

The Prophet

Francine Rivers

Seek and Find

DEAR READER,

You have just finished reading the story of Amos the prophet, as told by Francine Rivers. As always, it is Francine's desire for you the reader to delve into God's Word for yourself to find out the real story—to discover what God has to say to us today and to find applications that will change our lives to suit His purposes for eternity.

Amos was a humble shepherd and gardener. His heart for God helped him to weather the times he lived in and to face rejection. Amos did not shrink from the task to which God called him. Rather, he stepped forward and embraced his calling. Amos's obedience to God's call on his life is extraordinary. It foreshadows another prophet—the ultimate Prophet, Jesus of Nazareth.

May God bless you and help you to discover his call on your life. May you discover a heart of obedience beating within you.

Peggy Lynch

The Call

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

This message was given to Amos, a shepherd from the town of Tekoa in Judah. He received this message in visions two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam II, the son of Jehoash, was king of Israel. . . .

Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent a message to Jeroboam, king of Israel: "Amos is hatching a plot against you right here on your very doorstep! What he is saying is intolerable. He is saying, 'Jeroboam will soon be killed, and the people of Israel will be sent away into exile.'"

Then Amaziah sent orders to Amos: "Get out of here, you prophet! Go on back to the land of Judah, and earn your living by prophesying there! Don't bother us with your prophecies here in Bethel. This is the king's sanctuary and the national place of worship!"

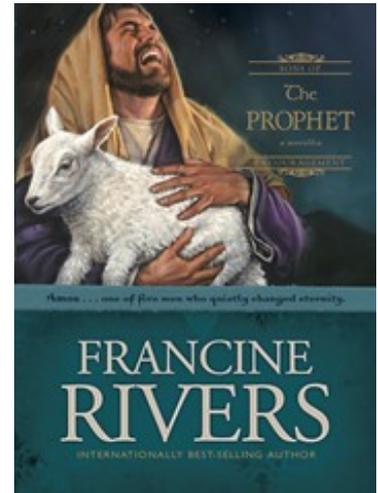
But Amos replied, "I'm not a professional prophet, and I was never trained to be one. I'm just a shepherd, and I take care of sycamore-fig trees. But the Lord called me away from my flock and told me, 'Go and prophesy to my people in Israel.'"

Amos 1:1, 7:10-15

Who was Amos and where was he from? What was his profession and sideline? When and how was Amos called to be a prophet? What kind of prophet was he? What kind of training did he have?

How was Amos received by the religious leaders, and why? How was he received by the political leaders?

How did Amos respond to the religious and political leaders? How did he respond to God?



Find God's Ways for You

Who are you and what kind of training do you have?

God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.

Romans 8:29-30

According to these verses, to what has God called you and why?

What is your response to God? Explain.

STOP AND PONDER

Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. . . . As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

message for others

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

This is what the Lord says:

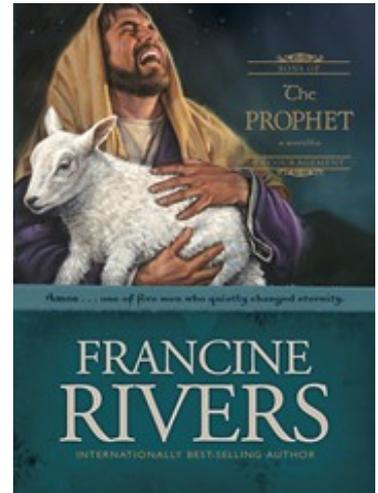
*"The people of Damascus have sinned again and again,
and I will not let them go unpunished!*

*They beat down my people in Gilead
as grain is threshed with iron sledges.*

*So I will send down fire on King Hazael's palace,
and the fortresses of King Ben-hadad will be destroyed.*

I will break down the gates of Damascus. . . .

*I will destroy the ruler in Beth-eden,
and the people of Aram will go as captives to Kir,"
says the Lord.*



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This is what the Lord says:

*“The people of Gaza have sinned again and again,
and I will not let them go unpunished!*

*They sent whole villages into exile,
selling them as slaves to Edom.*

*So I will send down fire on the walls of Gaza,
and all its fortresses will be destroyed.*

I will slaughter the people of Ashdod. . . .

