

Hosea

- I. **Intro** – buckle up, this is a love story. And not a very good one, to be honest. It's like a bad book or a bad movie, not all that enjoyable to follow...But it's not the first love story God has ever told, so in spite of it all, He capably weaves in beautiful moments and visions of glorious, pursuing love in and throughout.
 - A. **Background:** (*fly through this, sorry, not sorry*) same time as Amos the prophet; calling for repentance, or else...Assyria.
 1. A very convoluted political system (in quick passing, Jeroboam II had a militarily and economically successful rule in Israel keeping back Assyria and Syria (though wicked); he was followed by his son Zechariah who was quickly assassinated by Shallum who himself was assassinated within a month by Menahem who paid 1,000 talents of silver to Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria, Israel's biggest foe, whose succeeding son Pekahiah was assassinated by Pekah within two years who was himself also assassinated by Hoshea son of Elah
 - a. Wow. And in such a tumultuous time, you'd think they would return back to God. But then again, neither have modern countries who were once close to following the LORD, but went astray to false idolatry
 - b. As an aside, this is a good book to read following some of the historical accounts (books like Judges and I&II Kings) to get the context for what the prophecies are about. For example, knowing the tragedy of Gibeah from Judges helps understand **Hosea 9:9**
 2. The end of the northern tribes as we knew it. Israel (aka Samaria, aka Ephraim, aka Jacob) was to be finally sacked. Amos had been warning, but with no direct mention of the foe. Hosea presently follows and names the enemy God would ultimately use to destroy them, Assyria.
 - a. This was of concern for Hosea/God, that God would end Israel's nationhood. But also the book of Hosea demonstrates major concern with how Israel's lack of obedience affected Judah, the southern tribes. The promise of God was to continue through Judah and Jerusalem and the book and prophet warned Judah extensively against following the pattern of the northern tribes. Directly put, he states in chapter 4 – "Ephraim has joined herself to idols; leave her alone." (**4:17**)
 - b. Before we go further, let's address the Israel/Jacob/Ephraim/Samaria connection so it doesn't become a confusion
 - i. Israel was the name for Jacob, the man, and then became the name given to the collection of children after him, the nation God started through him
 - ii. Ephraim, the second son of Joseph, was adopted by grandpa Jacob, father of Joseph, and became grafted into Jacob's promises (**Genesis 41:50-52, 48:5**); scripture says he was regarded the same as Reuben and Simeon
 - iii. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom, Israel, and often the seat bed of spiritual perversion, and therefore often known and condemned for it
 - iv. Israel was the northern ten tribes and part of who God called His people. However, based on the above, they were not just called Israel. Samaria and Ephraim were both representative heads for the northern kingdom as a whole in biblical prophecy and Jacob was used in an original name's sake, so in the end all four can be used to say the same thing. It might be likened to speaking of Washington DC or of the current president as a representative of the whole (like when I was in Uganda and they said "oh, you're from Obama-land")

