

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, Sept. 30, 2012

Passage: Amos 4:1-13

Memory Passage: Romans 8:29-30

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Amos 4:1-13.** Read this chapter several times today, taking notes on what you see (i.e. repeated words/phrases, where each section begins & ends, God's actions vs. Israel's actions, connections with chapters 1-3, etc.).
- (b) What is Amos intending to say about the women of Samaria when he calls them "cows of Bashan" (For help, look at the cross references given in your Bible, or do a word search of "Bashan," and see how Scripture informs your interpretation of Scripture. You should find passages such as Deut. 32:14, Ps. 22:12, & Jer. 50:19 especially helpful)? What does he say about their behavior? What do we learn about their social status, their wealth, and their attitudes?
- (c) Why has God "sworn by His own holiness" concerning His judgment, and why is this important? Though we don't know where "Harmon" is or anything about it, what else do you see concerning God's judgment on these women? What is God saying about wealth & prosperity in 4:1-3? How does this speak to/apply to us in 21st century America?
- (d) *Family:* **Read Amos 4:1** and ask, "Why does Amos call the women of Samaria "cows of Bashan?" Write on your white board the following references: **Deut. 32:14, Ps. 22:12, & Jer. 50:19.** Give your family the assignment to look up each passage and write down what they learn about Bashan's pastures and its animals. Then ask the question again: "Why does Amos call the women of Samaria "cows of Bashan?" and discuss the answer. They should better understand that this is a way of saying that they are well-fed, well taken care of, just as the cattle of Bashan were cattle that grazed on very fertile land and grew to be fat and healthy. Then point them back to Amos 4:1 to show them that what Amos condemns is the fact that these women became rich, having all they needed but yet always wanting more, by oppressing the poor and crushing the needy.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Amos 4:1-13.** What connection do you see between vs. 1-3 & vs. 4-5? Vs. 4 & 5 are packed with irony, so keep that in mind as you study them. Why does God call them to come to Bethel & Gilgal to worship? What will happen when they worship there, and what *should have* happened when they worshiped? Where *should* they have been worshipping?
- (b) Why is Amos calling the nation to continue worshipping in the same way they have been, even though they would be multiplying transgressions? What does v. 5 tell us about what Israel thought about their worship? What do these outward actions reveal about their hearts?
- (c) In what ways has the church today fallen into worship practices that might cause our transgressions to be multiplied? In what ways have *you* fallen into worship practices that would cause your transgressions to be multiplied? How can the church/you repent of these practices and institute reform?
- (d) *Family:* **Read Amos 4:5-6** and ask, "What things seem to be upside-down in these verses?" (God is calling His people to worship in a way that displeases Him and multiplies their sins; He is calling them to worship in places other than Jerusalem; He seems to be telling them to continue their sinful practices; He tells them to continue drawing attention to themselves ["proclaim," "publish"]; etc.). Then explain the irony (language that says one thing to express the opposite) Amos uses: God is telling them to continue their worship at the wrong place and the wrong way to show that He continues to be offended by it but they will not listen to His warnings. In doing so He points out several things that are wrong with their worship. **Then Read Matt. 6:1-6 & 16-18** and show that Jesus addressed some of the same problems (outward, self-centered, attention-getting worship) in His day. Then discuss ways that Christians today can fall into worship expressions that are done to look good on the outside but reflect hearts that are far from God and His intentions for our worship, and ways we can correct them.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Amos 4:1-13.** What was God's single goal for His people as He visited them with everything mentioned in vs. 6-11? To what act of God does v. 6 refer?
- (b) Of what acts of God does Amos remind the people in vs. 6-9? How are these works of the Lord related to each other? Given the description Amos gives, how long do you think God did these things? To what extent did they affect the people?
- (c) What was the "pestilence" God sent (v. 10)? To what stench does Amos refer, and of what should this have reminded the people? To what event(s) might Amos be referring in v. 11?
- (d) *Family:* Prior to your lesson make a copy of Amos 4 for each person in your family (you can type it out, or copy it from a site like esvbible.org or biblegateway.com). As you **Read Amos 4:1-13** have your family circle every action of God (i.e. "I gave you" from v. 6, "I also withheld" from v. 7, etc.) and underline the repeated response of the people ("yet you did not return to me"). Then enter into a discussion concerning why God would act in these ways toward His people (He desired them

