HOSEA (Week 1)

DAY 1: ONE HOT MESS!

The book of Hosea describes the spiritual state of God's chosen people, and it's not a pretty picture! God uses the prophet to act out a distinct message from the Lord, at great cost to Hosea financially and emotionally. I challenge you to put yourself in Hosea's shoes as you read through this book, for only then will the depth of Hosea's message resonate.

Keep in mind that Israel started out as one nation, but divided into two kingdoms after King Solomon's reign: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

Read **1 Kings 11:29-40 and 1 Kings 12:12-33,** making note of:

1. **What caused the division**

2. **The specific promise given to Jeroboam**

3. **Jeroboam's worship solution for a divided kingdom and the reasoning behind the solution**

> *Disaster was lurking. After Jeroboam II died, six different kings ruled Israel during the next 25 years; four were eliminated by assassination. Weakened by internal strife, Israel collapsed in 722 B.C. when the nation of Assyria destroyed Samaria. Hosea was probably an eyewitness to many of these events as his prophecy about God's judgment on Israel was fulfilled.* – Dean Niforatos, "Hosea"

Author and Timeframe

The first verse of Hosea gives much information revealing the author and time period. Hosea, which translates as "Deliverance" or "Salvation," is identified as the author of the book. Though he only references Israel's King Jeroboam, he does specify the reigns of Judah's kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. This information allows us to place the book of Hosea to be around 755-715 B.C.

Today's Devotional Thought

The story of King Jeroboam saddens and scares me. Imagine learning that you are destined to be king of Israel, and your kingship is because of Judah's lack of devotion to God. If you walk in obedience, the Lord Himself will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one built for King David (1 Kings 11:38). What would be your thoughts? How would you respond? What would be your motivation?

King Jeroboam responded out of fear and need for power. He created a system of false worship, so far from God's design and directive that it was worse than Judah's original offense! He and his fears led a nation into spiritual adultery and political demise -- and it causes me to wonder -- what fears lead me to depart from God's directive, bringing harm to myself and/or others? Let us learn a lesson from King Jeroboam: Ungodly fears bring disaster!!

DAY TWO: CHAPTERS 1-2

Today we start digging in to the book of Hosea. I'll be asking you to mark certain words or phrases as you read today, and therefore encourage you to designate colors or designs for different key words. For example, I personally mark every reference to and synonym of "harlotry" in red. But, I put a "J" next to things referring to Jesus. There are lots of options: different colors, underlining, arrows, boxes, circles, etc. Create your own system, but for the sake of consistency, I encourage you to use consistent markings throughout the book. You might even want to create a legend for your markings on an index card to keep in your Bible as you complete the study.

Without spoiling the story, Hosea is instructed BY GOD to marry an unfaithful woman. Hosea is living out the very message he's been instructed to preach. Keep in mind as you read this book that Hosea is a real man with real emotions. Can you imagine what it would be like to enter into marriage with someone who was 100% certain to be unfaithful to you? And that a holy God, who hates sin and created harsh discipline for adultery, would ask you to do the very thing He considers evil?

"If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel."
-- Deut. 22:22

As you read Chapters 1-2, please do the following:

- Mark with a distinctive color or shape the words "**harlotry**", "**I will**," and "**in that day**". Include any synonyms.
- Mark any references, foreshadowing, or works of **Jesus** and the **Holy Spirit**.
- Write down what the "I wills" are (i.e. punish house of Jehu, no longer show love, etc.)
- What do you notice is different about the "I wills" in Hosea 2:14-23?

What's In (Or Not) In A Name

In Hebrew, "Lo-" put in front of a word means "no" or "not."

Two of Hosea's children have that distinct marker.

- Lo-ruhama = No compassion
- Lo-Ammi = Not My people

Yet in Chapter 2, Hosea refers to them without the "Lo-" prefix and in 2:23, the Lord uses the meanings of the names to declare that in essence He will remove the "Lo-" prefix from Israel as well – that He <u>will</u> have compassion on them and they <u>will</u> be His people.

Today's Devotional Thought

There is a REALLY powerful statement in 2:16, which unless it is understood, will be completely lost in translation! After hearing all the punishment God will bring upon Israel for her adulterous nature, He begins to woo her and says, "'And it will come about in that day,' declares the Lord, 'That you will call Me Ishi and will no longer call Me Baali.'"

