

Day 20: Amos 8

I recently heard some interesting statistics on listening and communication. The average number of words that we are able to listen to per minute is around 450. But just because the words are spoken, doesn't mean we hear them.

Even though our ears are capable of picking up on so many words, our brains may not be processing them. Most people remember and absorb only 25% of the things they listen to. That is quite a discrepancy! It's not that listening necessitates huge physical effort, but with the barrage of information we receive on a daily basis, our brains get a serious workout.

Amos 8:11, speaks of “a famine on the land— not a famine of bread or water but of hearing the words of the Lord.” This accurately described people in Amos's context who were apathetic to God and his Word. It is not that there was a lack of words or teachers, but rather a lack of hearers and doers.

This is also a timely message for us. The Bible is available in every format imaginable. Daily devotionals can be sent to your inbox. Insight for living and biblical wisdom in the form of books, articles, podcasts and blogs are everywhere. But it seems that too often we look for answers to life's problems everywhere but God and the Bible.

Pray: Lord, help me to seek you first this week. I want to prioritize your words and ways over all others. Help me to hear you and have the courage to do what you say.

Amanda Rue



AMOS

Day 16: Amos 4

As much as I love being a parent, there are times I get so frustrated I want to scream into a pillow. It usually happens when I tell my son over and over again to either do something, or not do something. Why doesn't he listen the first time? Why do I have to keep increasing the punishment to force him to stop (or continue)? Then again, we adults aren't so different. If I wrote down every repeated mistake I made, it would fill a book thicker than an entire encyclopedia.

All through chapter 4 of Amos, one phrase was repeated time and again: **“Yet you did not turn back to Me — declares the Lord.”** No matter how severe the punishments increased, the people continued their sinful behavior.

Part of me shakes my head at their stubbornness, but I have to stop myself. Am I really that much different? Are we as a people now any different? I doubt it. As much as we might like to count ourselves wiser and more enlightened, all in all, human nature hasn't changed. We are just as inclined to turn our back on God, and stomp our foot in childish stubbornness to keep doing what we want to do instead of what we need to do.

The difference is, we have a historical account in Amos and all throughout the Bible of what can happen when we don't. Hopefully I will remember Israel's experience before I decide to exercise my own tendency toward stubbornness. The good news is, God will continue to give us opportunities to change our ways, because of his immense love and patience. As a parent, I can appreciate that more than I did before.

Andra Marquardt

Day 17: Amos 5

“Assuredly, at such a time the prudent man keeps silent, for it is an evil time.” Amos 5:13 (HEB)

Surrounded by people, friends and family alike, who vociferously disagree with my faith, I’m always tempted to keep silent. Why incur division and anger when it’ll only cause me to lose said friends and family ties?

With our society seeming to turn on those who believe as I do, I’m tempted to stay silent in the public square as well. After all, are we not also living in “evil times?”

Compared to other countries, as much as people attack our faith here, we don’t have to worry about being imprisoned, tortured or killed in horrendous ways for living and speaking our faith. So no, we do not as yet live in such evil times as described in Amos and other times in Scripture. It is during this time as more and more people turn away from Christ that we need to keep speaking, and showing who Christ is by how we live.

Because as of now we can without mortal recourse. That is our calling, after all.

Prudence demands we keep our eyes open, and discern when to speak and when to stay silent. Or as Jesus put it in Matthew 10:16: “. . . therefore be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.”

Andra Marquardt

Day 18: Amos 6

It doesn’t always feel like it with all the negative news we hear each day, but we live in a prosperous time and a prosperous country. Sure, not all of us are as prosperous as others, but compared to the majority of the world, we are all rich.

Amos also lived in a similar time. Israel was experiencing economic prosperity. There was even negativity in the news, so to speak. The difference was that the negativity was coming from the prophet Amos. “Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure.” (Amos 6:1) The Israelites did not want to hear any of it. Their ancestors went through the rough times. They were living the good life now. The problem was that Israel was living like they were the reason they were prospering. They had forgotten all that God had done for

them. They were prideful, thinking they were better than all their neighbors.

I tend to fall into the same pattern as the Israelites. I’ll look to God in the hard times. I’ll even thank Him during some good times. But when things are going well for an extended period, my confidence in myself starts to overflow. I won’t ask for help, because I can figure everything out on my own. I won’t listen to other’s ideas, because my ideas are the best. When it comes to money, I stray from our savings goals and indulge with some larger purchases, because I’m confident it won’t affect our future. I know that I wouldn’t have wanted to listen to someone like Amos during those prosperous times. If you’re like me, let’s pray that when we fall into this pattern, we are quick to remember what God has done for us.

Jeremy Skoglund

Day 19: Amos 7

“And Amaziah said to Amos, ‘O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.’” Amos 7:12-13

Verses 10-17 recount the confrontation between Amos and a priest named Amaziah when Amos takes his message to ritual center called Bethel. Amaziah does not seem to recognize the divine influence in Amos’s message; after all, he believes Amos is in Bethel to earn a living through his dangerous preaching. Fortunately, Amos is not deterred. He does not cave to Amaziah’s invocation of authority, for Amos knows his cause is just and his message must be heard.

As you read through this story again, where do you find yourself? Do you persist like Amos or are you persuaded to bow out? Perhaps you identify with Amaziah and simply want to keep things calm? If you were King Jeroboam, how would you respond to this notice from Amaziah that someone is prophesying your downfall on account of the impact you’re having on the poor?

“From the cowardice that dares not face new truth,
from the laziness that is contented with half-truth,
from that arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,
Good Lord, deliver me. Amen.”

-For the Spirit of Truth, a prayer from Kenya; The UM Hymnal #597

Tanner Carlson