

HOSEA

A Broken and Restored Marriage

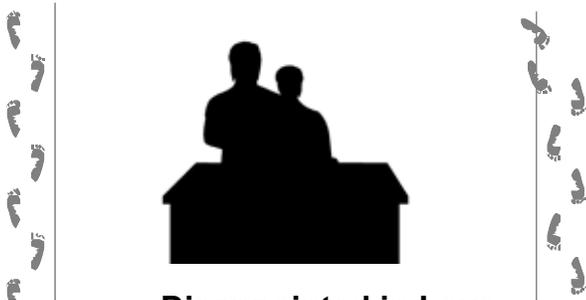
by Dr. Robinson

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If it is true, as Emerson once said, that “all the world loves a lover,” then the story of Hosea should be the best loved in the entire Bible.

In some ways it differs little from ten thousand other stories that take place every year in New York or London, Dallas, or San Francisco. It is the story of a broken vow and a broken home, of a broken heart, and a broken life. But in other ways the story is so utterly unique that it ranks as one of the most amazing in all of literature. God has chosen the sad and sordid story of this broken-hearted prophet to reveal His heart and to manifest His love.



Disappointed in Love

The story of Hosea took place in the city of Samaria. Hosea met, loved, and eventually married a young woman named Gomer. Gomer must have been swept off her feet by this young man who had the heart of a hero, the passion of a poet, and the zeal of a saint. And God, knowing well the outcome of this relationship, yet gave Hosea His permission to marry Gomer.

“Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness...”(Hosea 1:2 NIV).

Any man’s life is blessed or blasted by the woman that he marries. When Hosea first met Gomer, he may have thought that she was as pure as the lily of the valley in his favourite love poem, *The Song of Solomon*. He must have hoped that their future would be filled with blessedness and bliss.

But as the days passed and he grew to know her better, disappointment set in. Had the petals of her purity already been plucked and trampled

by the passions of vile and impure men before the marriage? Was Hosea too busy to give his young wife the attention she needed? We may never know. We know only that Gomer’s heart drifted away from her husband’s and that she sought affection from other lovers.



Hosea must have seen and grieved this cooling of his wife’s affection. And this was not the only burden on his heart. He also saw his nation, the nation of Israel, turning away from God. There had been a series of military victories under King Jehoash, whose son, King Jeroboam II, continued this military success and prosperity, winning for himself a forty-one-year reign. However, King Jeroboam turned his people’s hearts from God. *“He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat (Jeroboam I), which he had caused Israel to commit”* (2 Kings 14:24 NIV).

Hosea could see that his nation, although prosperous, would eventually fall victim to the war machine of Assyria unless it repented of its sin. Day after day Hosea returned home with the burden of a decaying nation on his heart. Night after night he lay awake long after it was good for him, waiting for his wayward wife to return.

Certainly he must have prayed. Since he was a godly man, he carried his burden to the Lord.

Children of Adultery

Then Gomer gave birth to a baby. For Hosea this may have been a renewal of hope. Perhaps as he held that infant in his arms he reasoned, "This is God's doing. For this little boy will take one chubby hand and put it around my heart and the other hand and put it around Gomer's heart, and he'll draw our lives together."

Then God spoke to him. "Call his name Jezreel," God said (Hosea 1:4).

In the Hebrew language, "Jezreel" means to *cast something away*, to *fling something aside*. It was also the name of a city that had played a tragic part in Israel's history. The terrible apostasy under King Ahab and his queen Jezebel had come to a frightening conclusion when the queen was hurled from the window of her palace and her body was devoured by dogs in the streets of Jezreel.



So when God told Hosea to call his son Jezreel, he was making the boy and his family an object lesson of God's relationship to His people. It would be as though a Jewish parent today were to call his child Dachau, or Bergen-Belsen, names of Hitler's horror camps where millions were massacred during World War II. Those names, sounding in the ear of a Jewish person today, would bring out of the cemetery of memories grim ghosts of a bygone day.

