

**you
are
beloved**

HOSEA II Women's Bible Study

H O S E A

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A NOTE FROM COLIE KRUEGER, *women's lead pastor*_____

Dear beloved sister,

The Lord put the book of Hosea on my heart nearly eight months ago and I had no idea what I was getting myself into. All I could remember about Hosea was that it was a story of a man who married a prostitute and his faithful love to her that brought any normal person to tears. I entered into a week of preparation to get ready to write this curriculum and had no idea how much God would rock my world in this book.

Hosea transformed me, and most importantly, God spoke to my heart through it. I found a study guide by Jennifer Rothschild called, *Hosea: Unfailing Love Changes Everything*, and it was incredible. I owe much of this guide to her and have incorporated many of her ideas and points into this study because of her incredible ability to teach the Bible.

Daughters, God wants to speak to your hearts too. Not to your heads, or to your behavior, or your appearance or your actions, but to the deepest part of your core: your identity.

Who you are.

I pray that you will allow Him access into places you may have hidden from Him, or run from Him in fear, or are too scared to let Him into. I know, I've been there.

The book of Hosea is a love story about an unrelenting God who pursues His people and loves them despite their sin. He desires to bring them back to Himself and to bring YOU and me back to Himself. God is fighting for you sister, and above all, He is fighting for your most valuable asset: your heart. May you see how much He loves you in the pages of Hosea. His love wants to keep you from anything that could destroy you, because He longs to satisfy you and He longs for you to be who He created you to be: His cherished and beloved daughter.

Praying for you on this journey back to your true identity: BELOVED.

Big hugs to you as we venture deep with God.

Colie

Overview:

Hosea can be a tricky book to read. It's written in poetry and prose, and it has no chronological order. It jumps back and forth between stories and timelines like a frog on a lily-pad-filled pond. The first time you read it through it can feel like reading another language, at least it did for me.

To help us go through the book, I'm going to give you an overview of the three different stories happening within the story of Hosea:

- 1) **Hosea and Gomer:** This is the story of Hosea the prophet and the wife God calls him to take, an unfaithful woman named Gomer.
- 2) **God and Israel:** This is the story of Israel, God's chosen people who are unfaithful to Him, specifically the Northern Kingdom who is lovingly referred to as Ephraim. Israel has run after Baal, the god of fertility, and left the one true God behind.
- 3) **God and Us:** Finally, this is a story about you and me, about how we are prone to wander from His love and worship other gods, most specifically ourselves, instead of finding our true worth and value in Him.

Hosea weaves these three stories into a poetic and beautiful book that can be complicated to read straight through, but is packed with tender mercy, love and wisdom. We will try to unravel all of its mystery together.

Helpful Things To Know Before We Begin:

Author: Hosea is a prophet who was called by God to confront the Northern Kingdom of Israel for their unfaithfulness. Following Israel's division, the Northern Kingdom was comprised of 10 tribes and the Southern Kingdom, called Judah, was made up of the remaining two tribes.

Timeline: Hosea's ministry takes place over the course of 40 years in Israel's history when the nation was coming to an end during the eighth century B.C. Most scholars believe Hosea's prophecy was delivered between 751 and 715 B.C., spanning the years when Israel, because of their economic and political prosperity, became a calloused and

prideful people. Hosea, along with Amos, Isaiah and Micah, are known as the great eighth century B.C. prophets. While Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Isaiah and Amos prophesied to Judah, the Southern Kingdom.

WBS Study Guide Format: _____

The format for this guide is broken down into seven sections which are listed below. You can go through them all at once, do one section a day, or tackle each week however you would like! If you miss some, no worries! The most important thing is that you are reading Scripture and hearing God's life-changing Word.

Format:

1. Reading Time - spend time reading the Bible passage for the day, soaking it in; Scripture passages included are from the NIV translation unless noted otherwise
2. Question Time - answer questions specifically about what you just read
3. Process Time - unpack the theme of the day in greater depth
4. Holy Spirit Time - listen to the Holy Spirit and let Him speak into what you are learning
5. Application Time - apply the lessons of the Word to your own life
6. Prayer Time - pray for God to work out the application of Scripture in you
7. Note Time - take notes on what you are learning from the teaching for the week

Before We Start: _____

I recommend two things that I believe will benefit and better help your understanding of the book of Hosea we are about to embark on.