In one statement, the Lord declares that He will no longer be considered Baali ("master, owner") to Israel, but rather Ishi ("husband"), an intimate spouse. This is echoed throughout Scripture: Jesus as the bridegroom and the church as the bride, the marriage feast of the Lamb, husbands loving their wives even as Christ loved the church, and even expressions of divine jealousy for His chosen people.

By which name do you call Him today? Is He "Baali," the master who dictates rules and behaviors only? Or is He "Ishi," your intimate spouse, who shares life with you and has your heart?

DAY 3: CHAPTERS 3-4

In Chapter 3 we once again we see a remarkable example through Hosea's life of Christ's redemption and forgiveness. Take note of how this is accomplished.

In Chapter 4 there is reference to Ephraim, which could use some explanation before you read the chapter. After the nation of Israel divided into Israel and Judah (the divided kingdom), Israel consisted of ten tribes. However, the king of Assyria came against Israel in 733 B.C. and took most of Israel captive, except for the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Because Ephraim was the larger and stronger tribe remaining in Israel, Hosea speaks to Ephraim – in essence, the remainder of the nation of Israel. Ten years later the Assyrians would destroy what remained of Israel – Ephraim and Manasseh.

As you read Chapters 3-4, please do the following:

- Distinctively mark the words "**love**", "**knowledge**," "**understanding**" and "**harlotry**". Include any synonyms.
- Mark any references, foreshadowing, or works of **Jesus** and the **Holy Spirit.**
- List the sins described by the Lord in building His case against Israel.
- How does the culture and spiritual climate of Hosea's day compare or contrast to ours?
- What stands out to you in today's passage? Why does it strike you and what is God teaching you?

What's Love Got To Do With It?

Ready for goose bumps? The price Hosea paid for Gomer was the same price one would pay to purchase someone out of slavery.

Gomer, Israel, us – we are enslaved to idolatry, addictions, sin, etc. without Christ purchasing us from our slavery and into freedom and salvation!

But His request is the same now as it was then: Leave behind your lovers (enslavement) and be Mine.

Today's Devotional Thought

As part of our pre-marital counseling, my husband and I were instructed to read through Hosea and note what it said regarding marriage. I was struck by the Lord's love for a people who consistently strayed. I was humbled by Hosea's willingness to forge through personal anguish, frustration, and humiliation for the sake of demonstrating faithfulness. Hosea had every reason to abandon Gomer to her sinful lifestyle and move on with his own life. Yet he didn't. He didn't because he wanted to demonstrate God's never-failing love for Israel.

> *"The judgment of the Lord on adulterous Israel was not a divorce. His desire always was that she would repent of her faithlessness and become a loyal wife."*
>
> -- Jack Hayford, "Twelve Voices for Truth"

Hosea didn't walk the pathway of his culture. He didn't even walk the pathway of his human heart. He walked the path of forgiveness and restoration. He walked the path of covenant, which is what marriage is intended to be.

Let us pray, whether single or married, that we will walk faithfully in forgiveness so that our imperfect relationships can be places of God's restorative power.

DAY 4: CHAPTER 5

Today's chapter goes into detail how God will judge Israel. Remember that references to Ephraim are synonymous with Israel. Judah, however, is referring to the southern kingdom and is different than Israel – though you will see how Israel has negatively influenced Judah toward sin.

Code Language

Hosea uses a play on words tactic to describe a certain place of worship. In verses 4:15 and 5:8 he refers to "Beth-aven", which is actually code language for Bethel.

This is significant because Bethel means "house of God," yet Beth-aven translates to "house of evil."

Hosea is making the point that where God should be found, evil has instead taken hold.

As you read Chapter 5, please do the following:

- Mark the words "**harlot**" and "**I will**." If there are other repeated words or phrases that catch your eye, mark those in a distinctive manner as well.
- Make note of the "I will" statement results.
- Mark any references, foreshadowing, or works of **Jesus** and the **Holy Spirit**.
- What are Israel's (Ephraim) sins and how are they affecting Judah?

Hosea 5:15

The whole of Chapter 5 is quite a downer, in that God is declaring judgment for sin that has just gone too far. Yet, there is a glimmer of hope in the final verse: *"I will go away and return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me."*

- What is your reaction to this verse? Does it sound like God will relent His judgment, or carry it out to completion?
- What does this verse say of God's character and how He relates to His people?

"But however long you may have continued in rebellion, and however black and long the catalog of your sins, yet if you will now turn to God by a sincere repentance, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall not be cast out."

