



Session 1: Waking up to reality

1-8 JULY

ICEBREAKER

How do you wake up in the morning and how would you describe your usual mood? (eg do you use an alarm clock, a mobile, are you naturally grumpy, bright, need caffeine?)

KEY THOUGHT

Through the prophet Amos, God calls people to wake up to His sovereignty and their failure to live according to His ways because He sees right through to their inner sinful attitudes.

KEY VERSE

'The LORD roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem' Amos 1:2

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Would you be concerned by God's scrutiny of your own life?
2. Do you see God as a comforter or challenger?
3. Why would God judge nations that are not Christian (see 3 July)?
4. How would you explain God's wrath to someone (see 4 July for ideas)?
5. How do you respond to Selwyn's sentence on 5 July, 'We cannot domesticate the Bible's prophetic message because it is not a matter of religious choice or opinion'?
6. What is the difference between love and holy love (see 6 July)?

7. Why can we not let our conscience be our guide?
8. Do you agree with the statement, 'What a person is in private he or she is likely to be in public life' found on 8 July?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.' Matt. 23:25

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you understand the message of Amos as you study this issue together.
- Thank God that He has made a way for us to avoid experiencing His justice for our sins through faith in Jesus.

Session 2: Taken to court

9-16 JULY

ICEBREAKER

How would you deal with a driver registering 31mph in a 30 zone? What if they were driving at 32, 33 or 34? At what different speeding levels of transgression would you act and what would you do? Would it make a difference if they caused an accident?

KEY THOUGHT

God is a righteous judge who weighs our lives in the balances of His justice, so we should not presume on His grace by living carelessly.

KEY VERSE

'Hear this word the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel' Amos 3:1

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Remember how God has blessed you in the past and share an example with the group.
2. How can Christians be different without being weird?
3. Do you agree with Alec Motyer and Selwyn that the 'world's greatest problems are not material but moral'? (See Alec's quote on 11 July.)
4. How may judgment be 'strange grace' (see 12 July)?

5. How do you respond to Selwyn's phrase, 'Don't mistake God's special choice for special immunity' (see 13 July)?
6. What is the difference between unhealthy introspection and constant vigilance?
7. Why may prophecy be 'a sign of God's grace' (see 15 July)?
8. Does your church evidence a prophetic passion to warn of God's impending judgement?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?' John 8:46

PRAYER POINTERS

- Thank God for His 'strange grace', which helps protect you from sinning but also cleanses you, after repentance.
- Ask God to fill you with a passion to warn people of their need of Jesus, and pray for the prophets among you.



Session 3: God's remnant

17-24 JULY

ICEBREAKER

How good are you at recycling so your remnants are not discarded but become valuable again?

KEY THOUGHT

We cannot attribute all disasters and difficulties to God, yet in all things He will be there in mercy to revive, restore, renew and rebuild us as we offer the remnants of our lives to Him.

KEY VERSE

"I gave you empty stomachs in every city ... yet you have not returned to me," declares the LORD' Amos 4:6-7

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What should characterise God's showpiece: the Church (see 17 July)?
2. In what ways can the idea of a remnant be misused, and what is God's intention for it (see 18 July)?
3. How does God combine blessing, guidance, judgment and mercy?
4. Why does the way in which we act at work matter to God (see 20 July)?
5. Discuss Selwyn's question from 21 July: 'Do we worship because we love God or because we just love to worship?'

6. Discuss whether you agree with Selwyn's assertion on 22 July, 'We do not live in a quid pro quo universe'.
7. How has God revealed His ways through nature to you?
8. On 24 July Selwyn says, 'Repentance does not qualify us to return to God; it *is* actually returning to God. It is not what we do before we come back to God; as the prodigal son realised, it *is* the way home.' Unpack this together.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'We don't have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He's been through weakness and testing, experienced it all - all but the sin. So let's walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help.' Heb. 4:15-16 (*The Message*)

PRAYER POINTERS

- Spend some time worshipping God for who He is.
- Pray for any prodigals that you may know, as well as those you know who are suffering, that they may draw closer to God and receive His help.

Session 4: Seek God first

25 JULY-1 AUG

ICEBREAKER

Devise a 'find and seek' treasure hunt in the garden, around the house or on a piece of paper where people follow clues to seek a simple reward (like a bar of chocolate).

KEY THOUGHT

Our lives tend to be based around seeking something. We seek pleasure, love and comfortable self-interest. But true life is only found in seeking God and His interests.

KEY VERSE

'This is what the LORD says to the house of Israel: "Seek me and live"' Amos 5:4

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How might we try to tame God?
2. Discuss together Selwyn's question from 26 July: 'Do we worship the Almighty, the Lord of Hosts, or merely a caricature?'
3. Why does our sin cause God so much disappointment and pain (see Gen. 6:5-6)?
4. On 28 July Selwyn quotes Frederick Faber: 'Those who love God cannot love Him by measure, for their love is but hunger to love Him still better.' How have you experienced this in your own life?
5. Do Christians really need Old Testament pictures of God's judgment (see 29 July)?

6. What is your favourite element of creation?
7. Why are words of love and actions of love both important?
8. What is your definition of goodness (see 1 Aug)?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who ... made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant' Phil. 2:4-7

PRAYER POINTERS

- Thank God that His mercies are new every morning and that He will forgive our sins.
- Pledge to seek God by putting Him first in your life above any self-interest.



Session 5: Living lives that please God

2-7 AUG

ICEBREAKER

What is your favourite worship song or hymn and why?

