



STORY 49

Famine and Feast

AMOS 8–9

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Amos 8–9.
- Pray for God’s help. Ask for the Spirit’s help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children’s eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1

Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week’s story. {5 minutes}

2

Teach

God uses all sorts of people to teach his word to his people. Amos was a prophet but also a shepherd and farmer. He lived in Tekoa, a town on the border of Israel and Judah. The north was ruled by Jeroboam II, a really bad king. He made the kingdom very wealthy. That’s not bad in and of itself. Abraham was rich. Job was rich too. What is not good is when riches make you lazy or, even worse, when they make you forget God’s commands. That’s what happened to King Jeroboam and the people he ruled. They worshiped other gods, worked on the Sabbath, cheated people when they sold things, and ignored the poor. Amos called them people who “trample on the needy” (Amos 8:4). God hates when his people treat other people this way. Big time! So God sent Amos to tell them what he thought of their behavior. God gave Amos visions of his coming judgment. And unlike the picture in the last lesson of a river of justice giving life to the land, these visions were not pretty.

TELL THE STORY

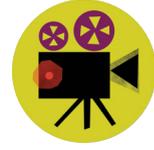
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
God's people
should worship
the God who
speaks and saves
by loving him and
loving others.

Think of all God had done for Israel: rescued them from slavery in Egypt, made them into a mighty nation, delivered them from enemies. Think of what God had called Israel to be: set apart to love him and to love others so that people could see what he was like. What would happen if God's people stopped acting like they are saved and set apart? What would happen if they disobeyed God's commands? They would face consequences. God would have to punish them for their sins—of course.

But here's a little trickier question. What if God's people acted like they were keeping his commands, but their hearts were far from God? That's what the people of the northern kingdom were doing. Some of their actions looked like they loved God. They still went to the temple, offered sacrifices, and sang praises to the Lord. But it was all a big show—they didn't really love God and love others! In fact, they worshiped other gods and cheated the poor. They thought they were *right* with God, but they were *wrong*. They were hypocrites, like an actor who puts on a mask of a certain character and starts acting like that person. God's people were playacting in their worship. They were fakes! As you might have guessed, faking it isn't enough. God doesn't want that kind of worship. He wants us to love him and show that by how we love our neighbors.

So God had enough. He wanted to get Israel's attention. He wanted them to repent. So he held back the rain and made their plants dry up. He sent big bugs to eat their crops. He allowed diseases to make his people sick. And he had their enemies punish them. They were so hungry and so sad. The saddest thing, though, was that God stopped speaking to them. "The days are coming," warned the Lord, "when I will send a famine on the land. But not a famine of bread or water—a famine of hearing

the words of the Lord” (see Amos 8:11). God’s silence was the worst punishment of all. It’s a bit like being in a dark room and then having your flashlight taken away.

Thankfully, that’s not the end of the story. God would not be silent forever. God spoke of a future day when he would raise his people up (like the dry bones!) and restore blessings to them. God promised they would eat and drink on that day until they were completely full, and they would hear him speak again. From famine to feast!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Because God is good, he must punish evil like the “sinful kingdom” where Amos lived (Amos 9:8). When God’s judgment came on them, they had nowhere to hide. It was a dark day. Amos describes some trying to hide in the mountains and others at the bottom of the sea. He is exaggerating to make the point that no one could escape God’s judgment!

Someday soon there will be a similar but final judgment. Amos describes this future dark day like this: “On that day,” God declares, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. . . . I will make it feel like someone is crying that their only son has died” (see Amos 8:9–10).

This is also how the death of God’s Son, Jesus, is described: “From the sixth hour [noon] there was darkness over all the land” (Matt. 27:45). The darkness lasted until three, when Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you stopped speaking to me?” (see Matt. 27:46) and died. In that moment, when the Snake Crusher died, he provided the way to escape God’s final judgment. How? He took the punishment we deserve for all our sins. He died in our place as the sky went dark with God’s judgment. He died to save us from the final judgment. Then he rose and told his followers that he would be with them always. What a Savior! Let’s run to him so we can escape the judgment we deserve.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- 1. QUESTION:** How did God’s people get out of slavery in Egypt? How did God teach them how he wanted them to live? If we truly love God with our whole heart, who else will we love?

TAKEAWAY: After God saved his people from slavery, he taught them to love God and love others.

2. **QUESTION:** The northern kingdom acted like they loved God by singing to him and making sacrifices, but how did God know they were just acting? What did Amos say was coming because God's people didn't love others the way God had commanded?

TAKEAWAY: Because the northern kingdom only pretended to love God, and did not love others, God judged them with a famine.