*Then I will turn to attack Ekron,
and the few Philistines still left will be killed,”
says the Sovereign Lord.*

This is what the Lord says:

*“The people of Tyre have sinned again and again,
and I will not let them go unpunished!*

*They broke their treaty of brotherhood with Israel,
selling whole villages as slaves to Edom.*

*So I will send down fire on the walls of Tyre,
and all its fortresses will be destroyed.”*

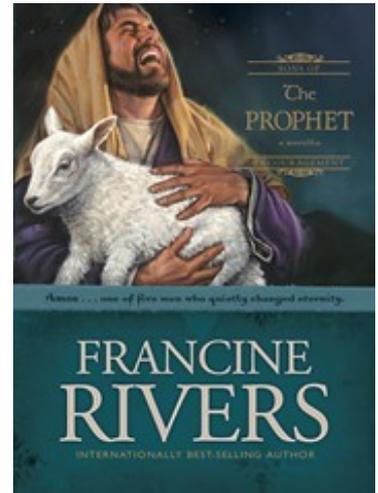
This is what the Lord says:

*“The people of Edom have sinned again and again,
and I will not let them go unpunished!*

*They chased down their relatives, the Israelites, with swords,
showing them no mercy.*

*In their rage, they slashed them continually
and were unrelenting in their anger.*

*So I will send down fire on Teman,
and the fortresses of Bozrah will be destroyed.”*



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This is what the Lord says:

*“The people of Ammon have sinned again and again,
and I will not let them go unpunished!*

*When they attacked Gilead to extend their borders,
they ripped open pregnant women with their swords.*

*So I will send down fire on the walls of Rabbah,
and all its fortresses will be destroyed . . . ,”*

says the Lord.

This is what the Lord says:

*“The people of Moab have sinned again and again,
and I will not let them go unpunished!*

*They desecrated the bones of Edom’s king,
burning them to ashes.*

*So I will send down fire on the land of Moab,
and all the fortresses in Kerioth will be destroyed . . . ,”*

says the Lord.

Amos 1:3–2:3

Name the six neighboring people/cities/nations on which Amos pronounced God’s judgment.

What did these neighbors have in common? Why was God angry with each of them?

What judgment was decreed?

What can we learn about God from this passage?

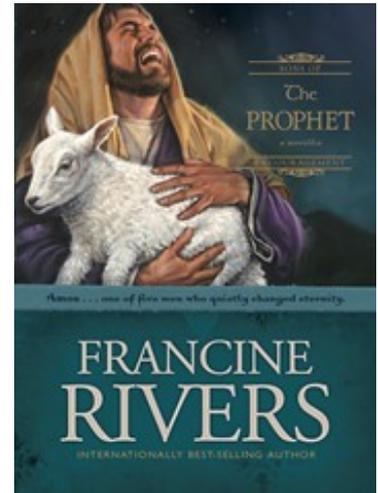
What is implied about Amos? Explain.

FIND GOD’S WAYS FOR YOU

What similarities do you see, if any, between the behavior listed in this passage and what is going on in the world today?

I am warning you ahead of time, dear friends. Be on guard so that you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing. Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:17-18



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What warnings are we given in the above passage, and why?

What are we to do to remain secure? Are you doing it?

STOP AND PONDER

The day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.

