sign, "Jonah's concern." On the map or globe, "God's concern." Have a third sign, "Where is your concern?" The application is obvious.

STEP SIX - CONCLUSION

- Encourage the class to read 1 Timothy this week.
- Close with prayer that class members will be sensitive to God's call to witness.