

When God Calls The Common: Amos

Amos 5:25-27

How do we keep our worship honest?

God knows, and He has given a negative example—of dishonest worship—through the Israelites from the Book of Amos.

Today, we have the unchanging, incomparable counsel of the whole Bible to demonstrate where the Israelites erred in their worship—and how we can prosper!

HOW TO KEEP OUR WORSHIP HONEST #4:

Get rid of all physical and spiritual idols in your heart and life, and worship God alone.

James 1:21

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Amos 5:25

(KJV) Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

(NIV) "Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the wilderness, people of Israel?"

To be clear, the sacrifices and offerings that Israel historically presented to God were His idea. When these religious rituals were offered as expressions of true worship from the heart to Yahweh, they would be deemed acceptable unto God. For us living under the death and resurrection of Jesus, our acceptable worship is the offering of a life lived for Him.

Romans 6:4

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

God, through prophet Amos, is not mocking Israel's long history of religious acts—though they were inconsistent at best—but He is laying ground for this statement:

Amos 5:26

(KJV) But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

(NIV) You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your god— which you made for yourselves.

Idolatry. They mixed in the worship of idols with the worship of their God.

Exodus 20:4-6

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

God does not accept any strange admixture of truth and error, or deity with demons. Honest worship, pure worship is giving worth to the only true God, according to His Word about Himself. Our hearts worship what we value most. When we introduce other loves into our minds and hearts, the Holy Ghost respectfully retreats. We cannot serve both God and anything else.

Matthew 6:24

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

1John 2:15-17

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

We dare not regard idolatry as just the worship of God's creation (Romans 1:25) or the bowing down to literal statues of carved gods as in Biblical times. No, beloved, idolatry is the act of worshipping *anyone or anything*—and sharing your attention and affection for them with your worship of God, who commands our complete adoration and obedience.

Luke 14:26

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Have you ever regarded Luke 14:26 as too extreme? What is Jesus really saying about the cost of following Him? How do you think these sobering truths play out in your daily life?

The evidence, or fruit, of idolatry can be seen in the lifestyle of the backslidden Israelites, who had not fooled God (Galatians 6:7-8). Israel had forgotten that God loves righteousness more than ritual. Because their lives lacked righteous fruit, God flat-out rejected all of their religious ritual and ceremony. Even their sojourn in the wilderness, which God provided to test their love for and trust in Him—and to refine their faith—was defiled with their worship of gods such as Moloch, Sikkuth, and Chiun.

Amos 5:26

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From IVP Bible Background Commentary:

“Since both of the gods mentioned in this verse are associated with the planet Saturn, the phrase “star of your god” is actually a reference to the people's worship of astral deities. Sacred processions paraded the images and symbols of these gods through the city streets to their shrines, where sacrifices, sacred dancing and other cultic activities would take place. Amos, however, is satirizing these practices. Instead of simply describing what has been occurring, he now predicts a “final” procession, but this time the people carry these idols with them into exile.”

Which you made for yourselves. Isn't this so much the way of our fallen nature? We design our own idols to bow down to—in order to spend our time, money, and affection on them. God is set aside for a convenient time. Oh, but beloved, we forget that God is a jealous God:

Exodus 34:14

For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:

He is jealous for us and for our devoted worship of Him!

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: How do you feel knowing that your Father God is jealous for you? Journal some ways that He has demonstrated His extravagant love for you this week. Are there moments of His grace you may have missed?

*STUDY POINT: Conduct an in-depth study of Old Testament passages that demonstrate God's jealousy for Israel. Note also Israel's responses to God's outreach to them.

Amos 5:27

(KJV) Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts.

(NIV) Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is God Almighty.

Consequences. Israel's disobedience demanded God's justice be exacted through their captivity to a land east of Damascus, namely Assyria. God's punishment could not be avoided or resisted—He would not be mocked (Galatians 6:7). They would be extracted even from their own homeland.

God wins again.

And one more Scriptural principle—actually, three in one—to keep our worship honest. Though you won't find these principles detailed expressly in our passage this week, their absence within the behaviour of the Israelites speaks volumes to us today about keeping our worship honest.

HOW TO KEEP OUR WORSHIP HONEST #5:

Forsake self. Embrace humility. Forgive readily.

Align yourself with the character of Christ through the Word of God, and the power of the Holy Ghost. Walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6).

Forsake self.

Luke 9:23

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Embrace humility.

Philippians 2:1-11

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Forgive readily.

Matthew 5:21-26

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

*STUDY POINT: Find three New Testament passages that illustrate the connection between forgiveness and worship.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland