

Hosea

the redemptive love of God

study guide

Hosea: Schedule

WEEK #	DATES	TITLE	HOSEA TEXT
1	Jan 5-11, 2025	Living the Meme	1:1-2:1
2	Jan 12-18, 2025	Family Fallout	2:2-13
3	Jan 19-25, 2025	Future Vision	2:14-23
4	Jan 26-Feb 1, 2025	Reunited	3:1-5
5	Feb 2-8, 2025	Broken Covenant	4:1-11
	Feb 9-15, 2025	Faith Promise/Missions	
	Feb 16-22, 2025	Faith Promise/Missions	
6	Feb 23-Mar 1, 2025	Worthless Worship	4:10-19
7	Mar 2-8, 2025	Corruption & Destruction	5:1-15
8	Mar 9-15, 2025	Let Us Return?	6:1-6
9	Mar 16-22, 2025	Murder, Marauding, & Manipulation	6:7-7:7
10	Mar 23-29, 2025	Senseless Alliances	7:8-16
11	Mar 30-Apr 5, 2025	More Than They Bargained For	8:1-14
12	Apr 6-12, 2025	End the Celebrations	9:1-17
13	Apr 13-19, 2025	Sow, Reap & Seek the Lord	10:1-15
	April 20-26, 2025	Easter	
14	April 27-May 3, 2025	Overwhelming Mercy	11:1-11
15	May 4-10, 2025	Justice Prevails	11:12-12:14
	May 11-17, 2025	Mother's Day	
16	May 18-24, 2025	Forgotten God	13:1-16
17	May 25-31, 2025	Return & Be Loved	14:1-9



Week 1
Jan 5-11, 2025

Living the Meme (Hosea 1:1-2:1)

WELCOME!

We are so glad you are joining us to study the book of Hosea. When we study together as a whole church, wonderful opportunities open up for God to speak to us and through us. Connecting personal study with the Sunday messages helps us understand God's Word better and remember it longer.

This guide will walk you through the process of studying scripture for yourself to understand the book of Hosea as a whole. There are three basic steps in the process. First, *explore* the text to *comprehend* what was written. What words did Hosea use? What did God say through Hosea? The next step is to *interpret* the original meaning. That means we work to discover the message Hosea wanted to communicate and what the original audience would have understood. Finally, we *apply* the passage and ask, "*How should I respond? How should this change me?*" The Holy Spirit may help you recognize some action you need to take. Or you may develop a new perspective of God and his character.

As you work through each section, remember that the Bible is God's story first. Through it, God reveals himself—his character, actions, and intentions. Self-discovery comes as a result of God-discovery. When we know God, we know truth, and that truth guides us to see and understand ourselves and the world.

Each week, **THE BIG PICTURE** summarizes what we have learned previously and offers background information and historical notes to aid understanding and orient us within the book.

INDIVIDUAL STUDY: Beginning with week two, there are four days of individual study exercises. Small group discussions will use selected questions from this daily study (see **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**). Some questions may be challenging. Do your best to answer and then discuss the question in your small group. The process—digging into scripture and contemplating God's Word—is more important than getting the "right" answer to the questions. You will learn more by studying and pondering the text on your own. Resist the urge to go immediately to a study Bible or other aids.

Ideally, you will complete the individual study questions **before** the Sunday message on that passage. If you do, you will be ready to interact more deeply with Sunday's message.

Let's get started!

THE BIG PICTURE

I doubt that any little boy in ancient Israel daydreamed of growing up to be a prophet. While they might be well regarded, often they were despised because of the hard messages they brought. Sometimes, in addition to giving his prophets words to speak, God directed them to be living examples of the message. Hosea was one of those prophets. He is probably better known today for what God called him to do than for what he told him to say. Today, a meme is an image that conveys a big message with few or no words. In a sense, Hosea was a living meme. His life portrayed deep truths about God, his relationship with his people, and a love that seeks out the unfaithful one to redeem a broken relationship.

After the reign of King Solomon, the nation of Israel was divided. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, remained in Jerusalem as king of the southern kingdom of Judah (containing the tribes of Judah and Benjamin). His rival, Jeroboam, became the king over the much larger northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 12). While Israel intended to stay faithful to God, the new boundary between Israel and Judah separated the people of Israel from the temple, the only God-ordained location for sacrifices. Fearing that this would cause problems for his new nation, Jeroboam authorized two new locations for his people to worship God (Are you imagining ominous background music?).

By the time Hosea entered the scene (somewhere around 750-710 BC), the northern kingdom had experienced many ups and downs. King Jeroboam II brought economic prosperity through successful military campaigns. Israel's spiritual health was not so rosy, however. Like many cosmopolitan areas, religious ideas are bought in the marketplace along with other goods, and a flourishing economy often leads to excessive pride in oneself and a decreased reliance on God. (See the timeline on page 4 to get an idea of when Hosea lived related to other prophets and kings.)

Prophetic writings can be difficult to understand. They are far more poetic than the Bible's historical writings, like the Gospels or the opening books of the Old Testament. Prophecy also uses symbolism and refers to events that are not always familiar to us. The prophetic books were often written over several years, but it is not always clear when the prophet delivered each message. What does this mean for us? We should be careful not to read prophecies in a very strict, literal sense. We also should not make the opposite mistake of assuming it is so figurative that it doesn't represent something true in the real, physical world where we live. While the Old Testament points to Jesus (John 5:39-40), there was a specific message for those who first heard it. We must be careful to try and determine what was communicated to that audience before applying the principles to today.

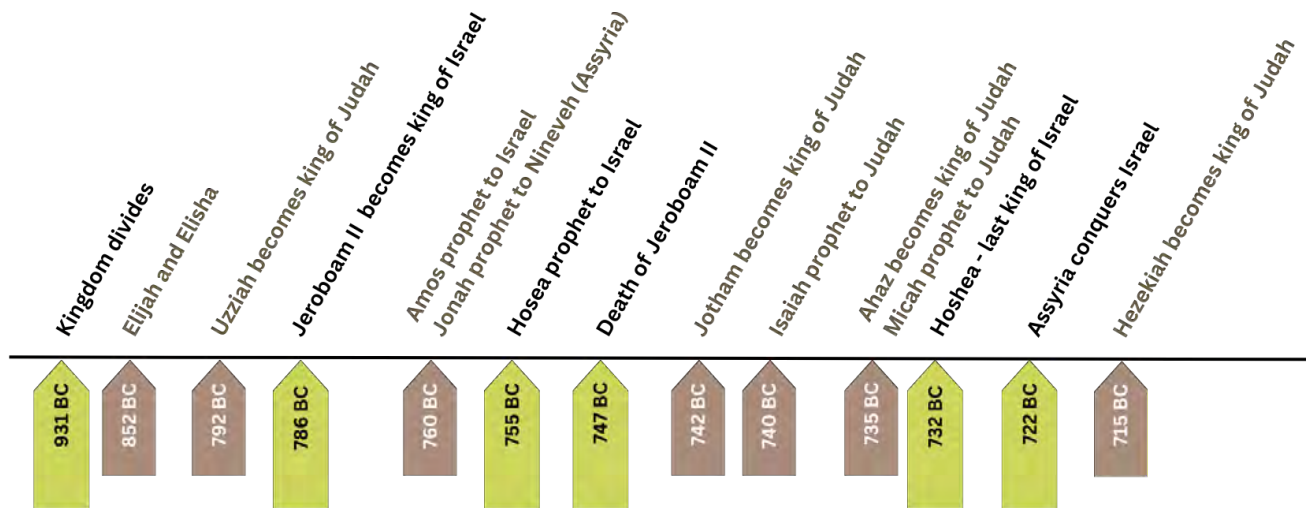
Hosea uses different names to refer to Israel, like Ephraim and Jacob. This can get confusing. While we often use the word "Israel" to refer to the Jews as a whole, Hosea used it most often to refer to the northern kingdom specifically. Because Hosea was a prophet to the northern kingdom, there will be only a few references to the southern kingdom of Judah. Both kingdoms are on similar paths, but Israel will get there first.

Are you ready? Let's dive in and see what God has asked Hosea to do and say!

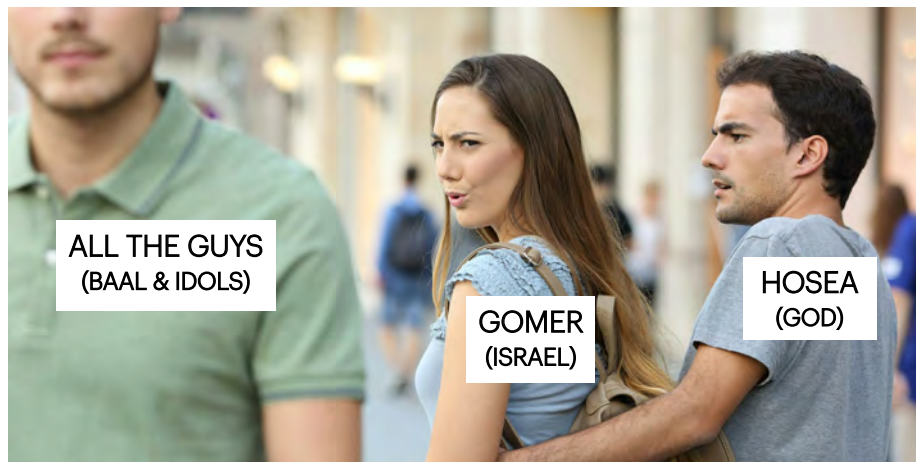
RESOURCES



HOSEA: HISTORICAL CONTEXT



HOSEA: THE MEME



VIDEO OVERVIEWS



[BIBLE PROJECT: Hosea Animated Overview](#)

[GOT QUESTIONS: Summary of Hosea](#)



AUDIO BIBLE APPS/WEBSITES



SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES

COMMITMENT: Commit to attending group every week, making it a priority to be prepared, present, and on time.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS KEY: What is said in the group stays in the group. Keeping things shared in the group confidential builds trust and shows value to the person. Confidentiality can prevent gossip that only values the story. Jesus always valued the person above their story or their sin.

THIS IS A SAFE GROUP: We will all do our part to create an environment where everyone can be real, open & honest with their struggles and victories. This allows for authenticity and for everyone to share openly.

LISTEN WELL: Let's value one another during our discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you're going to respond or what you're going to say next.

ALLOW PAUSES: Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares to allow the person sharing the chance to finish and the group to consider what was shared before responding.

ALLOW SILENCE: It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members of the group to process the topic or question being considered.

NO 'CROSSTALK': Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

NO FIXING: We are not here to fix each other; Jesus does that part. Encourage, speak truth, and point to Jesus, but don't try to solve or fix each other.

PRAYER: Promise to pray for others in the group regularly.

NO RESCUING: When people are sharing something deeply personal, there can be a tendency to try and make them feel better about themselves or the situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause them to stop sharing. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

ENCOURAGEMENT: Everyone in the group may be at a different point in their relationship with Jesus. Accept each group member where they are and for who they are, and always encourage them to take that next step in becoming more like Jesus.

LEAVE SPACE TO SHARE: Be sensitive about the amount of time you share. Be sure to leave space for others who hesitate to jump in.

BE SELF-AWARE: Pay attention to how you affect the environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication.

USE 'I' STATEMENTS: It's easiest to talk about the issues of others, but we want to share with each other. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them," "they," "we," "us," "the church," etc.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: It's important to use this time to consider where we are related to any given subject or issue and what God would have us do. How am I walking this out in my personal life? What changes does God want me to make?

RESOLVE CONFLICT BIBLICALLY: When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, choose to honor God and each other in dealing with these issues. These are a few key Scripture references regarding conflict resolution (there are many more).

- Someone sinned against you (Matt 18:15-20).
- Restoring someone in sin (Gal 6:1-5).
- Forgiving a sinner (Col 3:12-13).
- Reconciling differences (Matt 5:23-24; 7:1-5).

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME

ICE BREAKER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

GUIDELINES: Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well
Allow Pauses ● Allow Silence ● No 'Crosstalk' ● No Fixing ● Promise to Pray
No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 1:1-14:9 (approx. 30 min)

DISCUSSION

1. **WATCH:** After reading through Hosea, watch the Bible Project overview. (Link available on Resources page.)
2. **EXPLORE:** Which kings did Hosea mention in 1:1? Do you recognize any of them from your past reading and study? What do you remember about them?
3. **EXPLORE:** What steps did God ask Hosea to carry out in this first chapter?

APPLY: Try to put yourself in Hosea's sandals. How do you think you would react to receiving a similar message from the Lord? Which of the things that God asked Hosea to do would be the most difficult for you to carry out? What questions or concerns might you have?

4. **APPLY:** How would you respond to someone if they told you that God told them to marry someone like Gomer? Do you think that God gives prophetic messages like this today? Explain your thoughts.

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week→

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**Week 2**
Jan 12-18, 2025**Family Fallout** (Hosea 2:2-13)**THE BIG PICTURE**

Last week, we were introduced to Hosea and his family, who were called to represent the messy and broken covenant relationship between God and Israel. This was not some ancient street theatre performance. Hosea experienced the difficulties and heartbreak of committing to faithfully love his wife, fully knowing he would be repeatedly rejected and abandoned while she shared the beds of other men.

During this week's self-study, we will take some time to revisit and look more closely at our introduction to Hosea before we look at the specific charges of Israel's adultery.

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Valley of Jezreel featured in several important events in Israel's past. It is also called the Valley of Meggido. In Hosea, the reference is to God's judgment on King Ahab's descendants at the hands of Jehu in the Valley of Jezreel. (See 2 Kings 8:25-10:11 for the story.) The NIV translation, "punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel," is more literally stated as "visit the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu." Rather than representing a judgment against Jehu's descendants, God may be describing a judgment against Israel like the Jehu carried out against Ahab.

