

AMOS

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 119:1-8

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Amos 7

AMOS 7:10-17

¹⁰ Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: “Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. ¹¹ For this is what Amos is saying:

“Jeroboam will die by the sword,
and Israel will surely go into exile,
away from their native land.”

¹² Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. ¹³ Don’t prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king’s sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.”

¹⁴ Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. ¹⁵ But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’ ¹⁶ Now then, hear the word of the LORD. You say,

“Do not prophesy against Israel,
and stop preaching against the descendants of Isaac.’

¹⁷ “Therefore this is what the LORD says:

“Your wife will become a prostitute in the city,
and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword.

Your land will be measured and divided up,
and you yourself will die in a pagan country.
And Israel will surely go into exile,
away from their native land.”

KEY VERSES

Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”—Amos 7:14, 15

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize the nature of the resistance to Amos’s message and his response to that resistance.
2. Compare and contrast that resistance with modern resistance to the gospel.



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3. Write a short “letter to the editor” that contrasts a biblical view of a current controversy with the prevailing secular view.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. What’s My Profession?
- B. Lesson Background: Israel in General
- C. Lesson Background: Bethel in Particular

I. Professional Priest ([Amos 7:10-13](#))

- A. Report to the King ([vv. 10, 11](#))
- B. Rebuke for the Prophet ([vv. 12, 13](#))

Outsiders

II. Professing Prophet ([Amos 7:14-17](#))

- A. Source of Authority ([vv. 14-16](#))
- B. Essence of the Message ([v. 17](#))

Credentials

Conclusion

- A. True to the Call
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

Introduction

A. What’s My Profession?

A young man in seminary was very talented. So talented that he believed that it was only fair that he offer his services as a minister of the gospel to the highest bidder. He spent time poring over data to discover which denomination offered the highest average salary. He was more than willing to tailor his doctrine to the beliefs of those willing to pay him for it!

In contrast, we all know individuals who serve faithfully in full-time ministry as a vocation. There is certainly nothing wrong with a preacher’s being paid a living wage as compensation for his work ([1 Corinthians 9:7-14](#)). There need be no conflict between earning a living and being an obedient servant of God. Although we would hope that the attitude of the man above is rare, those who choose vocational ministry struggle with a difficult question: *Is there a difference between a professing and a professional follower of Christ?*

During his task of proclaiming judgment, the prophet Amos was confronted by a man who was paid for being a priest but who did not profess God’s truth faithfully. Their conflict is insightful.

B. Lesson Background: Israel in General

Amos was one of the many prophets whom God raised up during the period of the divided monarchy (931-722 BC) in Old Testament history. His ministry took place during the reigns of Uzziah as king of Judah and Jeroboam as king of Israel ([Amos 1:1](#)). Commentators generally refer to this Jeroboam as Jeroboam II to distinguish him from the Jeroboam who was the first king of northern Israel after the nation divided.

Both Uzziah and Jeroboam II experienced lengthy reigns: Uzziah (also known as Azariah) from 792 to 740 BC and Jeroboam from 793 to 753 BC (dates are approximate). Spiritually, however, the kings were quite different. The Scriptures record that Uzziah “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord” ([2 Chronicles 26:4](#); an exception being the incident noted in [26:16-21](#)). Jeroboam, by contrast, “did evil in the eyes of the Lord” ([2 Kings 14:24](#)).

In fact, no kings of the northern nation of Israel were considered good or godly. This is an important reason the northern kingdom fell under God’s judgment much sooner than did the southern kingdom of Judah. Prophets like Amos came on the scene to sound the alarm and warn of coming judgment. Many Bible students date the start of his ministry around 755 BC, toward the conclusions of the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam.

Amos himself seemed an unlikely candidate for the prophetic task. He was a simple shepherd and fruit farmer from a village in Judah ([Amos 7:14](#), part of today’s text), but God sent him to shepherd his wayward people of northern Israel. In the warnings prior to today’s text, Amos prophesied God’s condemnation of various locations around Israel, including the southern kingdom of Judah ([1:3-2:5](#)). That was followed by a long, scathing indictment of Israel. Injustice was rampant there, and God intended to correct that problem ([4:1](#); [5:7](#), [10-12](#); etc.).