KEY THOUGHT

God hates evil and He calls us to feel and act like Him. If our lifestyle and relationships do not reflect His purity and righteousness He will not accept our songs of worship.

KEY VERSE

'Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts.' Amos 5:15

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why do some Christians live in the 'Perhaps' instead of the 'Yes' of forgiveness?
2. On 3 Aug Selwyn says, 'The great tragedy in Israel, as we have been seeing, is that the people fondly imagine God is with them but then live as if He isn't.' How much do you think this happens in the Church today?
3. Can Christians become so preoccupied with either confession or forgiveness they neglect the other?
4. Elizabeth Achtemeier describes Israel's worship as 'empty show' (see 5 Aug). Why does God sometimes reject our worship, and what is He most concerned with?

5. Discuss Selwyn's point from 6 Aug, 'the streams of the Spirit and rivers of refreshment that God is most interested in are justice and righteousness'.
6. How do your 'Sabbath' practices affect the rest of your week?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him' John 8:29

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for one another, that your lives will more closely reflect the love of God and the issues closest to His heart.
- Pray for Christians within politics and other areas that can have a direct impact of issues of justice.

Session 6: Holiness: God's plumb line

8-13 AUG

ICEBREAKERS

Draw a number of lines at different angles along a horizontal line on a piece of paper with only one at 90 degrees and others at 89, 91, 75 degrees etc. Ask the group to identify which is at a perfect 90 degrees.

View www.christianstogether.net/Images/content/658/426813.JPG

Would you say your church is perfect?

KEY THOUGHT

God's chief concern is not our temporary happiness but our eternal holiness, and He will move heaven to earth in the person of His Son for that to happen.

KEY VERSE

'This is what he showed me: the Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand.' Amos 7:7

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How many modern-day Josephs can you think of?
2. What is your understanding of the following quote from 9 Aug, 'The only refuge from God is in God'?
3. Are holiness and happiness opposites?

4. Is the blindness of modern society due to its refusal to come to the light or our failure to shine?
5. Do you agree with what Selwyn says in 12 Aug, that 'history is a dialogue, not a monologue'?
6. How has the Church acted as God's plumb line of society throughout history?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'As you come to him, the living Stone - rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' 1 Peter 2:4-5

PRAYER POINTERS

- Thank God for giving us the holiness of Jesus.
- Pray that the Church will truly represent the perfection of Jesus as its light shines in darkness.



Session 7: Bad news and good news

14-20 AUG

ICEBREAKER

Watch the video found at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXoITWzl_EU

Discuss the phrase said by Dr William Carey, 'Attempt great things for God, expect great things from God.'

KEY THOUGHT

The gospel is only 'good news' because it saves us from the bad news of God's judgment. Therefore, it is only relevant if we first faithfully warn people of God's judgment for sin.

KEY VERSE

'Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land' Amos 8:4

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What examples of NIMBY (see 14 Aug) can you think of both in society and in the Church today?
2. Why do prophets experience so much opposition?
3. Do you think visual aids enhance or detract from preaching?
4. Do you view God as being too nice to execute justice? (You may want to explore Amos 8 and look at descriptions of Jesus' death together.)

5. What do you make of Selwyn's last sentence on 19 Aug, 'God does not communicate with those who do not take Him seriously'?
6. Like vitamin deficiency, what happens when people do not feed on God's word?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'I am the bread of life' John 6:48

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for Christian speakers to boldly proclaim the full message of the gospel of grace and salvation from judgment.
- Thank God for the availability of His Word and pray for organisations such as the Bible Society and CWR.

Session 8: Mercy triumphs over judgment

21-26 AUG

ICEBREAKER

Watch the video found at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nClnUHPcas

How have God and others treated you mercifully?

KEY THOUGHT

In the midst of God's scrutiny and righteous justice for sin, He chooses to exercise mercy over judgment and bless those who return to Him.

KEY VERSES

"'yet I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob'" declares the Lord' Amos 9:8
'Mercy triumphs over judgment' James 2:13

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why does God judge religion when it is divorced from morality?
2. Does religion attempt to placate God rather than surrender to Him?
3. How do you respond to this quote from David Hubbard: 'God's presence is at home everywhere in the universe from top to bottom, and that presence is utterly dependable and permanently to be reckoned with'?

4. Discuss Selwyn's last point on 24 Aug, 'we must never confuse God's favour with favouritism'.
5. How does God's 'nevertheless' of grace and mercy stop God's judgment and total destruction?
6. Why might we regard God's grace as a 'severe mercy' (see 26 Aug)?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent' Rev. 3:19

PRAYER POINTERS

- Thank God that His mercy triumphs over judgment and that He has chosen to forgive and bless you.
- Pray that the Church will be a place where sinful people find mercy and not judgment.



Session 9: The God of hope

27-31 AUG

ICEBREAKER

What has most impacted you in our studies this issue and how will your thinking and behaviour change as a result?

KEY THOUGHT

God's final word is not one of judgment but of hope, mercy, restoration and an invitation to come home into His family in a new glorious creation.

KEY VERSE

'In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be' Amos 9:11

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What are some of the characteristics of a king and a priest (see 27 Aug)?
2. How can the Church combine the offices of king and priest in its ministry to the world?
3. Consider Ezekiel 47:1-12. How could you have a deeper experience in the river of God?
4. What elements are involved in returning to God?
5. Why is it always possible to hope in the direst circumstance?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' Luke 4:18-19

PRAYER POINTERS

- Thank God that His final word is one of hope, mercy, forgiveness, restoration and glory.
- Pray that we will have a complete view of God as our forgiving Father but also as a righteous judge.