

Amos

1:1 & 7:10-17

Introduction

Both *secular* and *spiritual* sources are lately encouraging you to go beyond the borders of your personal “comfort zone.”

1. Among secular sources the current cliché is “Think outside the box.” I hear it all the time. You’re encouraged to look at problems and possibilities in a whole new manner in order to go beyond traditional solutions.
2. Christians have adopted this same cliché but put a spiritual spin on it. They are all reading the immensely popular little book, *The Prayer of Jabez*, by Bruce Wilkinson. Regardless your opinion of the book, it analyzes the words of Jabez, an Old Testament character, who prayed, “Enlarge my territory.” It is the spiritual counterpart to “think outside the box.”

If the popularity of *The Prayer of Jabez* is any indication, then Christians do seem to want to think outside the box, to enlarge their territory, and go beyond their personal comfort zone to serve God.

If **you** are among those who senses the urgency to be doing more to serve the Lord, you will appreciate Amos, the author of the Book of Amos, the third book of the Minor Prophets. Amos was not a prophet or a priest; he wasn’t in the full-time service of God. He was a “sheepbreeder” and a “tender of sycamore fruit.” He lived in the insignificant rural community of Tekoa, far from the important centers of spiritual life in Israel and Judah. In other words, **he was just like you and I!** And just like you and I, God had a calling upon his life to serve – a calling that moved Amos out of his personal comfort zone to serve the Lord.

We will begin our study of the Book of Amos with a study of Amos himself. His book contains biographical information in the opening verse and in verses ten through seventeen of chapter seven. These few verses will be our text, and we will organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Amos Inspires You To Overcome Any Obstacles To

Serving God, and #2 Amos Inspires You To Overlook Any Objections To Serving God.

#1 Amos Inspires You To Overcome Any Obstacles To Serving God (1:1)

I should give you some background to the Book of Amos as we begin. It was the eighth century BC. God's chosen people, the Jews, were divided into two kingdoms: Israel to the North and Judah to the South. Both kingdoms were enjoying a time of prosperity and security. Interest in religion was popular. The citizens of Israel worshipped at Bethel, where King Jeroboam had set up a chapel and appointed a priest. Beneath this secure and prosperous surface, however, the nation was corrupting. Making money was more important than serving God; the rich exploited the poor; the judicial system was evil; injustices were common.

Amos was from Tekoa, a city in Judah. He was called by God to go to Israel, to the royal chapel at Bethel, and prophesy. Chapters one through chapter six contain his messages of warning against six Gentile nations and both of the kingdoms of the Jews. Beginning in chapter seven, Amos records a series of visions of the future which he shared. The final vision is of the glorious future kingdom of Israel on earth in the Day of the Lord.

We will be concentrating on Amos himself in this first study. As we've already seen, Amos was what we would call a "lay-person" who lived and worked in an insignificant rural farming community. **You fit that description!** Looking at Amos can inspire you to think outside your box and enlarge your territory.

In the opening verse of the book you read,

Amos 1:1 The words of Amos, who was among the sheepbreeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Things were going great in Israel and Judah. Judah was prospering in the South under the reign of King Uzziah. In the North, King Jeroboam reigned for forty-one years and was the most successful

king of Israel. Yet in just two years a great and notable earthquake would shake things up. In the mean time, God would shake things up spiritually by sending Amos to prophesy at Bethel in Israel.

That sounds exciting! I suggest to you that Amos had first to overcome certain common obstacles to serving God – the same obstacles that you and I must overcome.

Amos had his own problems. I say this because names had meaning in Bible times, and the name “Amos” means *burden*. Now, you might think of his name in a positive light and say that he had a *burden* to share God’s truth, a *burden* to reach the lost. While that might be true, it’s more likely that, when he was born, he was seen as a **burden** to his family for some undisclosed reason.

The Book of Genesis records the naming of Benjamin by his mother and father. When Benjamin was born his mother, Rachel, died shortly thereafter. She named the boy “Ben-oni,” meaning *son of sorrow*. His father, Jacob, changed his name to “Benjamin,” *son of my right hand* (Genesis 35:18). Names and their meanings were far more significant than they are today and they do give you insight into the person.

“Amos” was born; **“Burden” was born!** We don’t know what they were, but he had problems of his own.

People often see their problems as obstacles to serving God. If your problems are obstacles to serving God, **then overcome them!** In First John 5:5 you read,

1 John 5:5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Then, eight times in the Revelation of Jesus Christ Christians are exhorted to be “overcomers.” The wonderful thing about the Christian life is that the same Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead lives in you. The things God tells you to do, you are able to do. You **can** overcome your problems – whatever they may be.

Amos had his own priorities. According to verse one he was a “sheepbreeder.” In chapter seven you learn that he also was a

“tender of sycamore fruit.” He was a busy guy. The sheep and the sycamore both demanded a lot from him. Yet God didn’t wait to call him into service until Amos was retired and had lots of free time. It was when he was at his busiest, holding down two jobs, that He called him.

Busy lives can present real obstacles to serving God. And there is always plenty to keep you busy, even if you try to keep things simple. God calls busy people. Again the answer is the indwelling Spirit of God. In Ephesians 5:15 you read,

Ephesians 5:15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

“Circumspectly” is the word we translate *circumference*. It means to walk in every direction at the same time. How? In Ephesians 5:18 you are told to “be filled with the Spirit.”

