

The Book of Hosea

Tells of God's Love

For His People

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Hosea

OVERVIEW:

A wedding is a joyous celebration of love. It is the holy mystery of two becoming one, of beginning life together, and of commitment. Marriage is ordained by God and illustrates his relationship with his people. Thus, there is perhaps no greater tragedy than the violation of those sacred vows.

God told Hosea to find a wife, and told him ahead of time that she would be unfaithful to him. Although she would bear many children, some of these offspring would be fathered by others. In obedience to God, Hosea married Gomer. His relationship with her, her adultery, and their children became living, prophetic examples to Israel.

The book of Hosea is a love story—real, tragic, and true. Transcending the tale of young man and wife, it tells of God’s love for his people and the response of his “bride.” A covenant had been made and God had been faithful. His love was steadfast and his commitment unbroken. But Israel, like Gomer, was adulterous and unfaithful, spurning God’s love and turning instead to false gods. Then after warning of judgment, God reaffirmed his love and offered reconciliation. His love and mercy were overflowing, but justice would be served.

The book begins with God’s marriage instructions to Hosea. After Hosea’s marriage, children were born, and each given a name signifying a divine message (Hosea 1). Then, as predicted, Gomer left Hosea to pursue her lusts (Hosea 2). But Hosea (whose name means “salvation”) found her, redeemed her, and brought her home again, fully reconciled (Hosea 3). Images of God’s love, judgment, grace, and mercy were woven into their relationship.

Next, God outlined his case against the people of Israel—their sins would ultimately cause their destruction (Hosea 4; Hosea 6; Hosea 7; Hosea 12) and would rouse his anger, resulting in punishment (Hosea 5; Hosea 8-10; Hosea 12-13). But even in the midst of Israel’s immorality, God was merciful and offered hope, expressing his infinite love for his people (Hosea 11) and the fact that their repentance would bring about blessing (Hosea 14).

The book of Hosea dramatically portrays our God's constant and persistent love. As you read this book, watch the prophet submit himself willingly to his Lord's direction; grieve with him over the unfaithfulness of his wife and his people; and hear the clear warning of judgment.

Then reaffirm your commitment to being God's person, faithful in your love and true to your vows.

THE BLUEPRINT

A. HOSEA'S WAYWARD WIFE (Hosea 1:1-3:5)

Hosea was commanded by God to marry a woman who was unfaithful in marriage and would cause him many heartaches. Just as Gomer lost interest in Hosea and ran after other lovers, we too can easily lose appreciation for our special relationship with God and pursue dreams and goals that do not include him. When we compromise our Christian life-styles and adopt the ways of the world, we are being unfaithful.

Hosea 1:1-3:5

The Lord gave these messages to Hosea son of Beeri during the years when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah, and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel.

[2] When the Lord first began speaking to Israel through Hosea, he said to him, "Go and marry a prostitute, so some of her children will be born to you from other men. This will illustrate the way my people have been untrue to me, openly committing adultery against the Lord by worshiping other gods."

[3] So Hosea married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she became pregnant and gave Hosea a son. [4] And the Lord said, "Name the child Jezreel, for I am about to punish King Jehu's dynasty to avenge the murders he committed at Jezreel. [5] In fact, I will put an end to Israel's independence by breaking its military power in the Jezreel Valley."

[6] Soon Gomer became pregnant again and gave birth to a daughter. And the Lord said to Hosea, "Name your daughter Lo-ruhamah—'Not loved'—for I will no longer show love to the people of Israel or forgive them. [7] But I, the Lord their God, will show love to the people of Judah. I will personally free them from their enemies without any help from weapons or armies."

[8] After Gomer had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she again became pregnant and gave birth to a second son. [9] And the Lord said, "Name him Lo-ammi—'Not my people'—for Israel is not my people, and I am not their God.

[10] Yet the time will come when Israel will prosper and become a great nation. In that day its people will be like the sands of the seashore—too many to count! Then, at the place where they were told, 'You are not my people,' it will be said, 'You are children of the living God.' [11] Then the people of Judah and Israel will unite under one leader, and they will return from exile together. What a day that will be—the day of Jezreel—when God will again plant his people in his land. [2:1] In that day you will call your brothers Ammi—'My people.' And you will call your sisters Ruhamah—'The ones I love.'