- B. **Hosea, the person:** background is not all that instructive. We know little of him. Actually, we know nothing. He is a prophet and knows the Lord's voice deeply and personally.
- C. **Method of teaching** and prophecy with Hosea: partly, Hosea passes on the word of the LORD and yet equally true, there is a prominence to the life of Hosea in a prophetic sense
 - 1. In the entire book, Hosea is only quoted speaking in one verse, and that to his wife to declare his faithful love for many years and to call her to the same. And again in chapter 9 and the first part of chapter 14 it seems that he is the one giving the address instead of the LORD, or at the least that the two voices are melded into one so that what Hosea is saying is really just what God was directly saying through him; the subject speaking changes but the message remains the same. But the rest of the book catalogues the direct quotes of God as He speaks to and over the people in Israel and Judah. Whether or not a section here or there is actually Hosea's words or not, the point remains: it's very little speaking on the part of Hosea, for whom the book is named
 - 2. And yet here we are thousands of years later talking about him and he has an entire book in the Bible. How was he a prophet, let alone a standout in history? He was a faithful man to do and say what the LORD told him.
 - a. His life was a ministry
 - b. His family had a national ministry (and international / across millennia)
 - c. Ultimately, Hosea is a great example that it's really God at work the whole time, and that God just happens to use people to work alongside Him sometimes. And when He does use people, it is sometimes best if they do nothing but just quote his words directly and do exactly what He says, even if it's odd.
- D. Despite all of this, the book of Hosea is a model followed by many other prophetic books. It is quoted, alluded to, carries messianic importance, and jumps the gap to the NT many times! This is a prominent book!
 - 1. **I Peter 1:10-12** – this book was written for you! Literally for you and for me today, the prophet of Hosea was working on our behalf, says the Lord.
- II. A quick overview of the book so you can get the gist of the book. Truly truly, it is far better if you are able to read the book in advance, and I trust many of you were able to do that. So, this overview will serve as an on ramp to get us all up to speed together as we highlight notable sections or ideas from each chapter:)
 - A. **Hosea 1** – word of the LORD comes to the prophet Hosea to marry a woman of whoredom, of prostitution. They have kids which are given very strange names, but ones with great significance to the nation of Israel; the names were a warning
 - B. **Hosea 2** – the essence of the love story, floundering as it may be, is captured in this chapter. Israel takes what God gave her and in fact gives it to the baals, exact opposite of God's best. Yet, in some marvelously inexplicable way that only God could do, He pursues her as a lover and desires betrothal and knowing Him experientially and intimately.
 - C. **Hosea 3** – Hosea is told of God to go back and remarry Gomer, to buy her back and recommit in a new same covenant (don't lose that; it's hugely significant to the understanding of the Gospel in this book!)
 - D. **Hosea 4** – more multiplying of sin is depicted in this chapter, along with a few statements to point out that "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*"
 - E. **Hosea 5** – the people's pride and apostasy gets in the way; God closes the chapter saying He will go away until they acknowledge their guilt and seek His face
 - F. **Hosea 6** – the chapter starts with a false repentance, but with a huge tip of the cap toward the Gospel. IF ONLY they would have actually got it and understood! God, in this chapter, states that all of the sacrifice is not all that impressive; He desires love and loyalty and true knowledge more than all that.

