

AMOS

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

CONSEQUENCES JUSTICE DIVINE REPENTANCE SOCIAL JUSTICE

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Amos 8:1-8

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the students understand that God cares about people, especially those who are treated unjustly

MEMORY VERSE

“Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you” (Jeremiah 7:23b, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Many of our modern societies have greater economic advantages than Israel had during the times of the prophet Amos. Prosperity brings its problems, such as religious indifference and complacency. Religious indifference means that people do not care about their neighbors.

In the times of the prophet, the independence of the rich people who did not recognize God brought as a consequence the oppression of the poor and the marginalized people. The rich believed themselves to be powerful; they did not feel responsible for others and did not respond to others, not even God. For that reason, they treated the less fortunate of society with indifference and sometimes cruelty.

We do not need to spend much time with preadolescents to realize that social injustice is obvious. Children sometimes take advantage of the weak or the disabled. It is often common for preadolescents to be bullies use others to achieve what they want. This lesson is a call to remember God’s love for the students and others. We trust that you will help them respond with love when they see or experience injustices at school, at home, and in their daily activities. It will also help them to care for and act on behalf of the less fortunate.

The commandments of God call us to treat others with love, respect, and justice. We cannot persist in acting as if we are “gods.”

Only by walking in God's will can we be humble enough to treat others as children of God.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Amos is one of the 12 "minor prophets," and his prophecies are of the utmost importance.

In Amos 8:1-8, he prophesied with determination: "Israel, this is over, and I will tell you why." Sound very loud? Surely yes, but that was the message that God had given the prophet. The Lord led him to give the message through a clear example in a vision.

The vision consisted of a basket of ripe fruit. This illustrated and emphasized that the nation of Israel was ready (mature) to be judged and destroyed. So the end was near!

The reason becomes clear in verses 4-6. In its days of prosperity, Israel deceived the poor. The merchants had become greedy. And what was striking was that the owners of the businesses kept the religious practices, closing their businesses on the Sabbath day and during other festivities. However, their minds were occupied with themselves. After the Sabbath was over, they opened their businesses to keep taking advantage of people with their purchases and sales.

In fact, the five visions of Amos have a similar note of divine judgment. Only in the last verses of the book (read 9:11-15) do we find words of hope. But still, we did not find any note of repentance by the people. Simply the Lord says that there would be restoration after the destruction. However, the final words of God are not death. They are words of life.

Who was Amos?

Amos was not a priest. He was a shepherd of sheep and took care of sycamore-fig trees" (7:14). It seems that his is one of the first books of the prophets, beginning his writing about 760 BC. He had his home in Tekoa, an elevated area that gave him a wide and panoramic view of the most important parts of Israel. That way he could see if the enemies were advancing. It was the perfect place to see the punishment of the nation.

The importance of Amos

Amos lived in an economically and militarily strong nation. As a prophet, he could see the danger of the moral collapse of his people, even though they pretended to be strong. That was the focus of his prophetic ministry. Perhaps the saddest aspect of the book of Amos is not the pessimistic tone, but its message goes beyond time and place. Humanity has changed very little, comparing what is happening today with what happened in the days of Amos. Today, the rich still take advantage of the poor, and the powerful oppress the weak. When we engage in such actions, we'll face the judgment that God imparted on Israel through Amos. The book of Amos reminds us that the faithfulness that God demands will be measured according to what we do for the weak and the less fortunate. As you prepare for this lesson, think about these questions:

Why do you believe that God cares for the poor and the helpless in our world?

In what way did Jesus show concern for the poor of his day?

How does the mission of the Church to evangelize and make disciples compare with the mission of clothing and feeding the poor?

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

As you begin this session, think about the following questions and then ask the group:

Do you believe that God cares for the poor and the helpless in our world?

Did Jesus show concern for the poor of his day?

Does the mission of our Church to evangelize and make Christlike disciples include clothing and feeding the poor?

TEACH THE LESSON

The soccer (football) competition (drama)

Choose four volunteers to represent the following characters in "Football fight": the coach; Nicolas, an intellectual teenager; Thomas, an athletic boy; and Laura, a cheerleader. Give them Student Activity Sheet #374-A.

(The coach enters the gym and sees Thomas, Nicolas and Laura talking).

Coach: Hi guys, I'm looking for someone to help me at a kids football game next Tuesday after school.

Nicolas: I would love to help. I've never played football, but I know the rules well. If you need me, I'm willing to help you.

Thomas: Coach, you know that I would like to help you. I know you don't have anyone else to do it, but I don't have time.

Coach: Well, no problem. Nicolas offered to help me.

Laura: Yes, but Nicolas ... Everyone knows that he would look funny on the field.

Nicolas: As I said, I know how to play, I've just never had the chance to do it.