C. Lesson Background: Bethel in Particular

A major factor in the spiritual decline of northern Israel was the idolatry encouraged by Jeroboam I when he set up golden calves to be worshipped in the towns of Bethel and Dan. He did so to keep his residents of the northern kingdom from traveling to Jerusalem, worshipping at the temple, and reaffirming their allegiance to the house of David (1 Kings 12:26-30).

HOW TO SAY IT

Ahab *Ay-hab*.
 Amaziah *Am-uh-zye-uh*.
 Azariah *Az-uh-rye-uh*.
 Amos *Ay-mus*.
 Assyrians *Uh-sear-e-unz*.
 Bethel *Beth-ul*.
 Elijah *Ee-lye-juh*.
 Elisha *Ee-lye-shuh*.
 Ezekiel *Ee-zeek-ee-ul* or *Ee-zeek-yul*.
 Jeroboam *Jair-uh-boe-um*.
 Mosaic *Mo-zay-ik*.
 Rehoboam *Ree-huh-boe-um*.
 Samaria *Suh-mare-ee-uh*.
 Uzziah *Uh-zye-uh*.
 Zion *Zi-un*.

Bethel was still quite active as a pagan shrine in Amos's day, nearly 200 years later (Amos 3:14; 7:13). The spiritual danger posed by that center of idolatry, only 11 miles due north of Jerusalem, was immense. The danger was underlined by the fact of Bethel's association by reputation with Gilgal, another center of idolatry (4:4; 5:5). The prophet Hosea mocks Bethel (which means "house of God") by referring to it as *Beth Aven* (which means "house of wickedness"), associating it with Gilgal in the process (Hosea 4:15).

Bethel is mentioned by name seven times in the book of Amos. The text of today's lesson features the last two of those seven.

I. Professional Priest

(Amos 7:10-13)

A. Report to the King (vv. 10, 11)

10a. Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: "Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel."

Amaziah the priest is no servant of God and neither is *Jeroboam king of Israel*. The vested interest those two men share is the town of *Bethel*, described by Amaziah as "the king's sanctuary" and "the temple of the kingdom," the town where Amos is preaching (Amos 7:13, below; also see the Lesson Background). Should that which Amos prophesies about the town and its altars come to pass, both king and priest will be out of a job (Amos 3:14; 5:5, 6; compare John 11:48).

So Amaziah sends word to Jeroboam of a conspiracy against him, a conspiracy fomented by Amos. It is noteworthy that Amaziah sends this report only after Amos prophesies against Jeroboam by name in Amos 7:9.

10b. "The land cannot bear all his words."

This part of the report points to the effectiveness of Amos's message. He is not compromising the Lord's righteous standards or watering down his content just to curry favor with leaders such as Jeroboam and Amaziah. He is definitely getting people's attention! But for someone like Amaziah, Amos is nothing but a troublemaker (compare the label attached to the prophet Elijah by wicked King Ahab in 1 Kings 18:17).

11. "For this is what Amos is saying:

**'Jeroboam will die by the sword,
 and Israel will surely go into exile,
 away from their native land.'**

One should note that Amaziah's quotation of Amos begins with *this is what Amos is saying*. The usual way to preface a prophet's message is with the phrase "the Lord says" or some variation of it (that is how Amos responds to Amaziah in verses 16 and 17, below). Clearly, Amaziah

sees nothing authoritative in Amos's message; he's just spouting his own words, not the Lord's.

Though Amos's message has little to say about Jeroboam specifically, the prophet *does* have much to say about Israel's going *into exile, away from their native land* ([Amos 3:12](#); [5:27](#); [6:7, 8](#); [7:17](#); [9:4](#)). Sadly, that's just what happens. The Assyrians will conquer Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, as the prophecy is fulfilled ([2 Kings 17](#)).

What Do You Think?

How do we know when our message should primarily be one of dire warning?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Regarding nations and their policies

Regarding other religions

Regarding individual people

B. Rebuke for the Prophet ([vv. 12, 13](#))

¹² Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there.

Amaziah follows his message to the king with a blunt directive to Amos: Go home! He is from *the land of Judah*, and the northern kingdom of Israel has no use for this interloper. If Amos wants to make people's lives miserable, then let him do it to his own countrymen!

To *earn your bread* in Judah may imply that Amos will be fed or paid better in his homeland than he currently is in the northern kingdom. Perhaps Amaziah believes that prophets are interested in nothing more than earning a livelihood.

