

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Study the Text . . .

Approaching the text

The nation of Israel was God's chosen people. God had brought them out of Egypt and rescued them from their affliction. He led them to their land, giving them victory over their enemies, that they may possess it. Israel was His people, and He gave them commands and promises of blessing if they would obey Him and be His. But Israel instead gave themselves to the gods and the peoples of the nations around them (Amos 3:1-2). Amos and Hosea both prophesied against the Northern Kingdom (Israel). They delivered to the people God's coming response (judgment) to the manner in which they had chosen to live and dishonor Him.

Read

Amos 5:1-7; 18-27

Throughout Amos we see the rebuke from the Lord that Israel has turned aside and refuses to return to Him. It's not a picture of this happening just recently or only once. God has repeatedly and patiently shown grace and mercy to His people. Now because of Israel's persistent sin, severe punishment must come before He restores them again.

Hosea's prophecy carries much the same message, but in addition to vocal proclamation, his message is demonstrated in unconventional actions. God calls Hosea to execute his message as a living symbol to Israel. Hosea follows God's instructions to take a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom giving them names that symbolize judgment on Israel (Hosea 1:1-8).

Hosea 4:1-12; 5:14-15

Here we see the charges of controversy that the Lord had against Israel. He specifically names a lack of faithfulness (steadfast love) and knowledge of God. Instead of faithfulness to God and knowledge of God, Israel has filled their lives with worldly pursuits that are described in strong and offensive ways just as they were to the God they were forsaking. We also see the coming punishment and destruction at the hands of the Lord. He will tear them like a lion and leave them.

Discuss

- What character traits or attributes of God are evident in these passages of Scripture?
- Which of these character traits of God are least likely to be talked about in the church today? Why?
- Many are the manifestations of Israel's sin and offense toward God, but what is the root of the matter? How does your answer to the preceding question relate to the root of sin

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we see in the Garden of Eden? Have you ever thought that this may also be the root of the sins that you struggle with the most?

- Our modern church culture emphasizes forgiveness and patience, but this scripture seems to focus more on the resolute wrath of God due sin. Do you find yourself counting on continued patience? When you struggle with sin, do you focus on its manifestations or its root?

Read

Amos is a prophecy weighing heavily on the transgressions of Israel and speaking strongly of the destruction the nation is sure to face. It is not, however, without its upturn and looking forward toward a garden like restoration.

Amos 9:11-15

Speaking of the raising and repairing of the fallen booth of David is a promise that Israel will have a remnant to carry out its purpose in Salvation History. This passage is even quoted in Acts 15:16-17 as they consider gentiles coming to faith and that they are seeing part of the fulfillment of this claim in David's house possessing "all the nations who are called by [His] name." The focus has turned from an ethnic Israel to a spiritual Israel to which people from all nations may belong by faith in the Messiah who came through Israel's remnant.

Discuss

- How does God coming to Israel with both judgment for sin and promises of restoration anticipate the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ? (judgment for sin= cross, restoration and hope= resurrection)

Read

The book of Hosea is more complicated in its cyclical nature of addressing Israel's transgression, warning of punishment, and God's desire to restore them. Like Amos though, it does end on a positive or hopeful note.

Hosea 14:1-9

The call is for Israel to return with humble repentant hearts requesting the favor of the Lord. Then God's response will be healing, blessing, and a reminder that he was always the only God, and that he alone is worthy of all their worship. Not only do we hear of this redemption and healing in the words of the prophet, but they are also symbolized in his act of redeeming his unfaithful wife (Hosea 3).

These prophecies display God's wrath in ways that are hard to deal with, but the grace, mercy and love of God are evident also. We see that God tears so that he may heal and strikes down that he may bind up (Hosea 6:1). His purpose is to purify His people and gather them to Himself.

Discuss

- Read again Hosea 14:2-3. From the words Israel has been suggested to use, what elements can we see that should be present in hearts that return to God?

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- How can we seek to be a people of faithfulness and steadfast love – the faithful bride of Christ?
- How can we seek and share knowledge of God?
- In your relationship with Christ, do you communicate your gratefulness that as a follower of Jesus you have been included in “all the nations who are called by [His] name”? If so, how do you do that on a daily basis?
- The unfaithfulness of Israel calls for a more permanent remedy, which will come in the faithfulness of Christ to the Father and the faithfulness that Christ then works through the Holy Spirit in his people. How does the Holy Spirit enable us to remain faithful to God?
- God’s love for Israel foreshadows Christ’s love for the church. How has God specifically shown you love despite your unfaithfulness?