- G. **Hosea 7** – through a few analogies, Hosea/God point out that the people were useless and gooey on the inside, again in their own pride and wickedness and unfaithfulness
- H. **Hosea 8** – they make idols and worship them...how full of sin that is and how dumb
- I. **Hosea 9** – their harlotries have brought on punishment and shame; “*they have become as detestable as that which they loved*”
- J. **Hosea 10** – while supposed to be a vine, they have become thorn and thistle; so now the call is to “*sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD*”
- K. **Hosea 11** – Jesus is foreshadowed, and God describes His heart, holy and faithful and kindled with compassion
- L. **Hosea 12** – amid a description of reality, there is a call to “*return to your God, observe kindness and justice, and wait for your God continually*”
- M. **Hosea 13** – they sinned more, they forgot God, they will be destroyed
- N. **Hosea 14** – yet again! It’s a call to return! And if so, God will heal. God will love freely.
- III. **Themes** for the book of Hosea – we’ll take a few minutes on this now as we might not come specifically back to these descriptively
 - 1. *Hesed* – perhaps the best word in the entire Bible, and therefore the best word ever invented to describe a reality that is far beyond what we can comprehend
 - a. For a further study, go to fmi360.com and look for the Psalms teaching. We touched on it in that teaching too
 - b. *Hesed* is the undefinable, way-beyond our comprehension love; it means lovingkindness, mercy, faithfulness, goodness (and a ton more, but go check it out yourself!)
 - 2. Knowledge of God (“*yada*” – personal knowing, not just intellectual acquiescence)
 - 3. All the big words that are beyond our full understanding: righteousness, justice, compassion, love, kindness, and more. Hosea hits them all
 - 4. Stupidity of man, frivolity of sin (c.f. **2:8; 4:11-12; 7:4,8,16; 8:4-7; 13:4-11**)
 - 5. Seek the LORD (**2:7; 5:6,15; 7:10; 10:12; 12:4** from what I found)
 - 6. Return – the continual call of the prophets to the people. There is hope, return!!
 - 7. Pursuing, betrothing love of God (goes with point 1)
- B. **Main theme and big point** of the book of Hosea: like any good love story, this book is not a linear book. He circuitously hits on a number of themes throughout the book, coming back and back to the big point – sin separates yet God’s love pursues.
 - 1. Chapter 1 – Hosea and Gomer visibly and tangibly depict God’s undeserved love
 - 2. Chapter 2 – pursuing love of God, though even less deserved than at the beginning
 - 3. Chapter 3 – Gomer has chased other lovers, but Hosea still pursues and gives a new covenant of long-term committed love
 - 4. Chapter 6 – “*for I desire faithful and loyal love, not sacrifice*”
 - 5. Chapter 11 – “*My heart is turned over within Me, all My compassions are kindled*”
 - 6. Chapter 14 – “*I will love them freely*”
- IV. With that as an overview, let’s restart where all good love stories start, the beginning
 - A. God is love and exists in a relationship of love, in a way, before time began. But when God created the world, He had infinitely more reasons and ways to express His perfect forever love to an undeserving people. That’s when He got to show off His perfect love in a way impossible to show without us. It’s just part of who He is. It’s *natural* to Him.
 - B. And, like a beautiful and creative Lover, He creates a garden in which to walk and woo His people. The genesis of time, space, and love. Beautiful garden spaces, flowing rivers around land with gold in it, fruit trees ripe for the picking, long walks in the river garden in the cool of the day. Wow, how romantic is that!

- C. And He's been pursuing His people ever since! With a Lover such as God and with all of the provisions of security and relationship and family and all needed earthly provisions, He would easily be loved in return...unfortunately not the story. His beloved bride has been running away from Him. Below are a few examples in Scriptures
 - D. **Genesis 1-3** – remember that beautiful garden of romance? They haven't even left the garden and they already turned to lust for something else they deemed beautiful. But even in that very moment, God offered Himself to come in the most intimate way He could have, as a human, to crush the enemy and give hope for a life with God again.
 - E. **Exodus 32** – while Moses is on the mountain receiving tablets literally written upon with the finger of God, the people are taking the gold God had given them and using it to make their own "god". He, the Lover, gives them rings of promise and provision and He is writing a hand-written note, only to find that they are using what He gave them to "make a god," as if that were even possible...
 - F. **Isaiah 5** – "The vineyard of my well-beloved"
 - 1. There was not a thing that He could not have done to make it better; yet it produced bad fruit because they did not abide in Him
 - 2. Circa John 15 when He calls them to abide in His love
 - G. **Ezekiel 16** – Failed love relationship, promiscuous woman taking the beauty God gave and flaunting it on other lovers
 - 1. Dead and dirty in our own blood; made alive and cleaned up through Him and His blood
 - 2. She had nothing. Then He lavished on her all good things.
 - a. But she took that and was satisfied by it apart from Him (**Hosea 13:6**)
 - 3. But God establishes a new covenant after it all (**Ezekiel 16:60-63**)
 - H. **Song of Songs** – Love relationship of intimate lovers, protective and deepening in heart understanding as the relationship and the book progresses. This mirror a God who is our Lover and the One who pursues us with a crazy love.
 - I. **Luke 15** – Love relationship of a father and son
 - 1. At the heart of God's transformation in Hosea, is going from "baali" to "ishi", going from a distant relationship to family. The second son returns to the house after squandering it all and is prepared to be a servant to the master. But the father does not allow that and declares himself as a loving father!
 - J. Love stories all throughout Scripture! You can tell it's a major theme for God; and no wonder because "*God is love*" (**I John 5**). God did not singularly choose the theme of a love story for Hosea, but He did choose to play it out in a different way, and a memorable one at that. With the remaining time today, we will look at the highlights through the book that drive toward what I believe is the main point. I will give it to you again: sin separates but God's love pursues.
- V. **Hosea 1:1** – "The word of the Lord..."
- A. As with other prophets, this is the clarion call. The message is not their own, but the word of the Lord. As it should be with us.
 - B. This was also the way of Jesus who says "*I do nothing on my own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught me*" **John 8:28**
- VI. **Hosea 1:2** – wife and kids and names
- A. Right from the jump, we see the style of ministry the Lord uses with Hosea the prophet is not merely words. Hosea would be an exemplary prophet. But in his case, a very tough exemplar. He would need to have fear of God and no fear of man, for to obey would mean to be ridiculed, shamed in his name, perhaps to the point of shunned and no longer trusted or no longer invited into the public worship spaces, etc.

