

What Does It Take to Get Our Attention?

Lessons from Amos on God's Discipline and Pursuit

There are moments in life when we know something is wrong but keep pushing it aside. We delay, we rationalize, and we convince ourselves we're fine. The book of Amos shows us that this is not a new problem. God spent centuries trying to get Israel's attention, and their story holds a mirror up to our own lives today.

Why Is God Trying to Get Your Attention?

In Amos chapter 3, God speaks directly to the nation of Israel, the very people He brought out of Egypt. He says in verse 1, "Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt." His rebuke was not for a select few. It was for everyone who identified as His people.

It is easy to hear a message like this and think it applies to someone else. But the right response is to pause and ask, "Lord, is there something in my life You are speaking to right now?"

Here is the key truth to hold onto: God's discipline is not evidence that He has abandoned you. It is evidence that He is pursuing you. He keeps working on you because He loves you and does not want sin to destroy your life.

Does God's Rebuke Make Sense? Seven Cause-and-Effect Questions

In Amos 3:3-6, God asks seven questions rooted in everyday cause and effect to show that His rebuke is completely reasonable.

- Can two walk together unless they are agreed?
- Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?
- Will a young lion cry out when he has caught nothing?
- Will a bird fall into a snare where there is no trap?
- Will a snare spring up if it has caught nothing?
- If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid?
- If there is calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it?

The point is simple. If these principles hold true in the physical world, why would we think they work differently in our spiritual lives? Galatians 6:7-8 puts it plainly: "Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to the flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction. And whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap everlasting life."

It is reasonable for a loving God to rebuke His people living in sin, just as it is reasonable for a loving parent to correct a child heading toward danger.

What Happens When We Ignore God's Warnings?

God had been sending prophets to Israel for roughly 200 years. He was patient. He warned. He waited. But Amos 3:7 tells us, "Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets." God does not act without warning. But when the warnings are ignored long enough, judgment comes.

For Israel, that judgment came through the Assyrian army. Their strength was stripped away, their palaces plundered, their altars destroyed, and their luxurious homes reduced to rubble. Everything they had placed their confidence in, their wealth, their idols, their religious rituals, fell apart.

Can Religious Activity Replace a Real Relationship with God?

One of the most sobering parts of this passage is found in Amos 4:4-5. Even in the middle of their corruption and idolatry, Israel kept their religious routines going. Sacrifices every morning. Tithes every three days. Freewill offerings. Thanksgiving offerings. The religious system was running smoothly.

But God was not impressed. Religious activity can give you a sense of accomplishment. It can make you feel like you have done your spiritual duty. But you can go through every motion and still completely miss the heart of God.

Jesus warned about this in Matthew 7:22-23: "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

God is not after religious performance. He is after relationship.

How Does God Try to Get Our Attention?

In Amos 4:6-11, God walks through a list of things He allowed in order to turn Israel back to Himself.

- Famine and lack of food (verse 6)
- Drought and withheld rain (verses 7-8)
- Crop failure and locusts (verse 9)

- Plague and military defeat (verse 10)
- Destruction like Sodom and Gomorrah (verse 11)

After each one, God says the same thing: "Yet you have not returned to Me." Hebrews 12 reminds us that God disciplines those He loves. If you are walking through a difficult season, a health crisis, a broken relationship, a financial struggle, the right first response is not to chalk it up to bad luck. The right response is to go to God and say, "Lord, here I am. My ears are open. What are You saying?"

That does not mean every hard thing is God's discipline. Sometimes it is simply the trials of life or an attack from the enemy. But in either case, the response is the same: come to Jesus with an open heart and open hands.

What About the People in Your Life Who Don't Know God?

Many people pray for loved ones who have walked away from God or never known Him at all. It is natural to hope that God will draw them gently. But sometimes God has to do something more dramatic to get someone's attention.

Jude 1:22-23 says, "And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh."

The challenge is to pray for those people, share God's love when you can, and then surrender them into God's hands. Trust Him to do whatever is necessary to reach them, in His way and in His time.

Who Is the God We Are Dealing With?

Amos 4:13 closes with a reminder of exactly who God is: "For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind, who declares to man what His thought is, and makes the morning darkness, who treads the high places of the earth. The Lord God of hosts is His name."

He is the commander of all the armies of heaven. He holds a power that is beyond comprehension. This is not a God to be dismissed or ignored. He is a God to be taken seriously, and He is also a God who loves you enough to keep pursuing you even when you keep walking away.

What Should You Do If You Are in a Place of Deep Trouble?

The message of Amos is not ultimately about destruction. It is about a God who keeps calling out to His people before it is too late. If sin has moved you into a place of trouble, the answer is not to keep pushing it aside. Own it. Confess it. Bring it before God and trust that His grace is ready to meet you there.

Do not just know what to do. Do it.

Life Application

This week, take an honest look at your own heart. Is there an area of your life where God has been nudging you, and you have been pushing it aside? Maybe it is a habit, a relationship, an attitude, or a pattern of thinking that you know is not right. Stop waiting for rock bottom. Bring it to God now.

If you have a loved one who does not know the Lord, commit them to prayer this week. Ask God to open their eyes to who He truly is, and surrender them into His hands with this prayer: "Lord, do whatever You need to do to get their attention."

Ask yourself these questions as you reflect this week:

- Is there an area of my life where I have been going through religious motions without truly seeking God's heart?
- Are there circumstances in my life right now that could be God trying to get my attention, and how have I been responding to them?
- Is there a sin I have been rationalizing or delaying to confess that I need to bring before God today?
- Who in my life needs me to pray for them and surrender them into God's hands this week?

God's patience is real, but it is not without limit. The best time to respond to His voice is always now.