

The Books of Hosea, Joel, and Amos, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 11: Woe to Those at Ease in Zion

Amos 6:1-14

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson confronts a sin that rarely feels like sin: complacency. Amos 6 is not aimed at the obviously wicked but at the comfortable, the secure, and the self-satisfied leaders of Israel who trusted in their position, their wealth, and their sense of being first among the nations. The doctrinal stakes are high because complacency is a quiet form of unbelief. It puts security in created comforts rather than in the living God, it presumes upon blessing while ignoring accountability, and it deadens the heart toward both God and neighbor. A church of Christ that loses the ache over sin and suffering has begun the very drift Amos describes. Help students see that God holds each person responsible for the condition of his own heart, and that numbness is not neutral. The Lord calls it woe.

The formation aim is twofold and inseparable. First, help students relocate their security from comfort to Christ, who alone is an unshakable foundation. Second, awaken in them the grief of God over the ruin of others, so that worship and justice are reunited in the heart. Amos will not let us choose between loving God and loving neighbor. The leaders sang their songs and anointed themselves while their nation bled, and God was not pleased. Lead the class to a tender, practical repentance: not contempt for rest or beauty, but a heart that uses its blessings as a launching point for compassion. Let the final movement of the lesson lift their eyes to Jesus, who left every comfort of heaven, who was deeply moved by the crowds, and who calls His people out of ease and into love.

Question 1

Student Question:

Amos pronounces woe on those who are at ease in Zion and feel secure on the mountain of Samaria (Amos 6:1). What does the text say these people trusted in, and why does God treat false security as a spiritual danger rather than a harmless comfort?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Amos opens chapter six with a double woe, addressed to those who are at ease in Zion and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria. Zion is the southern capital, Samaria the northern, so the prophet sweeps both kingdoms into one indictment. The leaders are the notable men of the first of the nations, the ones the house of Israel comes to for guidance. Their sin is not described first as cruelty but as ease, a settled, self-satisfied comfort that has stopped looking up to God or out to neighbor.

The Hebrew picture is of people relaxed and reclining, untroubled, confident that nothing can touch them. It is worth pausing on how unalarming this sin looks. These are respectable people, the leadership class, the ones others admire. Amos exposes the truth that God's woe can rest on the comfortable just as surely as on the violent, because false security is a quiet rejection of dependence on Him.

The phrase first of the nations carries the pride at the root of the chapter. Israel saw herself as elite, as exceptional, as untouchable. God will spend the chapter dismantling that illusion. The privilege He gave them was meant to make them a blessing to the nations, not a fortress of self-congratulation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- False security is treated by God as a spiritual danger, not a harmless comfort; the woe falls on the at ease.
- Privilege and blessing carry responsibility; being first among the nations was meant for service, not self-satisfaction.
- Personal accountability runs through the chapter: each leader answers for his own settled, careless heart.
- Complacency is a form of practical unbelief, trusting in position rather than in the living God.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to be at ease in a way God would call woe rather than blessing?
- How can the things that make us feel secure quietly become substitutes for trusting God?
- Where do you see the temptation to feel first or exceptional, and how does pride hide inside that feeling?

Question 2

Student Question:

Read Amos 6:1–3 slowly and honestly. Where do you notice yourself feeling secure for reasons that have nothing to do with God, and what would it mean to put those things in their proper place this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

In verse two Amos sends Israel on a tour: pass over to Calneh, go to Hamath the great, go down to Gath of the Philistines. These were notable cities, and the argument cuts in more than one direction. Are you better than these kingdoms? Is your territory greater than theirs? The leaders thought themselves uniquely secure, but Amos reminds them that other proud cities have already fallen or will fall. No nation is exempt from God's reckoning.

The point is humbling. Israel measured herself against others and felt superior, but comparison is a treacherous foundation. The same God who judged Gath and Calneh sees Samaria. Pride built on being better than someone else collapses the moment God brings His plumb line.

This verse trains us to distrust the math of comparison. We feel safe because we imagine we are doing better than the next person or the next nation. God does not grade on a curve. He measures against His own holiness, and by that measure the comfortable have no grounds for confidence.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Comparison with others is a false basis for security; God measures against His own standard.
- No nation, however privileged, is exempt from divine judgment.
- Pride often hides inside the feeling of being better off than someone else.
- The fall of other great cities was meant to be a warning, not a comfort, to Israel.

Discussion Prompts

- How do we use comparison with others to feel safe before God?
- Why is being better than someone else no real security at all?
- What would it look like to measure ourselves by God's holiness instead of by other people?