- 1) Watch the Bible Project's overview of Hosea before we get started. This seven-minute video will help build the landscape of our story and give you a better overview of where we are headed. Website: <https://vimeo.com/194716837>
- 2) Read through the entire book of Hosea, all fourteen chapters, in one sitting. It might feel complicated and overwhelming to understand at first, but reading it will help you see the big picture before we begin to explore Hosea and hear God's truth for us. There is a lot of judgment in these pages, but don't be discouraged, there is also great hope!

My Prayer For You: _____

I want you to know that I have been praying for you. As I experienced God moving in my heart, exposing things that I have loved more than Him and His invitation to return home to my true love, my true identity as His Beloved, I prayed that He would be working the same way in your hearts. That you would be so moved by the depth of love that God has for you that you would understand it and feel it and know it in a way that is more palpable and tangible than we can ask, hope or imagine. Would you allow God's Word in Hosea to shape you, to move you and to see God in His full tenderness towards you?

My prayer for you is best summed up in Ephesians 3:16-19:

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

This is God's desire for you - to know His love and receive it and believe it and live in it. Nothing you and I do can separate us from the love of God. So whether you've been running from Him, hiding from Him, chasing after Him, ignoring Him, or are set on living apart from Him, the one thing I know is that His love is still pursuing you. He is inviting you to come back to Him.

His unending, unconditional, unrelenting love changes everything, my friends.

Ladies, get ready to embark on a love journey with the King of Kings. May you be blessed beyond measure.

Hugs,

Colie

WEEK ONE: An Introduction to Hosea

Hosea is a hard book to swallow all at once, so through the course of this study we are going to take baby steps into the water, wade into the text so to speak. This week we are going to do an overview of Hosea so you can get a better sense of where we are going in the weeks to come.

If you are joining us for WBS in-person on the church campus or joining a Satellite group in your leader's home, there is nothing you need to do in this study guide for Week 1. You will start your homework for Week 2 after your first group meeting, and you can take notes in the Week 1 section under "Note Time" for the weekly teaching. If your group is meeting online, you will just need to watch the WBS video teaching before your first group meeting which you can find here:

<https://www.womensbiblestudy.com/current-series>

WEEK ONE: Note Time _____

WEEK ONE: Group Introduction Questions

Every week, you will discuss the Application Time questions in this study guide with your group. This week, it's time to get to know the other women in your group and pray together that God would move in you through His Word! The questions below can be used at your first group meeting.

- 1) Introduce yourselves and share three words that people who know you well would use to describe you.
- 2) What is your hope for Women's Bible Study: Hosea in this season?
- 3) What is something you learned from the teaching this week? And what is something you can start applying in your life today?
- 4) How can your group be praying for you over the next eight weeks? What do you feel you most need from God in this season?

WEEK TWO: Who Are You?

Hosea is ultimately a book about identity. At its core, it's about who we are as God's people and how we choose to live based on the God who made us. This week we will dive into the story of Hosea and see the picture of the marriage of Hosea and Gomer and how God sets the stage to tell His love story through them.

Reading Time:

Read Hosea 1:1 - 2:1

1 The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel:

2 When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord." 3 So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

4 Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. 5 In that day I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel."

6 Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means "not loved"), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them. 7 Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the Lord their God, will save them."

8 After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. 9 Then the Lord said, "Call him Lo-Ammi (which means "not my people"), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.

10 "Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'children of the living God.' 11 The people of Judah and the people of Israel will

come together; they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.

Hosea 2

1 "Say of your brothers, 'My people,' and of your sisters, 'My loved one.'

Question Time: _____

1) In the Bible names have deep meaning. They define who a person is and their character. Write the meaning of each name from chapter one below. (A description is provided where one wasn't given in the text.)

- Beerli - means a well
- Hosea - means salvation
- Gomer - means completion: the filling up of idolatry
- Diblaim - means double portion of raisin cakes (*aka Viagra)
- Jezreel - means God scatters, God sows
- Lo-Ruhamah - means _____
- Lo-Ammi - means _____

What are some observations you make from the names of the people in this story?