[2] "But now, call Israel to account, for she is no longer my wife, and I am no longer her husband. Tell her to take off her garish makeup and suggestive clothing and to stop playing the prostitute. [3] If she doesn't, I will strip her as naked as she was on the day she was born. I will leave her to die of thirst, as in a desert or a dry and barren wilderness. [4] And I will not love her children as I would my own because they are not my children! They were conceived in adultery. [5] For their mother is a shameless prostitute and became pregnant in a shameful way. She said, 'I'll run after other lovers and sell myself to them for food and drink, for clothing of wool and linen, and for olive oil.'

[6] "But I will fence her in with thorn bushes. I will block the road to make her lose her way. [7] When she runs after her lovers, she won't be able to catch up with them. She will search for them but not find them. Then she will think, 'I might as well return to my husband because I was better off with him than I am now.' [8] She doesn't realize that it was I who gave her everything she has—the grain, the wine, the olive oil. Even the gold and silver she used in worshiping the god Baal were gifts from me!

[9] "But now I will take back the wine and ripened grain I generously provided each harvest season. I will take away the linen and wool clothing I gave her to cover her nakedness. [10] I will strip her naked in public, while all her lovers look on. No one will be able to rescue her from my hands. [11] I will put an end to her annual festivals, her new moon celebrations, and her Sabbath days—all her appointed festivals. [12] I will destroy her vineyards and orchards, things she claims her lovers gave her. I will let them grow into tangled thickets, where only wild animals will eat the fruit. [13] I will punish her for all the times she deserted me, when she burned incense to her images of Baal, put on her earrings and jewels, and went out looking for her lovers," says the Lord.

[14] "But then I will win her back once again. I will lead her out into the desert and speak tenderly to her there. [15] I will return her vineyards to her and transform the Valley of Trouble into a gateway of hope. She will give herself to me there, as she did long ago when she was young, when I freed her from her captivity in Egypt.

[16] "In that coming day," says the Lord, "you will call me 'my husband' instead of 'my master.' [17] O Israel, I will cause you to forget your images of Baal; even their names will no longer be spoken. [18] At that time I will make a covenant with all the wild animals and the birds and the animals that scurry along the ground so that they will not harm you. I will remove all weapons of war from the land, all swords and bows, so you can live unafraid in peace and safety. [19] I will make you my wife forever, showing you righteousness and justice, unfailing love and compassion. [20] I will be faithful to you and make you mine, and you will finally know me as Lord.

[21] "In that day," says the Lord, "I will answer the pleading of the sky for clouds, which will pour down water on the earth in answer to its cries for rain. [22] Then the earth will answer the thirsty cries of the grain, the grapes, and the olive trees for moisture. And the whole grand chorus will sing together, 'Jezreel'—'God plants!'

[23] "At that time I will plant a crop of Israelites and raise them for myself! I will show love to those I called 'Not loved.' And to those I called 'Not my people,' I will say, 'Now you are my people.' Then they will reply, 'You are our God!' "

[3:1] Then the Lord said to me, "Go and get your wife again. Bring her back to you and love her, even though she loves adultery. For the Lord still loves Israel even though the people have turned to other gods, offering them choice gifts."

[2] So I bought her back for fifteen pieces of silver and about five bushels of barley and a measure of wine. [3] Then I said to her, "You must live in my house for many days and stop your prostitution. During this time, you will not have sexual intercourse with anyone, not even with me."

[4] This illustrates that Israel will be a long time without a king or prince, and without sacrifices, temple, priests, or even idols! [5] But afterward the people will return to the Lord their God and to David's descendant, their king. They will come trembling in awe to the Lord, and they will receive his good gifts in the last days.

B. GOD'S WAYWARD PEOPLE (Hosea 4:1-14:9)

God wanted the people in the northern kingdom to turn from their sin and return to worshiping him alone, but they persisted in their wickedness. Throughout the book, Israel is described as ignorant of God, with no desire to please him. Israel did not understand God at all, just as Gomer did not understand Hosea. Like a loving husband or patient father, God wants people to know him and to turn to him daily.

