

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: AMOS 6:1-14**

To understand how God feels about pride and complacency.

## “Twice the Pride, Double the Fall”

In 2005, the final installment of the so-called prequel trilogy of Star Wars hit the theaters. Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith saw the final fall of Anakin Skywalker and his rise as the harrowing Darth Vader. The movie shows the seemingly small and isolated decisions of Anakin that all lead him to his final demise. One of these moments comes in the beginning of the movie when he and his mentor, Obi-Wan Kenobi, face for a second time the Sith Lord Darth Tyranus, or better known as Count Dooku. The first duel led did not go well for Anakin, however, at this point in the story he had grown considerably in strength and knowledge of the Force. As he approaches Dooku, a conversation between the two ensues:

Count Dooku: “I’ve been looking forward to this.”

Anakin: “My powers have doubled since the last time we met, Count.”

Count Dooku: “Good. *Twice the pride, double the fall.*”

Pride does have a way of almost guaranteeing our demise. The Scriptures warn us of the dangers of pride regularly. Proverbs 16:18 reads, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” In Amos chapter 6, God says, “I abhor the pride of Jacob and hate his strongholds, and I will deliver up the city and all that is in it” (Amos 6:8). In fact, one of the things we learn from Amos is that pride is judged against harshly by God.

## You’ll Become Just Like Them

Verses 1 through 3 begin with a cry out against the leaders of Israel who, in their own self-evaluation, have supreme confidence in their ability to defend themselves from other nations. They are, “at ease,” and, “feel secure,” (Amos 6:1). Amos asks them to go to three neighboring city-states in verse 2. He likely doesn’t intend

for them to actually travel, but rather, to go with their imaginations. The first that are listed, Calneh and Hamath, were both Syrian city-states that were under the control of Israel. They had been beaten and captured and were allowed to continue as Syrian developments, but were under the control of the northern kingdom. Gath was a Philistine city-state under the control of Judah, very similar to the first two mentioned. Amos asks, “Are you better than these kingdoms?” (Amos 6:2) The question is meant to make them think deeply about their current status: Could what happened to those three city-states also happen to them? Of course, the answer to this question is clearly understood. Because Israel continued to, “put far away the day of disaster” (Amos 6:3), they have invited this reign of terror upon themselves.

## Complacency Kills

Verses 4 through 7 unveils what awaits those who have lived with excessive comfort while complacently ignoring the injustices surrounding them. These are people who, “lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches” (Amos 6:4), “sing idle songs to the sound of the harp” (Amos 6:5), and, “drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils” (Amos 6:6). All of these actions indicate a level of wealth as well. Ivory beds were beds with an ivory inlay that were a work of Phoenician craftsmanship from Samaria. The idea of singing to the harp implies a lack of manual labor. The consumption of wine was only for those privileged enough to afford it.

All of these details highlight the lavish lifestyles of those in the northern kingdom, all the while turning a blind eye to injustice and in some cases even being paid to ignore it (Amos 5:16-17). These privileges were also likely financed by direct injustices against the lower classes of people (Amos 2:6-8). These people are akin to those that James describes in James 5:5: “You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.” Complacency is harmful because it prevents someone from speaking up when they see injustice being done, and as is the case here, the harm ultimately comes back on themselves. Proverbs 1:32 says, “the complacency of fools destroys them.” The people of Israel, because of their foolish complacency towards the various sins against others, now face a brutal and almost complete destruction.

God warns them that 1/10 of them is all that will remain after judgment (Amos 6:9-10). The one in ten should not be taken literally. Verse 9 begins with the conditional and hypothetical “if” (אִם), indicating that this is figurative speech. The point is that almost all of them will be wiped out in the pending attack. The term “house” in verse 9 should also not be taken as merely a physical house, but more than likely also serves to designate a family unit, including extended members as well. This is reinforced in verse 11, with the terms, “great house,” and, “little house.” “Great house” could refer to a royal family or families of immense wealth, while, “little houses” might be your more average family units. The house terminology may be a double entendre; the physical houses will be shattered in war, and the family units will be reduced to almost nothing.