Seer was the term commonly used before the designation *prophet* replaced it ([1 Samuel 9:9](#)). The older term reflects how a prophet is empowered by the Lord to “see” what others cannot, whether in a spiritual sense or by means of visions. In Amos's case, Amaziah seems to use the term *seer* sarcastically; else he would not demand that Amos stop prophesying in northern Israel.

What Do You Think?

How should we react when others try to restrict our message?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

When access to an audience is restricted

When topics on which we may speak are restricted

When threats are expressed or implied

OUTSIDERS

While traveling, my husband and I stopped at a store. Not finding what we wanted, we approached a woman in the parking lot and asked if a Walmart was nearby. She looked at us for a moment before loudly proclaiming, “You don't know where Walmart is?” She started laughing.

“Hey, Joann! They don't know where Walmart is!” she called to her companion. The women then got the attention of someone else they knew across the parking lot. “Hey, Charlie!” they hollered. “They don't know where Walmart is!” All three laughed.

At that point, we began to back away from these strangers who were taking such joy in our lack of knowledge. Finally one woman informed us that Walmart was just around the corner, very easy to find.

Outsiders draw attention, often in a negative way. By definition, outsiders do not share the common, personal history of the insiders—those of the immediate culture. The locals may treat outsiders dismissively simply because of their outsider status. Viewing Amos as a threat, Amaziah had a choice to make: neutralize the threat either by discrediting the message or by discrediting the messenger. Amaziah chose the latter path, his tactic being an attack on Amos's outsider status. When we hear a person/message we don't like—whether that message be spiritual or secular in nature—do we do the same? Examples in [Numbers 23](#); [Jonah 3](#); and [Mark 9:38-41](#) caution us in that regard. —L. M. W.

¹³ “Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.”

Amos's preaching is especially unwelcome *at Bethel*, which implies his current location. The word translated *sanctuary* can also be found elsewhere (example: [Ezekiel 45:3](#)), while the word translated *temple* is commonly rendered *house* when referring to a dwelling place of either God or people (examples: [Zechariah 14:20](#) and [13:6](#), respectively). Taken together, these may imply that King Jeroboam II has a residence in Bethel in addition to the one he would have in the capital city of Samaria (compare [1 Kings 16:23, 24](#); [22:37](#); [Amos 3:15](#)). Alternatively, this may be just Amaziah's way of emphasizing that Bethel is Jeroboam's turf. Either way, Amos is viewed as having no business whatsoever trespassing on the king's domain.

But Amos cares nothing about the reactions or feelings of any earthly authority who opposes him. The prophet answers to a far greater king,