1. Israel's sinfulness
2. Israel's punishment
3. God's love for Israel

Hosea 4:1-14:9

Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel! The Lord has filed a lawsuit against you, saying: "There is no faithfulness, no kindness, no knowledge of God in your land. [2] You curse and lie and kill and steal and commit adultery. There is violence everywhere, with one murder after another. [3] That is why your land is not producing. It is filled with sadness, and all living things are becoming sick and dying. Even the animals, birds, and fish have begun to disappear.

[4] "Don't point your finger at someone else and try to pass the blame! Look, you priests, my complaint is with you! [5] As a sentence for your crimes, you will stumble in broad daylight, just as you might at night, and so will your false prophets. And I will destroy your mother, Israel. [6] My people are being destroyed because they don't know me. It is all your fault, you priests, for you yourselves refuse to know me. Now I refuse to recognize you as my priests. Since you have forgotten the laws of your God, I will forget to bless your children. [7] The more priests there are, the more they sin against me. They have exchanged the glory of God for the disgrace of idols.

[8] "The priests get fed when the people sin and bring their sin offerings to them. So the priests are glad when the people sin! [9] 'Like priests, like people'—since the priests are wicked, the people are wicked, too. So now I will punish both priests and people for all their wicked deeds. [10] They will eat and still be hungry. Though they do a big business as prostitutes, they will have no children, for they have deserted the Lord to worship other gods.

[11] "Alcohol and prostitution have robbed my people of their brains. [12] They are asking a piece of wood to tell them what to do! They think a stick can tell them the future! Longing after idols has made them foolish. They have played the prostitute, serving other gods and deserting their God. [13] They offer sacrifices to idols on the tops of mountains. They go up into the hills to burn incense in the pleasant shade of oaks, poplars, and other trees.

"That is why your daughters turn to prostitution, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery. [14] Why should I punish them? For you men are doing the same thing, sinning with whores and shrine prostitutes. O foolish people! You will be destroyed, for you refuse to understand.

[15] "Though Israel is a prostitute, may Judah avoid such guilt. O Judah, do not join with those who worship me insincerely at Gilgal and at Beth-aven. Their worship is mere pretense as they take oaths in the Lord's name.

[16] Israel is as stubborn as a heifer, so the Lord will put her out to pasture. She will stand alone and unprotected, like a helpless lamb in an open field. [17] Leave her alone because she is married to idolatry. [18] The men of Israel finish up their drinking bouts and off they go to find some prostitutes. Their love for shame is greater than their love for honor. [19] So a mighty wind will sweep them away. They will die in shame because they offer sacrifices to idols.

[5:1] "Hear this, you priests and all of Israel's leaders! Listen, all you men of the royal family! These words of judgment are for you: You are doomed! For you have led the people into a snare by worshiping the idols at Mizpah and Tabor. [2] You have dug a deep pit to trap them at Acacia. But never forget—I will settle with all of you for what you have done. [3] I know what you are like, O Israel! You have left me as a prostitute leaves her husband; you are utterly defiled. [4] Your deeds won't let you return to your God. You are a prostitute through and through, and you cannot know the Lord.

[5] "The arrogance of Israel testifies against her; she will stumble under her load of guilt. Judah, too, will fall with her. [6] Then at last, they will come with their flocks and herds to offer sacrifices to the Lord. But it will be too late! They will not find him, because he has withdrawn from them, and they are now alone. [7] For they have betrayed the honor of the Lord, bearing children that aren't his. Now their false religion will devour them, along with their wealth.

[8] "Blow the ram's horn in Gibeah! Sound the alarm in Ramah! Raise the battle cry in Beth-aven! Lead on into battle, O warriors of Benjamin! [9] One thing is certain, Israel: When your day of punishment comes, you will become a heap of rubble.

[10] "The leaders of Judah have become as bad as thieves. So I will pour my anger down on them like a waterfall. [11] The people of Israel will be crushed and broken by my judgment because they are determined to worship idols. [12] I will destroy Israel as a moth consumes wool. I will sap Judah's strength as dry rot weakens wood.

[13] "When Israel and Judah saw how sick they were, Israel turned to Assyria, to the great king there, but he could neither help nor cure them. [14] I will tear at Israel and Judah as a lion rips apart its prey. I will carry them off, and there will be no one left to rescue them. [15] Then I will return to my place until they admit their guilt and look to me for help. For as soon as trouble comes, they will search for me."

