



Unit .14

Session .02

An Unfaithful People Receive Love

Scripture



**Hosea 2:16-23;
3:1-5; 14:1-4**

16 “And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’ **17** For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. **18** And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. **19** And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. **20** I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD. **21** “And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, **22** and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, **23** and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’” ... **1** And the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the

LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.” **2** So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. **3** And I said to her, “You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you.” **4** For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. **5** Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days. ... **1** Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. **2** Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, “Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips. **3** Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, ‘Our God,’ to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy.” **4** I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.

Intro Options



Main Point:
**God faithfully pursues
His people even when
they are unfaithful.**

Option 1

In most fairy tales there are two main characters: a lovely princess and her handsome prince. The prince goes out to seek this princess because of her beauty, her talents, or her magical powers. And it is a good thing he goes after her because she is always in need of rescue. Every great princess finds herself captured by someone evil and powerful, and only a heroic and courageous man can set her free. This last part is consistent with the Book of Hosea.

Gomer was a woman who needed to be rescued. She had given herself wholly over to temptation and followed her sin into dark and desperate places. God called the prophet Hosea to courageously go and pursue Gomer. But the part of the fairy tale formula that this book lacks is the desirability of Gomer. No words describe her beauty. She was not faithful, talented, or gifted with magical abilities. Instead, Gomer was a “woman of promiscuity.” Though Hosea was faithful to her, she was not faithful to him. Through their marriage, God was going to show His people how they were like Gomer in their relationship with Him.

- **Are there any parts of your personality, physicality, talents, or skills that you lean on as reasons that God loves you? How would pointing to these things minimize the gospel?**

Option 2

The way a message is communicated says a great deal about the message itself and the message deliverer. Have your parents ever told you to watch your tone of voice? Have they ever commanded you not to “talk back” to them? Although the content of the message is important, the method of delivery can cause people to listen intently or turn their backs and walk away—away from the deliverer and the words he or she spoke. Even our actions, body language, and facial expressions communicate to those around us. Communicating a clear message is important, but we must also use the appropriate tone, facial expressions, and actions to accompany our words.

- **How do you typically deliver important messages? Do you think your tone of voice often causes people to listen or to shut down?**


God called Hosea to be a prophet, but his method of delivery did not consist of only words—Hosea actively demonstrated God’s faithfulness to His unfaithful people. God instructed Hosea to marry a prostitute, have children with her, and continue to love and pursue her, no matter what she did or how many times she ran away from him. God actively confronted Israel’s sin through Hosea’s life.

TEACHING PLAN

God's prophets, in the Old Testament, are His mouthpieces. They stood before the people and spoke with heavenly authority saying, "Thus says the Lord." Typically, the messages of prophets involved asking the people of God to repent. In the case of Hosea, the prophetic role involved more than speaking. God's plan for this prophet involved a walking, talking, breathing kind of message.

Read Hosea 2:16-23.



The Lord called Hosea to act out through his life and marriage a picture of God and Israel. Hosea sought out Gomer, a woman of promiscuity, and married her, made his home with her, and bore children with her. Of all the actions that God could have called Hosea to do, He wanted to reveal to Israel the intimate relationship that He desired with her. Gomer was not sought out to be a maid, a personal assistant, or simply a companion. Hosea made her his wife. She wasn't brought into Hosea's home solely to serve and be tolerated, but to be loved, known, and cherished. God wanted Israel to see—through Hosea's marriage to Gomer—that He didn't just call them to be His people because He wanted servants that obeyed out of duty but more of a bride who would draw near to Him. 

- **If Hosea's pursuit of an unfaithful Gomer is a picture of God's pursuit of us, what does this say about His character, especially in light of our unfaithfulness?**

God commanded Hosea to pursue Gomer, his wife, who left him to turn to a life of adultery. To prepare Hosea for this call, the Lord told him more about His love for His people and how He loved them though they returned again and again to other lovers. God was the husband of His people, yet they continued to turn away from the covenant He made with them to go after other gods.

- **Like Gomer, what are some sins that you keep running back to in your own life?**

Read Hosea 3:1-5.



