

Weekly church attendance in the UK has significantly declined in recent decades. Despite this, the Church still holds a position of influence, through its representation in Government, charities, and the faith school network. With justice and righteousness at the centre of the message of Amos, Christians today should consider whether that influence is used to promote equity or whether we are in danger of using it to protect our rights as believers. Although numbers have declined, research shows that people who do attend church increasingly go there because of a commitment to their faith rather than a feeling of obligation. We are chosen by God and should use our influence, no matter how limited, to care about the things and people he cares about.

Think about the following questions and jot down practical ways that we can live lives that reflect God's passion for righteousness and justice.



Are we more concerned about our own needs when we attend church rather than the needs of those facing injustice? If so, what can we do to change that?



How can we use our own platforms, whether big or small, to speak out on the things that matter to God?



How should being chosen by God influence the choices we make as believers?

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TELL IT LIKE IT IS

From what you have read and discussed today, what is your 'tell it like it is' message for the Church?

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GOD DOES NOT TOLERATE COMPLACENCY

complacency

Definition:

1. self-satisfaction especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies.
2. an instance of usually unaware or uninformed self-satisfaction.
3. Israel demonstrated complacency in the way they handled their wealth, how they worshipped, and their level of awareness of God's judgement. They were very much in their own worlds, enjoying the good life, ignoring the poor and focusing on themselves.



What are the modern-day equivalents for each example?

Rich women lived off money made by their husbands from the oppression of the poor.

'Listen to this, you cows of Bashan grazing on the slopes of Samaria.

You women! Mean to the poor, cruel to the down-and-out!

Indolent and pampered, you demand of your husbands, "Bring us a tall, cool drink!"

Amos 4:1 MSG

Good people said nothing when they saw injustice.

'Justice is a lost cause. Evil is epidemic.

Decent people throw up their hands.

Protest and rebuke are useless, a waste of breath.'

Amos 5:13 MSG

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The people attended worship for show,
rather than dedicating their hearts to God.



**'I can't stand your religious meetings.
I'm fed up with your conferences and conventions.
I want nothing to do with your religion projects,
your pretentious slogans and goals.
I'm sick of your fund-raising schemes,
your public relations and image making.
I've had all I can take of your noisy ego-music.
When was the last time you sang to me?
Do you know what I want?
I want justice – oceans of it.
I want fairness – rivers of it.
That's what I want. That's all I want.'**

Amos 5:21-24 MSG



What does Christian complacency look like today?

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The culture of complacency embedded within the Israelites' behaviour extended to the belief that God would withhold his judgement while the people continued to sin. We are in danger of thinking that our sin has no consequence today as well. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, grace is always available to believers, but it does not mean that he overlooks our deliberate choices to sin against him and others. We must guard against complacency in our churches.



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From what you have read and discussed today, what is your 'tell it like it is' message for the Church?

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GOD DOES NOT TOLERATE CORRUPTION

corruption

Definition:

1. Dishonest or illegal behaviour especially by powerful people
2. Inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means
3. A departure from the original or from what is pure or correct.

Amos called out the corruption he saw in the Israelite community. He made it clear that God was not happy.

God's Message:

'Because of the three great sins of Israel
– make that four – I'm not putting up with them any longer.
They buy and sell upstanding people.
People for them are only things – ways of making money.
They'd sell a poor man for a pair of shoes.
They'd sell their own grandmother!
They grind the penniless into the dirt,
shove the luckless into the ditch.
Everyone and his brother sleeps with the "sacred whore" –
a sacrilege against my Holy Name.
Stuff they've extorted from the poor
is piled up at the shrine of their god,
While they sit around drinking wine
they've conned from their victims.'



Amos 2:6-8 MSG

**'People hate this kind of talk.
Raw truth is never popular.
But here it is, bluntly spoken:
Because you run roughshod over the poor
and take the bread right out of their mouths,
You're never going to move into
the luxury homes you have built.
You're never going to drink wine
from the expensive vineyards you've planted.
I know precisely the extent of your violations,
the enormity of your sins. Appalling!
You bully right-living people,
taking bribes right and left and kicking the
poor when they're down.'**



Amos 5:10-11 MSG



What kind of corruption do we see in the world today?



How is the Church used by powerful people to promote messages that aren't in line with the Bible's teaching?



How is the Church impacted by politics? Do you think this presents a danger for corruption? If so, how?

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