[6:1] "Come, let us return to the Lord! He has torn us in pieces; now he will heal us. He has injured us; now he will bandage our wounds. [2] In just a short time, he will restore us so we can live in his presence. [3] Oh, that we might know the Lord! Let us press on to know him! Then he will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or the coming of rains in early spring."

[4] "O Israel and Judah, what should I do with you?" asks the Lord. "For your love vanishes like the morning mist and disappears like dew in the sunlight. [5] I sent my prophets to cut you to pieces. I have slaughtered you with my words, threatening you with death. My judgment will strike you as surely as day follows night. [6] I want you to be merciful; I don't want your sacrifices. I want you to know God; that's more important than burnt offerings.

[7] "But like Adam, you broke my covenant and rebelled against me. [8] Gilead is a city of sinners, tracked with footprints of blood. [9] Its citizens are bands of robbers, lying in ambush for their victims. Gangs of priests murder travelers along the road to Shechem and practice every kind of sin. [10] Yes, I have seen a horrible thing in Israel: My people have defiled themselves by chasing after other gods!

[11] "O Judah, a harvest of punishment is also waiting for you, though I wanted so much to restore the fortunes of my people!"

[7:1] "I wanted to heal Israel, but its sins were far too great. Samaria is filled with liars, thieves, and bandits! [2] Its people don't realize I am watching them. Their sinful deeds are all around them; I see them all! [3] The people make the king glad with their wickedness. The princes laugh about the people's many lies. [4] They are all adulterers, always aflame with lust. They are like an oven that is kept hot even while the baker is still kneading the dough.

[5] "On royal holidays, the princes get drunk. The king makes a fool of himself and drinks with those who are making fun of him. [6] Their hearts blaze like a furnace with intrigue. Their plot smolders through the night, and in the morning it flames forth like a raging fire. [7] They kill their kings one after another, and no one cries out to me for help.

[8] "My people of Israel mingle with godless foreigners, picking up their evil ways. Now they have become as worthless as a half-baked cake! [9] Worshiping foreign gods has sapped their strength, but they don't even know it. Israel is like an old man with graying hair, unaware of how weak and old he has become. [10] His arrogance testifies against him, yet he doesn't return to the Lord his God or even try to find him.

[11] "The people of Israel have become like silly, witless doves, first calling to Egypt, then flying to Assyria. [12] But as they fly about, I will throw my net over them and bring them down like a bird from the sky. I will punish them for all their evil ways.

[13] "How terrible it will be for my people who have deserted me! Let them die, for they have rebelled against me. I wanted to redeem them, but they have only spoken lies about me. [14] They do not cry out to me with sincere hearts. Instead, they sit on their couches and wail. They cut themselves, begging foreign gods for crops and prosperity.

[15] "I trained them and made them strong, yet now they plot evil against me. [16] They look everywhere except to heaven, to the Most High. They are like a crooked bow that always misses its target. Their leaders will be killed by their enemies because of their insolence toward me. Then the people of Egypt will laugh at them.

[8:1] "Sound the alarm! The enemy descends like an eagle on the people of the Lord, for they have broken my covenant and revolted against my law. [2] Now Israel pleads with me, 'Help us, for you are our God!' [3] But it is too late! The people of Israel have rejected what is good, and now their enemies will chase after them. [4] The people have appointed kings and princes, but not with my consent. By making idols for themselves from their silver and gold, they have brought about their own destruction.

[5] "O Samaria, I reject this calf—this idol you have made. My fury burns against you. How long will you be incapable of innocence? [6] This calf you worship was crafted by your own hands! It is not God! Therefore, it must be smashed to bits.

[7] "They have planted the wind and will harvest the whirlwind. The stalks of wheat wither, producing no grain. And if there is any grain, foreigners will eat it. [8] The people of Israel have been swallowed up; they lie among the nations like an old pot that no one wants. [9] Like a wild donkey looking for a mate, they have gone up to Assyria. The people of Israel have sold themselves too many lovers. [10] But though they have sold themselves too many lands, I will now gather them together. Then they will writhe under the burden of the great king!

[11] "Israel has built many altars to take away sin, but these very altars became places for sinning! [12] Even though I gave them all my laws, they act as if those laws don't apply to them. [13] The people of Israel love their rituals of sacrifice, but to me their sacrifices are all meaningless! I will call my people to account for their sins, and I will punish them. They will go back down to Egypt.