The law codes of some nations around Israel mandated basic items a husband was obligated to provide for his wife, including grain, oil, wool, and clothing. (See 2:5, 8.)

Baal was the storm god of the Canaanites and other nations in the area. He was thought to control rain and the fertility, life, and prosperity that accompanied it. (See 2:8.)

Day One

Take time to read through Hosea this week. (Around 30 min.) Read it in a single sitting or break it up over a few days. (YouVersion and other Bible apps can also read it to you while you follow along.) Note one or two observations or questions from your reading.

FOR REVIEW: READ HOSEA 1:1-2:1.

1. Complete the chart below using several translations (NIV, ESV, NASB, NET recommended). Record all of the variations of meanings you find.

Child's Name	Meaning	Significance for Israel
Jezreel	<i>God sows, plants; God scatters</i>	
Lo-Ruhamah		
Lo-Ammi		

2. What do the children's names illustrate about God's relationship with Israel, both past and future?

3. "Yet..." Following the dire prophecy, God offers hope. Restoration will come. List all of the areas of restoration you see in 1:10-2:1.

4. **APPLY** How does an adulterous marriage accurately illustrate God's relationship with Israel? With all of fallen humanity? In what ways, if any, does the human marriage analogy fail?

PRAY: How have you experienced God's "yet" in your life? Praise him for the mercy of restoration.

Day Two→

READ THIS WEEK'S PASSAGE: HOSEA 2:2-13.

5. In Hosea 2:2-4, the message moves its focus from Hosea's family. Who does God have in mind as the mother/wife, husband, and children in this family?

6. Why should 'your mother' be rebuked (v. 2)? What does God want her to do?

7. Verses 3-4 describe, in poetic metaphors, the consequences she and her children will face if she does not change her ways. List the punishments, using one or two words for each.

8. What does it mean that Israel's children are children of adultery? How did the sins of the nation/ kingdom as a whole impact the individual Israelites?

9. **APPLY:** How have you been impacted by the sins and failings of earlier generations of family members?

How might our sins, or even the failings of our church, affect our family, friends, or community?

PRAY: Ask God to reveal any areas of unfaithfulness in your life. Ask for his forgiveness and restoration.

Day Three➔

READ HOSEA 2:5-13.

10. Like a person making a case in court, God lists his complaint against his unfaithful wife, Israel. What is his primary charge? What did she do or fail to do?

- Verse 5: "She said...
- Verse 8: "She has not...
- Verse 13: "She...
"she...
"and...
"but...

11. What does God say he will do in response to her infidelity (v. 6)?

12. What does God intend the punishment to bring about (v. 7)? What does this show you about God?

13. Do you think the return described in verse 7 represents a true change of heart and repentance? Why or why not?

14. **APPLY** Considering God's complaint against Israel, what does living as a faithful child of God look like?

PRAY: Take a minute to consider the ways that God meets your needs. Thank him for faithfully providing.

Day Four

READ HOSEA 2:8-13.

15. How are the consequences of Israel's adultery described in this passage? Briefly list God's "I will" statements from verses 9-13.

16. What message(s) do you think God intends to communicate to Israel through these specific actions?

17. How do the punishments in this section relate to the list of offenses in 2:3-8? How well do you think they fit what Israel has done? Are they too easy, too harsh, or just right? Why?

18. Review this week's full passage. What did it reveal to you about God?

19. **APPLY:** Israel chased after foreign gods, believing that they, rather than the God of Abraham, brought her prosperity. What or who are you tempted to believe supplies your needs? What is it about it/them that suggests they can?

PRAY: "Lord, I confess that sometimes I credit others, or myself, as the source of the blessings I have received. Open my eyes and help me to remember that you are the God who provides."

Final Reflections

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

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 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 2:2-13.

DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (question 2) What do the children's names illustrate about God's relationship with Israel, both past and future?

APPLY: (question 4) How does an adulterous marriage accurately illustrate God's relationship with Israel? With all of fallen humanity? In what ways, if any, does the human marriage analogy fail?

2. **EXPLORE:** (question 7) Verses 3-4 describe, in poetic metaphors, the consequences she and her children will face if she does not change her ways. List the punishments, using 1-2 words for each.

APPLY: (question 9) How have you been impacted by the sins and failings of earlier generations of family members? How might our sins, or even the failings of our church, affect our family, friends, or community?

3. **EXPLORE:** (question 12) What does God intend the punishment to bring about (v. 7)? What does this show you about God?

APPLY: (question 14) Considering God's complaint against Israel, what does living as a faithful child of God look like?

4. **EXPLORE:** (question 17) How do the punishments in this section relate to the list of offenses in 2:3-8? How well do you think they fit what Israel has done? Are they too easy, too harsh, or just right? Why?

APPLY: (question 19) Israel chased after foreign gods, believing that they, rather than the God of Abraham, brought her prosperity. What or who are you tempted to believe supplies your needs? What is it about it/them that suggests they can?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

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How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week

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Hosea

Week 3

Jan 19-25, 2025

Future Vision (Hosea 2:14-23)

THE BIG PICTURE

Hosea began his writings with the very personal instructions the Lord gave him about his personal life. His marriage was intended to illustrate how the regularly unfaithful people of Israel treated the constant love and provision of their very faithful God.

Of course, God had more than just an image in mind for his people. He also had a message to communicate. As the great Lover who has been left again and again for other lovers, the Lord is stating his case against Israel, and he has brought all the receipts. Israel's sins will be thoroughly listed. There will be no denying her guilt.

Last week, we saw the initial statement of the charges. Israel not only left her husband to prostitute herself to others, but she also praised them for supplying her with the essentials of daily living. Gifts that came from God alone.

And yet, God did not speak just to list Israel's sins. His purpose is restoration. This week, we will again see a ray of hope shine on Israel's situation.

Day One➔

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. (Around 30 min.) Read it in a single sitting or break it up over a few days. (Or listen on YouVersion or another Bible app while you follow along.) What is one new observation or question that you discovered?

READ HOSEA 2:14-23.

1. What does this passage reveal about God? List everything you notice.
2. Summarize this passage in 1 or 2 sentences.
3. As you read this passage, what did you feel/experience? Did connections with other Bible stories or verses come to mind? If so, what?
4. **APPLY** Hosea 2:2-23 is one long section that we have broken into two parts. With which section (2:2-13 or 2:14-23) did you most identify—the charges of adultery and betrayal or the romance and restoration? Why?

PRAY: What did you notice about God in this passage? Choose one or two aspects and praise God for who he has shown himself to be.

Day Two➔

READ HOSEA 2:14-15.

5. Using a dictionary or thesaurus, write a definition of *allure* that fits the meaning of verse 14.

ALLURE

In what ways is this a somewhat shocking word to be applied to God? What does it communicate about God and his connection to Israel?

6. Thinking of the wilderness may bring to mind a dangerous place or a time of suffering, but it simply means a remote location away from the crowds. What do you think God finds useful about this setting at this time?
7. How did Israel respond to God when he delivered her from Egypt? (See Exodus 15) How does that illuminate the response God is seeking from her now?
8. Having only recently entered the promised land and after victory in Jericho, Israel experienced trouble. Read Joshua 7.
- What is the significance of the door of hope in 2:15 in light of the history of the Valley of Achor (Trouble)?
 - What hope does this reversal offer you?
9. **APPLY** Think about when God first led you toward the “promised land” of salvation. How did you feel? What was your first response? How does your current emotional response to following God compare to that earlier one?

PRAY: What would it mean to you for God to turn your Valley of Trouble into a door of hope? Ask him to do that for you and to guide you in the steps you need to take to realize that hope.

Day Three

READ 1 JOHN 2:3-11.

10. When is 'in that day'? When will Israel experience the fulfillment of this prophecy?
11. God says Israel will no longer call him 'master' (baal) but 'husband.' There was a way that Israel could generically refer to God as *baal*, but this may have muddied the waters and made it easier for people to worship Baal or confuse the God of Israel with Baal.
- Besides clearing up the language difficulties, how might Israel be affected by referring to God as 'husband' rather than 'master'?
 - By removing the names of the Baals from Israel's lips, is Hosea referring to a change of title, or is something deeper being communicated? If so, what?
12. What images and emotions come to mind when thinking about an engagement? What comes to mind regarding a remarriage or renewal of vows? Why do you think God used betrothal/engagement to make his point in this passage?
13. A prospective husband would pay a bride price as part of the betrothal. In 2:19-20, what characteristics does God promise to bring as a 'bride price'? Does he bring these to the marriage through himself or bestow them on his people/his bride? Explain. (See also Jeremiah 31:33.)
14. **APPLY** Orthodox Jews recite Hosea 2:19-20 as part of their daily prayers. It is a daily reminder of their relationship to God. Would it be appropriate for Christians to use these as a similar reminder of our relationship with God? Why or why not?

PRAY: Thank God for drawing you to him. Ask the Holy Spirit to revive and revitalize your love and devotion to him in any areas it may have grown cold.

Day Four

READ HOSEA 2:21-23.

15. In your own words, sum up what these verses say will happen 'in that day.'

16. How do these verses address the beliefs of the cult of Baal, the storm god? What can we learn from this chain of answers?

17. Compare the restoration described in 2:23 with 1:10-2:1. What is repeated? What is unique to one passage?

18. What idea is repeated in 2:20 and 2:23? Why is this significant?

19. **APPLY** Do Christians have a responsibility to transform this world into the paradise described in 2:18, 21-22? Why or why not? If so, what is that responsibility?

PRAY: "Lord God, in your love and mercy, you redeem rebellious sinners and offer them a relationship with you. Help me to live faithfully and remember your love and grace toward me."

Final Reflections

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

GUIDELINES: Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well
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 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 2:14-23.

DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (*question 3*) As you read this passage, what did you feel/experience? Did connections with other Bible stories or verses come to mind? If so, what?

APPLY: (*question 4*) Hosea 2:2-23 is one long section that we have broken into two parts. With which section (2:2-13 or 2:14-23) did you most identify—the charges of adultery and betrayal or the romance and restoration? Why?

2. **EXPLORE:** (*question 6*) Thinking of the wilderness may bring to mind a dangerous place or a time of suffering, but it simply means a remote location away from the crowds. What do you think God finds useful about this setting at this time?

APPLY: (*question 9*) Think about when God first led you toward the “promised land” of salvation. How did you feel? What was your first response? How does your current emotional response to following God compare to that earlier one?

3. **EXPLORE:** (*question 12*) What images and emotions come to mind when thinking about an engagement? What comes to mind regarding a remarriage or renewal of vows? Why do you think God used betrothal/engagement to make his point in this passage?

APPLY: (*question 14*) Orthodox Jews recite Hosea 2:19-20 as part of their daily prayers. It is a daily reminder of their relationship to God. Would it be appropriate for Christians to use these as a similar reminder of our relationship with God? Why or why not?

4. **EXPLORE:** (*question 18*) What idea is repeated in 2:20 and 2:23? Why is this significant?

APPLY: (*question 19*) Do Christians have a responsibility to transform this world into the paradise described in 2:18, 21-22? Why or why not? If so, what is that responsibility?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week→

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Week 4
Jan 26-Feb 1, 2025

Reunited (Hosea 3:1-5)

THE BIG PICTURE

In chapter 2, Hosea recorded God's complaint of Israel's unfaithfulness to him as her husband and provider. Israel had ignored him as the source of blessing and prosperity. Instead, the nation claimed Baal as the god they sought to solve their problems and ensure the good times would never end. Even though these actions meant that discipline was coming, God's plan to restore and repair their relationship was also underway.

This week, Hosea and Gomer illustrate God's coming redemption of his people. Although brief, their story offers us a profound image of God's love and grace.

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Sacred raisin cakes (3:1): Sweet cakes made of compressed fruit (usually figs or dates) were used in worship and offered to various Mesopotamian gods (Jer 44:19; 2 Sam 6:19).

Sacrifice or sacred stones (3:4): These were involved in worshipping a deity. Sometimes, Israel legitimately used sacred stones in worship of God (Isaiah 19:19), but more often, they were connected with foreign gods (Ex 23:24).

Ephod or idol (3:4): These were used to consult gods. An ephod was an element of priestly clothing utilized to determine the will of some deity. Even Aaron, Moses' brother, used an ephod as Israel's first high priest (Ex 28:6-14; Judges 8:22-27). The idols here refer to small, household gods (called teraphim) believed to bring luck and prosperity (Gen 31:19).

Day One

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. (Around 30 min.) Read it in a single sitting or break it up over a few days. (Or listen on YouVersion or another Bible app while you follow along.) What fresh observation did you have from this reading?

READ HOSEA 3:1-5.

1. What does God tell Hosea to do now? What do you imagine Hosea thought or felt about this instruction?

2. What does this passage tell us about how God will show/has shown love to Israel? What unique characteristics of God’s love are evidenced in this passage?

3. We are not (necessarily) called to return to an unfaithful spouse like Hosea, but God does call us to persist in other ways. Note what he instructs us to continue doing in each passage.

<i>Matthew 18:21-22</i>	<i>1 Corinthians 13:4-7</i>
<i>Galatians 6:9</i>	<i>1 Thessalonians 5:16-18</i>
<i>Hebrews 10:25</i>	<i>1 John 4:7-8</i>

4. Look at the comparison between Israel and Gomer in verse 1. What does it imply about Gomer’s situation? How eager will she be for Hosea’s return demonstration of love? Explain.

5. **APPLY** What parts of living like Jesus are hard to repeat? What situations or people tempt you to give up showing love?

PRAY: Ask God to give you the strength and energy to persist where you are tempted to give up.

