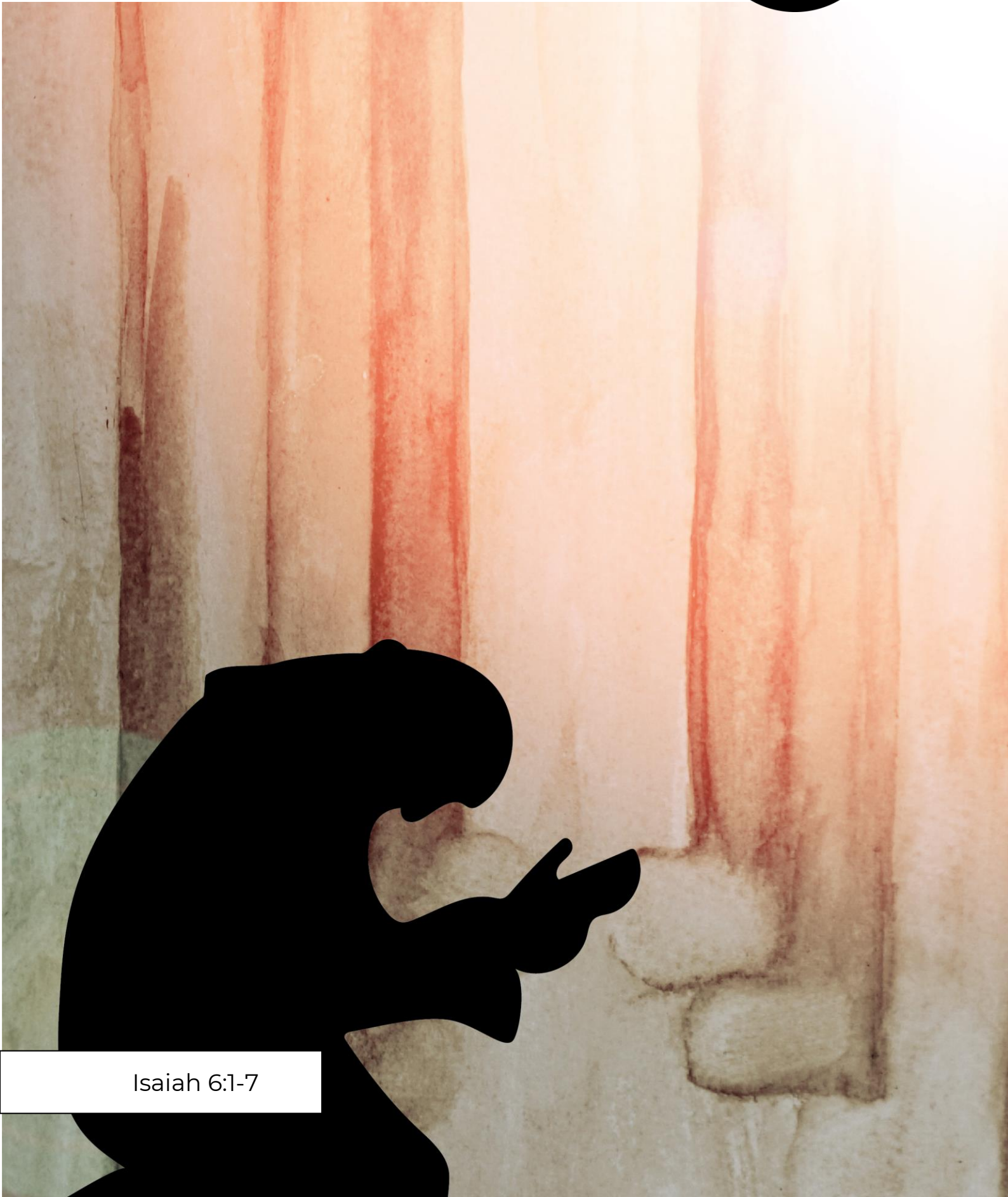


RECOVERING GOD'S VISION (1)
AMOS, HOSEA AND ISAIAH
Sample Lesson



Isaiah 6:1-7



This sample lesson is from the Level 3 course **Recovering God's Vision (1): Amos, Hosea and Isaiah.**

Copyright © GOLD Project

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without written permission from GOLD Project.

Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicized Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Published by:

GOLD Project, PO Box 561, WITNEY, OX28 9PD

www.goldproject.org

The Group-based Open Learning Discipleship (GOLD) Project is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered in England, registered charity no. 1166567

Introduction

Our Open Learning courses are designed to help you learn by means of:



Home Study

Each course is made up of **five Blocks** and each Block has **eight lessons**. If you have about $\frac{3}{4}$ hr to spare (very roughly), you can complete one lesson. These lessons require you to read and interact with the course material as well as with your Bible.

Each lesson is **programmed** to help you check your progress as you work through. To get the maximum benefit it is important that you use the course in the way it was intended:

1. Read section 1 (often referred to by the technical term 'frame' 1).
2. Make the response required, if there is one.
3. Check that your answer corresponds with the feedback given in the 'feedback' section at the end. (Wherever feedback is given, it is marked with a raven).
4. Proceed to section 2.



Note that the **course** is programmed—**you** are **not** being programmed! The aim of programming is that:

1. you can check frequently that you have understood the material presented;
2. you are stimulated to active and critical thinking;
3. you reinforce what you learn and are better able to remember it.

Sometimes, discussion frames are given. These are clearly indicated by a heading 'For Discussion' and box. Here you should answer the question in your own words and come to the group meeting prepared to discuss the question as indicated.

At the end of each lesson, we encourage you to spend some time in reflection on how what you have learnt applies to you in the situation where God has placed you.

Group Meeting

Regular group meetings take place (normally fortnightly) where you will have the opportunity to discuss points of interest that have arisen and think through with others how your learning may be applied. At the end of each block of home study, you will also normally be given a five-minute quiz.

The group meetings give the opportunity for you to clarify ideas and to share your own thoughts and to listen to the ideas of others. The process of learning from the Bible in a group is an essential part of the programme. It is here that you are able to think through areas of application and to pray and support each other in your studies.

Practical Application

Built into our courses are questions that encourage you to apply the message of the Bible to daily life. You are also encouraged to think through how your studies relate to your own discipleship and the mission and ministry of the local church.

Block 1 Lesson 1

The life and ministry of Amos



Preparing for this lesson:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take a moment to pray that God will help you as you begin this first course on the Old Testament Prophets.• It will be helpful to keep a notebook handy to note down any questions or issues for discussion.
Objectives	<p>At the end of this lesson you will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. state your expectations in relation to this course;2. locate Tekoa on a map;3. place the two kings of Amos' time on a timeline;4. list three important things that we know about the life and ministry of Amos;5. note down your ideas about the significance of Amos' call for your church.

a. Prophecy in the Old Testament

1. This is the first of two courses looking at some Old Testament prophets. In this course, we focus on the books of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah. We want to try to see what made them tick, how they felt in themselves about God's call to ministry, and how their message related to the world. We shall also need to compare their situation with our own and see how God's message to them applies to the twenty first century AD.

For Discussion



Apart from information about the contents of this part of the Old Testament, what are you hoping to get out of this course? Jot down your ideas below and be ready to share them in the group meeting

2. a. Before we go any further in this course, take a moment to write down your own definition of an Old Testament prophet.

- b. Do you think that there are prophets in the church today?

- c. In your view, what is the relationship between Old Testament prophecy and prophecy today?



b. The life and ministry of Amos

3. The most important thing that you will do in this course is to read the books of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah for yourself. In order to do this, we will ask you to read a section of each book each lesson. Sometimes this will link closely to what you are studying in the lesson. At other times it won't, but by the end of the course, if you are disciplined, you will have read the whole of these books. In this lesson, we start with Amos.



