

Exposing a Broken Relationship
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Hosea 1:1-2; 2:2-5; 3:1-5

Opening Question: Let's begin with a "counseling case study." Let's assume we have a friend...we'll call him Mr. H. *Mr. H.'s wife has left him and their three children (two of them teens). She's moved to another town, and has been living with a series of different men. Even though Mr. H. has tried repeatedly to get her to return, and even helped her out financially when she has had money problems, she just laughs at him. Still, Mr. H. can't seem to accept what has happened, and dreams of getting his wife back.*

"What advice would you give Mr. H.? How would you justify your advice biblically?"

[From The "Teachers Commentary"]

Many times we think of sin against God as being disappointing or merely making God sad. We probably picture our Heavenly Father just shaking His head. In today's text Hosea is called upon to demonstrate that sin isn't just a minor disappointment...it's UNFAITHFULNESS and it breaks our relationship with God in a way that our human minds would think could never be reconciled.

Today we begin a study of the first of the "minor" prophets, Hosea. Hosea is right after Daniel and right before Joel in your Bible.

Question: Why were the minor prophets called "minor?"

The minor prophets are not less important than the major prophets. Their prophecies were just shorter.

In Hosea's day there was a divided kingdom. The southern kingdom was called Judah and was made up of the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. The northern kingdom, where Hosea prophesied, was known as Israel, and made up of the other ten tribes.

His prophesy came at the end of a "golden era" for the northern kingdom. There had been great peace and prosperity which, over time, turned to great sin. The people had again, turned to worship idols and turned away from God. By the end of Hosea's time of prophesy the northern kingdom would fall to Assyria as punishment for not turning back from their lives of sin.

We don't know much about Hosea. He was apparently a "layperson" and not a trained theologian. One thing we DO know about Hosea is that God called him to do something most of us would find unthinkable, and he obeyed. We also know that he had to be one of the most long-suffering men who ever lived in a terrible marriage.

Let's begin with the first two verses of Hosea 1 which sets this up with the shocking command God gave to Hosea:

Hosea 1:2 (ESV)

Hosea's Wife and Children

2 When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord."

- Let me summarize: God told Hosea - I want you to marry the wrong kind of woman; she's going to be unfaithful to you; in fact, she will be a "serial cheater"; in fact, a prostitute for money; and you should not only marry her, have children with her.
- Can you imagine? When we think of God asking us to do something difficult the worst we usually think of is moving to a jungle somewhere. This request is SHOCKING!
- **Question: Try to imagine how it must have felt for Hosea. God is asking him to marry a prostitute. Wrap your brain around that. What would that feel like?**
- **How did marrying a prostitute prepare Hosea to deliver the message that God had for him?**
- Hosea marries Gomer and they have three children. God even gives the children names that speak to the sin in Israel:

Hosea 1:4 (ESV)

4 And the Lord said to him, "Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. [That name Jezreel means "scattered," just as God would SCATTER the people of Israel among other people]

Hosea 1:6 (ESV)

6 She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the Lord said to him, "Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all.

Hosea 1:9 (ESV) [When the third child was born...]

9 And the Lord said, "Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God."

The meaning of the names of Hosea's children document what would occur due to the UNFAITHFULNESS of Israel to God. They would be SCATTERED; God would show NO MERCY for a time; and God would consider them "NOT MY PEOPLE" for a time.

- However, verse 10 gives a glimmer of hope as God says to Hosea:

Hosea 1:10 (ESV)

10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God."

Before this is over, God says, "I'll give my people another chance and once again say you are 'Children of the living God.'"

Back to Hosea and Gomer. Gomer apparently begins to live exactly as God had told Hosea she would. After having three children, she leaves to live with other men. In chapter two God gives Hosea the words to prophesy about both the unfaithfulness of Gomer and the unfaithfulness of Israel toward God. Hosea speaks...

Hosea 2:2–5 (ESV)

2 “Plead with your mother, plead—
for she is not my wife,
and I am not her husband—
that she put away her whoring from her face,
and her adultery from between her breasts;

3 lest I strip her naked
and make her as in the day she was born,
and make her like a wilderness,
and make her like a parched land,
and kill her with thirst.

4 Upon her children also I will have no mercy,
because they are children of whoredom.

5 For their mother has played the whore;
she who conceived them has acted shamefully.

For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers,
who give me my bread and my water,
my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’

- Think of the scene as a courtroom. The children are called to bring accusations against their prostitute mother. The children symbolize the “common” people of Israel. The unfaithful wife represents the unfaithful “leaders” of Israel. The spouse who has been cheated on symbolizes God.
- **Verse 2: In essence, what are God’s UNFAITHFUL people told to do? Stop it! Repent!**
- **Verse 3: In essence, what will God do if his UNFAITHFUL people don’t repent? (Note: The ‘leathery appearance’ of a hard life)**
- **Verse 5: What did the Israelites hope to gain by seeking the affection of other “lovers”? What was the flaw in their thoughts in verse 5?**

Recognizing and confessing sin is vital to maintaining a healthy relationship with God. When God makes us aware of our unfaithfulness, we should turn back to Him, seeking the forgiveness He promises, and renewing our commitment to trust and obey Him.
(Explore the Bible Leaders Guide)

- **Question: In your opinion, do the warnings in these verses apply to Christians today? Why or why not? What message does this passage have for those who trust in Jesus Christ?**
- **Question: Do you think we would be less likely to disregard God or disobey Him if we saw these actions as spiritual adultery? Explain.**
- In chapter 3 Hosea goes so above and beyond in his long-suffering love, it’s incredible!
- If you think God’s first command to Hosea in chapter 1 was tough...just wait.

- It appears that Gomer had not only sold her body, she had literally sold herself into slavery.

Hosea 3:1–5 (ESV)

3 And the Lord said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.” 2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. 3 And I said to her, “You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you.” 4 For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. 5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days.

- No matter how UNFAITHFUL Gomer was, Hosea bought her out of slavery and restored her as his bride. Question: What’s the picture there for us today?
- **Question: If a friend asked you what it means to be redeemed, how would you respond? Can we return to God without being redeemed? Why or why not?**
- **Question: How does the fact that God redeemed you influence the way you live each day? What can you do to make sure you never take His redemption for granted?**

So, What’s the TAKEAWAY?

- SIN doesn’t just disappoint God or make him sad. It’s UNFAITHFULNESS that is as painful to him as flagrant, repeated adultery would be to a spouse!
- When we shift our RELIANCE and DEPENDENCE and AFFECTION somewhere other than to God --- we’re the spiritual equivalent of a CHEATING SPOUSE. In fact, when we do it for what we can gain, it’s SPIRITUAL PROSTITUTION.
- Because God is HOLY, He cannot IGNORE or RATIONALIZE our UNFAITHFULNESS.
- His HOLINESS demands that our SIN be confronted and dealt with.
- But, even if we’ve SOLD OURSELVES into slavery to sin. God was willing to BUY US out of slavery with the blood of His Son Jesus. We call that REDEMPTION.
- He’s also willing to treat our UNFAITHFULNESS as if it never happened. We call that RESTORATION.
- But before we can be REDEEMED and RESTORED we have to TURN away from our UNFAITHFULNESS and commit to being LOYAL to our FIRST LOVE (Jesus Christ). We call THAT REPENTANCE.