Day Two>

LOOK AT HOSEA 3:2

6. What does this simple statement from Hosea show or imply about him and his relationship to God? What does it indicate about the situation Gomer was in?

7. What part of the Lord's directive in verse 1 best corresponds to Hosea's purchase of Gomer?

8. While the word redeem doesn't appear, the concept is clearly portrayed in Hosea's actions. Using a dictionary or thesaurus, write the definition of REDEEM that best captures what is happening in this verse.

REDEEM

9. The grace that Hosea showed to Gomer was not cheap. Besides the money and grain, what else would he have to give up to restore the relationship?

10. **APPLY** The idea of buying a person is shocking to us. What emotions (positive or negative) are stirred in you when reading verse 2? What would you be willing to pay to set someone you love free from physical bondage? Why are we often hesitant to pay/sacrifice to share the path to spiritual freedom with others?

PRAY: Imagine hearing Jesus say, "So I bought _____ *[insert your name]* _____..."

Offer a prayer of thanks for all he was willing to pay to set you free from the slavery of sin.

Day Three>

LOOK AT HOSEA 3:3.

Because of the difficulties in translating biblical manuscripts, different versions of the Bible sometimes have significant variations. Comparing several versions allows us to see the possible ways to understand the verse or passage.

11. Look up Hosea 3:3 in each translation. Which version do you think fits the situation best? Why?

Version	Hosea Requires of Gomer	Hosea's Promised Behavior
NIV		
ESV		
NET		
NLT		

- Were Hosea's requests reasonable? Why do you think Hosea specified this behavior for Gomer and himself?

12. Imagine yourself in Gomer's position. How might you feel and respond to Hosea's sudden reappearance? What would you think about his list of conditions? Why?

13. Imagine yourself as Hosea. What might you be feeling as you challenge your unfaithful wife to faithfulness? How would you approach her (consider tone of voice, posture, etc.)? Explain.

14. **APPLY** In your own life, how does understanding God's grace and redemption challenge you to remain faithful to him?

PRAY: "Lord, your love redeems even those who know their unworthiness and live in shame. Help me accept your love and forgiveness, put aside the shame of my past, and live with the joy of a person purchased out of slavery."

Day Four>

LOOK AT HOSEA 3:4-5.

15. What things will Israel soon be living without? Are all of these bad or harmful? How will Israel be affected by their loss?

- Why did God plan to remove these things from Israel? How does this relate to yesterday's thoughts regarding Hosea and Gomer?

16. Look at 3:5. What can Israel look forward to? When will these events occur?

17. At the time of this prophecy, King David had been dead for approx. 200 years. What did Hosea mean that Israel would "seek the Lord their God and David their king" (3:5)? Who fulfills this prophecy? (See 2 Sam 7:8-16; Matt 20:30; and Rev 22:16 for insights.)

18. **APPLY** Consider your own life and the world around you. What encouragement do you find in Hosea 3?

PRAY: What did you notice about God's heart and character this week? Talk to him about it.

Final Reflections>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

GUIDELINES: Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well
 Allow Pauses ● Allow Silence ● No 'Crosstalk' ● No Fixing ● Promise to Pray
 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 3:1-5.

DISCUSSION

- EXPLORE:** (question 1) What does God tell Hosea to do now? What do you imagine Hosea thought or felt about this instruction?

APPLY: (question 5) What parts of living like Jesus are hard to repeat? What situations or people tempt you to give up showing love?
- EXPLORE:** (question 9) The grace that Hosea showed to Gomer was not cheap. Besides the money and grain, what else would he have to give up to restore the relationship?

APPLY: (question 10) The idea of buying a person is shocking to us. What emotions (positive or negative) are stirred in you when reading verse 2? What would you be willing to pay to set someone you love free from physical bondage? Why are we often hesitant to pay/sacrifice to share the path to spiritual freedom with others?
- EXPLORE:** (question 11) Look up Hosea 3:3 in each translation. Which version do you think fits the situation best? Why? Were Hosea's requests reasonable? Why do you think Hosea specified this behavior for Gomer and himself?

APPLY: (question 14) In your own life, how does understanding God's grace and redemption challenge you to remain faithful to him?
- EXPLORE:** (question 16) Look at 3:5. What can Israel look forward to? When will these events occur?

APPLY: (question 18) Consider your own life and the world around you. What encouragement do you find in Hosea 3?
- FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week

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**Week 5**
Feb 2-8, 2025**Broken Covenant** (Hosea 4:1-11)**THE BIG PICTURE**

We are now entering the second major section of Hosea's writings — the prophetic rebuke of Israel. The prophet's personal story will not make another appearance, but the image and emotions that it provided will never be far from view.

Hosea's first three chapters offered an ultra-condensed version of God's tumultuous relationship with his people—from the institution of the covenant with Moses to a nation divided into northern and southern kingdoms. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob struggled with faithfulness from the very beginning, even before the dust was swept from the stone tablets bearing the Ten Commandments.

Hosea's experience portrayed God's repeated expression of steadfast, unending, and sacrificial love to Israel, his fickle and ungrateful bride. We also saw the hope of reconciliation for Israel through the story of Hosea's rocky marriage. Ultimately, everyone who makes up Christ's bride, the Church, will see the same hope fulfilled.

Hold onto the full, hopeful picture as we dive into the prophet's confrontation with Israel and the formal charges of her sin.

Day One➔

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. Read it in a single sitting, break it up over a few days, or listen on YouVersion or another Bible app while you follow along. Write down one new observation or question.

READ HOSEA 4:1-11.

1. List the major themes/points you find in this section. What does God intend to communicate? Why?
2. What does this passage tell us about God and his character
3. Summarize God's case against Israel from this section in one or two sentences.
4. What generalizations can you make about life in Israel from this passage?
5. **APPLY** Compare and contrast your generalizations about life in Israel with life in Casper, Wyoming, and the United States. Consider the possible perspectives of people in different economic classes, ethnicities, etc.

PRAY: Read Psalm 119:1-8. Then, pray these words back to God.

Day Two➔

READ HOSEA 4:1-3.

This chapter begins with the prophet summoning the people of Israel to hear God's formal accusation against them.

6. After freeing Israel from Egyptian slavery, God entered into a covenant with his people, and in Deuteronomy, Moses reminds them of that agreement before they enter the promised land. Look at Deut 10:12-22. What did they agree to do?

7. What is God's charge against Israel (Hosea 4:1-3)? What have they done? What have they failed to do?

8. Look at Ex 34:6-7. How does God describe himself? What direct connections do you see with God's complaint against Israel?

9. What are the effects of Israel's behavior? Why do you think this is the case? (Read Deut 11:13-15 and Jeremiah 4:28 for additional insights.)

10. **APPLY** America does not have a covenant with God, but the effect of sin always extends to other people. What issues in our culture and world result from the sins of our nation and the people in it? Do you think these are the natural consequences of our behaviors or God-directed punishments? Explain.

PRAY: Bring the sins of our country before God. Pray that God would encourage believers to stand boldly and faithfully to bring God's light and love to those around us.

Day Three➔

READ HOSEA 4:1-11.

The word knowledge/acknowledge appears three times in this passage and is key to understanding the significance of the charges against Israel.

11. Look at each use of the words acknowledge or knowledge. What does each instance indicate about Israel and her relationship to God?

12. What does it mean to have knowledge of or to know God? (See Prov 1:7; 2:1-6; Jer 22:16 and 1 John 2:3-4.)

13. How are faithfulness and love related to knowing and acknowledging God? Is it possible to have one of these three without the others? Explain.

14. In verse 6, Hosea says that a lack of knowledge has destroyed God's people. How is ignorance about God destructive (Prov 29:18)? What effects of this lack do you see signs of in the world?

15. **APPLY** Evaluate your relationship with God. Is your knowledge of him more factual or relational? Do you acknowledge him in your life and to those around you? What can you do to improve your relationship?

PRAY: Ask God to reveal himself to you in real and tangible ways this week. Thank him for his love and guidance and all he has provided for you.

Day Four➔

READ HOSEA 4:4-11.

16. Read 4:4 in several translations (NIV, ESV, and NLT suggested). Who is directly charged and held most responsible?

- Why are they held more responsible? (See Jer 2:8; 18:18; James 3:1.)
- What are they charged with having done? Note everything you find in 4:1-11a.

17. What do you think is meant by the priests feeding on the sins of the people (v8)? Does this relate to an increase in sin offerings and sacrifices? Or are the priests' desires being corrupted along with the people? Or something else?

18. What does 4:9-11a show about God's justice? What can we learn about the consequences of our actions?

19. **APPLY** How do the character and behavior of pastors affect the character and behavior of those in their churches? What do you think are their greatest potential stumbling blocks? What is the congregation's responsibility for the faithfulness of their pastors and church?

PRAY: Ask God to guide your pastors and other spiritual leaders or mentors in wisdom and integrity. Pray that those who hold them accountable will do so with love and grace.

Final Reflections➔

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

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 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 4:1-11.

DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (question 4) What generalizations can you make about life in Israel from this passage?

APPLY: (question 5) Compare and contrast your generalizations about life in Israel with life in Casper, Wyoming, and the United States. Consider the possible perspectives of people in different economic classes, ethnicities, etc.

2. **EXPLORE:** (question 7) What is God's charge against Israel (Hosea 4:1-3)? What have they done? What have they failed to do?

APPLY: (question 10) America does not have a covenant with God, but the effect of sin always extends to other people. What issues in our culture and world result from the sins of our nation and the people in it? Do you think these are the natural consequences of our behaviors or God-directed punishments? Explain.

3. **EXPLORE:** (question 13) How are faithfulness and love related to knowing and acknowledging God? Is it possible to have one of these three without the others? Explain.

APPLY: (question 15) Evaluate your relationship with God. Is your knowledge of him more factual or relational? Do you acknowledge him in your life and to those around you? What can you do to improve your relationship?

4. **EXPLORE:** (question 18) What does 4:9-11a show about God's justice? What can we learn about the consequences of our actions?

APPLY: (question 19) How do the character and behavior of pastors affect the character and behavior of those in their churches? What do you think are their greatest potential stumbling blocks? What is the congregation's responsibility for the faithfulness of their pastors and church?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week→

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Week 6
Feb 23-Mar 1, 2025

Worthless Worship (Hosea 4:10-19)

THE BIG PICTURE

Through Hosea's personal story and actions, we witnessed a high-altitude perspective of unfaithfulness, discipline, and reconciliation. Now, Hosea directs our view to the ground level, and the view here is bleak. Even though the whole of Israel was guilty of violating their covenant with God, the priests were charged with greater responsibility. They should have known what was expected, but they rejected knowledge of God with his law. They not only failed to correct and guide the people in righteousness, but they also enjoyed their depravity. They traded the glory of the true God and the respect of their positions as his priests for the disgrace of serving idols and wickedness.

In this section, Hosea continues to explain the charges. By rejecting the knowledge of God, Israel was left to follow their own foolish, stubborn hearts.

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Gilgal, Bethel/Beth-Aven: These were the sites of important historical events for Israel, and both were associated with legitimate worship of God. By the time Hosea wrote, these were now areas for worshipping pagan gods. Hosea disparagingly refers to Bethel ("house of God") as Beth-Aven ('house of wickedness').

Cult prostitution: References to cult prostitution, along with the continuing metaphor of prostitution and adultery, are present in this passage. Some ritual prostitution occurred as an act of worship intended to bring fertility. For others, their presence at the shrines was related to the increased number of potential customers. Hosea may be referring to either or both of these in these verses.

Day One➔

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. Read it in a single sitting, break it up over a few days, or listen on YouVersion or another Bible app while you follow along. Write down one new observation or question.

READ HOSEA 4:10-19.

1. Who is speaking in this passage? Who is the audience? List any other people mentioned.
2. Write down the words, phrases, or ideas that are repeated in this section. How many times does each appear?
3. What kind of spirit motivates Israel's actions? What does that mean?
4. Summarize this passage in one or two sentences.
5. **APPLY** Because it consists of God's people, we can reasonably consider whether the prophet's words apply to the universal Church. Who in the Church might equate to the audience and others you identified in question 1? Make as many connections as you can to aid the application later.

PRAY: *"Father, I acknowledge that I have sometimes turned away from you and brought the consequences on myself and others. Help me to learn from my mistakes and to seek your will in everything I do."*

Day Two→

READ HOSEA 4:10-14.

6. Hosea proclaims that wine has taken away the understanding of people and priests. Using a dictionary or thesaurus, write out the meaning of *understanding* along with synonyms.

UNDERSTANDING

- How are understanding and knowledge related?
7. Drunkenness has produced muddled thinking and impaired understanding. How do we see that played out in this passage? What actions did the people take because they lacked understanding?
8. Look at 4:6 and 4:14. What comes to those who lack knowledge and to those without understanding? Are these different? Explain.
9. Why will God refrain from punishing the daughters and daughters-in-law (or brides) for their sexual sins? What kinds of faulty thinking lead to situations like this?
10. **APPLY** In verse 14, we see that the bad example set by the men and leaders was responsible for the sinful actions of the younger women. How does this affect your thoughts about the generations before and after yours? What responsibility do older generations have toward younger generations? Will younger generations not be held responsible for their sins?

PRAY: Ask the Lord to grant you the wisdom and understanding to see the value of his ways. Ask his forgiveness for any actions that may have led others to sin, and thank him for his generous grace and forgiveness.

Day Three➔

READ HOSEA 4:10-19.

11. How was Israel practicing worship? What practices are described in 4:12-14?

12. Where were they worshipping? Why does Hosea report they chose these locations?
Read 2 Chron. 7:11-22. Why was their worship location a problem?