Thomas: Because you're not good at football. Coach, I think I have no choice but to come to help you myself.

Coach: But you just told me you don't have time!

Thomas: (puffing out his chest): Well, what do you want me to say? I'll do it because I'm a good person.

Laura: (jumping): Yes. You're amazing!

Coach: I prefer that Nicolas helps me.

Nicolas, Thomas and Laura: SERIOUSLY?

Coach: Yes, without a doubt. I don't see why Nicolas can't do it. He's intelligent, knows the rules and is willing. He has everything you need to be a good coach.

Nicolas: Thanks, coach! Nobody has ever given me an opportunity like this. I won't disappoint you.

Coach: I know. And Thomas, now that you have time, I need you to help me wash the uniforms.

Thomas: Well ... I ... actually..... my mom told me to go straight home. Coach: That's what I thought ...

After they perform the drama, talk about the characteristics that we value in people, discussing the following questions, and based on the drama:

What characteristics do you consider important when choosing your friends? (Write on the board the students' suggestions, for example, athletic, tall, good players, friendly, etc.)

Why are these characteristics important? (Because they'll help the team win; it will be a better team than others; together they'll have fun and enjoyable moments; etc.)

Has there ever been a time when you were not chosen to play on a team, or were you the last to be chosen? How did you feel? (Encourage the students to answer and tell their feelings.)

Say: "We feel unimportant when they do not choose us but choose other children instead of us. In today's Bible story, we'll study people who were mistreated by others. Those who are unimportant to us are very important to God."

What a basket!

Have the preadolescents follow the instructions in Student Activity Sheet #374-B for the activity "What a Basket!" to discover the hidden word: "Consequences." Then answer the questions at the bottom of the page:

What did the people do to make God so angry? (They mistreated the poor; they cheated in the markets/businesses; they were hypocrites; they kept the Sabbath but they were disobedient the rest of the week.)

In this passage, people were warned that their actions would bring consequences. What consequences? (The nation would be judged for ignoring and mistreating the needy and poor people.)

What did God mean when he told Amos that the fruit in the basket was ripe? (The basket of ripe fruit illustrated the time had come when they would pay for their sins of mistreating the poor and needy. The ripe fruit meant that it was time to "eat" it, but in the case of Israel, it was the appropriate time for judgment.)

One of the most important issues in this story is the social difference between rich and poor. Does this problem still exist in our society today? (As in the times of Amos, this is still a problem today.) In schools, poor children are mistreated by those who have more. Children who cannot afford new clothes or who are not fashionable are mocked by those who are always in fashion. There are many children who do not eat well because of lack of food, do not have adequate medical attention, or do not receive the love of their family.)

Name other differences that divide people. (Money, intelligence, physical abilities, beauty, social recognition, fame, etc.)

CONNECT THE LESSON

Detectives of the Word: the two plots of Amos

Distribute Student Activity Sheet #374-C. Say: "To be good detectives we must study all the possibilities and observe all the details, small and large, and thus find the culprit or wrongdoer. To be good detectives of the book of Amos, you will need your Bibles and a pencil. The book of Amos has 9 chapters. We'll divide into 9 groups of 1 or more people. Each group should investigate one chapter to find what the bad news was for the people of God. Because of the nation's disobedience and sins, God had one or more punishments for them."

Then gather all the groups so that each group gives their report as detectives of the Word.

Next, ask the whole group the following questions:

What were the punishments? Make a list of the ones you find in your chapter.

Why do you think Amos was so negative? (Because the Israelites were unjust to their people, and had taken advantage of the weak.)

The final part of the last chapter has good news. Why? (Because although there were so many in Israel who did the wrong things, God always believed that there were possibilities for people to change, repent, and obey.)

Tell the group of persons working on chapter 9 that they look for how God would bless the people.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

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Prepare two or three sets of cards. Write each of the words of the memory verse separately. Divide the group into several competing groups to assemble the verse correctly in the shortest time, and so practice it.

If you want to present a certificate to those who memorize Jeremiah 7:23, 2 Timothy 3:16 and Hebrews 1:3, print Student Activity Sheet #374-D for each student.

WRAP-UP

Pray

End by praying for the students to have a heart that loves and helps their fellow human beings.

Encourage

Encourage the students to have an attitude of love and mercy during this week, and then give a report next Sunday about how they did. Ask them to think about how they felt by helping a less fortunate person or friend. You can bring a basket with a fruit for each child or you can split the fruit in half. Take small plates, a knife, and napkins. While eating the fruit, you can ask review questions about the lesson.

This is also an excellent opportunity to do something practical and bring a basket with food to a family in need or give used toys in good condition to a child who does not have anything to play with.

Invite

Before leaving, encourage the students to come back, telling them that the next session begins a new unit of lessons. Remind them that this is a good time to invite new group members.