1. ****kinda reminds you of the decision Mary had and the decision Joseph faced to agree with the LORD and birth/raise the Christ child****
- B. Jezreel
 1. Scattered
 2. Recalls the bloodshed of Jezreel – as to what this means, come talk to me later! I’ll save it for the post-Bible study Bible study :)
- C. Lo-ruhamah (not clear if it was Hosea’s child or if she conceived unfaithfully)
 1. Not loved
- D. Lo-ammi
 1. Not my people
 2. Uses the covenant language “I shall be your God and you shall be My people,” yet flipped. Stinging language.
- E. Wow, that seems devoid of hope. Will there ever be a turn around? In fact, yes! Scattered → Gathered. Not loved → Loved. Not My people → My people.

VII. **Hosea 2**

- A. Gives us a description of the saga; and already we begin to see it unfold. Israel has been terribly unfaithful, directly opposing God (even using the specific provision of the LORD and turning to make that into an idol, **2:8**; circa golden calf incident)
- B. **2:1** – “ammi” and “ruhammah”
 1. Opens the door for what God had just closed by their unfaithfulness
- C. BECAUSE! There is a bigger storyline than the people’s unfaithfulness and it begins to weave in from chapter 2. And it’s my favorite part of the book of Hosea, it’s what makes it so beautiful! It’s the OT presentation of the Gospel and it’s the heart of God. God the Lover pursues.
- D. Gospel
 1. The bad news: they took the gifts God gave them and made it to an object of worship. BUT God offers hope and will pursue even the least lovable.
 - a. We see this same Gospel presentation in Joel, for example, which is the next book of the Bible after Hosea – chapter 1: you will be destroyed because of your sin; chapter 2: call toward repentance and offer of salvation if so; chapter 3: God says I will be your God and you will be My people forever
- E. **Hosea 2:8** – epitome of the people who have flipped the blessing on its head
 1. *“for she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil, and lavished on her silver and gold, which she used for Baal”*
 2. Took what only God could give and gave it to a god who couldn’t give anything
 3. God has two responses
 - a. Firstly, He will take away what He had given and they had given to the other gods. He can’t keep giving them what they give to the other gods. That’s not a good God who would help them commit abominable acts
 - b. Second, we see a shocking “therefore” which truly shows the heart of God
- F. **2:14-23** – “therefore.” Only with God can this be the very next word after an entire description of their failing and running away with His gifts. God says *“therefore, behold I will allure her.”*
 1. **2:15** – “vineyards.” God is always bringing us to the point of needing His provision and needing His connection, and vines/vineyards are how He frequently highlights that gift and that need
 - a. John 15, Isaiah 5, etc
 2. **2:15** – “a door of hope.” Again, God even names it here. There is hope with God, even if unwarranted.