13. When the nation of Israel was divided into northern and southern kingdoms, Jeroboam I instituted some changes. Read 1 Kings 12:25-33. What did he change? What were his reasons?

14. Who or what did Israel consult for wisdom and direction? Was this a good idea? Why or why not?
(See Isaiah 44:9-17, Jeremiah 10:1-16, and Hab. 2:19 for additional insight.)

15. Cultic worship practices were intended to secure health, wealth, and fertility for the people and the nation. What does Hosea proclaim to be the ultimate result of Israel's idolatry? Note everything you can find.

16. **APPLY** To what extent are our worship practices (music, activities, strategies, messages, etc.) borrowed/adapted from the larger culture? How can we ensure our worship pleases God rather than our comfort and preferences?

PRAY: Read Psalm 19 as a prayer of worship to God.

Day Four>

READ HOSEA 4:15-19.

17. In this passage, Israel is described as a stubborn heifer. List the evidence of their stubbornness you find in these verses.

18. What three warnings are given in 4:15? What message is sent by mentioning them together?

19. What does the prophet say will come to Israel because they cling stubbornly to their idol worship and sacrifices? Is this a judgment that might happen? Or is it certain to happen? Explain.

20. **APPLY** Think about your regular life choices and habits. Is there anything that you would find difficult or impossible to give up to better follow Jesus? Why are you so attached to it? Can it really provide what you want it to give?

PRAY: *“Lord God, search my heart and reveal anything I am holding too tightly or refusing to change. Help me to keep you and your will first in my life.”*

Final Reflections>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

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No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 4:10-19.

DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (question 3) What kind of spirit motivates Israel's actions? What does that mean?

APPLY: (question 5) Who in the Church might equate to the audience and others you identified in question 1?

2. **EXPLORE:** (question 8) Look at 4:6 and 4:14. What comes to those who lack knowledge and to those without understanding? Are these different? Explain.

APPLY: (question 10) In verse 14, we see that the bad example set by the men and leaders was responsible for the sinful actions of the younger women. How does this affect your thoughts about the generations before and after yours? What responsibility do older generations have toward younger generations? Will younger generations not be held responsible for their sins?

3. **EXPLORE:** (question 13) When the nation of Israel was divided into northern and southern kingdoms, Jeroboam I instituted some changes. Read 1 Kings 12:25-33. What did he change? What were his reasons?

APPLY: (question 16) To what extent are our worship practices (music, activities, strategies, messages, etc.) borrowed/adapted from the larger culture? How can we ensure our worship pleases God rather than our comfort and preferences?

4. **EXPLORE:** (question 18) What three warnings are given in 4:15? What message is sent by mentioning them together?

APPLY: (question 20) Think about your regular life choices and habits. Is there anything that you would find difficult or impossible to give up to better follow Jesus? Why are you so attached to it? Can it really provide what you want it to give?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week

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Week 7
Mar 2-8, 2025

Decay & Destruction (Hosea 5:1-15)

THE BIG PICTURE

Israel began worshiping Baal, Asherah, and other gods to secure the good life—abundant food, large families, and wealth. The great irony was that they would have neither enough food nor a flourishing family because they deserted God. Instead of prosperity, Israel would find only hardship. They also abandoned the wisdom and guidance of the great Creator to seek messages from hand-crafted idols and sticks. Hosea explained that the Lord has no choice. Israel is too stubborn to be left to wander freely like gentle lambs. Israel is like a stubborn cow who must be corralled and redirected.

In chapter 5, the prophet describes God's judgment. Israel's ruptured relationship with the Lord will bring destruction and decay.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Israel, Ephraim, Judah, Benjamin: In general, Israel and Ephraim are two ways Hosea refers to the northern kingdom. Sometimes, though, Ephraim indicates the specific tribe. Judah refers to the southern kingdom. Benjamin is considered part of the southern kingdom, but individuals from the tribe are split between the two kingdoms. There is no need to be overly concerned about whether Hosea means a tribe or a kingdom. The main intention of the passage will be clear enough.

Mizpah and Tabor: These two high places had altars to worship foreign gods. By naming mountains in the east and west, Hosea is including the high places throughout the kingdom.

Gibeah, Ramah, Beth Aven: These cities are located in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin, which lies on the border between Israel and Judah. Their mention implies that Hosea sees a battle between the two. See day three for additional information about what these may point to.

Day One➔

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. Read it in a single sitting, break it up over a few days, or listen on YouVersion or another Bible app while you follow along. Write down one new observation or question.

READ HOSEA 5:1-15.

1. To whom is Hosea speaking? Who is represented by 'you' and 'they'?

2. What sins does Hosea charge against them? Note any new charges.

3. In 5:1-2, Hosea poetically describes Israel's leaders. What are they like?
 - What happened because of their leadership? Do you think the results were planned or accidental? Explain.

4. What does this passage show about God and the things he values or judges?

5. **APPLY** How have bad leaders been known to trap their people in harmful actions? How have they justified their actions?

PRAY: Pray for your leaders inside and outside the church. Ask God to give them wisdom and bring life and flourishing through their leadership.

Day Two→

READ HOSEA 5:1-7.

6. How could Israel's deeds prevent their return to God? Could they have done something God is unwilling to forgive? (See John 8:34 and Romans 6:16 for additional insight.)

- Read Romans 6:3-14. How can sin's damage be repaired?

7. Israel's arrogance was called evidence against them. What did it reveal about them?

8. The prophet says that although Israel will bring animals to sacrifice and seek God's approval and guidance, they will not find him (5:6-7).

- How do Israel's actions explain the Lord's withdrawal? Did they seek the Lord with the right attitude and motives? Explain.

- Look up Deut 4:29; 1 Chron 28:9; 2 Chron 15:2; Ps 40:16; Prov 28:5. What should the person seeking God look like?

9. **APPLY** What things might keep people from finding and connecting with God, even though they want to seek him? Is anything currently hindering you from seeking God wholeheartedly?

PRAY: "Heavenly Father, I want to seek you with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind. Reveal any false motives. Show me your glorious presence. Guide me in true worship. Amen."

Day Three>

READ HOSEA 5:8-12

The battle Hosea refers to may be the conflict between Aram/Damascus, Israel, and Judah (the Syro-Ephraimitic War). When the Assyrian king Pul invaded Israel, King Menahem paid Assyria to secure Israel's safety (2 Kings 15:17-22). Later, perhaps in an attempt to force Judah to join an alliance against Assyria, Aram and Israel joined forces to overthrow King Ahaz of Judah (2 Kings 16; 2 Chron 28). The ironic result: Ahaz called on Assyria to help defeat Israel.

10. God's judgment is described as a flood of aggression (5:8-11) and the slow corruption of moths and rot (5:12).

- What do you think people experienced when God's wrath poured out like a flood of water? How would that have impacted the people of Israel?

- What might God's corrosive wrath look like in a country? How would that affect people's daily lives?

11. Which is more destructive to a nation, a war of aggression or societal corrosion? Why do you think God brought both kinds of punishment?

Today, the most appropriate parallel to the nation of Israel (the group of God's people then) is the Church (the group of his people today).

12. **APPLY:** Is it possible that God might bring judgment to a corrupt church? If so, what might that look like? How should the members respond?

PRAY: Where do you see the corrosive effects of sin at work around you? Ask God for guidance and wisdom about how you might bring his light and peace to people in those situations.

Day Four

READ HOSEA 5:12-15.

13. Where did Israel go to find help? What does that indicate regarding their beliefs about God?

14. Ephraim's sickness undoubtedly showed itself in the kingdom's culture, finance, and political weakness. The king looked to rich, powerful Assyria as a solution (2 Kings 15:17-22). Why was it wrong to seek a political solution to what appeared to be political problems?

15. **APPLY** When are you tempted to turn to experts or authorities other than God to fix your problems? Is it always wrong to make political alliances or to seek help from others? Explain.

16. How will God act toward Ephraim and Judah (v. 14)? Why would he act this way?

17. Verse 15 finishes this section with hope. Do you think there will be anything different about how Israel seeks God in 5:15 compared to their seeking in 5:6? What?

PRAY: What opposition or difficulties are you experiencing today? Take your concerns to God and ask for his intervention and wisdom.

Final Reflections

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

GUIDELINES: Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well
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 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 5:1-15.

DISCUSSION

- EXPLORE:** (question 3) In 5:1-2, Hosea poetically describes Israel's leaders. What are they like? What happened because of their leadership? Do you think the results were planned or accidental? Explain.

APPLY: (question 5) How have bad leaders been known to trap their people in harmful actions? How have they justified their actions?
- EXPLORE:** (question 8) How do Israel's actions explain the Lord's withdrawal (5:6-7)? Did they seek the Lord with the right attitude and motives? Explain. What should the person seeking God look like?

APPLY: (question 9) What things might keep people from finding and connecting with God, even though they want to seek him? Is anything currently hindering you from seeking God wholeheartedly?
- EXPLORE:** (question 11) Which is more destructive to a nation, a war of aggression or societal corrosion? Why do you think God brought both kinds of punishment?

APPLY: (question 12) Is it possible that God might bring judgment to a corrupt church? If so, what might that look like? How should the members respond?
- EXPLORE:** (question 13) Where did Israel go to find help? What does that indicate regarding their beliefs about God?

APPLY: (question 15) When are you tempted to turn to experts or authorities other than God to fix your problems? Is it always wrong to make political alliances or to seek help from others? Explain.
- FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week→

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**Week 8**
Mar 9-15, 2025**Let Us Return?** (Hosea 6:1-6)**THE BIG PICTURE**

The depraved state of the northern kingdom was a direct result of the corruption of Israel's leaders. Not only did the people follow the general patterns of belief and action of their kings and priests, but they also fell prey to the idolatrous systems the leaders put in place for them. When Jeroboam I instituted new worship locations, complete with altars to idols, he directed Israel's first step toward full-blown idolatry and future destruction. Hosea reports that the wrath of God will come like a flood of water, like the slow destructions caused by moths and rot, and finally, like a lion tearing apart its prey. What God wants, though, is not Israel's destruction but their repentance. He wants them to recognize their guilt and to seek him.

This week, there is a light of hope and a call to repentance in Hosea 6:1-3. But who is calling? Is Hosea urging his people to repent? Or is God forecasting Israel's future repentance? Or is Israel presuming they can return to God when they have had their fill of idolatry since forgiving is what God does? Regardless, Israel's repentance will be short-lived. Israel will offer what they think they should rather than what God wants most.

Day One

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. **Choose a passage from the text** that you have found inspiring or impactful, and spend some time beginning to memorize it.

READ HOSEA 5:14-6:6.

1. What words or ideas connect Hosea 6:1-6 with 5:14-15?

2. Look at 1 Samuel 7:3-4; Isaiah 55:7; Lam 3:40; and Joel 2:12-13.

- What does it mean to “return to the Lord”? What things must happen?
- Do you think Israel is ready to return? Explain why or why not.

3. In Hosea 5:15, what two things would signal the end of God’s separation from Israel?

Then I will return to my lair until they have _____
and _____.

- Do you see evidence that Israel has done (or is ready to do) these? Explain.

4. **APPLY** Sometimes, in a crisis, people will turn to God in an insincere manner, looking for his gifts but not his presence. What makes the difference? Can a person’s sincerity be determined before they cry out to God? Explain.

PRAY: Ask God to search out any insincerity in your walk with him. Pray that he will increase your desire for him in every circumstance.

Day Two➔

READ HOSEA 6:1-3.

5. What does Israel expect from God if they return and acknowledge him? List everything you can find.

6. Read 6:1-3 a few times slowly, focusing on the poetry describing what the Lord will do. List the attributes of God that come to mind (in your own words).

7. What emotions do you think are being expressed in this passage?

8. Israel's wounds and brokenness were a result of their sinful behavior and God's just punishment. God's people today, both individuals and groups, can find themselves in similar situations. Read James 4:7-9 and Hebrews 10:19-23. What hope can we have when God seems distant?

9. **APPLY** In which of the ways described in 6:1-3 have you witnessed God work in your own life? Which do you most need him to work, currently?

PRAY: Take your answer to the last question to the Lord. Thank him for the ways he has been faithful and boldly ask for whatever you need today.

Day Three>

Let's look closely at verse 6: "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."

We often define mercy as "not getting what you deserve." That has the idea of a prisoner who receives mercy through a governor's pardon. But that doesn't exactly capture the idea of the Hebrew word *chesed*.

10. Look at Hosea 6:6 in several different translations and record the words they use instead of mercy. (Suggested translations: ESV, CSB, NASB, NLT.)

- Looking at these different translations, how would you describe what it is that God wants more than a sacrifice? Give some examples of this kind of mercy.

11. What connection do you see between Hosea 6:6 and 4:1?

12. God's law given to Moses mandated several sacrifices and burnt offerings. So what does God mean that he does not desire sacrifice here?

13. **APPLY** What modern church rituals/practices are sometimes made to be more important than *chesed* or the acknowledgment of God?

14. **APPLY** Are loyal love and knowledge of God your highest worship priorities? Are there any habits or practices you need to change?

PRAY: "Lord God, open my eyes to any way that I have made the methods of following and worshiping you more important than acting in faithful love."

Learn more about *chesed* in this [Bible Project video: What is God's Love Like?](#)



Day Four

God's lament in 4-6 indicates that whether the repentance was from the wrong motives or it was advice that Israel did not take, the people ultimately did not remain committed to the Lord.

Read 6:4-6 a few times slowly, focusing on the poetic descriptions.

15. How would you describe Ephraim and Judah's love for God? What emotion(s) do you hear under God's words?

16. In Hosea 6:5, what are the effects of God's words, transmitted through his prophets and recorded in scripture? What does that mean? What does it mean that God's judgments "go forth like the sun"?

