

2026-05-20 Small Group Guide

Small Group Guide: "Amos-erica" - Living as Foreigners in a Pagan Society Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word and to help each person honestly examine their lives in light of Scripture.

Icebreaker

Share one area where you find it most challenging to live differently from mainstream American culture as a follower of Christ.

Key Scripture Passages

Amos 5:14-26 - Seek good, not evil

1 Peter 2:11-25 - Living as foreigners and exiles

John 15:9-17 - Remaining in Christ's love

Key Takeaways

We are called to seek good actively, not just avoid evil - There is still good to pursue in God's creation despite living in a fallen world.

Religious activity without genuine obedience is detestable to God - Church attendance, worship, and offerings mean nothing if we're tolerating sin in our lives.

We are foreigners and exiles - Our citizenship is in heaven, which should affect how we live in American culture.

Suffering for doing good is commendable before God - Following Christ's example means bearing up under unjust treatment without retaliation.

Love is the ultimate command - We're called to love each other as Christ loved us, even those we disagree with.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

What struck you most about the comparison between ancient Israel in Amos and modern American Christianity?

The sermon mentioned God saying "I hate, I despise your religious festivals" (Amos 5:21). What does this reveal about God's priorities? How does this challenge our view of church activities?

What does it mean practically to "seek good, not evil" (Amos 5:14) in our daily lives?

Personal Reflection

The speaker talked about "tolerating little sins" we don't think are that significant. What are some examples of sins American Christians tend to tolerate that God's Word clearly addresses?

Be honest: In what areas of your life are you living more by American values than biblical values? (Examples might include materialism, individualism, entertainment choices, use of time, etc.)

1 Peter 2:12 calls us to "live such good lives among the pagans that...they may see your good deeds and glorify God." When non-believers observe your life, what do they see? Would they be curious about your faith?

Going Deeper

The sermon emphasized that we should "show proper respect to everyone" (1 Peter 2:17), even those we disagree with. Why is this so difficult? How can we practice this in our current political and cultural climate?

Read 1 Peter 2:21-23 again. Jesus "entrusted himself to him who judges justly" rather than retaliating. What situations in your life require you to trust God's justice instead of seeking your own vindication?

The speaker challenged us: "I care more about your soul than I do your feelings." How does this perspective change the way we should interact with fellow believers? With unbelievers?

Application and Action

What specific "sinful desire" (not just sinful action, but the desire itself) do you need to abstain from this week? What practical steps will you take?

The sermon mentioned that there are lost people within 10 miles of where we gather. Who is one person in your sphere of influence who needs to hear the gospel? What's keeping you from sharing with them?

How can we as a group hold each other accountable to "put into practice" what we've learned (Philippians 4:9) rather than just hearing good teaching?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following to focus on this week:

Option 1: The Respect Challenge

Identify someone you find difficult to respect (politically, personally, or culturally different from you)

Pray for them daily

Look for one opportunity to show them genuine respect or kindness

Journal about how this challenges you

Option 2: The Good Deeds Challenge

Intentionally do something good for someone outside your normal circle (neighbor, coworker, stranger)

Do it in a way that could prompt questions about your faith

Be prepared to share why you're different (hint: it's Jesus)

Option 3: The Tolerance Inventory

List 3-5 "little sins" you've been tolerating in your life

Confess them to God and to a trusted accountability partner

Create a specific plan to "die to" these sins (Romans 6:11)

Check in with your accountability partner weekly

Option 4: The Scripture Memory Challenge

Memorize 1 Peter 2:11-12 this week

Set a phone reminder to recite it three times daily

Share with the group next week how this affected your thinking

Accountability Questions

For next week's meeting, be prepared to share:

How did you actively "seek good" this week?

What situation tested your commitment to show respect to everyone?

What sin or sinful desire did you "die to" this week?

Who did you share the gospel with or show Christ's love to?

Closing Reflection

Read John 15:12-14 together:

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command."

Reflection Question: What would it look like for you to "lay down your life" for someone this week? (This doesn't mean literal death, but sacrificing your time, comfort, preferences, or pride.)

Closing Prayer

Go around the circle and have each person pray for the person on their

right, specifically asking God to help them:

Identify and repent of tolerated sins

Live as a foreigner and exile in this culture

Show Christ's love even when it's costly

Remain in Jesus' love through obedience

Leader Notes

Be Vulnerable First: As the leader, model honesty about your own struggles with tolerating sin and living counter-culturally.

Keep It Real: The speaker's tone was direct and honest. Don't let the discussion become theoretical—push for specific, practical examples.

Watch for Defensiveness: Some may react defensively to the critique of American Christianity. Gently redirect to Scripture and personal application rather than debate.

Emphasize Grace: While the message is convicting, remember we're under the new covenant. Balance the call to holiness with the assurance of God's grace in Christ.

Follow Up: Check in with group members during the week, especially those who shared specific struggles or commitments.

"There's no excuse anymore. If we are to call Him Lord and Savior, this is what we are to do."