3. **2:16** – “Ishi” v “Baali.” Again, only God! *Baali* – my master → *Ishi* – my husband
 - a. Both are true, but God tips the cap toward which is closer to His heart.
4. **2:19-20**
 - a. This is in spite of it all!
 - b. He betroths forever! And in a way only God can: righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, compassion, faithfulness. What a list!
5. **2:20**
 - a. “*then you will know the LORD*”
 - i. Point one – it is *after* you’ve seen His righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, compassion and faithfulness that you know the LORD. To see God without this is not to truly know God
 - ii. “To know” – *yada*. You will experience, you will have connection with, you will be in relationship with the LORD
 - iii. Knowing the LORD is huge in the book of Hosea
 1. C.f. - **2:20, 4:1; 4:6; 5:4; 6:3; 8:2; 14:9**
 2. “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*” (**4:6**)
 3. God wants them to know Him! And it is to their destruction if they don’t.
 1. Experience – what is it that, now you know, you are not the same?

VIII. **Hosea 3** – Gomer again

- A. “*Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.*”
 1. Keys to understanding this is Gomer, round 2
 - a. “*Even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel...*”
 - i. Going and marrying another woman doesn’t parallel the LORD’s love
 - b. “*Go love a woman who is loved by her husband...*”
 - i. Word for wife and woman are the same in Hebrew; which would be awkward for the LORD to go tell Hosea to go love a wife who is still loved by her husband, unless that woman is his wife
 - c. Storyline – as I already kind of stated above, the point of this is prophetic visual to the entire nation that God will pursue and love to the point of betrothal and marrying and rebetrothing and remarrying.
 2. He went and bought her back for the price of silver and grain for bread
 - a. Jesus!! Bought for the price of silver and lives as our bread of life!
 - i. God used the fact that Hosea didn’t have enough silver to pay in straight cash, and instead paid in part silver/part grain, to give a tip of the cap to who Jesus was and how He would buy us back> Jesus was the slave and also the provider
 - b. Why did Hosea have to buy her back? Because through her harlotries she had reduced herself to nothing more than a slave. And in fact, she was purchased at nearly half of the price of a common slave. She had run herself ragged chasing other lovers.
 - c. Which just highlights the beauty of God’s love story
 - i. Read **Hosea 3:3-5**
 - ii. Like God, Hosea made a new covenant with Gomer. This was not on the basis of what she deserved, but rather on the basis of who Hosea was called to be: a husband who loved in spite of Gomer giving that love away, a husband who was faithful in spite of his bride’s lack of faithfulness, a husband who searched and found and bought back in spite of the fact that she took his provisions and used them to get other lovers.

- B. It's all throughout, but I will bring up here a connection that is clear throughout Hosea: they are an unfaithful bride who is languishing on her own. She has taken what was given to her and run to other lovers
 - 1. Enter the reminder from **Ezekiel 16**. This is perhaps the most vivid / graphic rendering, along with Hosea, of the people of Israel. The woman in Ezekiel 16 is found by the Lord in her own blood, naked and without hope. God picks her up, cleanses her, dresses her, brings her up in beauty and to the point of maturity. All good things, yay God! But...she does not acknowledge God, rather her own self and, worse, acknowledges other lovers
 - 2. She goes from nothing and dying to royalty, to family with the King, but trusts in self. Sounds like our story and their story. Read **Ezekiel 16:1-30**
- IX. All of the major themes of the book come up in the first three chapters; the rest of the book plays this out as we will see. **Hosea 4**
 - A. The only thing the people are credited with loving through the book are other lovers and shame (**4:18**)
- X. It's not enough to say a few true things
 - A. End of **Hosea 5**, God requires them to acknowledge their guilt and earnestly seek Him. Their response? Chapter 6 has a wonderful little reply, but it's not fully true and it's not what He asked of them
 - B. God clearly isn't impressed with their soliloquy to start chapter 6. In fact, His response is to say "what shall I do with you...your loyalty is like a morning cloud"
 - 1. It's really just a focus on themselves. And that is one of the dangerous ways to approach God and life. Because with just enough truth mixed in to a worldview where they were the center, they were able to get away from culpability and back to a declaration that God was good with them
 - 2. Today, that is a temptation we see too when there is only part of the Bible preached and it's self-focused at that. God states very clearly that He is not impressed with the human-centered "gospel."
 - 3. Do a little personal inventory of your prayers and thinking. Is it a Gospel focused on God for the sake of God, or a little more on yourself and what He can do for you and how you will be healed and safe and blessed.
 - a. A helpful question to ask: "if all your prayers from this last week were answered yes, would the world be any different, would there be any more souls in the Kingdom, and would the Gospel advance? Or would you just have had a number of good days, a safe ride to your locations, and had "blessed food to your body" (whatever that actually means...)?
- XI. **Hosea 6**
 - A. **6:2** "*He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day.*"
 - 1. What they thought was a poetic way to claim God's blessings was in reality a prophetic declaration of God's entire plan of salvation!
 - 2. They were using a technique in Hebrew poetry known as parallelism, to further a point by taking it one step further than before
 - a. **Proverbs 6:16** – six things the LORD hates, yea seven which are an abomination...
 - b. **Psalms 38:1** – ...
 - B. Poetry is beautiful like that; it has a way of highlighting a point in a way straight discourse or narrative or declarations cannot do on their own.
 - C. **6:6** – one of the greatest declarations of God's heart in the OT. Super clear and to the point
 - 1. *Hesed*
 - 2. Love > sacrifice
- XII. **Hosea 7**