Amos had problems and priorities. He may also have had doubts. He was described in verse one as being “**among** the sheepbreeders of Tekoa.” There were others; why not send one of them to serve the Lord? Time after time in Scripture God calls those who express doubts; Moses and Gideon come to mind. Your doubts that God can use you are another obstacle. They, too, are overcome by the Spirit of God Who dwells within you to empower you in your service.

Finally, Amos had disadvantages. He had no formal training, yet was sent to the center of religious life to face the professional clergy. He was from Tekoa, a nothing little village on the way to nowhere. He was a country bumpkin going to the big city with no degrees or credentials. He had no resume or experience.

He was in good company! You read in First Corinthians 1:26-29,

1 Corinthians 1:26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*.

1 Corinthians 1:27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

1 Corinthians 1:28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

1 Corinthians 1:29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

Whatever **your** obstacles, God calls upon you to overcome them. Don’t allow obstacles to create borders that don’t exist. *Your borders*

are already enlarged! You have no borders, but are called upon to serve the Lord wherever you find yourself. **You** are God's minister in your home, in your neighborhood, at work, at school.

#2 Amos Inspires You To Overlook Any Objections To Serving God (7:10-17)

There is a biographical account of Amos' visit to Bethel in chapter seven, verses ten through seventeen.

Amos 7:10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words.

Amos 7:11 For thus Amos has said: 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land.'"

Amos 7:12 Then Amaziah said to Amos: "Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy.

Amos 7:13 But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it *is* the king's sanctuary, and it *is* the royal residence."

Again, a little background will be helpful. The Northern kingdom of Israel had no access to the Temple at Jerusalem. King Jeroboam set-up centers of worship at Beersheba, Gilgal, and Bethel. These were not authorized by God and were an abomination to Him. Amaziah was the state-appointed priest in Bethel. When Amos came to Bethel, Amaziah came against him by a series of objections to his serving the Lord. These are the same common objections that you face in your serving the Lord.

Amaziah objected to the king, "Amos has conspired against you..." We make fun of people who see a conspiracy in everything; or at least we think they are odd and peculiar. Amaziah said that Amos was a conspirator in this sense, an odd, peculiar person. If you serve the Lord, people will say these kinds of things about you.

Guess what? You **are** odd and peculiar! You're a stranger on this earth, a pilgrim, a wanderer. You understand that there **is** a vast spiritual conspiracy that holds men in unbelief. Be a Jesus freak.

Amaziah objected to the king, "the land is not able to bear [Amos'] words..." Amos' messages were of judgment. The people were content to listen when he spoke out against the Gentiles... But when

he spoke out against God's people, no one wanted to hear what Amos had to say. They wanted to be left alone to enjoy their peace and prosperity, and to go through the motions of formal religion.

People may not want to hear you, either. Don't let it bother you! Expect their opposition and overlook their objections for their own sake.

Amaziah objected to the king, "For thus Amos has said: 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land.'"

If you go back and read verse nine you find that this is not exactly what Amos said. Amaziah was misquoting and misrepresenting Amos to the king. Amos' message was being misunderstood.

No one likes to be misquoted, misrepresented, or misunderstood. *You will be!* You need to overlook these things and give the Gospel as simply as you can.

Amaziah objected to Amos, "'Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy.'" Amaziah was putting Amos in his place. Amos was not a full-time, professional minister. He worked for a living in Judah. He should stay put and know his place.

We live in a society that holds professionals in awe. They are the experts. What could you know as an untrained lay person? What could I know as an uneducated minister? Again, learn to overlook this objection. It's not *what* you know that is important, it's Who you know!

Amaziah objected to Amos, "never again prophesy at Bethel, for it *is* the king's sanctuary, and it *is* the royal residence." The objection here was that Amos had no authority from the king to prophesy. Well, of course he had authority; not from King Jeroboam, but from King Jesus! When you share the Word of God, you do so as Christ's ambassadors on earth and with His authority. You declare with authority that those who receive Jesus Christ as Savior will have their sins forgiven; and you declare with authority that those who reject Jesus Christ as Savior will have their sins retained.

Amos answered Amaziah's objections:

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.

Amos 7:15 Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel.'

Amos didn't defend himself. He didn't list any special accomplishments. He simply gloried in the Lord. If the Lord wanted to send a sheepbreeder and tender of sycamore fruit to speak to Israel, that was the Lord's business.

Amos also had boldness in the Lord:

Amos 7:16 Now therefore, hear the word of the LORD: You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not spout against the house of Isaac.'

Amos 7:17 "Therefore thus says the LORD: 'Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; your land shall be divided by *survey* line; you shall die in a defiled land; and Israel shall surely be led away captive from his own land.'

Some see in this a personal prophesy to Amaziah, and that is partly true. It was also generally true of the whole Northern kingdom of Israel. When the Assyrians came, they did make the women harlots; children were killed; Jews were led away captive.

Regardless the objections, Amos overlooked them and served his Lord with boldness.

Conclusion

There is an important difference between you and Amos. Amos was a sheepbreeder and tender of sycamore fruit who was suddenly called by God into service. He answered God's call and, as far as we can tell, returned to his rural life after he was through prophesying.

You and I are not *suddenly* called by God into service; we are *constantly* called by God into service!

1. Every believer is given Christ's Great Commission to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." The verb "go" in the Great Commission is *as you are going*. It is not necessarily a command to go out into a mission field; it is a reminder that

- earth itself is the mission field and as you are going through your life you are the missionary to those around you.
2. The apostle Peter said, “If **anyone** speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If **anyone** ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies...” (1Peter 4:11).

As soon as you become born-again, you are *already* outside of the box; your territory has *already* been enlarged.

Overcome the obstacles; overlook the objections.