Question 3

Student Question:

In Amos 6:2 the prophet tells Israel to look at Calneh, Hamath, and Gath. What point is God making by pointing to these other cities, and how does it expose the pride of those who counted themselves first among the nations?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse three names a subtle and dangerous habit: they put far away the evil day and bring near the seat of violence. The leaders pushed the thought of coming judgment out of their minds so they could keep enjoying the present, and in the vacuum that denial created, injustice moved closer. When people stop reckoning with God's day, the seat of violence, the place where the powerful oppress, draws near.

There is a profound spiritual mechanism here. Denial of accountability does not leave the soul neutral. It actively makes room for sin. The same heart that refuses to think about the day of reckoning grows comfortable with the abuse of power, because nothing seems to be at stake. Forgetting God's future corrupts the present.

Amos exposes the way comfort feeds on denial. To keep the music playing, the leaders had to keep the bad news out, and keeping God's reckoning out of view made cruelty easier. Honest

remembrance of the day of the Lord is not morbid. It is one of God's mercies, keeping us tender and awake.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Pushing away the thought of judgment makes room for present injustice to grow.
- Denial of accountability is not neutral; it actively corrupts the heart.
- Honest remembrance of God's reckoning is a mercy that keeps believers awake.
- Comfort often depends on shutting out unwelcome truth.

Discussion Prompts

- How do we push the thought of God's reckoning out of our minds, and what does it cost us?
- Why does forgetting the day of the Lord make sin feel less serious?
- What helps you keep eternity in honest view without falling into despair?

Question 4

Student Question:

Amos describes leaders who put far off the day of disaster (Amos 6:3). In what ways do we push the thought of God's reckoning out of our minds so we can keep enjoying the present, and what helps you keep that day in honest view?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verses four through six paint the famous portrait of luxurious indulgence: beds inlaid with ivory, bodies stretched out on couches, the choicest lambs and calves eaten, idle songs sung to the harp, instruments invented as David invented them, wine drunk not by the cup but by the bowl, the finest oils anointing the skin. The detail is lavish on purpose. Amos wants us to feel the softness, the abundance, the self-pampering.

It is essential to say clearly that rest, food, music, and beauty are not sins. Scripture celebrates feasts and song and the goodness of God's gifts. What Amos condemns is indulgence that has become an end in itself, a cocoon of self-pleasing that walls out God and neighbor. The leaders even borrowed David's gift for music, but where David's songs lifted hearts to God, theirs were idle, aimed only at their own pleasure.

The climax of the indictment lands in the last line of verse six: they were not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. The whole catalog of comfort exists to set up this devastating contrast. They had every good thing the body could want, and they had lost the one thing the soul most needs, the capacity to be moved by the suffering of others. Comfort had made them numb.

This is where comfort crosses into woe. Not at the ivory bed, but at the moment the ivory bed becomes a place to hide from the cries outside. The sin is not enjoyment; it is enjoyment that

has stopped caring. A heart that can feast while its brothers are ruined and feel nothing has contracted a deadly spiritual disease.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Rest, food, music, and beauty are God's gifts and are not condemned in themselves.
- Indulgence becomes sin when it walls out God and neighbor and becomes an end in itself.
- The decisive failure is being unmoved by the ruin of others, a numbness comfort produced.
- True worship and compassion belong together; idle self-pleasing songs are contrasted with hearts that grieve over suffering.
- Comfort can quietly anesthetize the conscience until the suffering of others no longer registers.

Discussion Prompts

- Where exactly does enjoyment of God's gifts cross over into the indulgence Amos condemns?
- What does it mean that they were not grieved over the ruin of Joseph, and where do you see that numbness in yourself?
- How can we receive God's good gifts in a way that fuels compassion rather than smothering it?

Question 5

Student Question:

Trace the catalog of indulgence in Amos 6:4-6: ivory beds, choice lambs, idle songs, bowls of wine, the finest oils. What is God actually condemning here, since rest and good food are not sins in themselves? Be precise about where comfort crosses into something God calls woe.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse seven announces the reversal: therefore they shall now be the first of those who go into exile, and the revelry of those who stretched themselves out shall pass away. The leaders who counted themselves first of the nations will be first into chains. The feast that seemed endless ends abruptly. God's judgment fits the sin with terrible precision.

There is a moral logic here that runs through Scripture. Those who exalt themselves are humbled. The comfort that was hoarded and never shared is stripped away. The very banquet that drowned out the cries of Joseph becomes silent, and the revelers join the ruin they refused to feel. Sin carries its own undoing inside it.