## The Absurdity of Sin

Verse 12 poses two seemingly ridiculous questions, both of which anticipate a negative response. The first question is, “Do horses run on rocky crags?” No one of sound mind and judgment would run horses in an environment like this. The second question can be interpreted in two ways, but both are equally preposterous. The question translated literally is, “Does he plow with oxen?” In the first interpretation, it could mean to be taken as, “Does one plow with oxen (in the same rocky crags)?” The answer would obviously be *no*. However, the words translated “with oxen” are actually one word in Hebrew, “בַּקָּרִים”. They can also be divided into two

words, “בִּקְרֹ” and “ים” meaning literally, “with oxen the sea.” Then the question becomes, “Does one plow the sea with oxen?” Again, this is an absurd question that is answered with an obvious *no*.

The ancient audience would have understood both of these actions to be mind-numbingly absurd, and yet what Israel had done (“turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness”) was equally absurd. The usage of the word, “wormwood” may be reminiscent to some. *Wormwood* is incidentally the name of the junior demon in C. S. Lewis’ classic book *The Screwtape Letters*. Wormwood is also the name of, “a great star” that falls from heaven in Revelation 8:11. It is a word in Hebrew (לַעֲנָה) that means, “gall,” or perhaps, “bitterness in taste or bitterness as a concept.”

The final blow in chapter 6 comes in the last verse: “For behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel,” declares the LORD, the God of hosts; “and they shall oppress you from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of the Arabah.” The judgment will indeed come against them in the form of another nation, and their military success against them will be total and complete. The boundaries given, “Lebo-hamath” and, “the Brook of the Arabah” are geographically significant. *Lebo-hamath* is the northern-most boundary of Israel, and *the Brook of Arabah* forms the southern-most boundary. There will be, in other words, no place to go in Israel where judgment will not find them.

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Amos 6:1. Who are the “woes” being directed toward? Where do those who feel secure reside?

---



---

2. Read Amos 6:2-3. What three areas are listed in verse 2? What is their significance (Hint: See above notes)? What does it mean to, “put far away the day of disaster?” What has that brought near?

---



---

### Day Two

1. Read Amos 6:4-6. What “lavish” things are listed in these verses that the northerners were indulging in? While they were living with such comforts, what did they notably not do?

---



---

2. Read Amos 6:7. Because they did not, “grieve over the ruin of Joseph,” what will they suffer as a result?

---



---

### Day Three

1. Read Amos 6:8. How is God described in this verse? What does God abhor? What does He hate? What will He do as a result of these things?

---



---

2. Read Amos 6:9. In your own words, what does this verse mean?

---

---

### Day Four

1. Read Amos 6:10. In your own words, describe what is happening in this verse.

---

---

2. Read Amos 6:11-14. What two absurd questions are asked? What are these two absurdities compared to? What is wormwood? Where is Lebo-hamath and the Brook of the Arabah?

---

---

## Week 7 Discussion: Pride

It's easy to fall into the trap of pride. Everyone deals with it to some degree. Because the Scripture talks so much about the dangers of pride, it's important for us as believers to be in touch with areas in our lives where pride might become an issue. As a group, talk about how both pride and complacency affects you, and what you can do to begin addressing it.

1. Icebreaker: What is one area in your life where you struggle with pride?
2. Do you consider yourself a prideful person? Why or why not?
3. Would other people consider you to be a prideful person? Why or why not?
4. Who all suffers when you are complacent towards injustice done to another person?
5. Read Philippians 2:3. How can you practically begin living this verse out starting today?
6. Read James 4:6. What does God do to the prideful? Now, read James 4:10. What does God do to those who are humble?

## Takeaways:

1. God abhors pride and brings judgment against Israel as a result of it.
2. Complacency not only harms the one being neglected, but ultimately harms the complacent one because God disciplines complacency.

### *PRAYER REQUESTS:*