2) How does God describe Gomer in verse 2?

3) Why did God tell Hosea to marry Gomer (v.2)? What does their relationship represent?

4) What are the promises that God gives in verses 10 and 11? How does He describe His people in these verses?

Process Time: _____

Gomer was chosen by Hosea. She was not chosen based on what she did, how she looked, what she wore, what her credit score was, or on any merit of her own. She was chosen by Hosea because God called him to love her. Israel was not picked for their faithfulness, their charisma, their great strength or their obedience, but they were chosen by God to be His people because of God's love for them. The same is true of you and me! There are two truths that we need to understand in order to comprehend our role in God's story, and to understand Gomer's story with Hosea.

Two truths about your identity:

You are CHOSEN

You are LOVED

1) You are CHOSEN. Read the following passages and record a word or two that stand out to you about your identity as CHOSEN from God's Word.

Romans 9:24-26

1 Peter 2:9-10

Ephesians 1:4-5

John 15:16

- 2) You are LOVED. Read the following passages and jot down what you learn about your identity as loved.

1 John 4:7-10

Jeremiah 31:3

Colossians 3:12

Romans 5:8

Sometimes we get confused about being loved and chosen and think that it comes from our own effort or worth. The world often tells us we need to _____ to be loved/chosen. For example:

We need to be skinny/beautiful to be loved/chosen

We need to work hard/be successful to be loved/chosen

We need to be more/less to be loved/chosen

We need to change who we are to be loved/chosen

Now you fill in the blank for yourself:

I think I need to be _____ to be loved/chosen.

The truth is, friends, you are already loved and chosen, based on God, not on you. God is worthy, and therefore He gives us our WORTH. He is love, and since we are His children we are LOVED. These parts of our identities don't come from us; they come

from our Creator who bestows them on us in our creation. They are part of how and who we were created to be. We don't EARN this identity, we RECEIVE it.

Gomer was loved and chosen. Israel was loved and chosen. However, they didn't act out of their true identities. They ran after other things in search of their identities. More to come on that in weeks to come, but a question to ponder today is, have you ever chased after other things to find your identity?

Now comes the fun part, our own response to God choosing us and loving us. One of the best invitations that God gives us is to respond to His overwhelming love by choosing to love Him by following Jesus Christ. If you have never responded to God's love for you by receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then today you are invited to make that life-changing decision.

The Bible tells us that we are all sinners - we have all fallen short of God's standards - and all of us deserve death. But God, in His great love and mercy for us, sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus paid our debt so that we don't have to, He rose from the dead three days later, and all those who place their faith in Jesus will be forgiven for their sins, will be made right with God, and will receive the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

If you've never said yes to Jesus as your Lord and Savior and you're ready to today, you can pray the following prayer:

"Jesus, I need you. I am a sinner in need of your forgiveness and grace. I believe in You, Jesus Christ, as my Lord and Savior who died for my sin and rose to new life three days later. I give you my life and commit to following you. Show me your ways. Amen."

If you prayed that prayer for the first time, please let us know by emailing women@cachurch.com and we will celebrate with you and give you next steps on your spiritual journey. If you weren't ready to pray that prayer and want to talk with a pastor about any questions you might have, please email us and we'd love to talk with you.

Holy Spirit Time: _____

Today we learned two key truths about our identities: we are loved and chosen. The enemy wants us to believe the exact opposite - that we aren't chosen and that we aren't loved. The enemy often uses our past, our mistakes and our weaknesses to convince us of this lie. Spend some time with the Holy Spirit today and invite Him to show you any ways you might be struggling to believe the TRUTH that you are loved and chosen. If you struggle to believe these core truths about yourself, invite the Holy Spirit to show you if there are any lies you are believing.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you a picture of yourself as God sees you. Not as you see yourself, but through God's eyes. Draw or make notes about what you see.

Application Time: _____

- 1) God told Hosea to marry an unfaithful woman. How would you feel if you were Hosea? How do you think God feels when we are unfaithful to Him?

- 2) Do the descriptions of **loved** and **chosen** as your identity come naturally for you to receive? Why or why not? Do you think Gomer knew that she was chosen and loved?

- 3) Hosea made a choice to obey God and love an unfaithful woman. Has God ever asked you to do something that was hard or didn't make sense to you? What was the result?

Prayer Time: _____

God, I know that I have sometimes struggled to identify as being loved and chosen. It doesn't come naturally for me. Forgive me for my unfaithfulness, for all the ways that I have defined myself by things other than you. Help me to enter the story of Gomer and Hosea and to see myself through the lens of your love. I want to believe that I am loved and chosen and I want to live out of that identity. Give me the faith to believe these great truths. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

WEEK TWO: Note Time _____

WEEK THREE: What You Love Defines You

We are what we love.

Or as a famous Maverick City Music lyric says, "We become what we behold."

Today we are going to be witnessing the story of an affair, a scandalous one that you might be tempted to think is far beyond you. But the truth is, an affair of the heart can happen anytime we love something or someone more than God. It is ultimately abandoning our true and first love for lesser and less substantial loves. This week we will explore what it means when we turn to things other than God to fill our needs.

Reading Time:

Read Hosea 2:2-13

2 *"Rebuke your mother, rebuke her,
for she is not my wife,
and I am not her husband.
Let her remove the adulterous look from her face
and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts.*

3 *Otherwise I will strip her naked
and make her as bare as on the day she was born;
I will make her like a desert,
turn her into a parched land,
and slay her with thirst.*

4 *I will not show my love to her children,
because they are the children of adultery.*

5 *Their mother has been unfaithful
and has conceived them in disgrace.
She said, 'I will go after my lovers,
who give me my food and my water,
my wool and my linen, my olive oil and my drink.'*

6 *Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes;
I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way.*

7 *She will chase after her lovers but not catch them;
she will look for them but not find them.
Then she will say,*

*'I will go back to my husband as at first,
for then I was better off than now.'*

*8 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.*

*9 "Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens,
and my new wine when it is ready.*

*I will take back my wool and my linen,
intended to cover her naked body.*

*10 So now I will expose her lewdness
before the eyes of her lovers;
no one will take her out of my hands.*

*11 I will stop all her celebrations:
her yearly festivals, her New Moons,
her Sabbath days—all her appointed festivals.*

*12 I will ruin her vines and her fig trees,
which she said were her pay from her lovers;
I will make them a thicket,
and wild animals will devour them.*

*13 I will punish her for the days
she burned incense to the Baals;
she decked herself with rings and jewelry,
and went after her lovers,
but me she forgot,"
declares the Lord.*

Question Time: _____

1) According to Hosea 2:5, what did Gomer do? In her own words, what was she after? Why do you think Gomer would go after the things that she already had (verse 8)?

2) Let's explore what else the Israelites were up to that caused this rebuke from the Lord in Hosea 2. List the sins that were indicted against Israel in the following passages:

Hosea 4:2

Hosea 4:12

Hosea 6:8

Hosea 8:4

3) How does God stop Israel and Gomer from wandering towards things that don't satisfy in Hosea 2:6?

4) What three things are listed that Israel and Gomer did for the ones they loved according to Hosea 2:13?

5) Hosea 4:7b says:
"They exchanged their GLORIOUS GOD for something DISGRACEFUL."

What do you think of when you hear the word "disgraceful"?

Process Time: _____

Israel loved prosperity and wanted to have it all for themselves. They worshiped God, but they added onto that worship the worship of Baal. Baal was the god of fertility. The Israelites still kept praying to God, but they decided that He wasn't enough for them. They wanted a back-up plan just in case God didn't deliver what they wanted. They didn't trust that God could fully do it, so they turned to other gods.

Gomer had the love and security of a faithful husband, Hosea, who provided for her and her children, but she decided it wasn't enough. She wanted more. She ran to other lovers to get her perceived needs met, then ended up being enslaved to these lovers by giving them her worship, even though her needs were already met by Hosea. She exchanged what Hosea gave to her and used it to worship other gods that did not give her what she was looking for.

The problem with us, all of us (Humanity with a capital H), is that we as people have a tendency to live with a scarcity mentality. Not only that, we can tend at times to be selfish and greedy and want more than we have in order to feel secure. When we don't find our security in our true identity as God's chosen and loved daughters, we start looking for it in other places. The problem is, nothing can satisfy us like the love of God. When we love other things and chase after false gods, we end up getting entrapped and enslaved by the very things that we thought would make us happy.