Amos is not gloating. He is warning. The whole point of naming the end is to call the comfortable to repent before the end arrives. God tells them where the road leads precisely so they can turn around. Judgment foretold is mercy still extended.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's judgment fits the sin: the first of the nations become the first into exile.
- Self-indulgence that ignores others ends by sharing in the very ruin it refused to feel.
- Those who exalt themselves are humbled, a consistent biblical pattern.
- Judgment announced beforehand is a form of mercy, a call to repent in time.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the punishment in this passage fit the sin, and what does that teach about God's justice?
- Why does hoarded, indifferent comfort tend to collapse in on itself?
- How is God's warning of judgment actually an expression of His mercy?

Question 6

Student Question:

Amos 6:6 says they were not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. Whose suffering have you found it easy not to be grieved over, and what would it look like for God to soften that numbness in you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verses eight through eleven darken sharply. The Lord swears by Himself that He abhors the pride of Jacob and hates his strongholds; He will deliver up the city. Then comes a chilling vignette: if ten men remain in one house, they shall die; a relative comes to carry out the bodies and asks if anyone is left, and the answer comes back, hush, we must not mention the name of the Lord. Death has so saturated the land that even speaking God's name feels dangerous.

That last detail is haunting. The same people who once felt secure now whisper, afraid even to invoke the God they had ignored. The comfort of chapter six has become a house of plague and silence. This is where complacency, left to run its course, finally arrives. The journey from ivory beds to bodies carried out in silence is shorter than the comfortable ever imagine.

God names the root in verse eight: the pride of Jacob. Pride is what made the strongholds feel safe, and pride is what God abhors. The strong house and the great house alike, verse eleven says, will be smashed to pieces. Nothing built on self-confidence stands when God commands its fall.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God abhors the pride of Jacob; pride is named as the root of the coming ruin.
- Complacency left unchecked leads to a darkness far beyond what the comfortable imagine.
- The silencing of God's name shows a people who ignored Him now afraid before Him.
- Both great houses and small are leveled; no human stronghold withstands God's judgment.

Discussion Prompts

- How can present comfort blind us to where a careless path is actually heading?
- What does the fear of even mentioning God's name reveal about the people's spiritual state?
- Why does God single out pride as the thing He abhors in Jacob?

Question 7

Student Question:

Because of all this, God says the revelers will be the first to go into exile (Amos 6:7). How does God's judgment fit the sin in this passage, and what does it teach us about the way unchecked self-indulgence ends?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse twelve uses two vivid absurdities: do horses run on rocks, or does one plow the sea with oxen? The expected answer is no, of course not. Yet Israel has done something just as unnatural and ruinous: they have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness. They have inverted the moral order as surely as a man trying to plow the ocean.

This is the heart of the chapter's ethical charge. Justice and righteousness are not optional extras to true religion; they are its fruit. When the comfortable twist justice into something toxic, they have not merely neglected a social program, they have corrupted the very thing God most desires from His people. Worship divorced from justice is the unnatural plowing of the sea.

The verse binds together the two halves of Amos's message. The numbness toward the ruin of Joseph in verse six and the poisoning of justice in verse twelve are one disease. A heart that stops grieving over suffering will soon stop doing right by the suffering. Compassion and justice rise or fall together.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Justice and righteousness are the fruit God seeks, not optional additions to worship.
- Turning justice into poison is as unnatural and ruinous as plowing the sea.
- Numbness toward suffering and the perversion of justice are one connected disease.
- True worship of God and right dealing with neighbor cannot be separated.

Discussion Prompts

- How does our culture, or our own hearts, turn justice into something bitter or self-serving?
- Why does Amos treat the perversion of justice as an absurdity against nature itself?
- How are heartfelt worship and just treatment of neighbor connected rather than rival concerns?

Question 8

Student Question:

The chapter moves to scenes of death, plague, and silence (Amos 6:8–11), even to hushing the name of the Lord in fear. When have you seen comfort and complacency lead, over time, to a place far darker than the comfortable expected? How does that sober you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse thirteen exposes the boast underneath the injustice: they rejoice in Lo-debar and say, have we not by our own strength taken Karnaim for ourselves? These were minor military victories, and the place names carry a bitter wordplay; Lo-debar can mean a thing of nothing. Israel was celebrating nothing and crediting it to her own strength. Self-reliance had become self-worship.

Here pride and complacency join hands. The comfortable life of verses four through six rested on the proud confidence of verse thirteen: we did this ourselves, by our own power. Every gift forgotten, every blessing claimed as an achievement, every victory used to feed the ego. This is the spiritual engine of the whole chapter.