2 Peter 3:10

message for kinsmen

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

This is what the Lord says:

*"The people of Judah have sinned again and again,
and I will not let them go unpunished!*

*They have rejected the instruction of the Lord,
refusing to obey his decrees.*

*They have been led astray by the same lies
that deceived their ancestors.*

*So I will send down fire on Judah,
and all the fortresses . . . will be destroyed."*

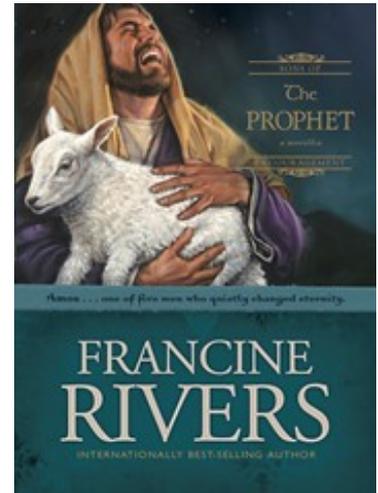
This is what the Lord says:

*"The people of Israel have sinned again and again,
and I will not let them go unpunished!*

*They sell honorable people for silver
and poor people for a pair of sandals.*

*They trample helpless people in the dust
and shove the oppressed out of the way.*

*Both father and son sleep with the same woman,
corrupting my holy name. . . .*



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*“So I will make you groan
like a wagon loaded down with sheaves of grain.
Your fastest runners will not get away. . . .
The archers will not stand their ground. . . .
On that day the most courageous of your fighting men
will drop their weapons and run for their lives,”
says the Lord. . . .*

*“My people have forgotten how to do right,”
says the Lord. . . .*

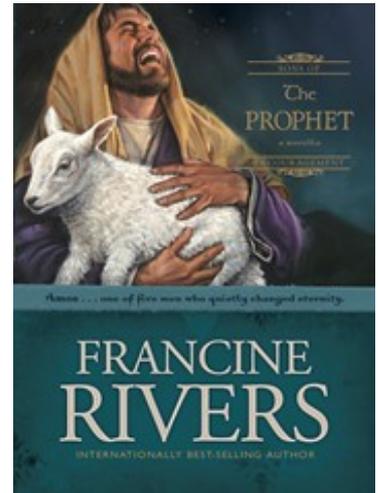
*“Come back to the Lord and live!
Otherwise, he will roar through Israel like a fire,
devouring you completely. . . .
You twist justice, making it a bitter pill for the oppressed.
You treat the righteous like dirt. . . .*

*“How you hate honest judges!
How you despise people who tell the truth! . . .*

*“Do what is good and run from evil
so that you may live!
Then the Lord God of Heaven’s Armies will be your helper,
just as you have claimed.
Hate evil and love what is good;
turn your courts into true halls of justice.
Perhaps even yet the Lord God of Heaven’s Armies
will have mercy on the remnant of his people. . . .*

*“I hate all your show and pretense—
the hypocrisy of your religious festivals and solemn assemblies. . . .*

*“Away with your noisy hymns of praise! . . .
Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice,
an endless river of righteous living. . . .”*



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What sorrow awaits you who lounge in luxury . . .

and you who feel secure . . . !

*You are famous and popular . . .
and people go to you for help. . . .*

How terrible for you. . . .

The Sovereign Lord has sworn by his own name, and this is what he, the Lord God of Heaven's Armies, says:

"I despise the arrogance of Israel,

and I hate their fortresses.

I will give this city

and everything in it to their enemies."

Amos 2:4-7, 13-16; 3:10; 5:6-7, 10, 14-15, 21, 23-24; 6:1, 4, 8

Why was God angry with Judah? with Israel?

How were the complaints against them similar to those against the surrounding people? How were they different?

What warnings were given? What judgments were promised?

What can we further learn about God from this passage?

What is implied about Amos? Explain.

FIND GOD'S WAY FOR YOU

What similarities do you see, if any, between the behavior listed in the following passage and what is going on in our nation? our churches? our homes?

Get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech. Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation . . . now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness.

1 Peter 2:1-3

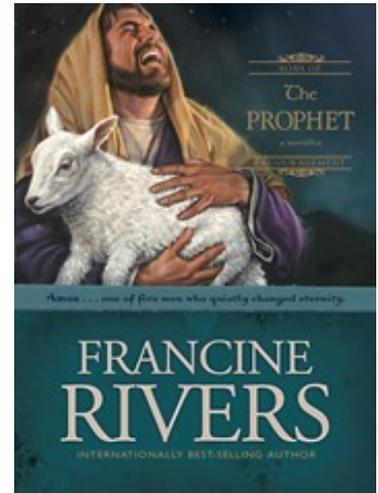
What are we told to get rid of? What are we told to do?

