

Amos 3:3

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BIG SANDY, Texas—On Nov. 14, I began a series of articles about the book of Amos. The first article was titled “Overview of the Book of Amos.”

Since that time, I chose to write about various verses from the book of Amos. This article will discuss Amos 3:3.

Reason for choosing

Someone could ask: Why did you choose to write about Amos 3:3?

My answer: I have seen church leaders and church teachers use Amos 3:3 incorrectly.

- Some of those leaders and teachers may have merely been mistaken about the meaning of the verse.
- However, it is possible that other individuals were deliberately using the verse for their personal gain—for exerting control over people or for extracting financial gain from people.

See what it says

Let’s see what Amos 3:3 says.

Amos 3:3—“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”

Some promote groupthink

Many religious people (both leaders and followers) have interpreted this verse to support the concept of “groupthink”—everyone must believe the same thing.

They will say that you can’t be associated with individuals unless you accept their interpretation of ideas (whether it is doctrine, tradition or opinion).

Horrible misapplication

By checking Amos 3:3 in various translations, a Bible student can see that groupthink is a horrible misapplication.

Young’s Literal Translation of the Holy Bible: “Do two walk together if they have not met?”

Contemporary English Version: “Can two people walk together without agreeing to meet?”

Revised Standard Version: "Do two walk together unless they have made an appointment?"

New American Standard Bible: "Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment?"

James Moffatt translation: "Do two men travel together unless they have planned it?"

Not what, but how

Notice a few questions and answers.

Question: Do you expect the members of your congregation to accept everything spoken from the pulpit?

Answer: Certainly not.

Question: Are speakers at your congregation allowed to give different views in their sermons?

Answer: Absolutely. Our congregation (founded in 1995) has a 25-year history of speakers giving their interpretation and members of the audience taking personal responsibility about how they accept the presentations.

Question: Do you as pastor approve the subjects in advance that the speakers give in the pulpit?

Answer: Not at all. The speaker is responsible for what he says in the pulpit. I am responsible for the invitation.

Question: What is the most important factor to you in offering someone an invitation to speak?

Answer: Matthew 20:25-28.

Question: What are some factors that influence you to withhold an invitation to a potential speaker?

Answer: Speakers should not be presumptuous, condescending or rude. Oftentimes, the way something is said will be more disturbing than any erroneous information that is mentioned.

Question: What do you say to people who use Isaiah 58:1 to justify a presumptuous speaking style?

Answer: Jeremiah 23:21 and Proverbs 25:15.

Question: What do you say to people who use John 8:44 to justify a presumptuous speaking style? (The Son of God was strong but not presumptuous.)

Answer: 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, Matthew 7:1-5, Matthew 20:25-28, John 8:1-11, Romans 2:21, Romans 14:10-12, James 3:1 and many other scriptures.

New Testament groupthink?

Did the apostle Paul teach groupthink in the New Testament?

1 Corinthians 1:10—“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

Question: Doesn't 1 Corinthians 1:10 prove that congregations should have groupthink about every subject?

Answer: Absolutely not. The context (verses 11-13) identifies that the apostle Paul wanted them to be on the same page (groupthink, if you will) about one specific subject.

Question: Doesn't 1 Corinthians 1:10 prove that congregations should have groupthink in agreement with special church leaders?

Answer: Certainly not. The context proves the exact opposite.

1 Corinthians 1:11-13—“For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”

I suppose a Christian could describe a favorable type of groupthink—having a relationship with the Father and with the Son of God.

But beware of businesspeople (dressed up as religious people) who use the idea of groupthink within a specific church organization or with a specific church leader in an attempt to take you into bondage.

People should have conviction

The Bible reflects the reality that people should have conviction.

- Joshua 24:15—As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.
- Acts 17:11—Search the Scriptures daily.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:21—Test all things and hold fast what is good.
- 2 Timothy 2:15—Rightly divide the word of truth.

People should avoid contention

The Bible reflects the reality that people should avoid contention.

- 2 Timothy 2:14—Do not strive about words.
- 2 Timothy 2:16—Shun profane and idle babblings.
- Titus 3:9—Avoid foolish disputes, contentions and strivings.

People should have compassion

The Bible reflects the reality that people should have compassion toward people with different ideas.

- Romans 14:19—Let us pursue the things that make for peace and the things by which one may edify one another.
- Galatians 6:1—You who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.

Building proper relationships

Let's go back to Amos 3:3.

This verse was not talking about groupthink. Rather, this verse advocates the opposite of groupthink. Amos 3:3 is talking about the proper approach that people should have in building relationships.

- Are you seeking to have a relationship with someone?
- Are you seeking to spend time together?
- Are you willing to see what you have in common?
- Are you willing to see what differences you have?
- Are you willing to allow other people to have different ideas from yours?
- Are you humble enough to consider being influenced by the ideas of another person?
- Are you strong enough to withstand the poor ideas coming from another person?
- Are you mature enough to withstand the rude approach coming from another person?
- Are you humble enough and willing to avoid being presumptuous, condescending and rude toward other people?