-- Archibald Alexander, Theologian and Professor (1772-1851)

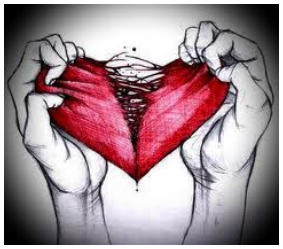
Today's Devotional Thought

In verses 5:5-6, we see that pride is added to the indictment against Israel. As it was for them, it is pride that leads us away from seeking the Lord, from depending upon Him, from intimacy with Him. It is pride that causes us to go through the motions of worship, yet keeps us unaware that the Lord is not pleased. It is pride that leads us from a life of prayer to a life of self-sustaining…which is false sustenance.

This kind of pride should scare us to death! As Proverbs 11:2 says, "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom." Let us be like David who prayed, "My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise." (Psalm 51:17)

DAY 5: CHAPTER 6

Though today's chapter is shorter in length, it is deep in content. Truly, we could probably spend a week just on this chapter, but there is one topic that I believe begs our attention. I encourage you to allow the Lord to speak to you through this chapter and perhaps lead you back here again in the future.



In this chapter we see peculiar word pictures of how God deals with His people, but also how His people relate with their God. **Read Chapter 6 through once, with the picture to the left in mind as you read.**

- Whose heart is being torn and who is doing the tearing?

- If you were God, what would YOUR words to Israel be?

Read Chapter 6 again, doing the following:

- Mark the words "**He has**," "**He will**," and "**harlotry**." Also mark references to **Jesus** and the **Holy Spirit**.

- Make note of the "He has" and "He will" statements. How do they compare/contrast?

- Describe how God has tried to get Israel's attention and how Israel has responded. (Hosea 6:4-10)

- Hosea 6:6 – What is your reaction to this verse? What does it mean for us as Christian believers?

Historical Note

Schechem (Hosea 6:9) was a city of refuge, inhabited by Levite priests. Yet, here it is described as an area of crime and murder – and who is implicated? The priests!

There is speculation that a band of priests were acting as road thieves, controlling the roadways, robbing, and killing those who chose not to worship the false gods of Israel but traveled to Jerusalem to worship the One True God.

Today's Devotional Thought

What does it mean to "return to the Lord?" (Hos. 6:1) What does repentance REALLY mean? I'm sure we've all heard the definition that it is turning completely opposite of where we were headed and going in the direction of God. I prefer this definition: Seeing sin as God sees it – horrific and worthy of eternal damnation – and hating the sin so much that one can't move forward without God's forgiveness, changing his/her life patterns to honor the One who forgave such atrocity. Don't get me wrong…only God can forgive, but we certainly partner with the Lord and His Spirit to live life in that forgiveness.

I believe Hosea 6:6 reveals a "human default" of false repentance, prevalent in all societies and time periods. With our lips we apologize to God, offer sacrifices and empty promises, yet remain unchanged. Our lives remain corrupt, our influence on others is corrupt, and our society remains corrupt before God – usually declining at a magnificent rate. False repentance is a problem that affects our relationship with God, but also every person around us!

So what is the difference between true repentance and false repentance? Please read and pray about what follows. May this sink deep into our hearts and affect the type of change the Lord desires and died for on the cross.

(Continued on next page)

DAY 5 (CONTINUED) Excerpt taken from "Times of Refreshing", Dean Niforatos

TRUE REPENTANCE

The truly repentant don't just see sin as God sees it – their heart really hates it! And they want to save others from it! They are so moved by the horrors of sin that they pray, fast, preach and pull sinners out of the flames of hell. The main point is that the truly repentant agree that both sin and sinner deserve hell and think it amazing that they themselves are saved. They don't see God as hard or harsh, but as just and righteous and merciful.

FALSE REPENTANCE

The falsely repentant have no true sorrow because they see God as unjust and the people aware of their [individual] sin as condemning, busybodies, prudish, judgmental or mentally unstable.

RESULTS OF TRUE AND FALSE REPENTANCE

True Repentance

1. A conscious change of mind, views and feelings in regard to sin.
2. The desire to keep sinning is gone.
3. There is a reformation and even a permanent change of conduct and character.
4. There is honest confession and even restitution when possible.