What do you need to get rid of?

STOP AND PONDER

Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

1 Peter 2:11-12



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A Prophet's Plea

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

The Sovereign Lord showed me a vision. I saw him preparing to send a vast swarm of locusts over the land. . . . In my vision the locusts ate every green plant in sight. Then I said, "O Sovereign Lord, please forgive us or we will not survive, for Israel is so small."

So the Lord relented from this plan. "I will not do it," he said.

Then the Sovereign Lord showed me another vision. I saw him preparing to punish his people with a great fire. The fire had burned up the depths of the sea and was devouring the entire land. Then I said, "O Sovereign Lord, please stop or we will not survive, for Israel is so small."

Then the Lord relented from this plan, too. "I will not do that either," said the Sovereign Lord.

Then he showed me another vision. I saw the Lord standing beside a wall that had been built using a plumb line. He was using a plumb line to see if it was still straight. And the Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?"

I answered, "A plumb line."

And the Lord replied, "I will test my people with this plumb line. I will no longer ignore all their sins. The pagan shrines of your ancestors will be ruined, and the temples of Israel will be destroyed; I will bring the dynasty of King Jeroboam to a sudden end."

Amos 7:1-9

In what ways were the first two visions similar? How were they different?

How did Amos respond to what the Lord had planned in these two visions? What did he ask? What was God's response?

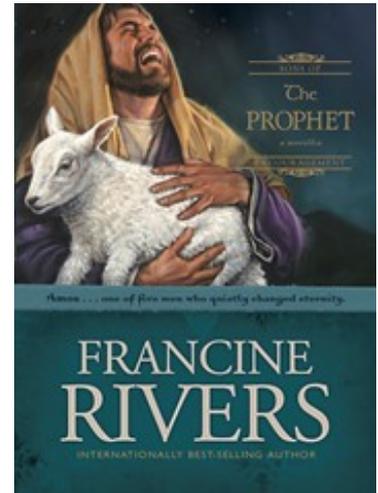
How was the third vision different, and what was Amos's response? What significance do you see, if any, to the third vision and this response?

What can we learn about God from these visions?

What is implied about Amos? Explain.

FIND GOD'S WAYS FOR YOU

Try to recall a time when you pleaded with God on behalf of someone else.



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Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven. Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

James 5:14-16

What instructions are given in this passage? What conditions are specified?

What results are we to expect? Why?

STOP AND PONDER

The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.

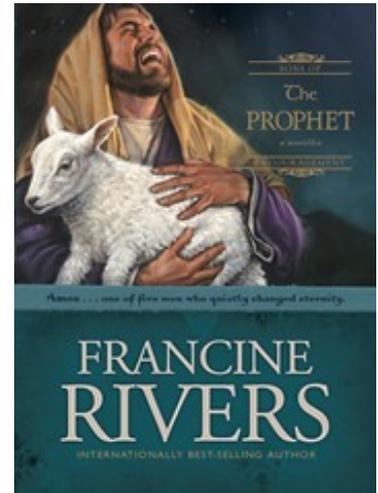
Romans 8:26-27

Message of Restoration

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

*"I, the Sovereign Lord,
am watching this sinful nation of Israel.
I will destroy it
from the face of the earth.
But I will never completely destroy the family of Israel,"
says the Lord.
"For I will give the command
and will shake Israel along with the other nations
as grain is shaken in a sieve,
yet not one true kernel will be lost. . . .
"In that day I will restore the fallen house of David.
I will repair its damaged walls.
From the ruins I will rebuild it
and restore its former glory.*



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*And Israel will possess what is left of Edom
and all the nations I have called to be mine.”*

*The Lord has spoken,
and he will do these things.*

*“The time will come,” says the Lord,
“when the grain and grapes will grow faster
than they can be harvested.*

*Then the terraced vineyards on the hills of Israel
will drip with sweet wine!*

*I will bring my exiled people of Israel
back from distant lands,
and they will rebuild their ruined cities
and live in them again.*

*They will plant vineyards and gardens;
they will eat their crops and drink their wine.*

*I will firmly plant them there
in their own land.*

*They will never again be uprooted
from the land I have given them,”
says the Lord your God.*

Amos 9:8-9, 11-15

Along with God's judgment to uproot and sift Israel, what did God promise never to do?

