



December 8, 2019

“Vertically True in a Crooked World”

Amos 1 – 9

Pastor Gary Hamrick

In order to understand what is right and what is wrong, we must have an objective moral standard to define those things. Who or what is the objective moral standard in the world? It's not government or the culture or any of us. It's God! In the book of Amos, God was described as the plumb line against whom all things are to be measured and aligned. Only when we align ourselves with the Lord and his Word are we “vertically true;” otherwise all things are crooked. Pastor Gary's message today is about a challenge for each of us to make sure we have aligned ourselves with the true standard of God so that we can influence our crooked generation for Christ.

Historical Background

1. Amos was from the southern kingdom of Judah, but God called him to be a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel.
2. Amos was from Tekoa, which is about 10 miles southeast of Bethlehem.
3. Amos was a “regular guy” who wasn't a prophet by vocational calling, and he admitted that he felt unqualified for the assignment.
 - a. **Amos 7:14** - *“Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: ‘I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a sheepbreeder and a tender of sycamore fruit [figs].’ ”*
4. Amos is not mentioned in any other books of the Bible.
5. Amos ministered during the reigns of King Uzziah (Judah) and King Jeroboam (Israel) circa 760-750 B.C., which is the time frame of **2 Kings 14-15**.

6. In [Amos 1-2](#), God speaks words of judgment on eight different nations or regions, including Damascus (Syria), Gaza (Gaza Strip), Tyre (Lebanon), Edom, Ammon, and Moab (Jordan), Judah, (southern kingdom) and Israel (northern kingdom).
7. Pastor Gary said, “[[Amos 2:4-8](#)] is a very overwhelming picture for Amos. He [described] the spiritual condition of the people of [Judah and Israel]. He [spoke] about injustice in the courts, [idolatry, prostitution in the Temple, extortion, and dishonest gain].”
8. God tried to get the attention of the people!
 - a. [Amos 4:6-10](#) – “*‘Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities. And lack of bread in all your places; yet you have not returned to Me,’ Says the LORD. ‘I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me,’ says the LORD. ‘I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, your vineyards, your fig trees, and your olive trees, the locust devoured them; yet you have not returned to Me,’ says the LORD. ‘I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt; your young men I killed with a sword, along with your captive horses; I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils; yet you have not returned to Me.’ ”*
9. God offered a remedy for the people!
 - a. [Amos 5:14-15](#) – “***Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the LORD God of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken. Hate evil, love good; establish justice in the gate. It may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.***” (Emphasis added)
10. Pastor Gary said, “[Here’s] the problem. What happens if your definition of good and evil [isn’t] God’s? ... This [was] the problem plaguing Israel. They were self-determining people. They decided that they knew best [regarding] what was right and what was wrong. ... When that happened, they had no hope of being saved... [As long as the people weren’t on the ‘same page’ as God, there was no remedy for them.] ... [This] is the same problem facing [our] culture. Every single one of us must answer this question: Who or what is the objective moral standard? ... The only clear answer to [this question] is God.”
 - a. Government is not the objective moral standard.
 - b. Culture is not the objective moral standard.
 - c. We are not the objective moral standard.

11. God gave Amos three visions to help him communicate to the people of Israel their need to understand God's will and God's ways.
- a. **Amos 7:1-9** - *"Thus the LORD GOD showed me: behold, He formed locust swarms at the beginning of the late crop; indeed it was the late crop after the king's mowings. And so it was, when they had finished eating the grass of the land, that I said: 'O Lord GOD, forgive, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he is small!' So the LORD relented concerning this. 'It shall not be,' said the LORD. Thus the Lord God showed me: Behold, the LORD GOD called for conflict by fire, and it consumed the great deep and devoured the territory. Then I said: 'O Lord GOD, cease, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he is small!' So the LORD relented concerning this. 'This also shall not be,' said the LORD GOD. Thus He showed me: behold, the Lord stood on a wall made with a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. And the LORD said to me, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'A plumb line.' Then the Lord said: 'Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore. The high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste. I will rise with the sword against the house of Jeroboam.' "* (Emphasis added)
 - b. Pastor Gary said, "[God showed] Amos three visions. The first two are visions about impending judgment. The last one [was] a vision about undeserved mercy. ... [Amos] stood in the gap and prayed. Don't underestimate your prayer before God and how the Lord may in fact respond to your prayers and give mercy where otherwise there would have been consequences."

