



PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD

Lesson 4

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DEVOTIONAL

"...prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

—Amos 4:12

I remember getting ready to meet my wife's (then girlfriend) parents for the first time. What would I say? What would they think of me? Would we get along? I remember thinking and mulling over what I would say, how I would shake their hand, rehearsing how I was to smile, then trying to find the right and proper clothes to wear and how I would present myself. It was quite the intimidating experience and they didn't make it easy for me! When we did meet, I am pretty sure that they enjoyed watching me squirm and trip over myself!

A year and a half after we got married, we discovered that our first child would be arriving. It was a wonderful but a bit scary experience. I was the youngest in my family and didn't grow up around babies, so I didn't know what to expect. I quickly learned that there wasn't any instruction manual, and so I was reliant on others who had gone through it. I tried to do everything in my power to get ready for that little girl. We had to get a room ready with paint, a crib, diapers, baby clothes, burp cloths, crib sheets, a rocking chair, and the list went on and on. It's amazing how much stuff we needed to have for such a tiny person! By God's grace, we finished our preparation just a few days before she arrived, so that it was a nice and smooth transition.

We have all had to prepare to meet someone—whether it's future in-laws, new baby, a guest coming to our homes, meeting a new boss, or getting ready to go on a date, we try to do everything necessary to prepare ourselves. Whether that means getting cleaned up, wearing the right clothes, or having the proper things in place, we have to prepare ourselves all the time for different things.

In Amos 4:12, the prophet tells the Israelites to prepare to meet God. How can we possibly prepare for that? There is no one to look to, no one around who has been through it who has looked God in the face. How do we prepare to meet God? Meeting possible in-laws is one thing, and preparing for a baby is another, but God? What do we do? What do we say? It's not like we can put our hand out and give a firm handshake to Him while looking Him in the eye with a wink and a smile. What does the creation say to its Creator? What do we as finite humans say to the infinite God who knows all of our thoughts, our comings and goings, our beginning and our end?

Today's passage is written to the Israelites who needed to prepare to meet God because they had become lazy, self-indulgent, and indifferent to the pain and brokenness of the people around them. The same could easily be said for us today. Instead of waiting for God's rebuke, we need to learn from their poor example and try to make changes now so that we might not hear His rebuke, but His commendation. As Christians, God has saved us for a purpose—to do good works and show that He is God (Ephesians 2:10). Let's step out of our comforts and use the good we have been given to show how good and great our God is.

OPEN IT

1. Describe when you were nervous meeting someone. Who was it? And what was it like?

READ IT

Amos 4:1-5:3

EXPLORE IT

2. What does God call the women of Samaria in v. 1?
3. What does God swear by?
4. What did God give the nation in v. 6?
5. What does God tell the people to do in vv. 4-5?
6. What does God tell them to prepare for in v. 12?
7. How many times did the Lord say, "You did not return to me"?

APPLY IT

COWS OF BASHAN?

"Bashan was the fertile tableland northeast of the Jordan. It was prime cattle country, and its animals were renowned. Here it is used as a stinging epithet for the capital's women, who are rich, idle, pampered and inevitably fatter than those whom they have reduced to poverty."—NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, p. 1487.

8. God is angry with the women of Samaria for abusing the poor for their own self-indulgence. Who are the poor and needy of our society today?

9. How are we self-indulgent at the expense of the poor and needy around us?

10. What does it mean that God is holy? What is the significance of His holiness? And why does that matter to us?

11. What does holiness look like practically for us?

12. The Israelite women were told that they were going to be humiliated and taken into exile (vv. 2-3). How might God humble us in our world today?

13. In v. 4, the Israelites appeared to be very religious and zealous, but they were going through the motions. How do we go through the motions in our faith? What do we need to do to change that?
14. God appears to be using sarcasm in His rebuke of the Israelites in vv. 5-6. Is it ever ok for us to use sarcasm to rebuke people? Are there any other examples in Scripture of God using sarcasm to rebuke others?
15. God uses several things to get their attention in vv. 6-10 (hunger, drought, destroyed crops, plagues and death), but they didn't listen. What makes it so hard for us to listen to God despite the fact that there are so many obvious signs?
16. In v. 12, the Israelites are told to prepare themselves to meet with God. If you were told that you were going to meet God face to face, what would you do to prepare yourself? Why don't we do those things now?
17. God desires to reveal His thoughts to us (v. 13), so that we might know His will. What keeps us from knowing and doing the will of God?
18. What is one thing God wants you to do in light of this lesson?