17. Look up Deut 32:44-47, Psalm 119:50, John 6:63, and Hebrews 4:12. What is God's word intended to bring? What perspective does this add to Hosea 6:4-5?

18. **APPLY** Consider the power in God's words to bring life and destruction. How can you bring life to yourself and others through God's word? Is it possible to misuse his word and cause destruction? Explain.

PRAY: Who do you know who needs to experience the power of God's words today? Lift that person to God in prayer.

Final Reflections

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

GUIDELINES: Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well
 Allow Pauses ● Allow Silence ● No 'Crosstalk' ● No Fixing ● Promise to Pray
 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 6:1-6.

DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (question 2) Look at 1 Samuel 7:3-4; Isaiah 55:7; Lam 3:40; and Joel 2:12-13. What does it mean to "return to the Lord"? What things must happen? Do you think Israel is ready to return? Explain why or why not.

APPLY: (question 4) Sometimes, in a crisis, people will turn to God in an insincere manner, looking for his gifts but not his presence. What makes the difference? Can a person's sincerity be determined before they cry out to God? Explain.

2. **EXPLORE:** (question 8) Read James 4:7-9 and Hebrews 10:19-23. What hope can we have when God seems distant?

APPLY: (question 9) In which of the ways described in 6:1-3 have you witnessed God work in your own life? Which do you most need him to work, currently?

3. **EXPLORE:** (question 10) Looking at the different translations of Hosea 6:6, how would you describe what it is that God wants more than a sacrifice? Give some examples of this kind of mercy.

APPLY: (question 13) What modern church rituals/practices are sometimes made to be more important than *chesed* or the acknowledgment of God?

4. **EXPLORE:** (question 16) In Hosea 6:5, what are the effects of God's words, transmitted through his prophets and recorded in scripture? What does that mean? What does it mean that God's judgments "go forth like the sun"?

APPLY: (question 18) Consider the power in God's words to bring life and destruction. How can you bring life to yourself and others through God's word? Is it possible to misuse his word and cause destruction? Explain.

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week→

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**Week 9**

Mar 16-22, 2025

Murder, Marauding & Manipulation (Hosea 6:7-7:7)**THE BIG PICTURE**

Hosea took a brief reprieve at the beginning of chapter 6 from the series of judgments and descriptions of wrongdoing with a call for Israel to repent and return to God. Hosea doesn't tell us who issued the call or how Israel responded if they did. We do know that Hosea's message quickly turns to God's sorrow and frustration over Israel and Judah. They are a fickle group of people, and their faithfulness always evaporates as quickly as the morning dew. God's law and his prophetic messages, intended to bring light and life to his people, have instead inflicted punishment and destruction. God does not choose to punish because he enjoys it. He acts so Israel will recognize their sins and return to their relationship with him. God has always wanted his people to exhibit the same loyal love he has shown them from the beginning.

The second section will follow the same general pattern as the first: charges of wrongdoing followed by a proclamation of punishment, another series of accusations, and a final message of hope. Many of the sins Hosea speaks about will be familiar repetitions from earlier chapters. The new charges will further expose the depths of wickedness to which Israel has fallen.

Day One

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. Spend some time memorizing the passage you chose last week.

READ HOSEA 6:7-7:7.

1. What sins are identified in this section of Hosea?

Verse	Charge Against Israel	Verse	Charge Against Israel
6:7		7:3	
6:8		7:4	
6:9		7:5	
6:10		7:6	
7:1		7:7	
7:2			

2. Based on our study of Hosea so far, what would you name as God’s top 3 most hated sins or categories of sin?

3. **APPLY** What do the sins tolerated by a community indicate about that community? How should Christians behave if they must live in a depraved and corrupt community?

4. **APPLY** Take one day this week to survey the news (or your video entertainment) and note the various sins depicted. Which ones overlap with Hosea’s complaints against Israel? Are they presented as normal behavior or actions that deserve punishment?

PRAY: Review the results of your news survey above. Pray that those involved would have their eyes opened to their sin and to the love and reconciliation Jesus offers.

Day Two→

READ HOSEA 6:7-10.

Hosea identifies Adam and Gilead as locations where significant unfaithfulness and evil occurred. Pekah's rebellion against Israel's king Pekahiah (736 BC) may be that bloody event (2 Kings 15:23-25).

5. What sins are Israel's spiritual leaders committing (6:7, 9, 10)?

6. Marauding is not a term we hear often. Look up the definition in a dictionary or thesaurus.

MARAUD

A band of marauding and murderous priests indicates that serious societal and religious problems had become widespread and acceptable.

7. What conditions might lead the nation's spiritual leaders to behave this way? Do you think they led the people into evil or that they followed along with the crowd? Why?

- How do you think they may have justified or rationalized their actions?

8. What do the priests' actions indicate believed, or failed to believe, about God?

9. **APPLY** How is a community affected by spiritual leaders who commit evil?

PRAY: Visualize the roads and businesses of Casper. Pray that the pastors and leaders of each church you see will remain faithful in serving God.

Day Three>

READ HOSEA 6:11-7:2.

10. Here, we see God's heart for restoration, but something stands in the way.

Whenever I would _____ the fortunes of my people,
 whenever I would _____,
 the sins of Ephraim are _____, and the _____ of Samaria revealed. (6:11-7:1)
 ...but they do not _____ that I _____ all their _____. (7:2)

The word "remember" carries the idea of consciously bringing something to mind and being prepared to respond to it. In a sense, the issue is "before" or "with" that person.

11. What does it mean that the people do not know God remembers their actions? How would this belief affect someone's behavior?

12. What does it say about Ephraim that their "sins engulf them?" How does this relate to God remembering their sins?

13. **APPLY** Two common false beliefs about sin can delay a person's reconciliation with God: 1) thinking God is unaware of or unconcerned with the sins, or 2) believing the sins committed are too evil for God to reconcile with them.

- Have you ever believed, or acted as if you believed, one of these lies? What happened?
- How has Hosea shown that both of these are false?

PRAY: Read Psalm 103 as a prayer of praise.

Day Four

READ HOSEA 7:3-7.

Hosea describes the palace intrigue and plots against the king using the kitchen analogy of the fire burning in an oven. The unfaithful princes' passions burn within them and power their plots. In the final years of the northern kingdom, several kings were violently overthrown in rapid succession. (See 2 Kings 15:8-21, 23-25, 29-30 for details.)

14. How does the image of a burning fire capture the desire to sin?

15. **APPLY** How have you experienced that kind of desire for something you shouldn't have or do? How can that fire be quenched in ways that honor God?

16. The description of political treachery ends with a final, tragic sin. What is it (7:7b)? What does it indicate about the hearts and minds of those involved?

17. **APPLY** What role do political and religious leaders play in forming a society's understanding of acceptable behavior?

PRAY: Pray that those in positions of political leadership would be willing to humble themselves and cry out to God as they make and implement decisions.

Final Reflections

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

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 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 6:7-7:7.

DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (question 2) Based on our study of Hosea so far, what would you name as God's top 3 most hated sins or categories of sin?

APPLY: (question 3) What do the sins tolerated by a community indicate about that community? How should Christians behave if they must live in a depraved and corrupt community?

2. **EXPLORE:** (question 7) What conditions might lead the nation's spiritual leaders to behave this way? Do you think they led the people into evil or that they followed along with the crowd? Why? How do you think they may have justified or rationalized their actions?

APPLY: (question 9) How is a community affected by spiritual leaders who commit evil?

3. **EXPLORE:** (question 11) What does it mean that the people do not know God remembers their actions? How would this belief affect someone's behavior?

APPLY: (question 13) Two common false beliefs about sin can delay a person's reconciliation with God: 1) thinking God is unaware of or unconcerned with the sins, or 2) believing the sins committed are too evil for God to reconcile with them. Have you ever believed, or acted as if you believed, one of these lies? What happened? How has Hosea shown that both of these are false?

4. **EXPLORE:** (question 14) How does the image of a burning fire capture the desire to sin?

APPLY: (question 15) How have you experienced that kind of desire for something you shouldn't have or do? How can that fire be quenched in ways that honor God?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week→

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Week 10
Mar 23-29, 2025

Senseless Alliances (Hosea 7:8-16)

THE BIG PICTURE

Entering another cycle of prophecy, Hosea begins with an extensive list of Israel's evil deeds and failures. And once again, the nation's leaders must be singled out. The extreme level of corruption and sin by those given the responsibility of guiding and interceding for God's chosen people indicates how far Israel has fallen. They have lost the awareness of God's watchfulness and care for them. They have forgotten that God remembers and punishes sin. It seems that no behavior is off-limits. Everyone feels free to follow their selfish desires wherever they may lead, even those designated to guide the moral behavior of Israel.

Now, the focus is on Israel's interactions with foreigners. Instead of being a light and hope to the nations, they have adopted many of the beliefs of their neighbors and sought out alliances that will bring destruction.

Day One

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. Spend some time committing the passage you selected to memory.

READ HOSEA 7:8-16.

1. Hosea continues with more charges of Israel’s sinful behavior.

Verse	Charge Against Israel	Verse	Charge Against Israel
7:8		7:13	
7:9		7:14	
7:10		7:15	
7:11		7:16	

2. What are the primary complaints against Ephraim in this section? How do they fit with the top three sins you identified on Day One of last week’s study?

3. Which of the analogies in this passage stands out to you as particularly descriptive? What insight does it provide?

4. **APPLY** Israel did not notice her decline (v.9). How can we prevent ourselves from becoming unaware of slow steps away from godly living and God himself?

PRAY: Ask God to keep your heart and mind sensitive and aware of his presence and will for you.

Day Two➔

READ HOSEA 7:8-10.

Israel's dealings with other nations left them vulnerable to compromise by incorporating the beliefs and behaviors of other cultures into theirs. The idea of mixing is not just interacting or doing business together. Instead, think of yeast mixed in flour or a grain offering mixed with oil. The combined parts make a new whole.

5. How does the analogy of "a loaf not turned" (simultaneously over and under-cooked) illustrate the effects of mixing with those from outside nations?

6. Hosea remarks twice that Ephraim did not notice the changes that had come.
 - How could severe cultural compromise and national degradation go unnoticed?

 - Do you think Israel's arrogance (v. 10) played a part in this? How?

7. **APPLY** Israel did not notice her decline (v.9). How can you guard against becoming numb to the "small" sins that lead away from godly living and God himself?

8. **APPLY** Where are churches vulnerable to similar problems of mixing with the culture? How might they prevent compromise?

PRAY: Ask the Lord to reveal any places where you are vulnerable to compromise with the values and behaviors of the world.

Day Three➔

READ HOSEA 7:11-12.

In week 7, we saw that Israel's king Menaham paid Assyria's king to gain his support and strength (2 Kings 15:19). These types of payments were not single events. They accompanied agreements to become a vassal of the stronger nation. This means that Israel placed itself under the authority (and therefore protection) of Assyria by paying for protection.

9. A dove's single-minded focus on food makes it less aware of dangers and easy to bait and trap. How do they make a good analogy for Israel and their coming judgment?

10. King Hoshea, Israel's last king, offers a good example. Read 2 Kings 17:1-4. How do the king's actions illustrate Hosea's characterization of Israel as "easily deceived and senseless?"

11. How will God respond to Israel's plans to turn to foreign nations to lead and protect them? Why does this make God angry?

12. **APPLY** When have you looked to some other power to meet needs that only God could?

13. **APPLY** What types of alliances might Christians or churches be tempted to make with the nations around them? Explain.

PRAY: Recommit yourself to be a vassal to the Lord, giving him your allegiance and relying on him as your authority and protector.

Day Four>

READ HOSEA 7:13-16.

14. What is the reason for the cry of woe in verse 13?

15. What consequences will Israel's unfaithfulness bring to them?

16. **APPLY** Why is remembering the times God faithfully cared for you in the past important? How can focusing on his past works help you today?

17. **APPLY** When have you witnessed God guiding and training you to be more like him or caring for you in a time of trouble?

PRAY: Thank God for those moments when you have witnessed him at work in your life and the lives of your loved ones.

Final Reflections>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

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 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 7:8-16.

DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (question 3) Which of the analogies in this passage stands out to you as particularly descriptive? What insight does it provide?

APPLY: (question 4) Israel did not notice her decline (v.9). How can we prevent ourselves from becoming unaware of slow steps away from godly living and God himself?

2. **EXPLORE:** (question 5) How does the analogy of "a loaf not turned" (simultaneously over and under-cooked) illustrate the effects of mixing with those from outside nations?

APPLY: (question 8) Where are churches vulnerable to similar problems of mixing with the culture? How might they prevent compromise?

3. **EXPLORE:** (question 9) A dove's single-minded focus on food makes it less aware of dangers and easy to bait and trap. How do they make a good analogy for Israel and their coming judgment?

APPLY: (question 12) When have you looked to some other power to meet needs that only God could?

4. **APPLY:** (question 16) Why is remembering the times God faithfully cared for you in the past important? How can focusing on his past works help you today?

APPLY: (question 17) When have you witnessed God guiding and training you to be more like him or caring for you in a time of trouble?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week→

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Week 11
Mar 30-Apr 5, 2025

More Than They Bargained For (Hosea 8:1-14)

THE BIG PICTURE

This set of messages from Hosea (Hosea 6:7-11:11) focuses on the repercussions of Israel's self-deception and senselessness. Having convinced themselves that God's restraint in punishing their sin was his acceptance or unawareness of their actions, they mixed their actions and beliefs with those of their neighbors. More than that, they turned to other nations for protection and support rather than the God who had proved faithful throughout their history.