God Is The Plumb Line

12. **Amos 7:7-9** - *"Thus He showed me: behold, the Lord stood on a wall made with a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. And the LORD said to me, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'A plumb line.' Then the Lord said: 'Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore. The high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste. I will rise with the sword against the house of Jeroboam.' "*
13. Pastor Gary said, "[God was letting them know] that he was the plumb line and that they must decide that their lives [and values] were going to be measured against him. ... Everything that is not aligned with God is otherwise crooked. The only way we can be vertically true is to align ourselves with the plumb line [and God is the plumb line]! ... If the people would measure and align their lives according to [God's] standard, they would be the recipients of his mercy."

A Crooked Generation

14. Pastor Gary said, “The sad reality is that our culture wants to persuade you that God is not the objective moral standard. [People] determine what is right and wrong, which is why everything presently in our culture from gender identity to the definition of marriage to laws pertaining to the unborn have all been rewritten to suit the standard of man. It was not always so. Our founding document, the Declaration of Independence, stated that the very basis for common law in America was derived from ‘the laws of nature and nature’s God.’¹ [This phrase] is defined as ‘the will of God for his creation as revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures.’² ... Our Founding Fathers believed that God and the Bible served to be the plumb line for our nation and our nation’s laws. But, unfortunately, in recent years we have seen a swift erosion of that principle, and thus, our culture is not vertically true. ... Every generation from the beginning of time has tried to determine and define right and wrong apart from God. [Man’s] basic instinct is to have man at the center of his world. ... That’s why the Bible in the Old Testament and the New Testament... every generation that has tried to define right from wrong apart from God as the objective moral standard [is] a crooked generation.”

a. **Deuteronomy 32:3-5** - *“For I proclaim the name of the LORD: ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He. ‘They have corrupted themselves; they are not His children, because of their blemish: a perverse and crooked generation.’”* (Emphasis added)

15. God is calling Believers to be different!

a. **Philippians 2:14-16a** - *“Do all things without complaining and disputing, **that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life...**”* (Emphasis added)

b. **Colossians 2:8** - *“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”* (1984 NIV)

c. **Romans 12:2** - *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.”* (1984 NIV)

16. When Jesus Christ returns, he will make straight everything that is crooked about our culture.

¹ https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declare.asp

² https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/blackstone_intro.asp#2 - *Blackstone’s Commentaries on the Laws of England* - Volume 1, Section 2

- a. [Isaiah 40:4-5](#) - *“Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Amos 1:1-2, 2:4-8](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Provide an overview of the life of Amos. (See #1 through #6 above)
3. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about the spiritual bankruptcy in Amos’ day. (See #7 above)
4. Read and discuss [Amos 4:6-10](#) and [Amos 5:14-15](#). (See #8 and #9 above)
5. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when the Lord tried to get their attention.
6. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks about every person’s need to understand that God is the objective moral standard. (See #10 above)
7. Read and discuss [Amos 7:1-9](#). (See #11a above)
8. Spend time talking about personal and biblical examples of times concerning the powerful prayer of one person and God’s answer. (See #11b above)
9. Read Pastor Gary’s comments about God being the true plumb line for measuring and aligning one’s life. (See #12 and #13 above)
10. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks about what it means to live in a crooked generation. (See #14 above)
11. Read and discuss [Philippians 2:14-16a](#), [Colossians 2:8](#), and [Romans 12:2](#). (See #15 above)
12. How has the Lord empowered you by the Holy Spirit to live day-to-day in a *“crooked and perverse generation”*? (See #15 above)
13. Close your Bible study time by emphasizing the fact that we have the assurance from Scripture that Jesus will make everything straight! (See #16 above)

14. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)