Amos shows that complacency is never merely passive. Underneath the relaxed body on the ivory bed is an active, boasting heart that says, I am secure because of what I have done. That boast is precisely what a holy God cannot abide, because it steals the glory that belongs to Him alone.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Self-reliance had become self-worship; they credited their own strength for everything.
- Pride and complacency are linked; ease rests on a boasting heart.
- Claiming blessings as personal achievements robs God of His glory.
- Their celebrated victories were, in truth, a thing of nothing.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you tempted to say, I built this by my own strength?
- How does crediting our own power for blessings poison gratitude and worship?
- What does it look like to receive even our successes as gifts to be stewarded humbly?

Question 9

Student Question:

Amos 6:12–14 charges Israel with turning justice into poison and righteousness into bitterness, while boasting in their own strength. Drawing on the whole chapter, why is complacency mixed

with pride such a serious thing before a holy God, and how does true worship of God and real justice toward neighbor belong together rather than apart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter ends in verse fourteen with God's verdict: behold, I am raising up against you a nation, O house of Israel, and they shall oppress you from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of the Arabah. The God they thought they could ignore is the One who raises up nations. The comfortable boasted that they took cities by their own strength; now God will bring a nation against them across the full length of their land.

This final verse answers every illusion in the chapter. They felt secure, but God controls the nations. They boasted in their strength, but their strength is nothing before His. They crowded out His name, but He has the last word. The sovereignty of God over history is the bedrock under all of Amos's warning, and it is the bedrock of hope too, for the same God who judges also keeps covenant.

Drawing the chapter together, complacency mixed with pride is shown to be deadly serious before a holy God because it is a false security that displaces Him, a numbness that betrays neighbor, and a boast that steals His glory. The way back is the way of grief and humility, a heart re-awakened to God and to the ruin of others, which is exactly the heart we see fully in Jesus, who left heaven's comfort, was moved with compassion, and gave Himself for the broken.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's sovereignty over the nations answers every illusion of self-made security.
- Complacency and pride are deadly because they displace God, betray neighbor, and steal His glory.
- The same sovereign God who judges also keeps covenant, grounding both warning and hope.
- The cure is grief and humility, a heart re-awakened to God and to others, seen fully in Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- How does God's control over history both warn the proud and comfort the faithful?
- Why is complacency joined with pride so serious in the eyes of a holy God?
- How does Jesus, who left heaven's comfort to be moved with compassion, reshape the way you hold your own comforts?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across all of Amos 6. Name one specific way the Lord Jesus is using this chapter to form you, whether to wake you from ease, to grieve you over something He grieves over, or to

root your security in Him rather than in your comforts. What is the first concrete step of obedience He is asking from you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the warning of Amos 6 and turns it inward. The chapter is a portrait of comfortable ruin: people 'at ease in Zion' (6:1), stretched on beds of ivory, eating the best of the flock, inventing music, drinking wine in bowls, 'but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph' (6:6). The deadly thing is not the comfort itself but the numbness that comfort produced, a heart that could enjoy every luxury while the people of God were falling apart. Help students feel how subtle this sin is. Complacency rarely feels like rebellion; it feels like a well-earned rest.

Ask students to examine their own ease honestly. The question is not whether they own nice things but whether their comfort has dulled them to the things that grieve the heart of God: the lost, the hurting, the spiritually fading brother or sister, the lukewarmness of their own walk. Amos says the complacent 'put far away the evil day' (6:3), living as though accountability would never come. Press the class to name the specific place where they have grown spiritually drowsy.

Bring the lesson to Christ, who was the opposite of complacent. He was grieved over the affliction of His people, He wept over Jerusalem, He left the comfort of heaven to seek and save the lost. To be formed into His likeness is to recover a heart that is moved by what moves Him. Spiritual formation here is the deliberate refusal of numbness, the choice to stay tender, engaged, and awake.

Close by inviting each student to name one concrete way the Lord Jesus is calling them out of ease and into love this week, whether a relationship to re-enter, a ministry to take up, or a discipline to renew. Pray that the class would not be a people merely at ease in Zion but a people grieved by what grieves God and glad in what gladdens Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Complacency as comfortable ruin: the sin is not comfort itself but the numbness it can breed.
- Being 'not grieved for the affliction of Joseph' as the heart growing cold to what grieves God.
- Putting far away 'the evil day' as living without a sense of accountability before God.
- Christ as the opposite of complacency: grieved over the lost, leaving comfort to seek and save.
- Spiritual formation as the deliberate refusal of numbness and the recovery of a tender, engaged heart.

Discussion Prompts

- Where in your life has comfort quietly become complacency, dulling you to what grieves the heart of God?
- What is one affliction (in someone near you or in the Lord's church) that you have stopped letting yourself feel?
- What is one specific way Jesus is calling you out of ease and into love this week?