

the
poverty
and
justice
bible

The core



HARPS



Discover: Amos 5.21-24

You can't occasionally keep a promise. You don't keep a vow "every now and again". It's either kept or broken. The people Amos was addressing were good people, in some ways. They were good at religion. They were good at worshipping. It was just the rest of life that was a problem. They were like people who say, "I'm a good Christian, really. I only mistreat and abuse people some of the time. And never on a Sunday!" God is not against worship, far from it. But he wants joined-up thinking. Our celebrations need a sense of fair play. To him, justice and righteousness are a constantly flowing stream, not a tap that we turn on and off when we choose. He is a whole-life God: Monday to Sunday,

24/7. He doesn't just work on Sundays and isn't fooled by "occasional" righteousness.

Monday to Saturday matters. Sing as loudly as you like, but hypocrisy will shout louder. Nice song; shame about the lifestyle.



Dream

As you sing praises to God, picture scenes from the rest of your week. See yourself treating people fairly and kindly.



Do

Try writing the lyrics to your own worship song. Can you make it honest and real?

Lord, you want justice done. We want to see your face. So we'll do what you want - no messing.

MEDIA



Discover: Proverbs 14.6-9

What would the writer of Proverbs make of our modern media? What would he make of our celebrity-obsessed, trivia-driven world? Would he watch Big Brother? Would he phone in to vote on X Factor? He was very keen on understanding and a big fan of insight. So where would he find it today? Entertainment is not wrong in itself, of course, but sometimes it seems as if we're entertaining ourselves to death. Sometimes it seems that we've become a nation of what the Bible calls "scoffers": those who "make fun of wisdom" (14.6) and lack any serious interest in finding the truth. They exist on a diet of trivialities and superficiality; to them nothing is serious. Everything is just "a bit of a laugh". But wise people know when to laugh and when to listen. They take wisdom seriously; they understand the need for understanding. They know that when we

use discernment with the media, it can help us engage with real life, not hide away from it.

At no time in history has there been more information available to us about the issues that really matter. It's just a question of finding the right channel.



Dream

You are launching the Poverty and Justice TV channel. What's the schedule?



Do

Identify your ignorance and do something about it. Use the media to stretch your mind and make you wise. Seek out wise writers, respected reporters, intelligent entertainers - and learn from them.

Lord, help me to generate respect for you and your values. I want to draw crowds to you who will celebrate your name.

SUN



Discover: [Romans 13.8-10](#)

Paul was a great traveller. It is estimated that he travelled more than 10,000 miles during his ministry. I wonder, if he were alive today, would he be zooming around Turkey on the Asia Minor equivalent of EasyJet? Would he be insulating his tent and reducing his carbon footprint?

The Bible says that God will end the world, not global warming. But that doesn't mean we can ignore it. Experts argue about the effects of climate change, but, like so many global disasters, it will probably be the poor who suffer the most. "No one who loves others will harm them," writes Paul. If we truly love other people, we care about their lives, their prospects, their living conditions, their future. And that means changing our lives so as not to damage theirs. We make sacrifices for their sake.

SALT



Discover: [Matthew 5.13-16](#)

Good stuff, salt. Lots of uses. In Jesus' time it was used for flavouring, preserving and purifying food. Small amounts of salt sprinkled on their food were good for the health of animals, and a little salt sprinkled on the soil could act as a fertiliser.

What salt has, above everything else, is distinctiveness. You notice it when it's absent. It makes a difference. As does light. Light reveals what is hidden, shows people the way, drives out the darkness. Salt and light are indispensable. Without them, what is left? A decaying world, rotting in darkness.

The disciples' role, says Jesus, is to make a real difference to the world. To purify it, to save it from decay, to make life more flavoursome, to help people to grow. Just to make life better for people.

The world has changed. In this global village some of our neighbours live a long way away. But they are still our neighbours. And we are called to love them just the same.

Monday to Saturday matters. Sing as loudly as you like, but hypocrisy will shout louder. Nice song; shame about the lifestyle.



Dream

Imagine you could change places for a day with someone your age on the other side of the world.



Do

Plan a journey for the future that takes you to a place where you can help the poor.

Lord, you rule the day and the night, and you put the moon and the sun in place. You made summer and winter and gave them to the earth. Help us to make wise choices as we move around our world.

Like salt, our faith needs to be sprinkled over life. Our daily existence should make a difference. Salt and light, driving out darkness, bringing things to life. The one thing we can't do is stay in the container.



Dream

You're at a job interview for becoming a human. You're asked how you intend to make a difference to this world. What do you say?



Do

Anyone can "make a difference" - the question is what kind of difference, and whether it's good. Spend a week studying the Bible, and making notes, on the ways in which God says we should be different from the rest of the world.

Lord, I belong to you and I love you. Keep me cheerful and strong.

WORLD



Discover: Amos 5.21-24

God created man and woman; but he also created a role for them. Even before the fall, humans were expected to work; it might have been paradise, but it wasn't a holiday. Humankind was appointed to take care of the land and to look after it.

The writers of the Bible took it for granted that life was inextricably embedded in nature. They hadn't invented the umbrella, let alone double-glazing and air-conditioning. The weather could be your enemy. Drought, famine and wild animals were real threats.

Nevertheless, they recognised their responsibility to work with the grain of nature. The land was transparent. It was given by God and ideas such as the Sabbath year (Leviticus 25) showed that it had to be managed in his way.

Today the situation has been transformed. Deforestation and urbanisation are growing at an unparalleled rate. Care of the earth is too often replaced by exploitation. The problem is not the improved technology, but the way it's used. A chainsaw can chop down one tree, or a hundred trees; what makes the difference is whether the user thinks he owns the forest, or is looking after it for someone else.



Dream

On which bits of land can you have an impact? How would you like them to look?



Do

Cultivate a relationship with your garden (or window box). Show it you care.

The earth is yours, Lord, and everything on it belongs to you. We are your people and we belong to you.