

How Hard a Challenge

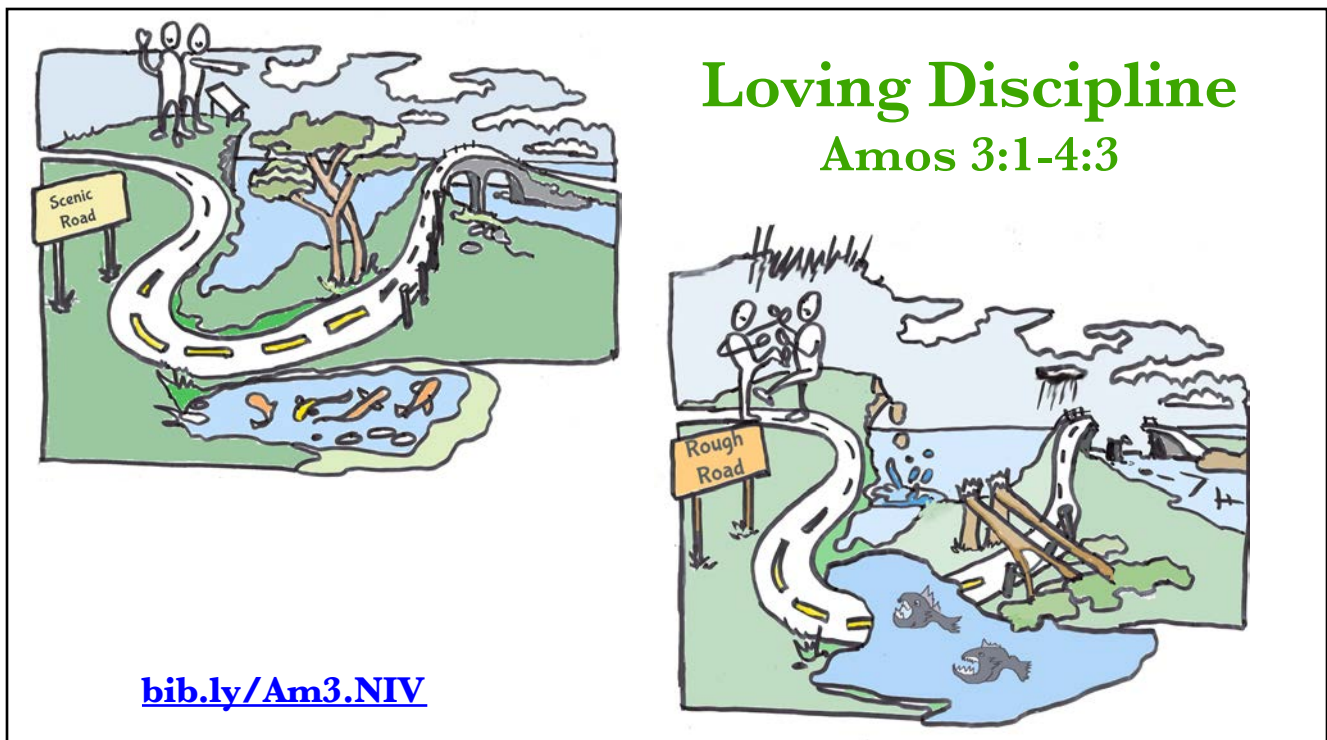
If you love someone...

- when is it good to make things **easier** for them?
 - When a task is too hard
 - When the effort is better spent on other things
- when is it good to make things **harder** for them?
 - When you want them to grow stronger

Where is your life **harder** than it seems like it ought to be?

What do we expect God to do in our lives?

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Amos, the minor prophet

- **What was the setting?**
 - Time of peace and prosperity (~760BC)
 - Israel (north) will be conquered in 722BC
 - Judah (south) will be conquered 586BC
- **Who is Amos?**
 - Shepherd & fig farmer from Judah (southern kingdom) whom God told to go to Israel (northern kingdom)
- **What was the message?**
 - God's judgment is coming against His own people



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Amos, the minor prophet

- **Chapters 1–2 (October 6, 2019)**
 - God's perfect ways will come and judgment will come to the unjust, the oppressors, and the rebellious in all the earth
- **Chapter 3 (today)**
- **Chapter 5 (June 28, Allan Greig)**
- **Plans still forming for the rest**

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Amos 3bib.ly/Am3.NIV

1-2: Israel's special relationship brought special punishment

3-8: • Judgment is for Israel and for Judah

9-12: • Yet a special message for Israel

13-15: came through a man called from Judah

4:1-3: • God's emphasis:

- You are the ones I chose and I rescued
- You rebelled against me
- Therefore, you are the ones I will punish

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**God selected & rescued the children of Israel as a gift to them
God promised that they would be a blessing to the whole earth**



Amos told Israel they will be destroyed

Israel will be conquered & destroyed

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Amos 3

1-2: Israel's special relationship brought special punishment

3-8: Israel's coming destruction is from God

9-12: • Walking in fellowship requires agreement

13-15: • Israel & God are no longer in agreement

4:1-3: • A lion's roar, a sprung trap, the warning trumpet

all show that **disaster is near**

- The prophet's warning shows that **disaster is near**
- Will the people appropriately fear God?
 - Believe even when God speaks hard words
 - Take seriously the warning of coming disaster

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**God selected & rescued the children of Israel as a gift to them
God promised that they would be a blessing to the whole earth**

**Israel's religious activity was false/empty
Israel oppressed its own people to amass wealth**

God chose to judge Israel

God told Amos of the coming judgment of Israel

Amos told Israel they will be destroyed

Israel will be conquered & destroyed

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Amos 3

1-2: Israel's special relationship brought special punishment

3-8: Israel's coming destruction is from God

9-12: Israel's enemies witness against them, and destroy them

13-15: • Even their enemies who don't know God

4:1-3: can see the trouble and oppression that is in Israel

- Key: Unjust (but socially acceptable) wealth
- Enemies will do God's work of judgment
 - Tear down walls and take away wealth
- Literally: "stored up violence and robbery"
- Leg bones and piece of ear: evidence of total destruction

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Amos 3

1-2: Israel's special relationship brought special punishment

3-8: Israel's coming destruction is from God

9-12: Israel's enemies witness against them, and destroy them

13-15: God is the one bringing judgment

4:1-3: • He will destroy their **empty religion**

- The problems with their religion:
 - Vertical ["worship"] without horizontal [justice]
 - Vertical is empty and corrupt
- He will destroy their **unjust wealth**
 - Gathered through oppression of the weak

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Amos 3

1-2: Israel's special relationship brought special punishment

3-8: Israel's coming destruction is from God

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13-15: God is the one bringing judgment

4:1-3: **Indirect oppressors will be judged as well**

- Women oppress the poor through their husbands
 - They are just as guilty
- Having treated others as animals, they will be captured and treated as animals

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The Big Idea

**God will judge the rebellious
and He will also discipline His children
so they will grow in Him**

**A special relationship with God (being children)
brings **extra** responsibility and discipline
not less**

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Jesus said: “The servant who **knows the master’s will** and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows.

**From everyone who has been given much,
much will be demanded; and
from the one who has been entrusted with much,
much more will be asked.”**

Luke 12:47-48

**Christians have greater responsibility before God
not less!**

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The Big Idea

**God will judge the rebellious
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so they will grow in Him**

A special relationship with God (being children)
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not less

Sometimes because we have done wrong

Sometimes because we are making good progress!

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Application

Believe that God is using ‘easy’ and ‘hard’ situations to make us more like Christ

- Very often what makes us grow is what we find challenging or hard or painful
- God is genuinely working for our good
 - His goal is not ‘making life easier for us’
 - Yet He is still a generous God

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And we know that **in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.** For those God foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also **glorified.**

Romans 8:28-30

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Application

Believe that God is using ‘easy’ and ‘hard’ situations to make us more like Christ

- Very often what makes us grow is what we find challenging or hard or painful
- God is genuinely working for our good
 - His goal is not ‘making life easier for us’
- God wants us to be holy and faithful and loving like Christ
 - That growth comes through challenges