[14] "Israel has built great palaces, and Judah has fortified its cities. But they have both forgotten their Maker. Therefore, I will send down fire on their palaces and burn their fortresses."

[9:1] O people of Israel, do not rejoice as others do. For you have been unfaithful to your God, hiring yourselves out like prostitutes, offering sacrifices to other gods on every threshing floor. [2] So now your harvests will be too small to feed you. The grapes you gather will not quench your thirst. [3] You may no longer stay here in this land of the Lord. You will be carried off to Egypt and Assyria, where you will live on food that is ceremonially unclean.

[4] There, far from home, you will not be allowed to pour out wine as a sacrifice to the Lord. None of the sacrifices you offer there will please him. Such sacrifices will be unclean, just as food touched by a person in mourning is unclean. All who present such sacrifices will be defiled. They may eat this food to feed themselves, but they may not offer it to the Lord.

[5] What then will you do on festival days? What will you do on days of feasting in the Lord's presence?

[6] Even if you escape destruction from Assyria, you will be conquered by Egypt. Memphis will bury you. Briers will take over your treasures of silver; brambles will fill your homes.

[7] The time of Israel's punishment has come; the day of payment is almost here. Soon Israel will know this all too well. "The prophets are crazy!" the people shout. "The inspired men are mad!" So they taunt, for the nation is burdened with sin and shows only hatred for those who love God.

[8] The prophet is a watchman for my God over Israel, yet traps are laid in front of him wherever he goes. He faces hostility even in the house of God. [9] The things my people do are as depraved as what they did in Gibeah long ago. God will not forget. He will surely punish them for their sins.

[10] The Lord says, "O Israel, when I first found you, it was like finding fresh grapes in the desert! When I saw your ancestors, it was like seeing the first ripe figs of the season! But then they deserted me for Baal-peor, giving themselves to that shameful idol. Soon they became as vile as the god they worshiped. [11] The glory of Israel will fly away like a bird, for your children will die at birth or perish in the womb or never even be conceived. [12] Even if your children do survive to grow up, I will take them from you. It will be a terrible day when I turn away and leave you alone. [13] I have watched Israel become as beautiful and pleasant as Tyre. But now Israel will bring out her children to be slaughtered."

[14] O Lord, what should I request for your people? I will ask for wombs that don't give birth and breasts that give no milk.

[15] The Lord says, "All their wickedness began at Gilgal; there I began to hate them. I will drive them from my land because of their evil actions. I will love them no more because all their leaders are rebels. [16] The people of Israel are stricken. Their roots are dried up; they will bear no more fruit. And if they give birth, I will slaughter their beloved children."

[17] My God will reject the people of Israel because they will not listen or obey. They will be wanderers, homeless among the nations.

[10:1] How prosperous Israel is—a luxuriant vine loaded with fruit! But the more wealth the people got, the more they poured it on the altars of their foreign gods. The richer the harvests they brought in, the more beautiful the statues and idols they built. [2] The hearts of the people are fickle; they are guilty and must be punished. The Lord will break down their foreign altars and smash their many idols.

[3] Then they will say, "We have no king because we didn't fear the Lord. But what's the difference? What could a king do for us anyway?" [4] They spout empty words and make promises they don't intend to keep. So perverted justice springs up among them like poisonous weeds in a farmer's field.

[5] The people of Samaria tremble for their calf idol at Beth-aven. The people mourn over it, and the priests wail for it, because its glory will be stripped away. [6] This idol they love so much will be carted away with them when they go as captives to Assyria, a gift to the great king there. Israel will be laughed at and shamed because its people have trusted in this idol. [7] Samaria will be cut off, and its king will disappear like a chip of wood on an ocean wave.

[8] And the pagan shrines of Aven, the place of Israel's sin, will crumble. Thorns and thistles will grow up around them. They will beg the mountains to bury them and the hills to fall on them.

[9] The Lord says, "O Israel, ever since that awful night in Gibeah, there has been only sin and more sin! You have made no progress whatsoever. Was it not right that the wicked men of Gibeah were attacked? [10] Now I will attack you, too, for your rebellion and disobedience. I will call out the armies of the nations to punish you for your multiplied sins.

