

How To Measure Up to God's Standard, part 1

Then he showed me another vision. I saw the Lord standing beside a wall that had been built using a plumb line. He was using a plumb line to see if it was still straight. And the Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?"



I answered, "A plumb line."

And the Lord replied, "I will test my people with this plumb line. I will no longer ignore all their sins. The pagan shrines of your ancestors[a] will be ruined, and the temples of Israel will be destroyed; I will bring the dynasty of King Jeroboam to a sudden end."

Amos 7:7-9

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(Just in case you've never used a plumb line, let me explain how it works. Basically a plumb line is a long string with a weight at the end. When you want to establish what is perfectly true or vertical, you suspend the string from the top of a structure and then let it unfurl itself so that the weight dangles straight down without touching the wall or object you're trying to align. When it stops moving the vertical line or true has been established. I used one years

ago when I was wallpapering my kitchen.)

I am so taken with these scriptures today. I can just picture

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God

a plumb line from his hand and then turning his gaze upon His children Israel to see how they line up. Now that makes me nervous. Why? Because I know I could very well be next on the test list!

Stickler for Perfection

Well, we can clearly see that God who created our world and everything in it is a stickler for perfection. We need only consider the beauty of creation in Genesis 1 to see that. Unfortunately, the perfect world God created didn't last too long. Sin marred the garden and all of creation including people, and we haven't been the same since. It bothered God that His world and His people were out of true.

At the stage of history that Amos finds himself in, the Israelites were a crooked mess. They had set up pagan shrines and were worshiping false gods, among many other things. We may wonder if they were helpless to do anything about it. After all, the perfect world God made was gone.

The simple answer is "No."

God had given the Israelites a **plumb line to align themselves with**, and that plumb line was the law – the rules, regulations, commandments, worship, and sacrifices that God had taught them. This was the way for them to atone for their sins so that they could continue to stay in relationship with Him. We can see that throughout the Old Testament, the Israelites spent a good amount of time in and out of true and

suffering the consequences for it: wandering in the desert for 40 years, enduring the rule of evil kings, and being defeated and taken as captives to Babylon.

Throughout these many years, God sent prophets calling the Israelites to return to the Lord, to get back in true. When they obeyed the law, God would bless them. When they ignored the call to repentance, He would allow bad things like enemy attacks to draw them back to Him, to straighten them out. Sometimes they did. Many times they didn't. Can't you just see Israel swinging back and forth like a pendulum on a clock? Something had to give.

Finally, God is silent for 400 years. I can't imagine going 400 years without hearing from God, but that's what happened. **The Israelites had to wait that long for the next plumb line to appear.**

We'll talk about that in [How To Measure Up to God's Standard, Part 2.](#)

In the meantime, share your thoughts in the comments below about why the plumb line of the law didn't work so well for the Israelites.

Pray on!

Jane

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Something to Celebrate



O Come Let us Adore Him

These words have been ringing through my mind today as Christmas draws near, and it's more than the obvious reason that I've heard this Christmas carol on the radio or that Christmas is only five days away. Much more. **God has been readjusting my vision this Christmas.**

Christmas 2011 will be a different Christmas for us. It's the first Christmas that we won't have both of our children with us. For the past 23 years, the four of us have always been together to celebrate. We have our traditions, our special things that we do together as a family to welcome Christmas Day. They're very much a part of what makes Christmas Christmas for me. Maybe too much so?

As many of you know, our son Jesse is on a walk across America to raise money for the burn center at Riley Hospital for Children where he was a patient in June of 2010. Three months ago when Jesse decided to do this walk, I thought surely he couldn't be meaning to miss Thanksgiving, his birthday and Christmas. Could he? When I asked Jesse this over the phone, he said, "Mom, how is that going to look if I fly home for

Christmas when people are sponsoring me, and I'm supposed to be walking across America?"

The reality that I knew was coming but had been avoiding thinking about had arrived. With the certainty that Jesse would not be home and possibly not Amber either as she now has her fiancé and his family to consider for Christmas plans, I was forced to look at where I was getting my real joy for Christmas from. Was my joy coming from my perfect plans all going according to schedule, or was it from the gift of Jesus in my life?

As I have had to adjust my perception of celebrating Christmas, God has been shifting my focus to where it should be. The priceless gift of having Jesus as my King is coming clearly into focus. **To know that He is with me each day in the nitty-gritty good-and-bad that makes up my life is what God is showing me I should be celebrating.**

I'm wondering what your Christmas will look like. Maybe you're struggling through a painful divorce. Perhaps you're hooked up to a chemo IV. Or maybe you're blessed this year to have all of your family with you. Whatever your life is or wherever you are this year, Jesus is there. And that's Something to celebrate.

O Come let us adore Him ...

Pray on!