

For Better or For Worse - Lessons From Old Testament Couples
Hosea and Gomer: Forgiving the Unfaithful

Lesson #12 for September 22, 2007

Scriptures: Hosea; 2 Kings 17; 2 Chronicles 36.

1. What picture of God would you have if you had only the book of Hosea? What were the circumstances of the writing of Hosea? (2 Kings 17)
2. What relationship is there between the first three chapters of Hosea and the rest of the book? (Compare Ezekiel 16) How many children did Hosea have? (Hosea 1:3-4) How many children did his wife have? (Hosea 1:3-9) Why would God go to such lengths to represent Himself to the people?
3. What was your general reaction to Hosea? If you had been Hosea's neighbor, would you try to pretend you did not know him? Would you be embarrassed to discuss his story with your children? If you had only the book of Hosea to tell you about God, could you anticipate what God would do with His rebellious people?
4. The period of Hosea's prophetic activity is dated according to the reigns of **four kings in Judah** mentioned in Hosea 1:1—**Uzziah** (792–740 B.C.), **Jotham** (750–731 B.C.), **Ahaz** (735–715 B.C.), and **Hezekiah** (729–686 B.C.)—and the reign of **Jeroboam II** (793–753 B.C.) **in Israel**. Also on the throne during Hosea's ministry were the last six kings of Israel following Jeroboam II—**Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea**—although they are not listed in Hosea 1:1. A dating which satisfies all the demands of the historical notation in Hosea 1:1 is 755–725 B.C., the darkest period of Israel's history.

Following the death of Jeroboam II, the nation was in a state of political anarchy. Of the last six kings of Israel, four (**Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, and Pekah**) were assassinated, and the other two (**Menahem and Hoshea**) ascended the throne via assassinations. Morally speaking, Israel was bankrupt. Blatant immoralities were practiced openly and unashamedly. The religious life of the people was idolatrous and degenerate. Hosea was an eyewitness to the inward deterioration which eventually led to the collapse of the nation in 722 B.C., at which time Samaria, the capital, fell to the Assyrians. (*Believer's Study Bible*, Introduction to Hosea)
5. Do you think that God would ever ask one of His "children" to marry a prostitute? Are we as Christians only allowed to marry perfect saints? Did God ask Hosea to violate the seventh commandment? Was this any worse than God asking Abraham to kill his son? (Genesis 22) Peter refused to "rise and eat" saying, "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." (Acts 10:9-16) Should Hosea have done the same thing and refused to marry such a woman? Should God have abandoned Israel while they were still slaves in Egypt? Was God wrong in "adopting" Israel—considering how they were behaving?
6. Is it possible—considering Hosea 4:1-3, 11-14—that Gomer was the best bride that Hosea could find? **None of us have the privilege of marrying "perfect saints" because there are none available to marry!**
7. Would God ever ask a human being to participate with Him in a "lived out" parable? (Job;

Isaiah 7 & 8; Jeremiah 16:2-4; 27 & 32; Ezekiel 5; 24:15-27) If the story of Hosea's marriage was an actual "lived out" parable, was it fair to the children who were involved? What about Job's children? **Is it fair to talk about God's relationship with us as comparable to the marriage of Hosea?** That woman took Hosea's name and "blackened it." What about us? When we take God's name, what do we do to it? God takes all the risk, we do not take any risk!