[11] "Israel is like a trained heifer accustomed to treading out the grain—an easy job that she loves. Now I will put a heavy yoke on her tender neck. I will drive her in front of the plow. Israel and Judah must now break up the hard ground; their days of ease are gone. [12] I said, 'Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will harvest a crop of my love. Plow up the hard ground of your hearts, for now is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and shower righteousness upon you.'

[13] "But you have cultivated wickedness and raised a thriving crop of sins. You have eaten the fruit of lies—trusting in your military might, believing that great armies could make your nation safe! [14] Now the terrors of war will rise among your people. All your fortifications will fall, just as they did when Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel. Even mothers and children were dashed to death there. [15] You will share that fate, Bethel, because of your great wickedness. When the Day of Judgment dawns, the king of Israel will be completely destroyed.

[11:1] "When Israel was a child, I loved him as a son, and I called my son out of Egypt. [2] But the more I called to him, the more he rebelled, offering sacrifices to the images of Baal and burning incense to idols. [3] It was I who taught Israel how to walk, leading him along by the hand. But he doesn't know or even care that it was I who took care of him. [4] I led Israel along with my ropes of kindness and love. I lifted the yoke from his neck, and I myself stooped to feed him.

[5] "But since my people refuse to return to me, they will go back to Egypt and will be forced to serve Assyria. [6] War will swirl through their cities; their enemies will crash through their gates and destroy them, trapping them in their own evil plans. [7] For my people are determined to desert me. They call me the Most High, but they don't truly honor me.

[8] "Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Admah and Zeboiim? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows. [9] No, I will not punish you as much as my burning anger tells me to. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy.

[10] "For someday the people will follow the Lord. I will roar like a lion, and my people will return trembling from the west. [11] Like a flock of birds, they will come from Egypt. Flying like doves, they will return from Assyria. And I will bring them home again," says the Lord.

[12] Israel surrounds me with lies and deceit, but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One.

[12:1] the people of Israel feed on the wind; they chase after the east wind all day long. They multiply lies and violence; they make alliances with Assyria and cut deals with the Egyptians.

[2] Now the Lord is bringing a lawsuit against Judah. He is about to punish Jacob for all his deceitful ways. [3] Before Jacob was born, he struggled with his brother; when he became a man, he even fought with God. [4] Yes, he wrestled with the angel and won. He wept and pleaded for a blessing from him. There at Bethel he met God face to face, and God spoke to him— [5] the Lord God Almighty, the Lord is his name! [6] So now, come back to your God! Act on the principles of love and justice, and always live in confident dependence on your God.

[7] But no, the people are like crafty merchants selling from dishonest scales—they love to cheat. [8] Israel boasts, "I am rich, and I've gotten it all by myself! No one can say I got it by cheating! My record is spotless!"

[9] "I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from your slavery in Egypt. And I will make you live in tents again, as you do each year when you celebrate the Festival of Shelters. [10] I sent my prophets to warn you with many visions and parables."

[11] But Gilead is filled with sinners who worship idols. And in Gilgal, too, they sacrifice bulls; their altars are lined up like the heaps of stone along the edges of a plowed field. [12] Jacob fled to the land of Aram and earned a wife by tending sheep. [13] Then the Lord led Jacob's descendants, the Israelites, out of Egypt by a prophet, who guided and protected them. [14] But the people of Israel have bitterly provoked the Lord, so their Lord will now sentence them to death in payment for their sins.

[13:1] In the past when the tribe of Ephraim spoke, the people shook with fear because the other Israelite tribes looked up to them. But the people of Ephraim sinned by worshiping Baal and thus sealed their destruction. [2] Now they keep on sinning by making silver idols to worship—images shaped skillfully with human hands. "Sacrifice to these," they cry, "and kiss the calf idols!" [3] Therefore, they will disappear like the morning mist, like dew in the morning sun, like chaff blown by the wind, like smoke from a chimney.

[4] "I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from your slavery in Egypt. You have no God but me, for there is no other savior. [5] I took care of you in the wilderness, in that dry and thirsty land. [6] But when you had eaten and were satisfied, then you became proud and forgot me. [7] So now I will attack you like a lion, or like a leopard that lurks along the road. [8] I will rip you to pieces like a bear whose cubs have been taken away. I will tear you apart and devour you like a hungry lion.