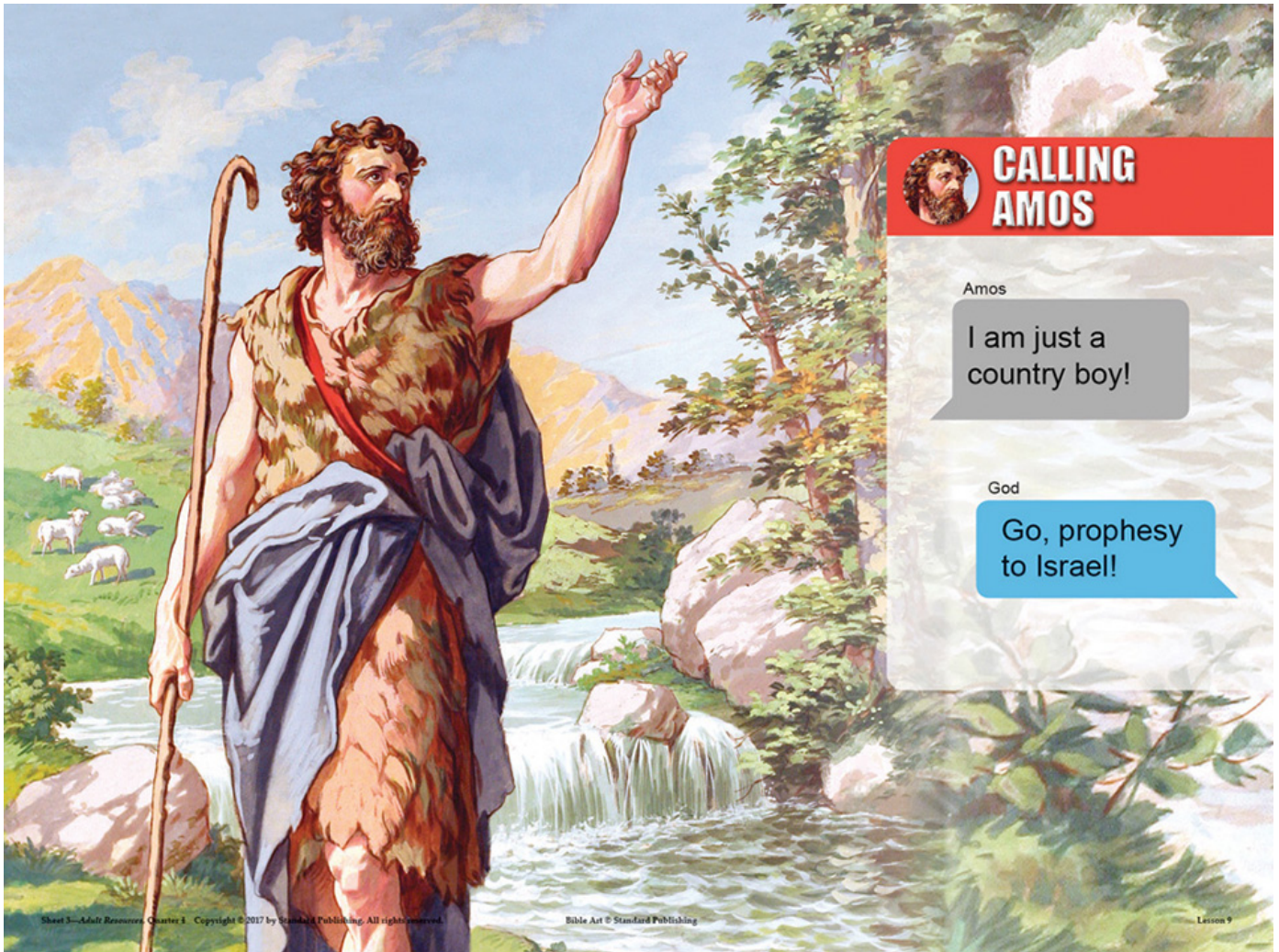
the one who resides in a heavenly sanctuary. His words and actions will be reflected centuries later by the apostle Peter when he squares off with the religious leadership in Jerusalem: “We must obey God rather than human beings!” ([Acts 5:29](#)). Decades earlier, King Jeroboam I had been confronted by an anonymous man of God from Judah who came to Bethel while the king was offering a sacrifice on the altar he had built ([1 Kings 13:1-4](#)). Now King Jeroboam II is being challenged by another man of God from Judah.

II. Professing Prophet

([AMOS 7:14-17](#))

A. Source of Authority ([vv. 14-16](#))

¹⁴ Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees.



Visual for Lesson 9. Point to this visual as you ask, “How do you relate the calls of Jesus’ disciples in [Mark 1:16, 17](#) and of Amos to your own life?”

The response by Amos may be understood one of two ways. First, he may simply be stating a fact of heredity: there is nothing about his earthly lineage that suggests he should be a prophet. No one in his family has ever held that responsibility.

The second possibility turns on the meaning of the phrase *son of a prophet*, since it may refer to the group known as “the sons of the prophets.” Its members appear to have been undergoing training of some kind in order to be ready for the Lord’s call to serve him in that way. The prophet Elisha, whose ministry ended about a half century before Amos’s began, had frequent contact with this group ([2 Kings 2:1-15; 4:1, 38; 6:1, 2; 9:1](#)).

If the second of the two possibilities is intended by Amos, then he is openly admitting that he has none of the credentials or official training

of other prophets. That would help explain at least some of Amaziah's contempt. Like Peter and John, Amos may be seen as "unschooled" and "ordinary" ([Acts 4:13](#)). But also like them, Amos has the one credential that matters most: the Lord's calling.

15. "But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'

Amos twice highlights the source of his calling and prophetic authority: the Lord. Like Moses and David, who also tended flocks ([Exodus 3:1](#); [1 Samuel 16:11-13](#)), Amos has been called to a ministry of shepherding people (compare [Psalms 77:20](#); [78:70-72](#); [Isaiah 63:11](#)). Amos's response to Amaziah's intimidation therefore yields not an inch of ground. The prophet from Judah answers to no earthly priest or king—only to the Lord God who took him from his accustomed life on the farm to be a proclaimer of his Word.

