



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

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- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
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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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Introduction

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 (or 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 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. Why is this (i.e., setting up road blocks or laws) not enough to transform a heart, and change a life? For example, 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 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 Interservity Press:<http://www.ivpress.com/bible/hosea/>

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Introduction

Though Israel acted like an unfaithful wife and brought about her ruin, God promised to take her back and restore her to flourishing. Israel had repeatedly given her heart and devotion to lovers who used her, defiled her and ultimately demanded more from her than she was able to bare. Israel became a slave to sin (Jn 8:34). In like manner all of us have walked this same path.

The good news (gospel) is that God hasn't left Israel or us to the deserved ruin of being slaves to sin. Rather, he stepped into our world to undo the ruin of sin and death, by taking it's oppression upon himself — on the cross. By this overt act of love, God has beautifully upstaged all of Israel's supposed lovers, and charted a new course for her (and our) repentance and restoration. The only thing that can free our heart from its devotion to lesser lovers, who promise much yet deliver little, is by being amazed by the greater love of God which promises much and delivers everything. (2 Pet. 1:3)

Observation/Interpretation

- After describing all of Israel's unfaithfulness in 2:2-13, how can God do all that he describes in 2:16-23?
- God promises that one day his marriage with Israel will be restored and will flourish. According to God (2:18-23), what are some of the characteristics which will mark out this restored marriage?

Application

- We live in the "already" of being the bride of Christ (united with Him), but we look forward to the "not yet" of perfect peace to come. Discuss what this will be like. How does that picture affect your perspective on life, today?
- The last sentence in the introduction reads: "The only thing that can free our heart from its devotion to lesser lovers, who promise much yet deliver little, is by being amazed by the greater love of God which promises much and delivers everything." In your experience has this been true? Explain why you think this is so.

Prayer

Thank God for his promise of restoration. Ask God to use *you* as his instrument of restoration, be it by loving your enemies, helping the helpless, forgiving those who've offended you, or being reconciled to those you've been at odds with.

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Introduction

Though Israel acted like an unfaithful wife and gave herself away to many lovers, God did not divorce her. On the contrary he actually renewed his wedding vows. In Hosea 2:19-20 God reaffirms his devotion to his people in spite of their infidelity by promising them five gifts (like a dowry) that her lovers could never offer: righteousness (Heb. *sedeq*), justice (Heb. *mišpāt*), steadfast love (heb. *hesed*), mercy (Heb. *rahāmîm*) and faithfulness (Heb. *ēmûnâ*).

The good news is that though Israel (and we ourselves) deserved to be cut off (divorced), God still relentlessly pursued her, simply because he is love. One day these gifts that he promised would come. He himself would embody, righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy and faithfulness in the most unexpected way as his word would become flesh—in Jesus.

Observation/Interpretation

- One of the gifts God promised was his steadfast love (heb. *hesed*). God intended that by giving this, along with the other gifts, his people would be so transformed that they'd reflect him by showing these back. Read Hosea 6:6, What does God *really* want from his people? What does he accuse his people of giving to him instead?
- The summary of all these promises is, “*and you shall know the Lord*” (Hosea 2:20). Read Jeremiah 31:33-34. The New Covenant that God would make with his people would one day fulfill all that he promised. How far would God go to demonstrate his covenant faithfulness (see Luke 22:19-20)? What shape would his love ultimately take?

Application

- If we were only *commanded* to show steadfast love, (and righteousness, justice, mercy, and faithfulness) we'd either attempt to replicate these or we'd fall under the crushing weight knowing we can't do it. One path potentially leads to self-righteousness and the other to despair. The good news (gospel) is that God actually *came to show* steadfast love to us (on the cross). How does living in light of this gospel-truth free and motivate you to want to show back steadfast love to him, with out the corrupting effects of self-righteousness or despair?

Prayer

Thank God for sending Jesus, who perfectly showed to us the very actions we so desperately need — righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy and faithfulness. Ask God to work these within you (and Calvary SLO) and toward others.

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hosea

WEEK 6
HOSEA 3

Introduction

Hosea 3 has been described by one commentator as being the, “greatest chapter in the Bible.” Unlike most actions or emotions our culture defines as love, God’s love is of a quality unmatched in this world. This chapter portrays a rich example of God’s love.

Note: Over the next several weeks (12/15/13 - 1/12/14) because of the Christmas season (Advent), many Community Groups will be breaking over the holidays. Use this time to encourage a period of reflection upon this rich passage.

Observation/Interpretation

- Read all five verses of Hosea 3 aloud.
- Hosea 3:1 contains the phrase, “Go again, love...”. If this command came to *you* on the heels of the most painful betrayal by the one you are to now “go again”, and “love”, how would *you* feel? Would *you* be reluctant or eager?
- Hosea 3:1 continues with the phrase, “...even as the Lord loves”. From the chapter, what stands out as most significant regarding God’s love?
- The quality of love which God possesses and shows cost him greatly. True love, for it to be anything but superficial, requires great cost. For Jesus, the cost was summarized by his death on the cross. According to Hebrews 12:2, what motivated Jesus’ obedience to go to the cross?

Application

- Knowing that the quality of love God has shown to you is one which doesn’t tire or give up, how does this stir your affections (emotions). How does this make you *feel* toward God? How does this affect your *actions*, and what does this make you want to *do* in response?

Prayer

Ask God to first overwhelm your heart with the quality of love He’s shown to you, then ask Him to help you to show that quality of love to others. Warning: loving like God will potentially be painful and costly.

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Introduction

Hosea 3 has been described by one commentator as being the, “greatest chapter in the Bible.” Unlike most actions or emotions our culture defines as love or loving, God’s love is of a quality unmatched in this world. With this chapter only being five verses long it’s a rich example of God’s unconventional love.

Note: Due to Pastor Bryan’s upcoming surgery/recovery this will be the last message in Hosea for now. He may continue Hosea in the future. But for the next several months the Calvary SLO family will begin a new series through the book of Ephesians and will be taught by a team of gifted leaders. Be sure to look for the Discussion Guides that will accompany this series. Please pray for Pastor Bryan’s recovery and for the team of teachers to faithfully reveal God’s heart through his word.

Observation/Interpretation

- Read all five verses of Hosea 3 aloud. If you’ve previously studied this section, do so again. Prayerfully asked God to reveal even greater layers of himself in this rich passage.
- Hosea 3:1 uses the phrase, “even as the Lord loves”. A word we’ve used through-out this study to describe God’s love is, “contraconditional.” In other words, contrary to how Israel acted, God was committed to bringing her back to himself so as to cleanse her from her defilement and robe her in beauty. From the chapter, what stands out as most significant regarding God’s love?
- True love, for it to be anything but superficial, requires great cost. For Jesus, the cost was summarized by his death on the cross. According to Hebrews 12:2, what motivated Jesus’ obedience to go to the cross?

Application

- Knowing that the quality of love God has shown to you is one which doesn’t tire or give up, but instead aims at transforming you from defilement to beauty, how does this stir your affections (emotions) for Him.
- How could this type of love change the way you view and treat others in your life who are, defiled by sin, difficult to get along with, or who have habits that are simply annoying?

Prayer

Ask God to *show* your group a greater revelation of His love. Ask God to help your group to *display* a greater revelation of His love.

• David Powlison, “God’s Love: Better Than Unconditional.”

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