[9] "You are about to be destroyed, O Israel, though I am your helper. [10] Where now is your king? Why don't you call on him for help? Where are all the leaders of the land? You asked for them, now let them save you! [11] In my anger I gave you kings, and in my fury I took them away.

[12] "The sins of Ephraim have been collected and stored away for punishment. [13] The people have been offered new birth, but they are like a child who resists being born. How stubborn they are! How foolish! [14] Should I ransom them from the grave? Should I redeem them from death? O death, bring forth your terrors! O grave, bring forth your plagues! For I will not relent! [15] Ephraim was the most fruitful of all his brothers, but the east wind—a blast from

the Lord—will arise in the desert. It will blow hard against the people of Ephraim, drying up their land. All their flowing springs and wells will disappear. Every precious thing they have will be plundered and carried away. [16] The people of Samaria must bear the consequences of their guilt because they rebelled against their God. They will be killed by an invading army, their little ones dashed to death against the ground, their pregnant women ripped open by swords."

[14:1] Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for your sins have brought you down. [2] Bring your petitions, and return to the Lord. Say to him, "Forgive all our sins and graciously receive us, so that we may offer you the sacrifice of praise. [3] Assyria cannot save us, nor can our strength in battle. Never again will we call the idols we have made 'our gods.' No, in you alone do the orphans find mercy."

[4] The Lord says, "Then I will heal you of your idolatry and faithlessness, and my love will know no bounds, for my anger will be gone forever! [5] I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. It will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon. [6] Its branches will spread out like those of beautiful olive trees, as fragrant as the cedar forests of Lebanon. [7] My people will return again to the safety of their land. They will flourish like grain and blossom like grapevines. They will be as fragrant as the wines of Lebanon.

[8] "O Israel, stay away from idols! I am the one who looks after you and cares for you. I am like a tree that is always green, giving my fruit to you all through the year."

[9] Let those who are wise understand these things. Let those who are discerning listen carefully. The paths of the Lord are true and right, and righteous people live by walking in them. But sinners stumble and fall along the way.

MEGATHEMES

THEME: The nation's sin

EXPLANATION:

Just as Hosea's wife, Gomer, was unfaithful to him, so the nation of Israel had been unfaithful to God. Israel's idolatry was like adultery. They sought illicit relationships with Assyria and Egypt in pursuit of military might, and they mixed Baal worship with the worship of God.

IMPORTANCE:

Like Gomer, we can chase after other loves—love of power, pleasure, money, or recognition. The temptations in this world can be very seductive. Are we loyal to God, remaining completely faithful, or have other loves taken his rightful place?

THEME: God's judgment

EXPLANATION:

Hosea solemnly warned Judah against following Israel's example. Because Judah broke the covenant, turned away from God, and forgot her Maker, she experienced a devastating invasion and exile. Sin has terrible consequences.

IMPORTANCE:

Disaster surely follows ingratitude toward God and rebellion. The Lord is our only true refuge. If we harden our hearts against him, there is no safety or security anywhere else. We cannot escape God's judgment.

THEME: God's love

EXPLANATION:

Just as Hosea went after his unfaithful wife to bring her back, so the Lord pursues us with his love. His love is tender, loyal, unchanging, and undying. No matter what, God still loves us.

IMPORTANCE:

Have you forgotten God and become disloyal to him? Don't let prosperity diminish your love for him or let success blind you to your need for his love.

THEME: Restoration

EXPLANATION:

Although God will discipline his people for sin, he encourages and restores those who have repented. True repentance opens the way to a new beginning. God forgives and restores.

IMPORTANCE:

There is still hope for those who turn back to God. No loyalty, achievement, or honor can be compared to loving him. Turn to the Lord while the offer is still good. No matter how far you have strayed, God is willing to bring you back.

TIMELINE

Jeroboam II becomes king of Israel 793 B.C.
Amos becomes a prophet 760
Hosea becomes a prophet; King Zechariah of Israel is killed 753
King Shallum of Israel is killed 752
Tiglath-Pileser III invades Israel 743
Micah becomes a prophet to Judah 742
Isaiah becomes a prophet to Judah 740
Israel (northern kingdom) falls 722
Hosea's ministry ends 715

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print