What Do You Think?

What are some deciding factors when considering a change in vocation?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

If changing from secular to ministerial

If changing from ministerial to secular

CREDENTIALS

In the winter of 2015, a 17-year-old boy wandered the halls of a medical center in West Palm Beach, Florida. He wore a white lab coat with the hospital's logo, carried a stethoscope, and even donned a surgical mask at times. People working in the center assumed he was a doctor. They assumed wrongly; he had no medical credentials.

This type of thing happens more often than one would like to think. A few years earlier, another 17-year-old boy impersonated a doctor at a different medical center in Florida. For five days, he examined patients, provided care, and accessed patient information. Suspicions grew as he repeatedly attempted to gain access to restricted areas. He was caught when staff in the Emergency Department reported him.

Credentials were important in antiquity too. And the only valid "accrediting agency" for prophetic work was God. The credentials for Amos came straight from him. Some who would lead us astray today may appear outwardly well qualified, yet still be "ferocious wolves" on the inside ([Matthew 7:15](#)). Amos's experience in evaluating sycamore-figs may have helped him in examining spiritual fruit. That is a quality we are to have as well. See [Matthew 7:16-20](#). —L. M. W.

16. "Now then, hear the word of the LORD. You say,

**'Do not prophesy against Israel,
and stop preaching against the descendants of Isaac.'**

Amos continues his rebuttal by quoting Amaziah's demand back to him. A purpose in doing so is to make certain that Amaziah realizes he has been heard loud and clear. Amos is leaving himself no room to escape persecution by later claiming he misunderstood Amaziah's directive.

Double meanings in one language are often very difficult to translate smoothly, and that is the case with the demand *stop preaching*. Elsewhere the underlying Hebrew speaks of rain as it drops or pours down ([Judges 5:4](#); [Psalm 68:8](#)). The same Hebrew is rendered "prophesy" and "prophet[s]" sarcastically in [Micah 2:6, 11](#), and that may be the intent here as Amaziah speaks mockingly of Amos as one who speaks drivel. By repeating it back to Amaziah, Amos is establishing part of the basis for his prophecy of judgment in the verse to follow.

Of interest is the rare expression *descendants of Isaac* (only here in the Old Testament) with "high places of Isaac" in [Amos 7:9](#), rather than "descendants of Jacob" (21 times) or "people of Israel" (over 100 times). As a bit of conjecture, perhaps Amos is changing the word Amaziah actually utters in order to inject irony: the meaning of the word *Isaac* is "to laugh" ([Genesis 18:11-15](#); [21:3](#)), and the people of the northern kingdom who are laughing it up at the moment ([Amos 6:1, 4-6](#)) will experience the exact opposite soon enough.

What Do You Think?

What are some steps to take when our message is rejected?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

When our motives are misrepresented

When our words are misquoted

When our character is questioned

Other

B. Essence of the Message (v. 17)

17a. "Therefore this is what the LORD says:

**‘Your wife will become a prostitute in the city,
and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword.**

The consequences of attempting to silence a prophet of the Lord are severe indeed! Since the word *your* (twice) is singular, this prophecy is aimed at Amaziah’s family. What could be more agonizing to a husband and father than to watch his family members suffer what is prophesied here? Amos has already prophesied that the Lord says, “With my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam” ([Amos 7:9](#)). Now the fuller prophecy includes the violent end of Amaziah’s lineage.

17b. “Your land will be measured and divided up,

Amaziah will not be able to leave family property to descendants because (1) no descendants will remain to inherit it and (2) no property will remain to bequeath anyway. For Amaziah’s land to *be measured and divided up* means it will be parceled out to others by its conquerors. This will be something of a reversal of the process of land allotment to the Israelites during the time of Joshua ([Joshua 14:1-5; 18:1-10](#)). Amaziah claims that “the land cannot bear all” the words of Amos ([Amos 7:10](#)). But the truth is that the land is not able to bear the sins of the people of the northern kingdom (compare [Leviticus 18:28](#)).

^{17c} **“and you yourself will die in a pagan country.**

**And Israel will surely go into exile,
away from their native land.”**

We come to the sentence pronounced on Amaziah himself. The Hebrew word rendered *pagan* is translated *unclean* the vast majority of the time. With regard to *country* it refers to places where pagan gods are worshipped. Such places are unclean, profane, polluted, defiled, and impure in contrast with the holiness required by the Mosaic law (compare [Ezra 9:11](#)).