- **How do we define love based on our usage of the word in our culture? How is that different than the picture of God's love we see in Scripture?**

The Lord commanded Hosea to once again go and love Gomer and restore their marriage. Gomer had again run off to a lover, and it appears that her status had sunken very low. God commanded Hosea to go and show love to her. Love is more than a feeling of affection. If Hosea's love for Gomer was only to be measured by his feelings for her, then perhaps there would be nothing to show. But the kind of love that God has for His people that was demonstrated through Hosea is a covenant love. A love that was rooted in a promise and guaranteed by a commitment to pay whatever the cost for that love to continue. Again, God wanted Hosea's pursuit of Gomer to reflect His pursuit of Israel and the love that God had for Israel was a love that wasn't merely felt but a love that was displayed by action.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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Hosea 2

16-23. It is not that love is without emotion when it comes to God; far from it. In fact, these verses along with a host of others in both the Old and New Testaments show us the deep affection God has for His people. But God's love is much deeper than that. His love, and all true love, involves willing pursuit and necessary sacrifice for the sake of the one being loved.

It's important to see in these verses that God was the One pursuing. He was leading. He was taking. He was giving. His people were the ones responding to the love God initiated. So it is with us.

It's also important to notice in these verses that there was no time limit to the love God promised. The imagery of eternity is intertwined in this poetic treatment of the love of God: We will be His people forever. We will rest in Him securely forever. He has promised and given us love, and this promise and gift will never be revoked.

Hosea 3

1. At some point between Hosea 1 and Hosea 3, Gomer left. We don't know exactly why or when she did, or if this was the first time she left. Maybe this was her usual pattern. She would, like so many of us do in our own relationship with God, commit herself to her husband only to find the lure of the old life so strong that she went right back to it.

Or perhaps she could never fully believe that the love of her husband was as true, faithful, and sacrificial as it seemed. Maybe she was always waiting for the other shoe to drop, every day wondering if this would be the day when he finally wised up and changed his mind. If so, maybe the wondering became too much for her and it was easier to run than to live with faithful commitment. Whatever the story, Gomer had found her way out of the house of Hosea and into slavery.



99 Essential Doctrines (p. 48, DDG)

God is Love

To say that God is love is to say that God is the essence of love, or that perfect love both resides and resonates within God Himself—one God in three Persons. The imperfect love that human beings share between one another is a dim reflection, a sign that points to the perfect love that resides within God. The greatest act of love by God toward humans isn't the giving of earthly goods but the giving of Himself in Christ so that we might become reconciled to Him.

TEACHING PLAN

Hosea's love for Gomer had to be shown and it was shown through his purchase of Gomer. Fifteen shekels of silver and five bushels of barley would have amounted to approximately thirty shekels of silver, the cost paid for a slave (Ex. 21:32). Hosea couldn't just grab Gomer and take her home because in her pursuit after other lovers she had fallen into slavery. The only way to get Gomer was to purchase her back. A cost must be paid to take her out of her slavery. Hosea's love for Gomer cost him something; he had to seek her out and pay her price.

- **Gomer's pursuit of sin ended in slavery. In what ways have you found sin to be a trap that enslaves rather than something that frees?**

We too were slaves when God came after us. In our pursuit of other lovers—things that we thought would satisfy and give us pleasure and meaning—we were nothing more than slaves to sin. When we were unlovely, unworthy, and in rebellion against God, He came, He sought us out, and He paid our purchase price. He came to each one of us with the promise of His gospel and told us that He had paid the price that would free us from our idolatry. But the price that He paid for us was much steeper than thirty shekels.

- **When you consider the price that God paid to purchase you back to Himself, how does that change your desire to be lured away by your temptations?**

Read Hosea 14:1-4.



God used the words that He had spoken to Hosea and the actions that Hosea carried to show Israel that they were stumbling in their sin and needed to return to Him. This reveals that the only thing that makes repentance possible in the first place is God's invitation. He invites sinners to repent and offers the promise of compassion, healing, love, and a turning from anger.

Gomer never took the initiative. Hosea sought her out. Hosea intended to marry her. Hosea found her again. Hosea purchased her. Hosea pursued. In fact, the only thing that we see Gomer do was run off, over and over again. So sad in so many ways, but at the same time, when we look how our hearts are prone to wonder and leave the God whom we love, isn't this the greatest hope that we could ever have? The hope of our covenant relationship with God staying intact and lasting forever isn't dependent upon us. If Christ Himself bears the full weight of our covenant relationship upon His shoulders, and if the everlasting nature of our relationship is dependent upon His faithfulness alone, then and only then can we truly have hope and assurance.



- **List some ways the prophet Hosea (whose name means Savior) resembles Jesus and His work.**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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Hosea 3

3. When Hosea went and purchased Gomer, restoring her as his wife, he said to her that from this point forward they were to remain faithful to one another, forsaking others. (v. 3). He desired a holy covenant with her. He wanted all of her affection; he wanted her committed to him and him alone. He promised to act the same toward her. Hosea did not make his purchase so that Gomer would be free to live and do as she pleased from then on. Neither was Hosea's intent for her to serve him for the rest of her life and pay him back out of thankfulness. It was so that she could, once again, be united to her husband and faithful to him, so that she could be his and he hers.

