



Introduction

Have you ever wondered whether or not you have sinned your way out of the love of God? Have you ever wondered if God would ever abandon you because of your unfaithfulness? The book of Hosea is a living parable. Shockingly, God calls the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute, have children with her and remain steadfastly faithful to her in spite of her wandering eye, unfaithful heart, and adulterous actions. Through this, God intends to reveal that sin (idolatry) is like adultery; it wounds both the one committing the act and the heart of the spouse. For God to remain faithful and not cast her aside (divorce) he must enter the pain-filled world of forgiveness. This story points forward to the time when God would ultimately put on display the painful extent he would go to to absorb his people's offense (sin) and demonstrate his faithful love.

Observation/Interpretation

You can imagine the heart wrenchingly painful experience it would be to marry a prostitute. Yet this is exactly what God says it was like for him to marry Israel, then later the Church (Hosea 1.2). In both marriages (Hosea's and God's) they knew up front their spouses would be unfaithful. Most would consider this act reckless and foolish.

- What does this action say about Hosea? What does this action say about God?
- If you're a Christian, it's because God has married (committed and covenanted) himself to you. Where would you be had God not done this? What does this stir in your heart?

Application

If you've ever been deeply hurt or offended by someone, our natural reaction is to push them away by either inflicting pain or by fleeing. Forgiveness is painful as it demands a high cost from both sides. This is one of the main reasons why it's seldom done in our world...the cost is more than we're willing or able to pay.

- What would it cost you to forgive someone who hurt/wounded you?
- What did it cost God to forgive you?
- Read Eph. 4.32. How can we do what this asks us to do?

Prayer

Ask God to overwhelm you with his faithful love for you and thank him
Ask God to empower you as you wrestle with the themes of forgiveness

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



Introduction

Hosea's marriage to Gomer the prostitute, and his naming of his children by her were like sermons, messages from God intended to get certain points across to Israel. The first child was named, "He Sows" (Jezreel - 1:4) and pointed to a dark period in Israel's history where they had sowed evil by their actions, and God promised to sow judgment. The second child was named, "No Mercy" (Lo-ruhama - 1:6) which described *what* their evil actions deserved. The third child was named, "Not My People" (Lo-ammi - 1:9) and referred to *how* his people were acting, and stood as a warning that spiritual harlotry (abandoning God) would result in being abandoned, though a faithful remnant would be spared (11:8-9).

God created people to love and trust him. Sin, the act of turning from God to give oneself to other god's is likened to spiritual prostitution. We, like Israel have all sinned (Rom. 3:23). God promised he'd judge sin *and* one day rescue drifting hearts. Jesus, in his death, gave himself to be treated as the spiritual whore and was judged — abandoned. Those who see and trust that this act of love was for them, will find their hearts melted and released us from their self-inflicted whoredom. Because Jesus was treated as the whore, those who trust God's provision are treated as his beautiful bride.

Observation/Interpretation

- In 1:1—2:1 how do the names of Hosea's children play a key part in his message and ministry?
- Hosea names his firstborn Jezreel (vv. 4-5) after a valley where many bloody massacres had taken place (1 Kings 21:1–16, 2 Kings 9:14–37). What would it be like and what message would be sent if one were to name their child, Auschwitz, Hiroshima or Guantanamo?

Application

- Some may find it offensive that God asked Hosea to marry a prostitute, yet the point was to characterize God's people as being as unfaithful as a prostitute. How are you unfaithful to God?
- The good news of 1:10—2:1 is ultimately fulfilled today in Jesus. On the cross he was shown "no mercy", so that we (like Israel) who *deserve* to be treated as he was, could be shown great mercy. When someone does a kind act for you, you can't help but be thankful. What type of response should your heart have knowing Jesus did the ultimate kind act.

Prayer

We are all prone to wander away from God at times. Thank God for his love, forgiveness and faithfulness in your life.

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When someone you really love is involved in self-destructive behavior, the most unloving thing you could do is, nothing. Israel was engaging in all sorts of self-destructive behavior. Because God promised to love Israel, contrary to what they deserved, He would disrupt these cycles of behavior, by making it more difficult for them to sin. Yet, the real reason Israel was sinning was because at her core she *loved other* gods. The *real* problem for Israel (and us) is a *worship* problem. They, and we are in *love* with the *wrong* things.

For God to only make it *more difficult* for Israel (and us) to sin would never *really* solve her (our our) problems or break the patterns of destructive behavior. What Israel (and we) really needed was to have their heart changed by seeing and knowing that God is lovely and loving. The good news is that in a very profound way God would enter his story in order to woe and amaze the heart of his prostituting bride, and forever change them.

Observation/Interpretation

- How does Israel's actions demonstrate that she is not God's wife (2:2-13)?
- Hosea 2 is organized by way of four "threats" (vv. 3, 6, 9, 14), each begins with the word otherwise (or lest) or therefore. What sets the fourth "threat" apart from the other three?

Application

- Israel gave credit for all she had to other gods instead of to the Lord (2:2-13). Who or what are you tempted to give credit to?
- God set up road blocks so as to steer Israel away from her sinful activities. While this is good and important (doing nothing is unloving), why is this not enough to transform a heart, and change a life? E.g., cutting up a credit card (which may bring the pain of debt) may limit spending, but never eradicate the covetousness that *loves* spending. How does knowing the gospel (the Story of Jesus' sinless life, sacrificial death and victorious resurrection) change your heart on a fundamental level by rearranging *what you love*?

Prayer

Ask God to kindle a fire in your heart that is moved and transformed by the good news that he loves you.

Several of these questions have been adapted from Interspersity Press

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