- A. **7:16** – “*They turn, but not upward*” – ooh. That’s God pointing it out clearly
** sing “Come, Return” on piano? **

XIII. **Hosea 8**

- A. **8:4** – read
B. **8:6** – “*a craftsman made it, so it is not God.*”
1. Duh! Pretty obvious with that one...If the human made it, the human is more powerful and creative than the thing it made. By nature it has to be that way. So clearly it cannot be God, Hosea says!
C. **8:8** – “*Israel is swallowed up; they are now among the nations*”
1. One of the worst of their fates, they are no longer a nation of God, they are simply “among the nations”

XIV. **Hosea 9**

- A. **9:10** – “*...and devoted themselves to shame, and they became as detestable as that which they loved.*”

XV. **Hosea 10**

- A. **10:1** – a luxuriant vine and in **10:8** – thorn and thistle
B. **10:12** – “*sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness; break up your fallow ground for it is time to seek the LORD until He comes to rain righteousness on you*”

XVI. **Hosea 11**

- A. Jesus! “Out of Egypt I have called my Son...”
B. **11:4** – “*I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, and I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; and I bent down and fed them*”
C. **11:8** – “*My heart is turned over within Me, all my compassions are kindled.*”
D. **11:9** – this is the opposite of what I would expect. <I am God and therefore when I get angry, I will destroy> but that’s not what God says here.
1. The Holy One doesn’t stay aloof and holy only. He is also the loving, pursuing One!

XVII. **Hosea 12**

- A. **12:6** – there it is again, the clear call of the prophet of the LORD. They all say “return!”

XVIII. **Hosea 13**

- A. Already mentioned it, but **13:6** is a sad depiction of where humans can go if they rely on themselves or think of life in their own little bubbles
B. **13:14** – Jesus again!
1. But this is the power of the Gospel. What was in the book of Hosea a condemnatory riff, is in I Corinthians attached to the power of the Gospel to transform a rebuke into a declaration of power and promise!
a. Read **I Corinthians 15:55-57**

C. **Hosea 14**

1. Again, the clear message of the prophet of the LORD closes the book of Hosea: return to the LORD (**v1**) and He promises to heal and to love freely (**v4**). God’s love is stronger and more perpetuating than human failure. Boom, let that cover the entire book. God declares He will heal and He will love freely.
2. There is also the recurring connection with vines and fruit and Him as our Source!

XIX. Take aways

- A. The book of Hosea is a love story. But it’s a bad love story because one side never really gets there. So it’s really just a God story
B. But it’s a call and a reminder to us so we can avoid the mistake and instead ourselves participate in this beautiful love story, one He is inviting us into as well today. He has placed the warnings to us, like He did to them through the prophets, that we might turn to Him and engage in the pursuit of love together!