This chapter begins with a warning blast. An eagle, or in some translations, a vulture, is flying above Israel. Hosea may be invoking the idea of an eagle swooping down to attack its prey or perhaps of a vulture circling, aware that death is imminent. Either way, the bird is a sign that destruction is coming due to Israel's broken covenant. This should not come as a surprise to Israel, after all, this very outcome was described in the 'fine print' of the original covenant (Deut. 28:15, 45-52). Hosea continues with a series of explanations and warnings about Israel's coming judgment. While Israel thought they knew how their plans would work out, the result will be significantly more and worse than they bargained for.

Day One➔

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. Spend some time memorizing the passage you selected.

READ HOSEA 8:1-6.

1. Why will an enemy pursue Israel, even after the people cry out and acknowledge God? Read Psalm 51:15-17, Matt 7:21-23 and Tit 1:15-16 for additional insight.

2. How does Hosea describe Israel's rejection of what is good?

"They set up _____ without my _____;

they choose _____ without my _____.

With their _____ and _____

they make _____ for themselves to their own destruction." (8:4)

- Who or what is the good they have rejected? (See also Psalm 127:1-2.)

3. **APPLY** Where might Christians be setting up authorities (kings and princes) without God's consent in our churches or lives?

PRAY: Have you rejected what is good—God's gifts or God himself? Confess and ask for his forgiveness. Thank him for his faithfulness and love.

Day Two➔

READ HOSEA 8:7-10.

In these verses, Hosea is again pointing to Israel's foolish diplomatic efforts. The very nation they looked to for safety and wealth will be the nation that conquers them.

4. In general, what does it mean to "sow the wind and reap the whirlwind?" (See Job 4:8; Pro 22:8; Isa 66:15; Gal 6:7-9.)

- How is that a good description of Israel's political strategy?

5. What is Hosea communicating through the image of headless grain and crops that are swallowed up (8:7)?

6. Hosea writes that Israel is swallowed up, unwanted, and sold (8:8-10). What about Israel's story (who they are and how they came to be) makes this description particularly sad?

7. **APPLY** The Church has been called to be an example and light to bring others to God through Christ, much like Israel was intended to be. How is the global Church living up to its mission? Are there ways she has become swallowed up, unwanted, or sold to other lovers? Explain.

PRAY: You are chosen, wanted, and freely loved by God! Thank him for that reality today.

Day Three>

READ HOSEA 8:11-13.

8. What did God intend Israel's sacrifices to accomplish? Read Lev 4:31; Ex 29:42-46.

9. Based on what we have already learned in Hosea, how did Israel's altars lead to more sinning?

10. **APPLY** What might that look like to us today? Are there any religious practices intended to help us repent or not sin that might actually cause more sin? Explain.

11. Why wasn't the Lord satisfied with Israel's offerings?

12. **APPLY** There were rules for Israel's worship of God. Is there a right way for Christians to worship? Can a Christian make improper sacrifices (of praise, money, time, etc.) to God? How?

PRAY: "Lord God, cleanse and guide my heart. Let my words and meditation be acceptable and pleasing to you."

Day Four➔

READ HOSEA 8:13-14.

13. What will the Lord remember? What will be the result?

14. What actions in this chapter show that the Lord, their Maker, has been forgotten by Israel (and perhaps Judah)?

15. What do these actions indicate about where Israel is placing their trust? What will come of that trust?

16. **APPLY** Does building and planning for our futures indicate that we have forgotten our Maker? Explain.

PRAY: Read Psalm 8. Praise God because he is trustworthy.

Final Reflections➔

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

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 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 8:1-14.

DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (question 1) Why will an enemy pursue Israel, even after the people cry out and acknowledge God? Read Psalm 51:15-17, Matt 7:21-23 and Tit 1:15-16 for additional insight.

APPLY: (question 3) Where might Christians be setting up authorities (kings and princes) without God's consent in our churches or lives?

2. **EXPLORE:** (question 4) In general, what does it mean to "sow the wind and reap the whirlwind?" (See Job 4:8; Pro 22:8; Isa 66:15; Gal 6:7-9.) How is that a good description of Israel's political strategy?

APPLY: (question 7) The Church has been called to be an example and light to bring others to God through Christ, much like Israel was intended to be. How is the global Church living up to its mission? Are there ways she has become swallowed up, unwanted, or sold to other lovers? Explain.

3. **EXPLORE:** (question 9) Based on what we have already learned in Hosea, how did Israel's altars lead to more sinning?

APPLY: (question 12) There were rules for Israel's worship of God. Is there a right way for Christians to worship? Can a Christian make improper sacrifices (of praise, money, time, etc.) to God? How?

4. **EXPLORE:** (question 14) What actions in this chapter show that the Lord, their Maker, has been forgotten by Israel (and perhaps Judah)?

APPLY: (question 16) Does building and planning for our futures indicate that we have forgotten our Maker? Explain.

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week→

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Week 12
Apr 6-12, 2025

End the Celebrations (Hosea 9:1-17)

THE BIG PICTURE

Last week began with the trumpet sound of warning, proclaiming danger close at hand. In failing to keep their part of the covenant, Israel would now be subject to consequences outlined in the covenant itself. Israel's cries to God will not be heard. They reject the Lord one day and then claim him as their God the next, revealing their insincerity. Trust in God is not demonstrated by offering sacrifices or calling him "my God" when trouble comes. Trust is shown by honoring God's will—who you will allow to lead you, how you worship, and where your sense of security is grounded. He desires to be the Lord of it all, and shady political alliances only demonstrate a lack of faith in the One who created everything.

When Hosea delivers the next portion of his message, a celebration appears to be underway. The mention of the threshing floors and winepresses in the second verse suggests it may be a harvest festival, perhaps the Feast of Booths or Sukkot. Like Thanksgiving, Sukkot was a time of gratitude for God's recent provision and to remember his care and protection during their forty years in the wilderness. God's story with Israel revealed his desire to dwell with his people. Everything God had done for Abraham and his descendants was to facilitate that relationship. While most of Israel thinks about feasts and festivities, Hosea is about to call an end to the party.

Day One

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. Spend some time committing the passage you selected to memory. Try reciting it aloud to someone.

READ HOSEA 9:1-17.

1. What warnings does Hosea give Israel about what is ahead?

Verse	Warning(s)	Verse	Warning(s)
9:1		9:7	
9:2		9:11	
9:3		9:12	
9:4		9:15	
9:6		9:17	

2. How would you summarize the future Israel can expect based on this chapter?

Hosea began with the picture of Israel as an adulterous, unfaithful wife, and that imagery returns in this chapter. But instead of being pursued by a loving husband, Israel will be turned out of the house (“the land of the Lord”) and returned to the situation she had been rescued from—captivity in Egypt.

3. If God was willing to divorce or separate himself from Israel, might the same thing happen to a Christian who commits spiritual adultery? Why? See James 4:4-8.

4. **APPLY** Imagine being warned that you would soon be forced to live in a foreign country with no churches and where you could no longer participate with other believers in group worship, communion, baptisms, etc. Describe how you would feel and react. What thoughts or questions might you have for God in that situation?

PRAY: Thank the Lord for his presence in your life. Pray for wisdom to discern false gods that would rob you of God-given blessings.

Day Two➔

READ HOSEA 9:7-9

5. What does Hosea mean by saying people consider the prophet a fool and a maniac (9:7)? (See Amos 7:10 and Jeremiah 29:25-28 for similar accusations.)

6. What is the role of a prophet (9:8)? What happens when they are rejected?

7. Israel's corruption is said to be as deep as in "the days of Gibeah." See Judges 19:16-30. What happened at Gibeah? What does that indicate about life in Israel?

8. How can we determine whether a modern prophet is a fool or a carrier of a message from God? (See Deut 13:1-4, 18:21; 1 John 4:1-6; Matt 7:15-20.)
 - To whom would we expect a prophet to speak? To the Church? The Government? Or to individuals? Explain your thinking.

9. **APPLY** When things appear to be going well, how likely are you to listen to a warning about a coming disaster in the weather, climate, economy, etc? Is it different if the warning comes from a brother or sister in Christ? Explain.

PRAY: Ask for the discernment to tell the prophets from the fools and to recognize God's work in the world.

Day Four➔

READ HOSEA 9:10-17.

15. How had Israel's relationship with God changed? How are the "fruit" images appropriate representations of that change (9:10, 16)?
16. How will the coming punishment impact children and families (9:11-14, 16)? Read Gen 15:1-6. How is God's promise to Abraham related to this part of the punishment of Israel?
17. Hosea speaks in his own voice at least twice in this chapter. What emotion(s) lies behind his words (9:14, 17)? What relationship, if any, does he seem to have with Israel?
18. **APPLY** As members of the Kingdom of God, Christians are spiritually separate from and physically part of the nation and culture around them. In light of this, how do you view your non-believing neighbors? How aware are you of the judgment they will face apart from life in Christ, and how does that show itself in your interactions with them?

PRAY: "Lord, soften my heart to the needs and cares of those around me and make my feet tough enough to walk into difficult places to share your gospel with all who will listen."

Final Reflections➔

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

GUIDELINES: Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well
 Allow Pauses ● Allow Silence ● No 'Crosstalk' ● No Fixing ● Promise to Pray
 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 9:1-17.

DISCUSSION

- EXPLORE:** (question 3) If God was willing to divorce or separate himself from Israel, might the same thing happen to a Christian who commits spiritual adultery? Why? See James 4:4-8.

APPLY: (question 4) Imagine being warned that you would soon be forced to live in a foreign country with no churches and where you could no longer participate with other believers in group worship, communion, baptisms, etc. Describe how you would feel and react. What thoughts or questions might you have for God in that situation?
- EXPLORE:** (question 6) What is the role of a prophet (9:8)? What happens when they are rejected?

APPLY: (question 9) When things appear to be going well, how likely are you to listen to a warning about a coming disaster in the weather, climate, economy, etc? Is it different if the warning comes from a brother or sister in Christ? Explain.
- EXPLORE:** (question 10) What was it like when the Lord began his relationship with Israel (9:10)? What does that mean?

APPLY: (question 14) The Holy Spirit inhabits every person in the Church. How is his glory displayed to the world through the Church? What part do we play in displaying his glory?
- EXPLORE:** (question 15) How had Israel's relationship with God changed? How are the "fruit" images appropriate representations of that change (9:10, 16)?

APPLY: (question 18) As members of the Kingdom of God, Christians are spiritually separate from and physically part of the nation and culture around them. In light of this, how do you view your non-believing neighbors? How aware are you of the judgment they will face apart from life in Christ, and how does that show itself in your interactions with them?
- FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week

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Week 13
Apr 13-19, 2025

Sow, Reap & Seek the Lord (Hosea 10:1-15)

THE BIG PICTURE

Israel's time of celebrating the good life they thought they enjoyed has come to an end. The relationship that began like "finding grapes in the desert" has soured, and the unfaithful wife will be put out of her husband's home. The family tree of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had grown and flourished, but now it will wither away from the loss and lack of children. The drastic changes that Hosea has described lead the people to call the prophet a fool. Surely his claims are ludicrous, they think. But history will verify Hosea's messages.

Chapter 10 continues the condemnation of Israel's false worship. This chapter will spend more time describing their wrongdoing than the punishment ahead.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Timeline: It is unclear when this portion of Hosea's message was delivered in Israel's timeline. Speaking in the people's voice in 10:3, Hosea comments that they have no king. This may be referring to the capture of King Hoshea by Assyria's Shalmaneser V or to one of the string of assassinations detailed in 2 Kings 15:1-31).

Agricultural Metaphors: Hosea uses an agricultural metaphor to illustrate God's calling Israel for a specific purpose. Threshing, or treading, grain was a relatively easy task. The animal was not muzzled and could snack on the grain while working (Deut 25:4). An animal that had become docile through threshing could then learn to do more difficult work like plowing. For this task, it would be placed under a yoke that facilitated pulling farm implements. A well-fitted yoke is one constructed to make the task easier and more comfortable for the animal.

War: This chapter closes with a ruthless scene involving the killing of mothers and their children by Shalman at Beth Arbel. Modern historians are unsure about this event's location and timing and Shalman's identity. Regardless, the brief description conveys the brutality and loss that Israel can expect at the hands of the Assyrian army.

Day One➔

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. Spend some time committing the passage you selected to memory.

READ HOSEA 10:1-15.

1. What metaphors does Hosea utilize in this passage? What does each represent?
2. How did Israel behave as they became more prosperous? What does this indicate about their thoughts and priorities?
3. **APPLY** One commentator described Israel's worship sites (including their altars and standing stones) as "holy machinery which produced the prosperity." Are we vulnerable to allowing the "business" of Christianity to hijack our worship? In what ways? How can we guard against it?
4. **APPLY** Does prosperity always negatively affect a person's (or a country's) relationship with and obedience to God? If not, what factors lead to a positive outcome?

PRAY: Thank God for the abundance and prosperity in your life. Ask him to help you guard against the lies that often accompany great blessings.

Day Two→

READ HOSEA 10:3-6.

5. Verse 3 describes Israel's apathy about authority. They do not fear or revere the Lord, and they doubt the value of a human king as well.
- Look at verse 4 in a few different translations (NIV, ESV, NLT) and note what is springing up like weeds. What does that mean? (See Amos 5:7, 6:12 for additional insight.)
 - Does their apathetic attitude contribute to the empty oaths and poisonous weeds? How?
6. Hosea has charged Israel with both arrogance (thinking they determined their success) and apathy (nothing makes any difference). Which sinful attitude do you think is worse? Explain.
7. Which statement(s) best explains Israel's emotional reactions regarding the calf idol (v. 5)?
- They recognize they have worshiped falsely, regret their actions, and are returning to God.
 - Their object of devotion and worship has been shamed, which brings them shame as well.
 - They were proud of their idol and their worship and embarrassed they could not protect it (nor did it protect them).
 - They regret the events that have occurred and mourn for their lost power and prosperity.
8. **APPLY** What is revealed about us by how worried we are about the loss, or potential loss, of something?