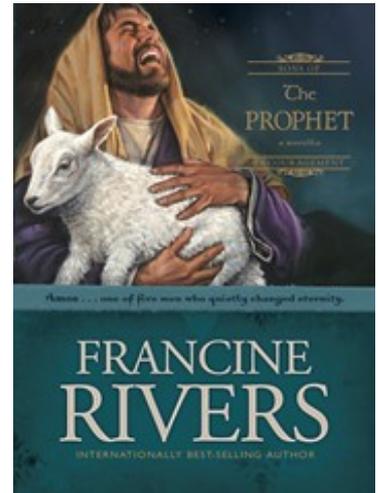
Whose kingdom was to be restored? In what ways?

What further promise did God make to His exiled people?

What phrases are used that offered Israel hope?

What permanency did God promise Israel?

What can we learn about God from these promises?



Seek God's Ways for You

Which of the promises of restoration listed in Amos 9 took place for Israel? Explain.

Humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. . . . In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.

1 Peter 5:6, 10

What has God promised those whom he has called? What is our part?

In what ways has God restored, supported, or strengthened you?

STOP AND PONDER

Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!

Romans 11:33

The Prophet's Promise

AMOS AS PROPHET

The Lord sent prophets to bring them back to him. The prophets warned them, but still the people would not listen.

2 Chronicles 24:19

According to this verse, why did God send prophets to his people?

Jesus told them, "A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his own family."

Matthew 13:57

How were prophets generally treated?

Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

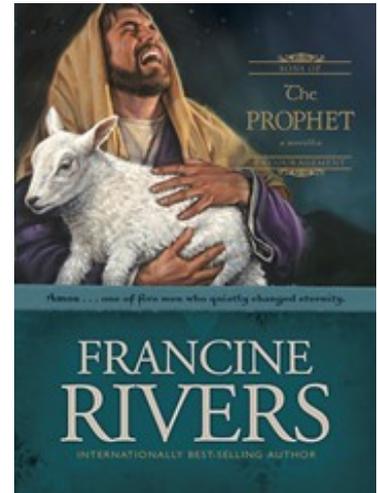
2 Peter 1:20-21

Who is the source of true prophecy?

AMOS AS SHEPHERD

Amos was a shepherd by profession. Read what Jesus said about shepherds in the following passage:

The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. . . . The sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. . . .



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The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. . . . I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me.

John 10:2-3, 11-12, 14

How might Amos's experience as a shepherd have prepared him to be one of God's prophets? How would his shepherding knowledge have helped him respond to God's call?

AMOS AS GARDENER

In addition to his work as a shepherd, Amos also tended fig trees. Read what Jesus said about gardeners in the following passage:

[The gardener] cuts off every branch . . . that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. . . . A branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine.

John 15:2, 4

How might caring for trees have helped Amos understand the need for God's judgment?

How would it have prepared him to obey God regardless of what others thought?

AMOS AND JESUS

Amos was an obedient man. His shepherding prepared him to prod people in a caring way. His gardening skills allowed him to see that people, like plants, need to have the wild, unproductive growth removed in order to produce fruit. His obedience—along with his training—foreshadows another prophet, Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:14) and "I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener" (John 15:1).

In Revelation we find Jesus' prophetic warning and promise to the churches:

Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book. . . . Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds. . . . I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne. I am the bright morning star. . . . Yes, I am coming soon!

Revelation 22:7, 12, 16, 20

May Jesus be heard in our world, our nation, our churches, our homes. May we each hear and heed His call before He comes!