Read Matthew 6:19-21

If your heart were a map, where would it be leading to these days? Can you name what you are most seeking and why? What do you believe it will give to you that you haven't already received from God?

Holy Spirit Time: _____

Invite the Holy Spirit to sit with you today. As you quiet yourself, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what you are chasing in this season that is not God. Where do you long for more than you already have? Ask Him to show you the root of what you are looking for (i.e. Gomer was chasing bread and water - not for bread and water in and of themselves, but rather for the security and stability they provided her).

Draw a picture of what you see, or write words that describe what you experience.

Application Time: _____

- 1) Israel and Gomer made some bad decisions. Have you ever made a bad decision? Think back to a time you made a bad decision and answer this question: Why did you do it? What do you think causes us to wander from what we know to be true?

- 2) Gomer was human and the things she wanted weren't necessarily bad; some of them were good. But why she wanted them and how she went about getting them was where she tripped up. Read Hosea 2:5. Assuming bread and water represent daily needs, wool and flax represent clothes/appearance, and oil and drink represent pleasure, what would be your own equivalents today?
- a) **Bread & Water:** What makes you feel secure, or what is something you can't live without?

 - b) **Wool & Flax:** What about your physical appearance or wardrobe is important to you?

 - c) **Oil & Drink:** What do you go to for pleasure?

 - d) Do you ever want more of the things that you already have? What might be the danger in wanting more than you have? Can you list any examples of things that you currently believe that you need more of to be happy?
- 3) We can be tempted to act out of our wants/desires when we aren't secure in our identities as chosen and loved. What wants or desires have been driving you this week, and why?

- 4) What are some of the obstacles that God has placed in your life to keep you from wandering to things that don't satisfy you? Have you ever seen the roadblocks in your life as God's mercy towards you so that you don't get lost/stuck in trying to find your identity and fulfillment somewhere it isn't?

Prayer Time: _____

God, I want to love you more than anything. You give me everything I need. Forgive me for looking for my worth, identity and fulfillment in places other than you. Your love is enough. Help me to get out of the places I've gotten stuck. Forgive me for having an adulterous heart. I pray that you would be a consuming fire and that my heart would long for you and you alone. I love you God. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

WEEK THREE: Note Time _____

WEEK FOUR: You Are Redeemed

We read last week about adultery, the unfaithfulness of Gomer to Hosea, and Israel's unfaithfulness to God. We also took a good look at some of our own desires that aren't of God. Today we are going to explore how we get back to God. We will read about how Hosea saves Gomer after her unfaithfulness to him, the same way that the Lord saves Israel even though she is unfaithful to Him, and the same way He saves you and me despite our unfaithfulness. Because of God's great love for us, He chooses to redeem us through His Son Jesus Christ.

Redemption means being saved from sin, error, or evil. The Bible tells us that all of us are sinners and the penalty for that sin is death, but God sent His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross to save us from our sins. All those who place their faith and trust in Jesus are redeemed! You are worth saving, girlfriend.

If there is any doubt of your love and security in Christ, read on to discover the magnitude of God's love for you in His pursuit to buy you back and save you. As far away as we think we can wander, it is never too late or too far for Jesus' perfect reach. No matter what you have done, there is no one who is beyond the reach of God's powerful redemption.

Reading Time:

Read Hosea 2:14 - 3:5

14 *"Therefore I am now going to allure her;
I will lead her into the wilderness
and speak tenderly to her.*

15 *There I will give her back her vineyards,
and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.
There she will respond as in the days of her youth,
as in the day she came up out of Egypt.*

16 *"In that day," declares the Lord,
"you will call me 'my husband';
you will no longer call me 'my master.'*

17 *I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips;
no longer will their names be invoked.*

18 *In that day I will make a covenant for them
with the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky
and the creatures that move along the ground.*

*Bow and sword and battle
I will abolish from the land,
so that all may lie down in safety.*

19 *I will betroth you to me forever;
I will betroth you in righteousness and justice,
In love and compassion.*