PRAY: Lord, help me never to underestimate my sins and their effects. Guide me to true repentance.

Day Three➔

READ HOSEA 10:7-10

9. Despite Israel's best attempts, they will have no control over the approaching events. What words and phrases in this passage communicate this lack of control?

10. Israel's history at Gibeah is used again to illustrate their depravity. But now, Gibeah is also a metaphor for the punishment to come. Read Judges 20. Summarize what happened in that war.

- What will be repeated or similar now as in the days of Gibeah? What will be different?

11. When Hosea says Israel will be bound for their double sin, he may be pointing to two specific sins, or he may mean they will receive twice the discipline (See [Isaiah 40:2](#)). What do you think Hosea means by "double sin" (10:10)? Explain.

12. **APPLY** A famous statement claims, "...insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Do you think this accurately describes Israel's behavior? Does it reflect the relation of most people to sin? Explain.

PRAY: Are there any sins that you keep returning to? Ask the Lord to help you break the cycle and to make new choices.

Day Four>

READ HOSEA 10:11-15.

13. Compare God’s invitation to Israel with their response:

Verse 12:

Sow _____

reap _____

break up _____

for _____

until _____

Verse 13:

You have planted _____

You have reaped _____

you have eaten _____

because you have _____

and _____

14. A yoke helped an animal complete the master’s task. How was God’s yoke (Matt 11:29-30) different from what Israel could expect from her conquerors (Hosea 10:14-15)?

15. **APPLY** Like Israel, the Church is intended to show God to others. How should the Church be sowing righteousness, reaping the fruit of love, and breaking up unplowed ground?

What part do you think God has called you to play in the process?

PRAY: Ask God to show you how he has designed you for the tasks he has called you to perform.

Final Reflections>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

GUIDELINES: Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well
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 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 10:1-15.

DISCUSSION

- EXPLORE:** (question 2) How did Israel behave as they became more prosperous? What does this indicate about their thoughts and priorities?

APPLY: (question 4) Does prosperity always negatively affect a person's (or a country's) relationship with and obedience to God? If not, what factors lead to a positive outcome?
- EXPLORE:** (question 7) Which statement(s) best explains Israel's emotional reactions regarding the calf idol (v. 5)?

APPLY: (question 8) What is revealed about us by how worried we are about the loss, or potential loss, of something?
- EXPLORE:** (question 11) When Hosea says Israel will be bound for their double sin, he may be pointing to two specific sins, or he may mean they will receive twice the discipline (See [Isaiah 40:2](#)). What do you think Hosea means by "double sin" (10:10)? Explain.

APPLY: (question 12) A famous statement claims, "...insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Do you think this accurately describes Israel's behavior? Does it reflect the relation of most people to sin? Explain.
- EXPLORE:** (question 14) A yoke helped an animal complete the master's task. How was God's yoke (Matt 11:29-30) different from what Israel could expect from her conquerors (Hosea 10:14-15)?

APPLY: (question 15) Like Israel, the Church is intended to show God to others. How should the Church be sowing righteousness, reaping the fruit of love, and breaking up unplowed ground? What part do you think God has called you to play in the process?
- FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week→

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Week 14
Apr 27-May 3, 2025

Overwhelming Mercy (Hosea 11:1-11)

THE BIG PICTURE

Speaking in the voice of God, Hosea has repeatedly described Israel's degeneration. Once a young nation flourishing under God's care and guidance, Israel is now wasting away due to following their own understanding and authority. The sin of her youth has caught up to her, and, like in the days of the judges, war is again at Israel's gates. God built the nation to sow righteousness and reap the fruit of unending love (10:12), not the evil fruit of deception. Instead of depending on the strength of God, they have relied on their armies and political strategies. The calf idol, where they placed their worship and trust, will be taken as a trophy by an invading army, showing its lack of power. But Israel's story is not over yet. God has not finished with them.

This week's chapter concludes the second major part of the covenant lawsuit. Similar to 3:1-5, the end of Gomer's story, and 6:1-6, which ended the first part of the lawsuit, there is a break in the clouds and a view of a hopeful future. The mercy of God is overwhelming and affects everything he does.

There are only two places in the Old Testament where Israel is explicitly described in God's voice as "my son," Exodus 4:22-23 and Hosea 11:1. This metaphor carries the ideas of the benefits and responsibilities of the firstborn son. The eldest son bears the responsibility to remember and maintain the family traditions. The firstborn heir also receives a double-sized inheritance. Israel was chosen for God's blessings and for the responsibility of representing him to the world. In his gospel, Matthew connects Jesus to Hosea 11:1 and the image of God's son (Matt 2:15). While Hosea was describing a historical event, Matthew recognized that Jesus was the continuation and completion of God's plan that had begun with the nation of Israel.

Day One➔

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. Spend some time committing the passage you selected to memory.

READ HOSEA 11:1-11.

1. Note the “I” statements in this passage. What did God say about himself—what he has done and will do?

2. What parallels do you see between Hosea 3:1-5 and 11:1-11?

LOOK AT HOSEA 11:1-4.

3. Earlier, Hosea used marriage as a metaphor representing God's relationship with Israel. What family metaphor is used in these verses? What ideas and emotions are communicated through it?

4. How does Israel respond to God's love and care?

5. **APPLY** When have you experienced God as a kind Father, leading and caring for you? Have you ever reacted to him similarly to Israel? Explain.

PRAY: Which fatherly attribute do you need to experience? Ask him to show himself to you in that way today.

Day Two➔

READ HOSEA 11:5-7.

6. What emotion(s) seems to be expressed through these verses? Is this a change or continuation of the feelings shown in 11:1-4?

7. Compare verses 5-7 in three or more translations (suggest NIV, ESV, and NET). Pay attention to the significant differences and similarities, then answer these questions:
 - Who will rule over Israel?

 - What will these things occur?

 - What is the common idea expressed in all versions? Is there any sign of true repentance?

8. Read Luke 15:11-32. How are the representations of the father and sons in this story similar to those in Hosea 11? How are they different?

9. **APPLY** Does God guide and discipline his children mainly through direct punishment or natural consequences? How has that been true in your life? Explain.

PRAY: Father, forgive me for the times my heart has been set against you—when I wanted what I wanted regardless of the good you have for me. Thank you for molding me into the person you have created me to be.

Day Three➔

LOOK AT HOSEA 11:8-9.

10. What emotion is communicated through these verses?

11. Read Genesis 10:19, 19:24-29 and Deuteronomy 29:23.

- What other cities are Admah and Zeboyim associated with? What happened there?
- Is the certainty of punishment expressed in Hosea 11:5-7 contradicted by 11:8-9? Explain.

12. What reason does God give for not carrying out the full force of his anger?

13. Calling himself the Holy One indicates that God is set apart—separate and unique from creation and his people. But he also describes himself as the Holy One in their midst. God is set apart, but he is not distant and detached. He is among them! How does this identity (holy and in their midst) explain God's unique relationship with Israel and how he has dealt with them?

14. **APPLY** As Jesus, God embodied his title in a very concrete way. How are God's interactions with Israel like Christ's interactions with us? How is it different?

PRAY: Read Zephaniah 3:17. Praise God as the Holy One who lives in our midst.

Day Four➔

LOOK AT HOSEA 11:10-11.

15. God's love is at the heart of chapter 11. How has it been demonstrated throughout?

16. What finally causes the Israelites to return to God? What is their attitude like when they come back?

17. **APPLY** In the story of the lost son, the father waited expectantly for his son's return. In Hosea 11, God the Father calls Israel back with a roar. What do these two examples illustrate about God's approach to those who have abandoned their relationship with him?

18. **APPLY** Given the power of God's love and his desire that no one perish (2 Peter 3:9), why are so many Christians hesitant to share his love through evangelism? What, if anything, keeps you from sharing the gospel?

PRAY: *"Holy Father, your love and grace to sinful, wayward people, including me, is almost beyond comprehension. Thank you for loving me even when I was far from you. Teach me to love others with the love you have shown me."*

Final Reflections➔

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

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 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 11:1-11.

DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (*question 3*) Earlier, Hosea used marriage as a metaphor representing God's relationship with Israel. What family metaphor is used in these verses? What ideas and emotions are communicated through it?

APPLY: (*question 5*) When have you experienced God as a kind Father, leading and caring for you? Have you ever reacted to him similarly to Israel? Explain.

2. **EXPLORE:** (*question 8*) Read Luke 15:11-32. How are the representations of the father and sons in this story similar to those in Hosea 11? How are they different?

APPLY: (*question 9*) Does God guide and discipline his children mainly through direct punishment or natural consequences? How has that been true in your life? Explain.

3. **EXPLORE:** (*question 12*) What reason does God give for not carrying out the full force of his anger (Hosea 11:8-9)?

APPLY: (*question 14*) As Jesus, God embodied his title in a very concrete way. How are God's interactions with Israel like Christ's interactions with us? How is it different?

4. **APPLY:** (*question 17*) In the story of the lost son, the father waited expectantly for his son's return. In Hosea 11, God the Father calls Israel back with a roar. What do these two examples illustrate about God's approach to those who have abandoned their relationship with him?

APPLY: (*question 18*) Given the power of God's love and his desire that no one perish (2 Peter 3:9), why are so many Christians hesitant to share his love through evangelism? What, if anything, keeps you from sharing the gospel?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week→

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Week 15
May 4-10, 2025

Justice Prevails (Hosea 11:12-12:14)

THE BIG PICTURE

Perhaps there is no better way for simple humans to get a taste of the vast love of a perfect and holy God than through the anguished lament of a father. We can relate to the voice of God describing the tender care and guidance given to his young son. We feel the Father's pain and rejection when the son fails to recognize the source of all he has been given. Despite God's legitimate anger, he will hold back. God is not a human whose emotions carry him away. He is righteous and just. He abounds with mercy. In his love, he will call his son to return. He desires restoration.

We have reached the final section in God's covenant lawsuit against Israel. This time, the charges are offered by analogy to the life of Jacob before he was called Israel. The southern kingdom of Judah will also be included in this set of charges.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Assyrian treaty (12:1) - Hoshea was entangled with Assyria and forced to pay tribute to King Tiglath-Pileser III. Assyria claimed responsibility for placing Hoshea as king over Israel after Pekah's assassination. The Assyrian Annals also record Hoshea's tribute payment in 732, probably to confirm his position as king.

Oil tribute to Egypt (12:1) - After agreeing to be Assyria's vassal king in Israel, Hoshea entered into a separate relationship with Egypt by sending a large quantity of olive oil, a valuable commodity. Trying to make allegiances with both nations led to Assyria's invasion of Israel in 722.

Stone piles on plowed land (12:11) - The reference to these stones may indicate altars that had been toppled, or it may refer to altars as numerous as stone piles in a plowed field.

Day One➔

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. Spend some time committing the passage you selected to memory.

READ HOSEA 11:12-12:14.

1. What accusations of sin are made against Israel in this section?
2. What characteristics of God are shown in this passage?
3. What does Hosea say about Judah in 11:12 and 12:2? Is this surprising? Why or why not?
4. What does it mean that Ephraim feeds on and pursues the wind (12:1)? To what is Hosea referring?
5. The Hebrew word used for "treaty" is also used as "covenant." Why is it a problem for Israel to have additional covenants besides their covenant with God?
6. **APPLY** How have you seen Christians chasing after the wind or entering into "contracts" that conflict with their relationship with God?

PRAY: Ask God to reveal any ways you might be chasing after the wind.

Day Two➔

READ HOSEA 12:2-6.

Hosea begins by referring to the nation of Israel as Jacob but quickly changes to describing the life of Jacob the man. For the stories behind Hosea's references, see Gen 25:19-34 and 27-33:11.

7. From birth, Jacob was reaching to get ahead—first by taking advantage of his brother to take his birthright, then by deceiving his father to receive the blessing intended for his brother. Fleeing his angry brother, he met God at Bethel and later his wives in Paddan Aram. Many years later, returning to his home as a wealthy man, Jacob wrestled with the angel and requested (and received) a blessing and a new name. Jacob feared seeing his brother again, so he sent a peace offering (some might call it a bribe). When they met again, the brothers embraced one another and wept.

How were Jacob's schemes and struggles an example for Israel?

8. **APPLY** Have you ever wrestled with God? What was the result?

9. What is the significance of specifying God's name in 12:5? See Exodus 3:14-15. (Note: Bethel is the same location Hosea mocked as Beth Aven.)

10. What does God call Ephraim to do in 12:6? Why?

11. **APPLY** In what ways are you turning to and waiting on God? How have you acted in love (mercy)? How have you done justice? Which of these is easiest for you? Where do you struggle?

PRAY: Pray that the Church would display God's love, mercy, and justice to one another and the world.

Day Three➔

READ HOSEA 12:6-9.

12. What does 12:7-8 tell us about Ephraim?

13. Why was God concerned about honest scales? (See also Lev 19:36 and Amos 8:5.) Who is affected most by this form of dishonesty?

14. **APPLY** How should a Christian respond to fraud and dishonesty in the marketplace? Why?

15. How does Israel view their wealth? Do they believe they accumulated it innocently? Or do they expect their wealth to hide their sins? Explain.

16. **APPLY** What problems can wealth create for modern churches? How are the Body of Christ and the mission of the Church affected? (See Rev 3:17-19 for additional insight.)

PRAY: "Lord, give me a heart that loves mercy and justice. Grant me wisdom to know how to exhibit both. And empower me to use my wealth to love and lead others to you."