Activity

Read **Amos 1:1-2:3** and make your own notes on what you read.

4. We are starting this course with Amos. Open this book now and look at the opening verse. What do we learn here about his personal background?



5. Look up **2 Chron 11:5-12**. What do you learn about Tekoa from these verses?



6.



Activity

Locate and write Tekoa on the map in the **Appendix 2** (p.216) next to the 'T' south of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. You can check your answer with the map in **Introduction**.

7. The site thought to be Tekoa is about five acres in area. As a shepherd, Amos possibly lived in one of the surrounding villages.

The Hebrew word translated 'shepherd' (which is *noqed*, but you needn't bother about that!) is actually quite unusual. It's only used elsewhere of Mesha, king of Moab (2 Kings 3:4)! That suggests that Amos was not

necessarily a poor, uneducated shepherd. So perhaps we should translate 'sheep breeder' or even 'sheep dealer'. There are two other straightforward reasons for believing that Amos was well educated and possibly wealthy. See if you can work them out from the clues below.

Look up **Amos 7:14**.

a. i. How does Amos describe himself there? _____

ii. Does this suggest that he was an ordinary shepherd, out with the sheep all the time?

Yes No



b. Dip into the book anywhere and read about ten verses. What do you notice about the quality of the writing, and what does this tell you about Amos?



8. One hundred and fifty years before Amos (at the time of Rehoboam), the land of Israel had divided into two parts. What were the names of each



9.



Activity

Uzziah reigned as king of the southern kingdom of Judah from approximately 792-740BC. Jeroboam was king of the northern kingdom of Israel from approximately 793-753BC. Write these kings in on their respective places on the timeline on (p.217) of **Appendix 3**.

10. These two kingdoms had become quite separate and different, and were often hostile to each other. Look at the map in the **Introduction** on page x. To which kingdom did Amos belong?

Israel Judah



11.



Activity

On the same map, use a highlighter to mark the boundaries of the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah and then highlight the names of the two kingdoms.

12. Look quickly through some of his prophecies in chs 3 - 5. Note some of the place names and see if you can find them on the map. To which kingdom did Amos prophesy almost exclusively?

Israel

Judah



13. We can state two main facts so far about Amos and his ministry:

- a. He was a countryman but not a country bumpkin
- b. He was a missionary

Both these features come out strongly in the one historical (biographical) section of the book. Look quickly through and write down the reference for this. (Hint: You have already looked up a verse in this section)



14. Read through this section now. How does the northern kingdom seem to have taken to the idea of a missionary from Judah prophesying to them?



15. In fact they seem to have regarded him as some kind of trouble maker, perhaps even an agent come to destabilise Israel. Bethel was the most important religious centre in Israel, and Amaziah was its chief priest (we might think of him as something similar to an 'archbishop'). What was:

- a. the specific charge? _____
- b. the sentence? _____



16. Amos was given the equivalent of twenty-four hours to get out of the country. We do not know whether he went immediately, but he probably would have had no choice. The fact that Amos 1:1 dates his words specifically as 'two years before the earthquake' may suggest a short ministry!




For Discussion

Can you imagine Amos's feelings at this time? Write down one or two words or phrases to describe them.

17. However, Amos does not show any signs of being cowed by this opposition. He gives a vigorous defence of his role, and then proceeds to prophesy further against the 'archbishop' himself. What reason does he give for his behaviour? (7:15)




18. In one sense, Israel did not need Amos. It already had plenty of prophets. They were called 'sons of the prophets'. Some at least were attached to shrines or clustered around a great prophet as his disciples—like students studying under a great painter. You may recall that Elijah and Elisha were closely associated with these 'sons of the prophets'. This is probably the background against which we should understand Amos's words in 7:14f. 

19. Amos's reply is literally:

'Not a prophet I,
and not son of a prophet I,
for a herdsman I
and a dresser of sycamore trees.'