That Amaziah will die in such a land can imply that he will be taken captive after witnessing what is to befall his wife, sons, and daughters. To accompany others who are also taken *into exile* also signifies that Amaziah will witness the destruction of “the high places of Isaac ... the sanctuaries of Israel” prophesied in [Amos 7:9](#). What, then, will he think of the gods he worshipped in those places?

The Scriptures provide no record of the fulfillment of this prophecy against Amaziah. Even so, we can be sure it was fulfilled, since it is “the word of the Lord” ([Amos 7:16](#)). History records the fate of Israel when it falls to Assyria in 722 BC ([2 Kings 17:6](#)). The fact that the line *and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land* repeats word for word (in the original Hebrew) the prophecy in [Amos 7:11](#) means that Amaziah’s attempts to intimidate the Lord’s prophet have utterly failed.

What Do You Think?

What are some ways to respond if a necessarily harsh message is rejected as “unloving”?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Considering the agenda of those voicing objection
- Considering validity of the objection

Conclusion

A. True to the Call

Amos was under intense pressure to modify or silence his message rather than risk offending the high officials in the northern kingdom; the pressure the church faces today is similar (compare [Matthew 15:12-14; Acts 4:18-21](#)). The pressure may tempt us to ask ourselves, “Who am I to judge another’s conduct?”

Amos shows how to meet such a challenge: it is a matter of *calling*. When Amaziah asked, in effect, “Who do you think you are?” Amos had a ready answer. We must be prepared to do the same ([1 Peter 3:15](#)). Amos knew who he was, and he knew his task. God expects the same of us ([Matthew 28:19, 20; 2 Timothy 2:15](#)). A simple review of how God has worked and desires to work in your life may result in your becoming an Amos to the lost of your community.

B. Prayer

Father, grant us the conviction that comes from the study of your Word so that we may profess boldly the grace of your Son by whose blood the coming judgment may be escaped. We pray for this in his name. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

True profession overcomes oppression.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Into the Lesson

Before class write the following statements on the board:

“I am a pro athlete.”

“I am pro athletics.”

Point out the differences in the two statements. “The first is saying that he gets paid for being an athlete. The second is saying that he believes that athletic activity is good.”

Then ask, “Is there a difference between someone who claims to be a professing follower of God and one who claims to be a professional follower of God?”

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Sort of” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Allow students to work individually or in small groups.

After either activity, lead into Bible study saying, “We know ministers of the gospel who are paid for faithfully professing the gospel. There are many examples in Scripture of people doing just that. The prophet Amos was in a different situation, however. He was called to confront a man who was paid for being a priest but who did not profess God’s truth faithfully. Let’s look at the conflict between Amos and Amaziah.”

Into the Word

Divide your class into groups of three to five students. Give each group paper, pen, and one of the two assignments below, but *without* the sample entries listed below the passage reference in parentheses. Each group is to read its portion of today’s text and write a job description for either Amaziah or Amos as indicated. Mention one or more sample entries if learners seem stuck.

Assignment 1—Amaziah the Professional Priest (Amos 7:10-13)

The priest must recognize he is employed by the king of Israel.

The priest must view any activity opposing his employer as treason and report it at once.

The priest must do everything in his power to suppress messages seen as treasonous.

Assignment 2—Amos the Professing Prophet (Amos 7:14-17)

The prophet must place loyalty to God above financial gain.

The prophet must go whenever and wherever God directs.

The prophet must speak the truth, even if it means confronting the powerful.

After groups have finished, reassemble the class and have a spokesperson from each group share its job descriptions and summarize its assigned passage of Scripture as basis for conflict between the two men.

Into Life

Say, “Speaking out for God will always put a believer on the spot! In our text today, we see Amos experiencing such a confrontation. He responded by giving what is commonly called his testimony.”

Give class members paper and pens. Ask them to quickly outline their personal testimonies using the following outline:

- I. My life before knowing Jesus.
- II. How I became a Christian (include specifics).
- III. The change Jesus has made and is continuing to make in my life.

Allow time for a couple students to share their testimony with the rest of the class.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Prophet and Profit” activity from the reproducible page. Have students work on this activity individually. If you prefer, use this as a take-home activity.