When God’s Patience Runs Out

Amos
**How to get the best value out of these studies...**


This Bible Study Guide is designed in a three part format...

1. Opening questions to get you thinking are listed as **Appetisers**.
2. Those which get you to investigate the text are contained in the **Main Course**.
3. The **Thinking It Through** section prompts you to reflect on what you’ve looked at and consider how it will change you and those in your group.

**If you’re using this guide in a Small Group**, it is vital that you have done preparatory work **before** you get to your meeting. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but to the other members of your group.

**If you’re doing these studies individually**, make sure you let someone know you are doing so and arrange a time to meet with them when you’ve finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God’s Word.

If you’re after good commentaries or resources to complement your looking into the Bible, speak to your Small Group Leader or one of the staff, and we’ll try to be as helpful as possible. Most people aren’t going to spend a lot of money on theological works, so we’re constantly on the look out for quality titles that will result in money well spent.

We trust you’ll find this guide helpful and we welcome any feedback you can give us as you use them.

Always surround your time looking into God’s Word with prayer, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with God’s people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Recommended Commentary:**

- J A Motyer  *The Message of Amos*, The Bible Speaks Today
- Roy Clements  *When God’s Patience Runs Out*, Living Word Series, IVP
The Background to Amos...

The book of Amos is located squarely in the eighth century BC. We know this from the opening verse of prophecy, Amos 1: 1 "The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa—what he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel."

Uzziah reigned in Judah from 790-740BC and Jereboam II from about 793-753BC. Amos was an untaught man called by God. He came from Tekoa which was a village of little account in Judah near Jerusalem. However, his public ministry involved him travelling to the Northern Kingdom/Israel to preach for repentance.

It’s important to know the background to this southern/northern split. The split occurred in the aftermath of Solomon’s reign as king of the combined twelve tribes. This division occurred in 922BC.

There was a lot of animosity between the north and the south (check out 2 Kings 14 for a bit of background), yet Amos went from Judah to preach a message of repentance to Israel - a great missionary spirit!

In many ways the nation of Israel was experiencing good times in the eighth century BC. They were prosperous and relatively secure in terms of their national state. This had led to relaxed, self-confident smugness. They had retained the appearance of relationship with God, but it was all on the surface. God and his word no longer had any impact on their life as God’s people.

Amos came with a word from God that His patience had run out and that He was about to judge them. Historically speaking, it was only 30 years later that God used Assyria to invade and conquer Israel (722BC).

The parallels with our own nation and the church in the west are obvious. The challenge for us as individuals is strong from Amos too. We live in a comfortable, well-off nation where it is easy to give lip service to God so long as it doesn’t disadvantage us in any was or unsettle our relationships with unbelievers around us. Amos prophesies with relevance and power to our society and our church some 2,500 years later.
Do We Want God To Judge?
Amos 1-3

Preparation: Given that we are doing a bit of a bird’s eye view of Amos, it would be good to read through the whole book and jot down the major themes and ideas that come up. Also, note the things that don’t necessarily make sense to you. Then when you get together in your Bible Study Group you might be able to help each other answer some of these issues.

For the first study, it would be good to read through the first three chapters carefully.

Appetisers...

1. FHB Dillon was the Rector of Holy Trinity between 1946 and 1952. He became known as ‘Hell, Fire and Brimstone’ Dillon because of his preaching on the wrath of God, the coming judgement and the need for repentance. If our preaching at Holy Trinity strongly and regularly emphasised the judgement of God, how would people react?
2. Do you think that warning about hell should be essential for any sharing of the gospel, or will it just scare potential believers away?

3. Do you think we have a sufficient horror of sin? Why? Why not?

Main Course...

4. You might like to look at 2 Kings 14: 23 - 15: 7 to get some background on the time of the two kings mentioned in Amos 1: 1. What do you think is the tone set in Amos 1: 2 for the message that is about to be delivered?
5. The focus of attention starts off with the nations that surround Israel. You might find it helpful to look at a Bible dictionary to see where these nations were located in relation to Israel. What are the sins that God is going to hold them accountable for? (see Amos 1: 3 - 2: 3). What do you think is the point of the repeated phrase (for three sins... even for four).

