

# Daily Practices

Week of 2/8/21 - 2/12/21

## DAY 1 // DAILY PRACTICES

**PRAYER:** Lord Jesus, as I look at my day, I know that you are the only thing that will ultimately fulfill the longings of my heart. May I slow down enough in this moment to be fully present to myself and to you.

**SILENCE:** Set a timer for two minutes. Sit in silence and bring your attention to the presence of God with you right now.

**SCRIPTURE:** Amos 2:4-8

<sup>4</sup> Thus says the Lord: “For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have rejected the law of the Lord, and have not kept his statutes, but their lies have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked. <sup>5</sup> So I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem.” <sup>6</sup> Thus says the Lord: “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals— <sup>7</sup> those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted; a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned; <sup>8</sup> they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.”

**DEVOTIONAL:** The prophet Amos was called by God to announce the Day of the Lord. Amos starts the book by announcing the coming judgment upon the neighboring nations who had oppressed God’s people. Both Israel and Judah (the nation of Israel divided into two nations) would celebrate this coming judgment because they wanted to see their oppressors experience justice for all they had done. But Amos’s announcement of judgment didn’t stop with the surrounding nations. He also pronounced the coming Day of the Lord up the people of Israel and Judah. According to God’s standard of justice, his people weren’t any better executing his heart for justice as the nations around them. The very fact that Amos had things to say about the secular world and the people of God should give us pause today. As God’s people, we should always be prepared for the Holy Spirit to convict us of the ways that we do not seek God’s justice. Rather than getting defensive, we need to listen to the Holy Spirit with humility.

**RESPONSE:** Take two minutes to respond to the scripture, devotional, or the Holy Spirit’s prompting. Respond by writing in a journal, by meditating on a specific thought, or by talking with God.

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**SCRIPTURE:** Amos 6:4-7

<sup>4</sup>“Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall, <sup>5</sup>who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp and like David invent for themselves instruments of music, <sup>6</sup>who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph! <sup>7</sup>Therefore they shall now be the first of those who go into exile, and the revelry of those who stretch themselves out shall pass away.”

**DEVOTIONAL:** The words of Amos are very strong. God sees when his people live a lavish life without pursuing justice for those who are oppressed. God warns his people that he will hold them accountable for their action, or the lack thereof. What was true for God's people in Amos is true for us today—to turn our backs on justice and compassion is to turn our backs on God. God is just and is passionate about justice in this world. Since the goal of discipleship is to be more like Jesus, we should want to develop His character. Therefore, we ought to desire to become more just people. Just people hate injustice and do whatever they can to stamp it out. As we begin to grasp God's passion for justice, we will begin to view biblical justice as part of the DNA of a disciple. When we turn our back to justice, at that moment, we are failing in our discipleship to Jesus.

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**SCRIPTURE:** Amos 7:10-16

<sup>10</sup> Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. <sup>11</sup> For thus Amos has said, “ ‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land.’ ” <sup>12</sup> And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, <sup>13</sup> but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.” <sup>14</sup> Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, “I was no prophet, nor a prophet’s son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. <sup>15</sup> But the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’ <sup>16</sup> Now therefore hear the word of the Lord.

**DEVOTIONAL:** Not every Israelite in Amos’ day was personally acting unjustly. Many were simply being complacent about it, allowing it to continue in their communities. This passage highlights one of the priests of the day who tried to silence Amos’s message. Too often people don’t want to hear about ways that they act complicitly toward injustice. But Amos highlights that God’s message is clear: God is also concerned about our apathy toward these injustices. Much of the injustice we have in this world is interwoven into daily life—in our systems, policies, institutions, traditions, etc. These are trickier to undo. They are more complex; yet God does not see us as innocent. We must become aware of injustices around you. Pay attention to the world around you, especially to those who are saying they feel oppressed. Do not easily dismiss them.

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**SCRIPTURE:** Amos 5:21-24

<sup>21</sup> "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. <sup>22</sup> Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. <sup>23</sup> Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. <sup>24</sup> But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

**DEVOTIONAL:** To update the language for today's world, we could imagine that Amos is saying that church attendance, attending Bible studies, tithing 10%, and singing worship songs don't matter if we aren't seeking after justice and righteousness. This is a hard word to hear because so many of us would rather avoid seeing where we are complicit with injustice. We would rather just live comfortably, partaking in the things of God when they are convenient for us. But words like this remind us that God doesn't want more religious activity. He wants his people to imitate him by seeking to "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." The words of Amos are clear: the people of God must pursue justice in our lives, in our church, and in the world around us.

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**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 22:23

<sup>23</sup>“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

**DEVOTIONAL:** For some, it is easy to ignore the words of Amos because he spoke before Jesus changed everything by coming to earth and taking on the judgment of God in our place. Yet, the words of Jesus sound very similar to the prophets who went before him. Even though God himself asks us to partake in religious activity (like church attendance, community, and tithing) in order to draw us closer to him, that activity means nothing to God unless our hearts are being transformed by Jesus. Part of God's character is to be fully just, so for us to be transformed by Jesus, then we should naturally begin to care about the things that God cares about. Followers of Jesus, who are truly being transformed by Jesus, must care about the “weightier matters” of God's design for humanity. Words like this should cause us to examine our own spiritual lives. How are you pursuing these weighted matters that God desires from you?

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