False Repentance

1. There is no change of attitude toward the sin, only grief over the consequences of its exposure.
2. There are feelings of regret that are centered in self-pity; it is founded only in selfishness! "Look at how horrible my life is (to which those around add, 'yeah, because of …[fill in the blank]') – why is God allowing this?"
3. There are feelings of fear without a hatred of the hypocrisy of their own two-faced life (one way in church, one way out). I am a father, husband, minister, etc., but all these "roles" I play interconnect. In unhealthy, sinful people, they can play church member, dad, and husband, but be different people in each role without those roles interconnecting! Hence, a person can be an abusive dad and go to church and play church member without any qualms, thinking all is OK. This is false repentance at work! It should also be noted that this hypocritical, two-faced lifestyle is accompanied by a fear of hell that never really goes away because they refuse to acknowledge they and their sins deserve it. They can almost be pouty about it.
4. The feelings about sin and the desire to do them remain unchanged; there is no desperate action to do anything about it.
5. The falsely repentant person wants no public knowledge of repentance or the fact that they were a sinner. It only leads to sweeping sin under the carpet, literally ashamed of repentance. And when sin is exposed and they are drawn to an altar, the sin is always talked about in the softest and most favorable terms, smoothing over the enormity of what happened.
6. There is only a partial reformation of conduct, which is generally forced and half-hearted. They generally go back to all previous behaviors but in less visible ways.
7. It tends to be extremely self-righteous and often is legalistic, going on witch-hunts to expose what they themselves have never willingly confessed.
8. It hardens the heart, closes out conviction, sears the conscience and makes you a zombie, and worst of all: it gives a false sense of security like Samson in the Old Testament and the man who built his barns for his wealth in the New Testament.

TEST YOURSELF

1. Examine and test your public life. Are you cheating, stealing, lying, lusting, swearing, etc.?
2. Examine and test your private life. Do you lack fear of the Lord; are you prayerless; going through the motions of devotions? Is Jesus not really the one your mind drifts to?
3. Examine and test your passion for the lost. Do you really not care if those around you are damned for eternity; are your prayers for the lost tearless; do you find yourself in such a lack of love that you cannot overcome your fear (remember, 'perfect love casts out fear'), etc.?

LET US BE TRULY REPENTANT INDIVIDUALS WHO SEEK THE LORD AND LIVE ACCORDING TO HIS WAYS!

DAY 6: CHAPTERS 7-8

Whew! You survived a heavy day yesterday dealing with repentance. I pray you have dealt with sin in your life and truly repented before the Lord, walking anew this day in His forgiveness, mercy and grace. Yesterday's focus was critical because today we see the continued outflow of lack of Israel's repentance.

As you read Chapters 7-8, please do the following:

- Put an exclamation point next to all references to "**None calls on Me**," "**against Me**," etc. In other words, if it describes a **complaint of God regarding how Israel has treated Him**, put an exclamation point!
- Make note of these complaints.
- Mark all references, foreshadowing, and/or works of **Jesus** and the **Holy Spirit**.
- There are 3 specific ways God will judge Israel. Describe the form of these judgments.
    - Hosea 8:4-6
    - Hosea 8:8-10
    - Hosea 8:11-14

Today's Devotional Thought

Take time today to formulate your thoughts about what you've learned in Hosea thus far. We still have another week in Hosea to go, but start focusing some of your thoughts now.

What is a main theme in Hosea?

How have you seen Jesus and the Holy Spirit represented in the book?

What has God been personally teaching you through Hosea this past week? What are you going to do with what you've learned?

"For your Maker is your husband – the Lord Almighty is his name – the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth."

-- Isaiah 54:5

DAY 7: REFLECTION AND GROUP DISCUSSION

If you're part of a group, then the questions below will help you further prepare for your discussion time. For those who are not part of a group, take opportunity to evaluate what you've learned and spend time in prayer with the Lord.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 11:2, "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin." What does this mean to you?

Israel's spiritual leadership is called out frequently for their immoral behavior. How can willful covenant breakers in the church influence others to be untrue to the Lord? How do you see this played out in your church and life?

Much of Hosea talks about Israel's unfaithfulness, harlotry, adultery, and idol worship. What do you see as idols and "lovers" today that draw us from the Lord?

What lessons did God teach you during this past week in Hosea? What are you going to do with what you learned?

How did you see Jesus and the Holy Spirit represented in the book of Hosea?

Though a bit early to summarize the whole book, if you had to pick one word or phrase that describes what we've covered thus far, what would it be?