So Jezreel was a reminder to Israel of God's relationship to His people. Every time Hosea summoned his son at play, every time he called him in the market place, that name, sounding in the ear of a pious Jew, would be a grim reminder that in the past God had been faithful to deal with the nation's sin.

Yet, even with a small son, Gomer did not change. Then she bore a second child. This time God said, "Call her name Lo-Ruhamah" This name means

unpity or no mercy. "For," God said, "I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel" (Hosea 1:6).

After Lo-Ruhamah was weaned, Gomer bore a third child, her second son. At God's command they called him Lo-Ammi.

These three names of Hosea's children do two things. First, they give us a sketch of what was to happen to the nation of Israel. Second, they give us a hint as to what was going on in the prophet's family. For this third name, Lo-Ammi, means *no kin of mine*. It shows that in his bitterness and brokenheartedness, Hosea was possessed of a suspicion that became a damning certainty, that these children born into his home **were not really his children at all!**



Pursuing an Unfaithful Wife

But even though Gomer was living in adultery, Hosea refused to divorce her. What happened next can be guessed from the message of God that Hosea gave to his people in Chapter 2. It appears that Gomer had left him. Perhaps there was a note pinned to the door, telling him that she was going to have her fling and was leaving the children to Hosea, and that he was not to follow her.

So we can imagine watching the prophet as he puts his children to bed that night. He has to be both a father and a mother to them now. He gives them a bite of supper and listens to their childish prayers and then watches as they drift off to sleep. But there is no sleep for Hosea. Even though Gomer has left his house, she has not left his heart.

Probably when Gomer left Hosea, she thought that she was bettering herself. "I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink" (Hosea 2:5). Maybe she was lured from his side by the promise of exotic foods and exciting clothes. But as so often happens with folks who take that primrose path, what

at first seems to be leading up to the heights takes a sudden turn and goes down into the depths.

All this time Hosea watched the downward path his wife had followed. Eventually it appears that Gomer fell into the hands of a man who was unable to provide for her the basic necessities of life. Out of love for his wife, Hosea may have decided to provide for her needs. We can imagine him going to her lover's house, introducing himself and saying, "Are you the man who is living with Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim?"

The man says, "Well, what if I am?"

Hosea says, "I'm her husband."

The man clenches his fist and is ready for a fight. Hosea says, "No, you don't understand. You see, I love my wife. I love her very deeply and I wonder if you would take some of my silver and some of my gold and buy for her the things that she needs."

The man stares at the prophet. But then seeing the silver in his outstretched palm and thinking, "There's no fool like an old fool," he agrees to the prophet's plan.

You would say to me, "It is not logical that a man would pay out good silver and good gold for the keep of a woman that was playing him false." And I wholeheartedly agree. But the point is, you see, that Hosea is not acting according to logic. Hosea is acting according to love. Love has motives that reason cannot understand. For "love is of God" (1 John 4:7) and it is infinite. Hosea is playing the part with Gomer that God has played with you and me all of our lives.

So we watch this lustful wretch as he returns home. His arms are filled with the things that Hosea's money has purchased. Gomer races from the hut, sees her lover with his arms filled with provisions, and throws her arms around him, thanking him for what he has done.



Somewhere in the shadows we see Hosea. He catches a glimpse of her who fills his heart. He watches as Gomer pours out her affection upon her

lustful lover, thanking him for the things that love has provided. In tears, Hosea says, "She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold—which they used for Baal" (Hosea 2:8 NIV).

Before you become angry with a woman like Gomer, I would remind you that you and I have done this with God. It is from His hand that we have received the bounty of life. We have received food for our tables and clothes for our bodies. Yet how quickly we thank everyone and everything except God who has provided them! We thank our friends, we thank our governments, we thank the strength of our own right arm, everyone and everything except God from whom the blessings come.