6. In Amos 2: 4-5, the attention swings to Judah (where Amos was from). What privilege did they have? How had they sinned against God? What outcome could they expect for their sin?

7. If Amos had stopped preaching at Amos 2: 5, what reaction would he have received from his listeners?
8. From Amos 2: 6, Amos turns the spotlight on Israel. What are the major sins?

9. What is the consequence of their failure to honour God (Amos 2: 13-15).

10. How can their coming judgement be squared with the reality that they are God’s chosen people (Amos 3: 1-2a)?
11. In Amos 3: 11-12, it speaks of the Israelites being saved as a shepherd saves two leg bones and an ear from the lion’s mouth. What does this mean?

Thinking It Through...

12. How have the first three chapters of Amos shaped your thinking about the character of God? What does it tell you about the way God feels about sin?

13. How would you respond to someone who describes themselves as a Christian, but say they believe God is going to save everyone in the end?
14. The picture of God in these opening chapters is of a lion roaring. We only tend to come across lions when they are in cages and largely domesticated. What image of God is this meant to conjure up? Do you think we have lost our reverence for God? Why? Why not?

15. “Until we understand the intensity with which God hates sin, we will not understand the love of Christ.” Discuss.

16. If God sent an Amos to the people of Holy Trinity in 2009 to speak to us about our three sins and four, what areas do you think would be highlighted?
Are You Ready To Meet God?
Amos 4

Appetisers...

1. When a natural disaster happens, what sort of reaction does it bring from people you have contact with? Do your non-Christian friends ever talk as if God is involved in any way?

2. Do you think God had any part in the twin towers disaster? If so, what?

Main Course...

3. What is the point in Amos 4: 1?
4. How was the prediction in Amos 4: 2-3 fulfilled?

5. What sort of criticism of their religious practices is being put forward in Amos 4: 4-6?

6. In Amos 4: 6-11, who is the agent of all these disasters? What is the reason for them? Why weren’t they ‘listened’ to?
7. What is the consequence of Israel’s failure to listen to God? (Amos 4: 12 -13)

Thinking It Through...

8. How has this chapter changed your view of the character of God?

10. Should disasters today be warning signs for our world?

11. How should we pray for non-Christians? Is there ever a place for asking God to intervene in a person’s life to turn them to Himself, even if it involves some disaster in their personal life?

12. Does the affluence and relative ease of our society insulate us against the need for God? How does that affect us as God’s people?
Appetisers...

1. Thinking personally for a moment, what do you think is the biggest 'gap' between what you believe as a Christian and the way you actually live?

2. How do you think God feels about our meetings in church each Sunday? What things would please Him and what would disappoint Him? Do you think anything about our times together could make Him angry?

Main Course...

3. A quick skim of Amos 5-8 will give you a feel for the Israelite religious practices, eg. Amos 4: 4-5; 5: 18-24; 8: 5.
4. They seemed to be operating according to ‘the book’, ie. in line with the Biblical prescriptions for worship. So, why is it that every time these practices are mentioned they are condemned?

5. In Amos 7: 10-17 there is a contrast/clash between Amaziah and Amos. Amaziah was like the king’s chaplain and Amos was the out of town yokel (never been to Bible College). What is the tension over? What is Amaziah committed to? Why can’t Amaziah hear what God is saying? What is the consequence of all this for Amaziah?

7. What reaction does God have to people where they have a gap between their ‘religion’ and the outworking of it in their ‘life’? (Amos 5: 23-24)

8. How does God respond to hypocrisy? How serious is it? (Amos 8: 9-12)

Thinking It Through...

9. Think through again where the ‘gaps’ are in your life. What do you need to do about them?
10. Read James 1: 22-27. This picks up on the need to be putting into practice what we know to be true. There are several areas touched on here like gossip, generosity and sexual purity. Are these issues that we need to be concerned about?

11. How can we guard against hypocrisy as a church (ie. the way we relate to each other)?

12. Earlier we looked at the question of what could anger God about our church services. Any further thoughts on this?