3. **QUESTION:** What things happened when God judged his people? What was the worst thing God promised to do? What would it be like to never hear from God again? What good news did Amos give about the future?

TAKEAWAY: Amos warned that God would stop speaking to his people because of their sin, but he also promised that one day God would bless his people again and send a feast.

4. **QUESTION:** How did Amos describe the sky when he talked about God's judgment? What was the sky like when Jesus died on the cross? What do you think God was trying to show us? How can we escape God's judgment for our sin and receive his promised blessings?

TAKEAWAY: God punished Jesus on the cross for all our sins so that we could escape his judgment and receive all the promised blessings.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Fruit Basket Upset

Supply List: paper, tape

Before Class: Gather supplies. Tape pieces of paper to the floor in a circle (one less than the total number of children).

Memory Verse
Man does not
live by bread
alone, but man
lives by every
word that comes
from the mouth
of the LORD.

DEUTERONOMY 8:3

Have children stand on a piece of paper. Assign each child a fruit name: apple, orange, or grape. Have one child stand in the middle of the circle and call out one of the fruits. The caller and the children who were assigned that fruit must move to a different spot in the circle. The child who is unable to get a spot is the caller for the next round. If the caller yells “Fruit Basket Upset,” all children must find a new spot around the circle. Remind children God sent a famine to get the Israelites’ attention.

Option 2: Rice Relay

Supply List: large sheet, plastic spoons (one per team), bowl of rice (one per team), jars (one per team), scale

Before Class: Gather supplies. Lay the sheet down. Set bowls of rice on the far side of the sheet. On the opposite side, set empty jars.

Divide the group into teams and give each team a spoon. The first person on each team crawls across the sheet to his or her team’s bowl of rice, spoons out some rice, carefully crawls back to his or her team’s jar, and dumps whatever rice is left on the spoon into the jar. The child then tags the next person in line to do the same thing. After all the children have raced, weigh each jar. The heaviest jar wins. Remind children God sent a famine to get the Israelites’ attention.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Don’t Get Caught Tag

Supply List: soft balls (five or more)

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Choose two children to be the taggers. Distribute five soft balls to five children that are not taggers (if you have a large group, add more taggers and balls). Explain the taggers will try to tag the children, but they can only tag someone who is holding a ball. If someone holding a ball is about to be tagged, that person should pass the ball to someone else. If someone gets tagged while holding a ball, that person is out and must sit down. After a few minutes, choose two different taggers and allow those who have been tagged to reenter the game. Remind children that sometimes we think we won’t get caught in our sins, but God sees and punishes all sin.

Option 2: Rice Relay

Supply List: large sheet, plastic spoons (one per team), bowl of rice (one per team), jars (one per team), scale

Before Class: Gather supplies. Lay the sheet down. Set bowls of rice on the far side of the sheet. On the opposite side, set empty jars.

Divide the group into teams and give each team a spoon. The first person on each team crawls across the sheet to his or her team's bowl of rice, spoons out some rice, carefully crawls back to his or her team's jar, and dumps whatever rice is left on the spoon into the jar. The child then tags the next person in line to do the same thing. After all the children have raced, weigh each jar. The heaviest jar wins. Remind children God sent a famine to get the Israelites' attention.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Dried Bean Collage

Supply List: cardstock, a variety of beans (split peas, lima beans, black beans, kidney beans, etc.), glue

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print outlines of simple shapes on cardstock (heart, flower, Bible, butterfly, etc.). Place beans on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Allow each child to choose a shape. Set glue and beans on each table. Have children glue the beans to fill the shape. Remind children God sent a famine to get the Israelites' attention.

Option 2: Give Us Ears to Hear Headband

Supply List: cardstock, construction paper, copy paper, scissors, glue sticks, crayons, stapler

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a picture of a left ear and a right ear on cardstock. Print and cut out strips that say "Give us ears to hear" (one per child). Cut strips of construction paper 2 inches wide and staple two together for one long strip (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give children the ear paper, the word paper, and the stapled construction strip for the headband. Set scissors, crayons, and glue sticks on each table. Have children color the ears and word paper, then cut out the ears and glue them and the words to the headband. Help the children fit the headband around their heads like a crown and staple ends together. Remind children God's people should have listened to God's word.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Bible Bookmark

Supply List: cardstock, scissors, colored pencils, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. On cardstock, print a bookmark with a picture of a Bible on it. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a bookmark paper. Set colored pencils, markers, and scissors on each table. Have the children write "Read Daily" on the bookmark, decorate it, and then cut it out. Remind children what a gift it is to hear from God in his word every day.

Option 2: Dried Bean Collage

See Above



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.