When God brought His people out of their slavery in Egypt, He told Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Let my people go so that they may worship me." The story of God and Israel was His rescue of them out of great slavery, not so that they could live as they pleased but so that they could finally be free to worship Him alone. He has done the same for us.

We were in slavery to sin. We were serving a harsh master whose intent for us was death. But through Jesus, God paid the price and bought us out of slavery, not so that we could be free to do as we please and attempt to rule ourselves but so that we could be united to Him in a covenant. He desires all of our affection. He wants us committed to Him and He promises to be committed to us. We have been bought with a price and for a great purpose: that we would praise our God who has set us free and joined us to Himself in a marriage covenant.

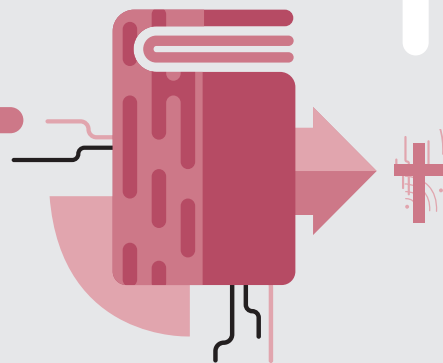
Hosea 14

This is the picture that God chose to display to Israel and to us. In this passage, He called Israel to return. He was the one who would forgive. He said He would heal the unfaithful. He would love freely. He would turn His anger away. It had to all start with God or there was no hope for Israel.

Your story is the same. God has called you out of slavery. God has forgiven you. God has healed your apostasy. God has loved you freely. God has turned His anger away from you. God has initiated everything and done all that is necessary to bring you to Himself. He offered up His only Son on the cross so that He could pursue you with all His goodness and love.

(p. 50, DDG) Christ Connection

Hosea's relationship with Gomer reminds us of God's relationship with the people of Israel and with us. Even though God's people are unfaithful and love many other things more than Him, God still loves us. It was because of God's love that He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sin and bring us back to Him.



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



What does it mean to redeem something? How is this story a picture of redemption?

How does understanding the love of Hosea for Gomer increase our gratitude for God's love for us?

Heart



The call for both Israel and us is repentance. What does it mean to repent?

Are there any areas in your life where repentance is only partial? What would full repentance look like?

Hands



What does this account teach us about loving other people?

Why is it important that we share God's message with actions and not just words alone?

Main Point: **God faithfully pursues His people even when they are unfaithful.**



Head

Hosea had every right to leave his wife to what she deserved, but he did not. The Lord commanded him to “go” to her because there was no way she could come to him, even if she wanted to. Hosea did not buy back Gomer on emotion, sentiment, or good intentions. He didn’t stand at a distance and shout about His love for her; instead, Hosea recognized freedom doesn’t come cheaply, so He went with His pockets full in order to pay the price so that the one he loved could go free.

Just as Hosea went to Gomer when she was powerless to return to him, so Jesus came to us as the Rescuer we so desperately needed. Through His death and resurrection, He broke the chains of sin and death and brought freedom to the people of God. This freedom came not as a result of our efforts, struggling against the chains that kept us in bondage, but from One who loved us enough to come to us. Though we have been unfaithful, He faithfully gave up His life on our behalf. This entire process can be summed up in a single word: Redemption. To redeem something means to buy it back. This is what Hosea did for Gomer, and it’s what Jesus Christ did for us at the cross.



Heart

Repentance involves turning away from sin and turning back to God with a heart full of trust. If Israel had simply tried to return to God while still holding onto her idols, her worship would have been divided. If Israel tried to turn away from idols but not trust in God, then her repentance would have been incomplete and short-lived. There is no neutrality in our hearts; we will put our trust in something. We will worship something: either God or our idols. Sometimes we find ourselves in sin and think, “I can dabble in this and still hold on to Jesus.” Or we give up a sin but instead of replacing it with worship, we simply look for another idol to fill its place. Neither of these is true repentance. Repentance will always involve turning away from pursuing idols of the heart and turning fully to Jesus, the One whom we were created for.



Hands

Having been pursued and loved by God, and in light of the great personal cost to Himself, we are called to extend that same pursuit and love to others. We love because we have been loved (1 John 4:11). As in the case of Hosea, this love for others is not an emotional attachment, and it is not without cost. To pursue others with the message of the gospel will be a costly endeavor—it will cost us time and the realignment of priorities. But when the cost might seem to be too great, it’s helpful for us to call to mind the great cost that God Himself paid for us.