



God Calls for Justice

(based on Amos 1:1; 5:6-8, 10-15, 21-24)

Things seemed to be going well in the land of Israel. The farmers grew lots of food, and there was plenty for everyone. However, God saw that things were not well with the people in the land. God noticed the difference.

The rich people had everything they needed—plenty of food, clothes, and income. They lived a good life. There were also many people who were poor. They did not have nice places to live. Even though there was plenty of food, they did not get a fair share. They often were hungry.

The poor people were forced to pay high taxes and had to work for almost no money. Sometimes they were even sold as slaves. Often the rich people got richer by cheating the poor people. They did nothing to help them. It was very unfair.

The judges—who were supposed to make sure everyone was treated fairly—did nothing to help either.

At that time, there lived a shepherd called Amos. He was a good man who tried hard to follow God's loving ways. Amos saw how unfairly people were being treated. He watched as rich people cheated the poor.

Amos knew that he had to speak out. God had given him a message. Amos saw the same difference between the rich and the poor that God had seen, and that was God's message.

"Listen to God," Amos declared. "Turn back to God and change your ways."

The people refused to listen to Amos, but the prophet kept on trying.

"You worship God and you think that makes you a good person," declared Amos. "God does not want your songs and prayers. God will not listen to them. God wants justice. God wants you to hate evil, love what is good, and treat everyone fairly."

When the rich people heard what Amos was saying, they complained to their king. Amos was sent back to where he came from.

He went back to his farm, but whenever he saw something unfair, Amos would always speak out. He knew that God wanted everyone to be treated fairly.



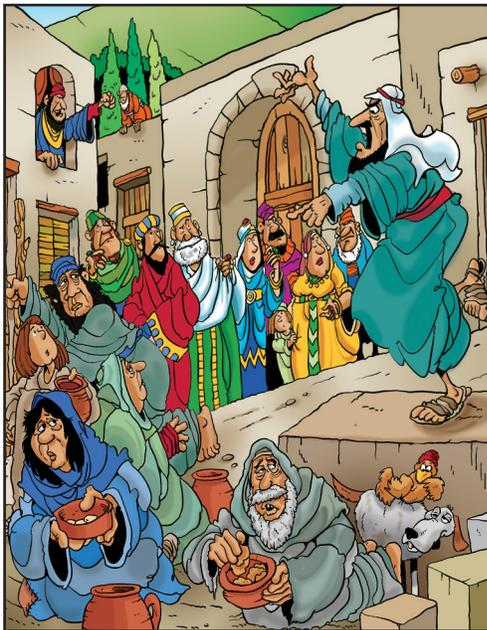
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Make up a play using the story of Amos. Use stacking block people or make paper characters, including rich and poor people, the king, and Amos the shepherd/prophet. Use the characters to tell the story.
- Amos spoke to the crowd, but today word travels faster on social media platforms. Together with your children, write a 140-character or less tweet as if you were Amos delivering a message.



Responding to God's Grace

- Role-play situations in which someone does something rude, then model gracious responses. Examples of rudeness include interrupting, taking someone's place in line, and poor table manners. Practice speaking up, but gently, with eye contact and a friendly, helpful tone of voice.
- Search the Internet for cotton-ball sheep. Help your children make a cotton-ball sheep. Talk with them about Amos's work as a shepherd of sheep and how he also tried to lead people on a just path.
- Read *God's Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Talk about God's desire for everyone to be treated fairly.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Search the Internet for cauliflower sheep. Serve the cauliflower sheep as an appetizer for your family meal. Give thanks and celebrate that your family has enough to eat at this meal. Think about those who do not.
- Sing "Though I May Speak," no. 693 in the *Glory to God* hymnal, or do an Internet search for the words. This is a good hymn to sing with a solo leader followed by others echoing each line.
- Pray:

Thank you God, for people who speak out when there is wrongdoing. Help me, that I also may speak out. Amen.