Redeeming the Rebel

In Hosea 2:9-23 God announces his double-edged plan for winning back His people to Himself. First, He says, He will bring them hardships by taking away all the pleasant things in their life. "I will return and take away My grain in its time and My new wine in its season, and will take back My wool and My linen, given to cover her nakedness" (Hosea 2:9).

Then, when His people are thoroughly miserable, God will begin to "court" them again, seeking to win their hearts back to Him. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her...and speak comfort to her" (Hosea 2:14). God's justice and God's love are both part of this plan. Neither His justice nor His love will allow Him to abandon His people.

Does God really love us like this? Pouring forth from the springs of scripture is the truth that God does indeed love us just like this.

God gives to man the metal in the mine. God gives to man the trees in the forest. God gives to man skill in his hand. Man with his skill chops down the tree. Man with his skill mines the metal. When the metal is mined and the tree is cut, man with his skill takes that tree and forms it into a cross. With his skill he takes that metal and forms it into a nail.

Then God comes in the person of Jesus Christ and allows men with cruel violence to pound the nails into His hands. He dies there on that cross for the very men who put Him there, for the crowds standing jeering beneath the cross, for the soldiers who put the nails into His hands. He dies there for them and for us, for you and for me, that we might have forgiveness of sins, that we might have eternal life, and that we might have heaven forevermore.

In Chapter 3 we discover the last act of this great drama of redemption. Not only did Gomer fall into the hands of a man who was **unable** to provide for her

needs. She now has fallen into the hands of one who was **unwilling** to provide them. Evidently this man decides to sell her into slavery.

In the days when this story took place, slavery was an established institution. Some historians tell us that when a woman was offered at the slave auction, she was stripped of her clothes and forced to stand naked before the gaze of the crowd. It was evidently to such a place that Gomer was taken, and to such a place that Hosea was called to go.

You can imagine the rustle of the crowd, the gossip that went from lip to lip as they saw Hosea. They said, "He's come to see her get what she deserves. He's come to watch her be punished."

And then the bidding begins. Someone offers ten pieces of silver, someone else twelve. And Hosea says, "I'll give you fifteen pieces of silver." Someone else says, "I'll give you fifteen pieces and a bushel of barley." Hosea says, "I'll give you fifteen pieces and a bushel and a half of barley" (Hosea 3:2). And the gavel sounds and Hosea goes forward to redeem his wife.

As he leads her out through the crowd, people must have said, "That's a high price to pay for vengeance. Why not just let her be sold into slavery? Why pay out good silver for a woman who has played him false?"

But Hosea did not buy his wife to punish her. He bought her to redeem her. He said to her, "*You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you*" (Hosea 3:3 NIV). What Hosea is suggesting is this: "What you would not do for me out of your own free will, I ask you to do now because you are a purchased possession."



That is a note sounded throughout the Bible. God tells us that He loves us, and because He has redeemed us He asks us to serve Him. The Apostle Peter said to those in his care, "*You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life*

handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18,19a NIV).

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, a church guilty of sexual looseness, said to them, "*You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Lessons from Hosea

The first lesson from Hosea is this: if you were to serve God from now until the day you die, God would not love you any more than He loves you now. For God does not love you **because** of what you do. God loves you **in spite** of what you do.



We are loved supremely. Because we have been so loved, we respond with worship, service, love, and praise.

The second lesson is for men and women who may not know God at all, who may have never put their trust in Christ. It is for people with broken hearts and broken homes, with broken dreams and broken lives. It is for those who from the depths of their souls cry out in the darkness of night, "Where is God? Where is He that I might find Him?"

The answer from the book of Hosea is, "**God is not lost. You are.**"

This is the God who went to Calvary's cross and pursues men through the tunnel of an empty tomb. Again and again He pursues them to bring them back to Himself.

When men cry, "Where is God?" the answer is always the same. **God is right here. He is waiting for you. He bids you come to Himself. He reaches out to embrace you in His love. He urges you to come in faith to know Him and to know the meaning of love in the very depths of your heart.**



For more literature that will help you find your way, call or write Dr. Clair Schnupp at:

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