Day Four➔

READ HOSEA 12:9-14.

17. Why do you think Hosea is reminding Israel about their history again? What does God want them to recognize?

18. **APPLY** What rituals and observances help the Church remember God and what he's done? How can we keep these practices from becoming meaningless repetition?

19. What important role(s) did the prophets play in Israel's history?

20. **APPLY** Does God still use prophets in the Church today? If so, who are they? If not, why not?

PRAY: Read Psalm 104 as a prayer.

Final Reflections➔

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

GUIDELINES: Commitment ● Confidentiality is Key ● This is a Safe Group ● Listen Well
 Allow Pauses ● Allow Silence ● No 'Crosstalk' ● No Fixing ● Promise to Pray
 No Rescuing ● Encouragement ● Space to Share ● Be Self-Aware
 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 11:12-12:14.

DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (*question 4*) What does it mean that Ephraim feeds on and pursues the wind (12:1)? To what is Hosea referring?

APPLY: (*question 6*) How have you seen Christians chasing after the wind or entering into "contracts" that conflict with their relationship with God?

2. **APPLY:** (*question 8*) Have you ever wrestled with God? What was the result?

EXPLORE: (*question 10*) What does God call Ephraim to do in 12:6? Why?

3. **EXPLORE:** (*question 13*) Why was God concerned about honest scales? (See also Lev 19:36 and Amos 8:5.) Who is affected most by this form of dishonesty?

APPLY: (*question 16*) What problems can wealth create for modern churches? How are the Body of Christ and the mission of the Church affected? (See Rev 3:17-19 for additional insight.)

4. **EXPLORE:** (*question 18*) What rituals and observances help the Church remember God and what he's done? How can we keep these practices from becoming meaningless repetition?

APPLY: (*question 20*) Does God still use prophets in the Church today? If so, who are they? If not, why not?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week→

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Week 16
May 18-24, 2025

Forgotten God (Hosea 13:1-16)

THE BIG PICTURE

Because of Israel's behavior, God's anger is fully justified. Hosea's multiple messages were delivered over several years and communicated using many styles and metaphors. Only a deeply deluded Israel could claim to be unaware of their sins. Although Israel's stubbornness and self-reliance will bring a horrible punishment on them, God's fatherly love and care for his people remains boundless. His faithful love compels him to keep his promises. God entered a covenant with Israel and will keep his obligations, even while Israel breaks theirs.

The nation of Israel is not the first to plan and scheme to grab what God has promised to give freely. Jacob, the first to be called Israel, schemed to take the place of the first-born and then fled to save himself. Even though he often relied on himself and his abilities, God worked with and through his plots and circumstances. God cared for Jacob and brought him back to his land. He is always the father ready to welcome the children who return to him. God has spoken through Hosea to convict Israel of their sins and perhaps repent. Unfortunately for the kingdom of Israel, the punishment will come first.

Hosea 13 describes the coming storm in brutal language. Israel has looked for safety from the wrong rulers, and their agreements will blow up in their faces. As you read this chapter, it is important to recognize that not everything described in Scripture was commanded by God. Assyria was known for brutality. Israel will experience it firsthand.

Day One➔

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. Spend some time committing the passage you selected to memory.

READ HOSEA 13:1-16.

1. What sins are emphasized in this chapter? Why do you think these are Hosea's final focus?
2. Note the "I" statements in this chapter. What does God communicate about himself through them?
3. According to Hosea 13:1-3, what was Ephraim's downfall? What does it mean that they died since they "sin more and more?"
4. **APPLY** From the beginning of the northern kingdom, the king mixed worship of God with the practices of worshiping other gods. (See 1 Kings 12:26-32.) Can other religions' practices ever be "Christianized" to legitimately worship God? Explain.
5. What do we learn about Ephraim from the similes in verse 3?
6. **APPLY** Individual sinners and enemies of God are said to be like chaff or smoke (Psalm 1:4; 68:2) like Israel is here. Do you find this idea comforting or challenging? Explain.

PRAY: Pray that your spiritual leaders and pastors will be wise and discerning as they guide believers in worshipping and following God.

Day Two➔

READ HOSEA 13:4-8.

7. Compare 13:4 in the NIV and ESV translations. Based on the rest of the passage, which version do you think best captures what God wants to communicate? Why?

8. What led to Israel forgetting God? Read Deut 8:10-14. Is it surprising that this happened to Israel?

9. **APPLY** Are you more aware of God's care and blessings when you have enough or when you are in need? Why do you think that is the case?

10. Compare the images in 5:14 and 11:10 with those in 13:7-8. How will God respond to Israel's pride and forgetfulness? Does this seem like a fair response? Read Deut 6:13-15 before answering.

11. **APPLY** How do God's holiness, justice, and love fit with being a jealous God? How is jealousy a positive response?

PRAY: In 13:4, God declares, "I have been/am the Lord your God." Talk to God about the significance of that statement for you.

Day Three➔

READ HOSEA 13:9-13

12. Why will Israel be destroyed (13:9)?

13. When Israel was first brought to the promised land, they were led by prophets and judges. God was their king. But Israel grew frustrated with this arrangement and asked to be ruled by a human king. Read 1 Samuel 8:1-20. Why did Israel want a king, and what did they expect one would provide?

14. What does verse 11 mean? Was God angry for the same reason he was wrathful? Were the kings the problem or something else? Explain.

15. Ephraim's foolishness is highlighted by the imagery in 13:12-13.

- What is the idea behind verse 12? Can guilt be stored indefinitely? What will be the eventual result?
- Look at verse 13. What happens if a child is unable ("unwilling") to recognize the signs and exit his mother's womb?

16. **APPLY** Will God rescue Christians from their sinful and foolish choices? Or are they doomed to receive his discipline? Explain.

PRAY: Look back over your life and note the times God cared for, sustained, or rescued you. Thank him for these moments, being as specific as you can.

Day Four>

READ HOSEA 13:14-16.

17. Read 13:14 in the NIV and NLT translations. What significant difference do you find? Which version do you think fits best with the message of Hosea? Explain.

No matter how we understand 13:14, the rest of the chapter confirms that the consequences of Israel's rebellion are coming soon.

18. What will happen to Israel according to 13:15-16?

19. Review Hosea 2:14-15, 6:1-3, and 11:8-11. What ultimate result does God want his judgment to accomplish?

20. **APPLY** Read Hebrews 12:5-13. When has God's loving discipline brought you back to him?

PRAY: *"Thank you, Father, for your plans and your promises, for your guidance and discipline."*

Final Reflections>

What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

WELCOME, ICE BREAKER, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER

PURPOSE: We're here to grow closer to the Lord and each other and to grow numerically. As our group grows, we will branch to disciple even more people.

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 Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 13:1-16.

DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (question 3) According to Hosea 13:1-3, what was Ephraim's downfall? What does it mean that they died since they "sin more and more?"

APPLY: (question 4) From the beginning of the northern kingdom, the king mixed worship of God with the practices of worshiping other gods. (See 1 Kings 12:26-32.) Can other religions' practices ever be "Christianized" to legitimately worship God? Explain.

2. **EXPLORE:** (question 8) What led to Israel forgetting God? Read Deut 8:10-14. Is it surprising that this happened to Israel?

APPLY: (question 11) How do God's holiness, justice, and love fit with being a jealous God? How is jealousy a positive response?

3. **EXPLORE:** (question 14) What does verse 11 mean? Was God angry for the same reason he was wrathful? Were the kings the problem or something else? Explain.

APPLY: (question 16) Will God rescue Christians from their sinful and foolish choices? Or are they doomed to receive his discipline? Explain.

4. **EXPLORE:** (question 17) Read 13:14 in the NIV and NLT translations. What significant difference do you find? Which version do you think fits best with the message of Hosea? Explain.

APPLY: (question 20) Read Hebrews 12:5-13. When has God's loving discipline brought you back to him?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week→

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Week 17
May 25-31, 2025

Return & Be Loved (Hosea 14:1-9)

THE BIG PICTURE

With the final chapter of Hosea's messages to Israel comes a beautiful vision of hope. The charges of the northern kingdom's sinfulness and rebellion have been proclaimed repeatedly. Their upcoming judgment and exile have been described in gruesome detail. This chapter does not offer a reprieve from the Assyrian overthrow that will soon occur, but it does show that the nation's fall will not be the end of the story. God still has plans for those who will turn back and faithfully serve him.

THE END OF THE STORY

We do not know how the people of Israel responded to Hosea's messages and this word of hope. We do know that the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722/721 B.C. Some 27,000 Israelites from Samaria were taken as captives to Assyria in 720 B.C., including charioteers who were made to serve in the royal guard. Others left Israel for the southern kingdom of Judah before the Assyrian takeover. Even though the northern kingdom of Israel was never re-established, God's invitation and plan remained for Judah and the scattered exiles.

Day One➔

Take time to read through Hosea again this week. Spend some time committing the passage you selected to memory.

READ HOSEA 14:1-9.

1. What kind of words should Israel take as they return to the Lord (See Hosea 6:1-3 also.)? Why?
2. What does it mean to “offer the fruit of our lips?” See Psalm 51:14-17, 116:12-14, and Hebrews 13:15. What does this indicate about the person offering it?
3. **APPLY** How have your words been an offering or sacrifice to the Lord? Do you think God desires the “fruit of our lips” as much as our righteous behavior? Explain.
4. Has Israel been fatherless? In what way? (See Hosea 1:6, 2:1, 23.)
5. **APPLY** How did God demonstrate compassion to you when you were fatherless (living in rebellion to him)? How does God’s love facilitate repentance?

PRAY: Using Psalm 36:5-9, offer a gift of praise to God.

Day Two→

READ HOSEA 14:4-8.

6. What does God promise to do for Israel when they return to him (14:4)?

7. Look at 14:4 in several different translations. What words are used to describe what God will heal? Do the different words affect the way you understand Israel's disease? How?

8. What does it mean that God will love Israel freely? What will become of Israel as a result of that love?

9. **APPLY** Read Acts 26:20, 1 John 1:9, and Revelation 2:5. Does God's message to Israel apply to you in any way? Explain.

PRAY: Pray for those you know who are still wayward and fatherless. Ask God to soften their hearts to hear and follow his call to healing and restoration.

Day Three>

READ HOSEA 14:9.

10. This verse was added to Hosea's collection of messages, perhaps by Hosea or whoever compiled them, to encourage wisdom and discernment. What should the wise and discerning person do?

11. What is the purpose of ending with this statement? Why do you think this needed to be said?

12. **APPLY** When you think about all of the messages included in Hosea, do you have any trouble believing that 14:9 is true? Explain.

PRAY: *"Heavenly Father, give me wisdom and discernment. Help me to realize and understand that all your ways are right. Guide me as I grow daily to more faithfully walk the path you have planned for me. Amen."*

Day Four➔

READ JOHN 3:16-21.

13. What similarities do you see between Jesus' description of the gospel message and the primary message of Hosea?

14. Summarize the message of Hosea in three or four sentences.

15. **APPLY** What has been your biggest takeaway from studying Hosea?

What do you know or understand now that you didn't before?

PRAY: Thank God for the gift of the Scriptures and for all he has shown you through this study.

Final Reflections➔

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What has God shown you about yourself?

How will you respond this week to what you have learned?

SMALL GROUP GAME PLAN

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Use 'I' Statements ● Personal Application ● Resolve Conflicts Biblically

SET THE SCENE

READ: HOSEA 14:1-9.

DISCUSSION

1. **EXPLORE:** (question 2) What does it mean to "offer the fruit of our lips?" See Psalm 51:14-17, 116:12-14, and Hebrews 13:15. What does this indicate about the person offering it?

APPLY: (question 5) How did God demonstrate compassion to you when you were fatherless (living in rebellion to him)? How does God's love facilitate repentance?

2. **EXPLORE:** (question 8) What does it mean that God will love Israel freely? What will become of Israel as a result of that love?

APPLY: (question 9) Read Acts 26:20, 1 John 1:9, and Revelation 2:5. Does God's message to Israel apply to you in any way? Explain.

3. **EXPLORE:** (question 10) This verse (14:9) was added to Hosea's collection of messages, perhaps by Hosea or whoever compiled them, to encourage wisdom and discernment. What should the wise and discerning person do?

APPLY: (question 12) When you think about all of the messages included in Hosea, do you have any trouble believing that 14:9 is true? Explain.

4. **EXPLORE:** (question 14) Summarize the message of Hosea in three or four sentences.

APPLY: (question 15) What has been your biggest takeaway from studying Hosea? What do you know or understand now that you didn't before?

5. **FINAL REFLECTIONS:** What has God shown you this week about himself?

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CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Sermon & Discussion Notes➔

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Things To Pray About This Week

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ה בשנת שלוש למלכו עשה מ הבירה בשנת שלוש למלכו
יו חיל פרס ומדי הפרתמים וש ועבדיו חיל פרס ומדי הפרת
זתו את עשר כבוד מלכותי ואת בהראתו את עשר כבוד מלכו
תו ימים רבים שמונים ומאת יונגדולתו ימים רבים שמונים ו
ה עשה המלך לכל העם הנמצא האלה עשה המלך לכל העם
ול ועד קטן משתה שבעת ימי למגדול ועד קטן משתה שו
בימי אחשורוש הוא אחשורוש ויהי בימי אחשורוש הוא או
שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה ברכוש שבע ועשרים ומאה מד
אחשורוש על כסא מלכותו המלך אחשורוש על כסא כ
ה בשנת שלוש למלכו עשה מ הבירה בשנת שלוש למלכו
יו חיל פרס ומדי הפרתמים וש ועבדיו חיל פרס ומדי הפרת
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Hosea
the redemptive love of God