The normal translation would be 'I am not a prophet...' (NRSV). There is no present tense of the verb 'to be' in Hebrew but this is the usual way of expressing it. But there **is** a past tense, and if Amos had wanted to say 'I was not a prophet...' then he could have done so explicitly.

Nevertheless, the NIV translates: 'I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees.' Look through the verses around this one and try and find justification or counter-evidence for this interpretation



20. What would your opinion be of these other suggestions? Write your comments, if any, below:

- a. 'I am not a prophet at all and never have been.'
- b. 'I am not a prophet in the sense that **you** mean; someone who earns his living by giving prophecies.'
- c. 'I am not a prophet by background or training.'



c. Review

21. We can say with assurance that Amos had not intended to become a prophet. It must have been quite a shock when the Lord called him.



Let us sum up our conclusions so far. We can say three important things in shorthand form about Amos and his ministry:

He was a _____ (see frame 8)

He was a _____ (see frame 8)

God _____ him. (see frame 12)



22. Against all the odds, God called Amos, a southern countryman, to be a missionary to the cities of the northern kingdom of Israel.



For Discussion

Does this spark off any ideas concerning you or your church? Jot them down below.

Reflecting on this lesson

Note down in your notebook anything from today's lesson:



- that you want to discuss in your group meeting;
- that is significant for your own personal faith;
- that is significant for explaining the Old Testament to others.

Spend some time in prayer asking God to help to put into practice what you have learnt.



Feedback: Block 1 Lesson 1: The life and ministry of Amos

- 1.1.2 Your answers. We will come back to these questions as we go through the course.
- 1.1.4 He was a shepherd from Tekoa.
- 1.1.5 Tekoa was a city that had been built/fortified by Rehoboam to defend Judah and Benjamin.
- 1.1.7 a. i. a 'herdsman' (NRSV; NIV has 'shepherd' which is not a correct translation) and 'dresser of sycamore trees' (a kind of fig tree); ii. No.
b. Your answer. It seems to be pretty good and suggests that he was probably well educated.
- 1.1.8 Judah, Uzziah : Israel, Jeroboam (this is the second king of Israel called Jeroboam)
- 1.1.10 Judah
- 1.1.12 Israel
- 1.1.13 Amos 7:10-17
- 1.1.14 Your words. E.g. Very badly; resentfully, cynically, etc.
- 1.1.15 a. Conspiracy against the king; b. deportation
- 1.1.17 The Lord called him.
- 1.1.19 Your answer. I should say that it is not too misleading, since anyone who prophesies (v15) must, in some sense, be a prophet. But as a translation it is not accurate enough. There ought at least to be a note in the margin (i.e. a footnote).
- 1.1.20 Your answer. I should say that b and c are both reasonable and similar in meaning. See v15 and the feedback to frame 19 for my objection to a.
- 1.1.21 1. He was a countryman but not a country bumpkin

Whatever your educational level or knowledge of the Christian faith, we have courses that can enable you to grow in your faith.

As a group you can choose the level at which you want to study. We will train your group leader how the courses work.

All our courses combine:

- ✓ Home Study: using carefully designed workbooks
- ✓ Group Meetings: with a trained facilitator
- ✓ Application: Activities and opportunities to practice what you are learning

Level 1 Courses

For those who are new to the Christian faith and want an easily accessible form of study.

Level 2 Courses

For those who want to learn what it is to follow Jesus through an in-depth study of his life and ministry.

Level 3 Courses

For those who want to take the study of the Bible further and engage with its meaning for today.

For more information, contact:

The GOLD Project

PO Box 561,
WITNEY, OX28 9PD

info@goldproject.org

www.goldproject.org

www.twitter.com/GOLDDiscipleship

www.facebook.com/groupbasedopenlearningdiscipleship

The Group-based Open Learning Discipleship (GOLD) Project is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered in England, registered charity no. 1166567