

Seek God Before It's Too Late: Four Ways to Turn Back to Him

God doesn't warn us to push us away. He warns us because He loves us and knows where sin leads. The book of Amos delivers a message that is just as relevant today as it was to ancient Israel: seek God, turn from sin, and let your life reflect your worship.

Why Does God Allow Hard Warnings?

Sometimes God pokes your conscience. Maybe it's a convicting verse, a friend speaking truth, or a situation that makes you stop and think. That poke is not designed to annoy you. It's designed to get your attention before things get worse.

The prophet Amos was sent from the southern region of Judah to the northern nation of Israel with a hard message: you are treating people wrong, you are harboring sin, and God is warning you because He loves you. Deal with it now before it deals with you later.

God's warnings of judgment are not meant to push us away from Him. They are meant to turn us back to Him.

What Will Your Life Song Say?

The Funeral Song Amos Sang Over Israel

Amos opens chapter five with something unusual. He sings a funeral song over Israel before they have even fallen. He calls it a lamentation, a song of mourning, and he describes Israel as a virgin who has gone astray and now lies forsaken with no one to raise her up.

It raises a personal question worth sitting with: what will people say about your life at your funeral? Will it be a story of redemption, or a sad song of how sin wrecked everything?

The lyrics and tune of your life song are up to you today.

The Math Is Frightening

Amos backs up the funeral song with sobering statistics. In Amos 5:3, he writes: "For thus says the Lord God: The city that goes out by a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel." That is a 90% decimation. God tried over and over to get their attention, and they kept ignoring it.

Sin is like a small leak in your home. At first it's just a drip. Then there's a water stain. Then wood rot. Then it starts affecting the electricity. You didn't deal with it early, and now the whole house is in trouble. God says deal with the leak before it becomes a flood.

What Does It Mean to Seek God?

Seek Me and Live

In Amos 5:4, God gives a simple and powerful command: "Seek me and live." He then warns them not to turn to the idols at Bethel, Gilgal, or Beersheba. Those places once held deep spiritual significance. Bethel was where Jacob met God. Gilgal was where Israel rolled away the idols and surrendered to God. Beersheba was where the patriarchs had significant encounters with the Lord. But over time, sin had pushed God out of every one of those places.

The same thing can happen in our lives. A church service where God moved powerfully can become just a holiday obligation. Worship that was once full of heart can become lip service. Daily Bible reading can fade into weeks of silence. Sin causes us to drift from what was and settle for what is.

Jesus said something similar to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2: remember where you have fallen, repent, and do those first works. Go back to the simplicity of wanting to sit with God, love Him, read His word, and pray.

Three Things to Know About Seeking God

- Seeking means searching with intention. You don't find your lost keys by sitting in your chair and glancing around. You get up and look. Seek God the same way, with focus and purpose.
- Seeking requires letting go of idols. Whether it's work, relationships, material things, or pride, seeking God means releasing those things to grab hold of Him.
- Seeking leads to life. As Jeremiah 29:13 says: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." And as Isaiah 55:6 reminds us: "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on Him while He is near."

What Sins Does God Call Out in Amos 5?

Injustice Leading to Bitterness

Amos 5:7 describes leaders who turned justice into wormwood, a bitter poison. They were treating the poor unjustly and creating bitterness in the hearts of people. Bitterness has spoiled countless hearts, both publicly and privately. If you are bitter toward someone in authority over you, or if your actions have caused bitterness in those under you, that is something to bring before God.

You can get your own heart right and make amends where possible. But you cannot control another person's bitterness. Pray for them and leave the results in God's hands.

Callousness Leading to Indifference

In verses 8 and 9, Amos points to God's power over creation. He made the constellations. He controls day and night. He brings rain and judgment. The Lord is His name. Sin has a way of making us forget who God is. It makes us blind to His power and indifferent to what He wants for our lives. Those pet sins you think God doesn't notice? He does.

Defiance Leading to Rejection of Truth

Verse 10 describes a culture where anyone who spoke truth was hated and rejected. The gates of the city were supposed to be places where justice flowed outward to the people. Instead, they were calling good evil and evil good. When sin becomes normalized, righteousness becomes offensive. That pattern is not unique to ancient Israel.

Oppression Leading to Silence

Verses 11 through 13 describe leaders who taxed the poor excessively, took bribes, and built their own wealth on the backs of the vulnerable. Things got so bad that even the wise and prudent stayed silent because they feared the backlash. Sin doesn't just affect the individual. It eventually shapes the culture around that person.

What Happens When You Return to God?

Amos 5:14 says: "Seek good and not evil, that you may live, so the Lord God of hosts will be with you." When you seek God with a repentant heart, He promises good, He promises life, and He promises His presence. A right standing with God leads to right living with God. You gain discernment to hate evil and love good, and direction in how you treat others.

Isaiah 1:18-19 puts it plainly: "Come now, let us settle the matter, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land."

Why Religious Rituals Are Not Enough

In Amos 5:21-23, God says something that stops you in your tracks: "I hate, I despise your feast days; I do not savor your sacred assemblies." He rejected their sacrifices, their offerings, and even their worship songs. Not because those things were wrong in themselves, but because the hearts behind them were not right. It was hypocrisy dressed up as religion.

Isaiah 29:13 echoes this: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

The question to ask yourself is whether you are giving God lip service and leftovers, or your first fruits and your whole heart.

What Does a Life That Matches Your Worship Look Like?

Amos 5:24 gives the answer: "But let justice run down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream." God doesn't want justice to be occasional. He wants it to be the norm. He doesn't want righteousness to show up here and there. He wants it flowing out of every life that belongs to Him.

God doesn't want your Sunday worship to stop Monday morning. When your heart is right, your worship is right, and the people around you are blessed because of it. When your heart is off, worship becomes ritual, and neither God nor the people around you are blessed.

Life Application

This week, identify one area of your life where you have been drifting. Maybe it's a habit you've been excusing, a bitterness you've been holding onto, or a spiritual discipline that has quietly faded. Take one concrete step to return to God in that area. Repent, reach back toward Him, and let your daily life reflect what you say you believe on Sunday.

Ask yourself these questions as you reflect:

- Is there a sin or idol in my life that God has been poking me about, and have I been ignoring it?
- Am I going through religious motions without bringing my heart to God?
- Is there bitterness, indifference, or defiance in my heart that I need to repent of?
- What would it look like for justice and righteousness to flow out of my life this week in how I treat others?

Seeking God is not complicated. It starts with honesty before Him, letting go of what has replaced Him, and returning to the simplicity of wanting to know Him. As He said through Amos: "Seek me and live."