8. Did Hosea want his wife at home, **or did he want her to want to be at home?** God said, "Go once more and love this woman"! (Hosea 3:1) What does this book tell us about feeling, love, trust, and honesty? Can it be forced? Can it be "bought"? What is "true love"?
9. Does God have a sovereign right to us because He "bought us with a price"? Look at Hosea 14:1-9. Look at the background in 2 Kings 17. Compare 2 Chronicles 36.
10. If this had been your story, would you have followed through with the experience in Hosea 3? What if you saw your pastor wandering around in the "red light" district, entering bar after bar and brothel after brothel "looking for his wife"? What would you think? What if Hosea's wife had refused to go home? Do you think Hosea should then have tied her up, dragged her home against her will, and locked her in the bedroom? As you understand God's character, is that what He would do?
11. Did God ask Hosea to violate everything that He had commanded previously about marriage? Do you think Hosea was a man of God and recognized as such in the community? Did people look up to him? At that time, did people look up to God? In Christian marriages today, if people followed Hosea's example, would they be better off or worse off? Was Hosea living a playboy's life and encouraging other people to follow his example? What about Salmon marrying Rahab? (Joshua 2:1; 1 Chronicles 2:11; Ruth 4:21-22; Matthew 1:4-5; Luke 3:32)
12. What was God trying to illustrate? First of all, Hosea "properly" married Gomer. She did not accept that and she sold herself into prostitution. Hosea then said, "If those are the only terms you understand, let me buy you." How far should we carry this story? Should we carry the illustration only as far as it is confirmed by the details of Scripture?
13. When Hosea's wife left him, did he say, "Now I have church grounds for divorce. Let me go and find another wife, or let me add to my harem?" What do you think his wife thought when Hosea appeared "downtown" to ask her to come home? Was she "owned" by a pimp and sold to Hosea who then had a right to "demand" that she come home with him? Is that the way that God relates to us?
14. Look at God's accusations against Israel. (Hosea 4:1,6; Hosea 5:4; Hosea 6:4-6.)
15. What will God do to those who reject Him? (Hosea 4:16-17. Compare Hosea 11.) Read from *Phillips*:
Hosea 4:16,17: ¹⁶ Israel is as obstinate as a stubborn heifer. How can the Lord feed them now Like lambs in a broad meadow?
¹⁷ Ephraim is wedded to idolatry, Let him alone.
Hosea 11:8,9. "How, oh how, can I **give you up** , Ephraim!
How, oh how, can I **hand you over**, Israel!
How can I turn you into a Sodom!
How can I treat you like a Gomorrah!
My heart recoils within me,
all my compassion is kindled.
I will not give vent to **my fierce anger--**
I will not destroy Ephraim again." (*Phillips*)

What does it mean, "They are bent on turning away from Me?" Why does He say, "I can love them no more"? But how does God feel as He says that? (Hosea 11:8,9.) Can God save cheats and liars? (Malachi 1:14. Compare Matthew 5:3.) Will He?

16. Compare Hosea 11 with Romans 1. Remember Hosea 9:10; Isaiah 44:9-20.
17. What happens when God fully "gives someone up"? (Romans 1:18,24,26,28; 4:25; Matthew 27:46.) But Jesus did not die as sinners die. Look at all the things He said on the cross. Did anything happen at the cross that makes you afraid of God?
18. Does the obedience that springs from fear produce good, loving, trusting children? The Romans wanted to let Jesus go; it was the "blueprinters" that wanted Him killed!
19. Imagine yourself being outside the New Jerusalem at the third coming looking back at God as He looks at you. What do you expect to see in God's face? Would God be saying, "Watch what I am going to do to these rebellious people" and would you take that as a warning? Is that the way God establishes law and order in His kingdom? Can we explain God's "wrath" without making anyone afraid? (GC 36; 1SM 235.) There is absolutely nothing arbitrary about the death of the wicked!
20. Which would be more awesome? God thundering at you as He destroys you, or God weeping as He tells you that there is absolutely nothing more He can do for you? God will wait and wait so long as there is any chance that someone might be saved. But God will not turn His universe into a penitentiary.
21. Discuss the four levels of obedience.
 1. Disobedience. 2. Obedience out of fear. 3. Obedience for legal reasons. 4. Obedience because it is right.
22. God had warned Israel that if they became like their predecessors, the Canaanites, they would be treated the same. (Leviticus 18:28; 26:27-39; Numbers 33:56; Deuteronomy 20:16-20)
23. Compare Revelation 13 & 14 with the book of Hosea. Had the children of Israel become irreligious at this time? (See 2 Kings 17; 2 Chronicles 36:14-16) Is the whole world going to become irreligious at the end? Or is it rather a question of what kind of "god" they will worship? Does "calling God by the right name" guarantee that you are truly worshipping Him?
24. What if God had turned to the universe and said, "Do you see how much evil there is down on planet earth? It is not safe for Me to go down and associate with those people! I am just going to leave them to the consequences of their own behavior!" Would the universe have understood and agreed with such an action? (RH, July 17, 1900 par. 4-7; ST, August 27, 1902, par. 3-4; compare DA 37) What would be the best illustration God could give to the universe about how He was trying to bring His erring people back to a correct relationship with Him?

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