to turn from idols and return to worship Him) and what the people should have done in response to each of these curses from God (they should have repented and returned to God). Then lead them in a discussion of how God disciplines us at times to move us toward repentance. Give them examples from your own life so they understand, and then give them examples they might experience in their own lives. Finally, in each instance, show them what true repentance looks like.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Amos 4:6-11 & Deut. 28:15-68.** What is going on in Deut. 28 (its context)? As you read Deut. 28:15-68, write down every curse to which Amos refers in 4:6-11. How many verses/curses did you find in common? What should have come to the mind of the Israelites when they experienced each one of these merciful curses from God? Was God just in His expectations that His people should have repented when He sent these calamities to them? Why/why not?

(b) Consider the plagues God sent on Pharaoh & Egypt (see Ex. 7-12 if you need a reminder): What similarities do you see between the way God punished Egypt and the way God dealt with His people as recalled by Amos in 4:6-11? What does this tell us about the way God viewed the worship and life of Israel?

(c) How should we apply Amos 4:6-11 today? Write down at least 3 applications for yourself and for our church. Be ready to share these applications in class.

(d) *Family:* **Read Amos 4:2.** Ask, “Why does God ‘swear by holiness’ concerning His coming judgment?” After a brief discussion, **Read Heb. 6:13-18** and teach your family: (1) People swear an oath by someone greater than them in order to confirm their words as true. (2) No one is greater than God, and He is true in His character and cannot lie. (3) When God swears by His holiness He is saying that His character is perfect so His oaths are true. (4) This means Israel (and we) should listen to His words and know for sure He will act according to His character, whether to judge or save, to bless or curse.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read Amos 4:1-13.** Upon what does God base His right to judge and the certainty of His judgment (v. 13)? Why do you think He finishes this oracle with the truths contained in this verse?

(b) What affect do you think v. 13 would have had on you if you were among Amos’ audience in Bethel? What affect *does* this verse have upon you *today* as you read it? How does it challenge your affections? Your priorities? How does it challenge your idol worship? What kind of life should this verse inspire from those who are redeemed? Do you live and serve in such a way that betrays that you have a much smaller view of God than this verse reveals to be true, or would others, by looking at your life, believe that you had a great and lofty view of God’s character? Explain your answer.

(c) For what kind of meeting with God does Amos command the people of Israel prepare? It is quite possible that some of the worshipers ironically described in v. 4 would have said, “We *always* come to meet with God! Why else would we come to the temple and make sacrifices and give tithes?” What about you? Are you so confident that your worship is pleasing to God that you would ignore a warning of judgment such as Amos is bringing? Consider for a moment your preparation and engagement in corporate worship. Ask the Holy Spirit to lay your thoughts and motives bare, and then ask yourself: Am I prepared to meet God in worship (i.e. do I start thinking about worship when the music starts or the night before as I prepare my heart and my family’s heart to receive the word the next day)? Do I listen with an expectant heart, ready to hear from God and obey? Am I holding on to sin, grudges, traditions, anger, disobedience, etc. when I come to worship and expecting God to bless me anyway as if it was my right to be blessed? Is worship about me or about God? Is my expectation to hear what I desire to hear or what God desires for me to hear through the ministry of His Word?

(d) *Family:* Lead your family through (a)-(c) above.

DATE: Sept. 30, 2012

PASSAGE: Amos 4:1-13

Return to Me!

In Amos 4:1-13 Amos preaches an oracle of judgment that contains four calls to His people.