



TOO COMFORTABLE

Lesson 3

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DEVOTIONAL

*"Hear, and testify against the house of Jacob,"
declares the Lord God, the God of hosts,
14 "that on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions,
I will punish the altars of Bethel,
and the horns of the altar shall be cut off
and fall to the ground.
15 I will strike the winter house along with the summer house,
and the houses of ivory shall perish,
and the great houses shall come to an end,"
declares the Lord.*

—Amos 3:13-15

When I was a boy, I remember playing hide and seek with some friends in my neighborhood. My sister's boyfriend was picking her up for a date and had parked his yellow Chevy truck on the street, keeping it running while he ran into the house to get her. I hid behind his truck and waited to see if anyone would find me. As I was crouched down by the tail pipe, I smelled the exhaust. It was comforting. I kept inhaling for a bit, waiting to be found and I was found—by my mother! She grabbed me quickly and yanked me back. She let me know in no uncertain terms that what I was smelling could kill me. It was carbon monoxide. I am no chemist, but I have learned about the dangers of carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is a gas that can't be seen and it is deadly. Because you can't see, taste or smell it, it can kill you before you ever know that it's there. It can kill anyone—babies, children, teens, adults, and the elderly. What makes it so deadly is that the hemoglobin in our bloodstream is attracted to it. When carbon monoxide is breathed in, it replaces the oxygen which the cells need to function. We know how deadly it can be, which is why we have carbon monoxide detectors in our homes—they alert us to know how close danger is, even though it doesn't appear that anything is wrong. In fact, it might make us feel quite good as it is killing us.

For Israel, they had become comfortable, lazy, and started thinking that they were better than everyone around them and that they were untouchable. However, their wealth, like carbon monoxide, had lulled them into a spiritual slumber and ripe for judgment. Israel had failed to be a witness to the nations, so God summoned them to see justice in action (Amos 3:9,13). Israel was guilty of oppressing their neighbors, being morally indifferent, greedy, exploiting the poor, and barricading themselves away so that they didn't have to help anyone and could carry on in their earthly pleasures without a care in the world. However, judgment was coming and it would be so bad that only a small portion of them would be saved.

The first thing that God was going to do was destroy the altars at Bethel, which was the center of worship in the northern kingdom (Amos 3:14-15; see 1 Kings 12:26-30). Since they were guilty of idolatry, God would strike at the heart of it all—their altars. He would cut off the horns of the altar, which were metal fixtures protruding up from the altar. They symbolized strength and safety, and by cutting them off, He was showing them that there was no protection left. To further emphasize His point, He would destroy their winter and summer homes—the very places where they took refuge in their material comforts. And when God says, “Declares the Lord,” He wanted them to know that this was an absolute certainty.

APPLY THE WORD

As we see in today's reading, money can be a powerful temptation because it can lull us into a spiritual slumber and cause us to forget those around us. Let's make sure that we use the material goods that God has given us to help others, not simply spoil ourselves. Money is not evil in itself. It is the *love of it* that is. God desires that we be good stewards of everything He has given us and use it for His glory by helping others. Let's make sure that we put everything in proper order, or else we may experience God's disciplining hand.

OPEN IT

1. **What is one luxury item that you would buy if you had the money?**

READ IT

Amos 3:1-15

EXPLORE IT

2. **God promises to do what to Israel in v. 2?**
3. **How many questions does God ask in v. 3-6?**
4. **Who does God reveal His secrets/plans to in v. 7?**
5. **What have God's people forgotten to do in v. 10?**
6. **What does God promise to do to in v. 15?**

APPLY IT

WHY SO MANY QUESTIONS?

In vv. 3-6, God asks seven rhetorical questions that would have been easily understood by the original audience, evoking images from everyday life—traveling on the road, lions roaring, birds in traps, and the ram's horn alerting the people. It's almost as if He were talking to us about driving on the expressway with a friend, dogs barking, mousetraps, and tornado sirens. Each question was meant to show that there was a cause and effect relationship to everything and that the coming judgment would not be accidental, but intentional. God is just and He is bringing justice to the Israelites because they have failed to listen and do what He required and desired of them.

- 7. If you have children, what is one of the funniest things that they have ever done?**

- 8. God chose Israel to be His special possession, His children. What did God want for them to be (cf. Isaiah 49:6)?**

- 9. Why is God so quick to punish His children (cf. Hebrews 12:5-11)?**

- 10. In vv. 3-6 God asks a series of obvious questions. What was He trying to get them to understand?**

11. In v. 6, we learn that God is behind the upcoming disaster to Israel. Does God bring disaster to us in our lives (cf. Isaiah 45:7)?
12. If God is behind the disaster, why would He do such a thing? Does this go against His nature as a good and loving God? What about His justice? Does this affect your view of God at all?
13. What does God's revealing Himself to His prophets mean for us? Why is it good for us if we know what is going to happen and can't do anything about it? Or can we?
14. Israel appeared to barricade themselves in their homes hoping not to deal with the evils in their world. How can we make sure that we are not doing the same?
15. In v. 12, God uses a shepherd trying to save one of his sheep from a predator as an example of Israel's futile attempt to escape God's judgment. How do we try to escape God's judgment?

16. How have our earthly comforts kept us from seeing God at work in our world?

The people of Israel had become quite wealthy with very nice houses that brought them comfort and joy, and in the process, had forgotten Him and how to do what's right and practice justice. Similar things could be said of us today; we have wealth and earthly comforts and have forgotten God.

17. What are some practical steps that we can take so that we might not incur similar judgment?