

# False Worship

## by Travis Riesen

### FAITH STORY:

Amos 4

### FAITH FOCUS:

In this passage, the prophet Amos foretells the fall of Israel. He begins with pointing out the poor conditions in Israel. There are many rich people with their well-fed cattle and there are others who are living in poverty. He then moves on to pointing out the hypocritical worship that is happening in the country. He tells them that they are going through the motions in their worship. They are doing the ceremonies right, but their hearts are not in the right place. He then tells them about the things God has done to punish them, and reminds them that they still didn't return to God. Then he prophesies the fall of Israel.

### MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- Copy of the movie Ice Age. Be prepared to show the clip from about 27:40-31:20.
- Copies of the questions in Apply for each small group
- A melon
- Bibles for each student
- Copies of the Lectio Divina exercise for each person

### SESSION OUTLINE

#### FOCUS:

Welcome students. Invite them to think about one very important thing/activity/person in their life right now, and to become a statue that symbolizes that thing. For example, if football is very important, the student should "freeze" into a statue in their football stance. If it's school work, become a statue symbolizing school work. If it's a boyfriend/girlfriend, create a statue to show that.

Ask students to get into their statue pose, and see if the rest of the class can guess what they are portraying.

## **CONNECT:**

Play the clip from “Ice Age.”

**Discuss:** What’s going on? Did you notice anything that could be seen as false worship? (the melon.) How does the worship of the melon relate to today’s world? (Materialism.)

## **EXPLORE THE BIBLE:**

Make sure all students have a Bible and a copy of the Lectio Divina exercise. Ask them to spread out so they have some quiet space to do this exercise.

When students have completed the exercise, bring them back together. Go around the group and share answers to the questions in the exercise, allowing students to pass if they choose not to share.

## **APPLY:**

Divide into small groups. Hand out the questions for them to discuss. After the small group discussions, come back together and share in the whole group.

## **RESPOND:**

Form a large circle. As the teacher, begin this exercise by taking the melon in your hands and saying “Sometimes I’m tempted to worship \_\_\_\_\_ instead of God.” Pass the melon around the group. Students may pass, but encourage them to finish the sentence if possible.

## **INSIGHTS FROM THE SCRIPTURE:**

This story takes place after the division of the kingdom. Israel is its own country in the north, and Amos is a writing prophet who foretells the fall of the country of Israel because of its sins. The line “Go to Bethel—and transgress” is very significant. Bethel is a place of worship for the people of Israel. It had a distinguished past and was the worship location for the royal family. It was called “the king’s sanctuary.” For Amos to stand up in a crowd of people and tell them to “Come to Bethel and rebel against God”—that was huge. The Israelites heard what they thought to be absolute hypocrisy—but they were the ones who were being hypocrites.

## *Session Reproducibles*

### **LECTIO DIVINA EXERCISE**

- 1 Read Amos 4. Focus on words and phrases that jump out to you as you read them.
- 2 Read Amos 4 again. Imagine God is saying this to you. What is God trying to say to you through this passage?
- 3 Read it one more time. Listen to what the passage is challenging you to do specifically, or how you are to become a different person or act differently.

### **Questions for small groups**

- 1 Where do you see oppression today?
- 2 What are some ways that we can help the oppressed?
- 3 What kinds of false worship do you see today?
- 4 What does a hypocrite look like today?
- 5 When do you turn your back on God?
- 6 Is God challenging you to come back to true worship of God? In what ways?