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Scenic Road

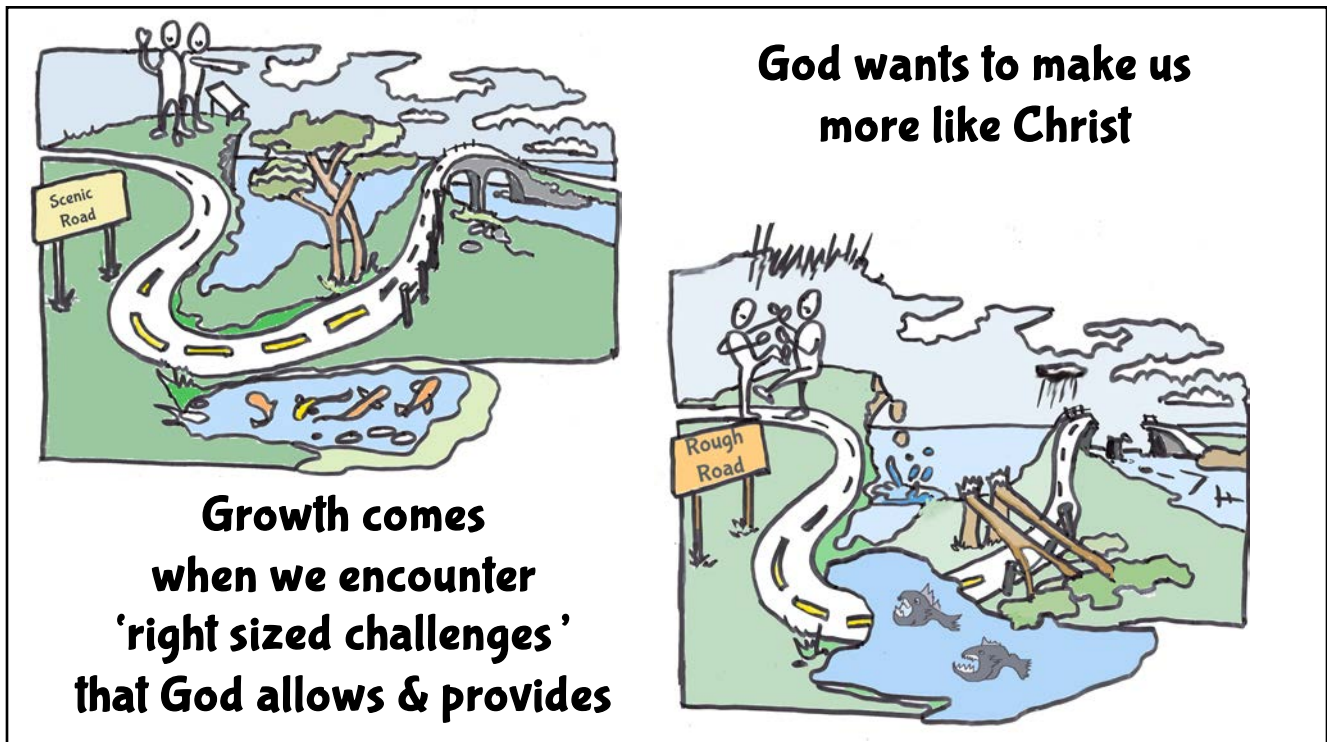
What do you notice about these two roads?



Rough Road

- Why might a loving God **let** His children end up on the rough road?
- Might a loving God **send** His children onto the rough road?

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Application

Believe that God is using 'easy' and 'hard' situations to make us more like Christ

Take growth in Christ and obedience to Christ seriously

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Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? **Run in such a way as to get the prize.** Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, **I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave** so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

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Application

Believe that God is using 'easy' and 'hard' situations to make us more like Christ

Take growth in Christ and obedience to Christ seriously

- We should seek growth in Christ the way people train for the Olympics, or to become a distinguished professor, or to be the top artist, or to get a job, or ...
- **NOT** so that we can try to earn God's love
- **But BECAUSE** we already are God's deeply loved children, and He wants us to flourish!

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Application

Believe that God is using ‘easy’ and ‘hard’ situations to make us more like Christ

Take growth in Christ and obedience to Christ seriously

Submit to God when confronted or disciplined

- “The lion has roared—
who will not fear?” *Amos 3:8*

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In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood [as Jesus did]. And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,

“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,
because **the Lord disciplines the one he loves**,
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.

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Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but **God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.** No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, **it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace** for those who have been trained by it.

Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

Hebrews 12:4-13

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Application

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Take growth in Christ and obedience to Christ seriously

Submit to God when confronted or disciplined

- “The lion has roared—
who will not fear?” *Amos 3:8*
- So when we encounter trouble, we should ask...
 - Is there sin in my life that requires repentance?
 - How might God be using this to help me grow in Him?

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Application

Believe that God is using 'easy' and 'hard' situations to make us more like Christ

Take growth in Christ and obedience to Christ seriously

Submit to God when confronted or disciplined

Use times of trouble to reinforce our prayer and trust

- For you, is crying out to God automatic in trouble?
- If not, then clearly more training is needed!

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The Big Idea

**God will judge the rebellious
and He will also discipline His children
so they will grow in Him**

Where is life challenging for us today? for you?

**How might God be using that challenge to make
you and me more like Christ?**

*Holy, faithful, persevering in hope, compassionate,
comforting to others, free from sin, ...*

How might you and I join God in that work?

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