20 *I will betroth you in faithfulness,
and you will acknowledge the Lord.*

21 *"In that day I will respond,"
declares the Lord—*

*"I will respond to the skies,
and they will respond to the earth;*

22 *and the earth will respond to the grain,
the new wine and the olive oil,
and they will respond to Jezreel.*

23 *I will plant her for myself in the land;
I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.'
I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people';
and they will say, 'You are my God.'"*

Hosea 3

1 *The Lord said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."*

2 *So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley.*

3 *Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you."*

4 *For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. 5 Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days.*

Question Time: _____

- 1) Describe God's posture towards Gomer/Israel when he calls her back in the verses we just read. Is it what you would expect? Why or why not? What words stand out to you that define God's character?

- 2) List the five adjectives that describe how God will betroth himself to Gomer/Israel and to you and me (v.19-20). Next to each word draw a picture or symbol describing what those words mean to you.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.

- 3) Hosea 3:15 refers to when God led His people out of Egypt in the book of Exodus. You can imagine the excitement and freedom of being delivered from slavery after 400 years by oppressive captors. Have you ever been set free or delivered from something? How might that help you better understand how Gomer and Israel feel when they are redeemed from their past mistakes?

- 4) What are the conditions that Hosea sets for Gomer when he buys her back (Hosea 3:3)? What does this teach you about your relationship with God? How does He treat us when we have gone astray?

Process Time: _____

God sends Hosea to purchase Gomer from the slavery block. After she cheated on him multiple times, had children by other men, and refused to live with Hosea and their children, her other lovers no longer wanted her and they tried to make a profit off of her by selling her off.

The same thing happened with us. We have all sinned and forgotten about God and gone after the things we thought would satisfy us, but it ended up costing us heavily -- it enslaved us to the things we thought would love us. God in His love and mercy sent His Son Jesus Christ to purchase us back from the penalty of death, from our own sin, from other gods. Through the death and resurrection of His one and only Son, all those who place their faith in Jesus are no longer slaves to sin, but beloved children of God.

In this account, Hosea doesn't just buy back Gomer and treat her in accordance with her past. He doesn't punish her or make her pay for her decisions to be unfaithful to him or demand she pay back the 30 shekels of silver. Instead he invites her to live faithfully with him and promises to do the same to her as husband and wife. He loves her despite her actions against him.

Wow. This is what we call grace - God's unmerited and unconditional love toward us. The covenant of God's love never ends.

The Lord is always gracious towards us, always loving, always kind, always patient, and yet we easily run away and turn to other things again and again. But God treats us as his

bride, as his beloved, and invites us to call him our husband (2:16b). He promises to be faithful to us, even when we aren't faithful to him.

Can you even believe it when you read it? It is our privilege to choose to let God love us and redeem us from our past. He not only buys us out of slavery, but restores our identity to dignity, value and worth, instead of shame, degradation and humiliation. He redeems us through the work of Christ on the cross.

Not only does He redeem us, but he uses our past places of pain and restores and transforms them into something new. He replaces our valleys of pain, shame and woundedness with hope, new beginnings and life. That is our God!

Holy Spirit Time: _____

Today is a day for redemption, for you to experience the gift of the Lord's redemption instead of disregard. Gomer was brought back into a marriage covenant with a husband she had been unfaithful to, and the Lord too is inviting you back into holy covenant with Him and asking you to be faithful to Him again.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you an area of your life that God would like to redeem. It might be something from your past, or something in your present. Invite the Holy Spirit into that memory or place, and let Him show you how He wants to change it and redeem it for your good. Ask Him to show you what His redemption looks like. Draw whatever you see/feel/hear.

Application Time: _____

1. Where do you need God to speak to you tenderly? What would it look like to get alone with Him and let Him minister to you in a place of pain or sorrow? Are you willing to let God love you in places you feel unlovable or in areas where you messed up?

2. If God were to remove the names of other gods from your lips, what names would He remove?

3. The Valley of Achor is the place where a man named Achan and his household were executed. After the Israelites were victorious in their battle against Jericho, Achan disobeyed God and took some of the spoils from Jericho for himself. In their next battle against Ai, Israel was defeated because of Achan's disobedience. As a result, he and his household were burned and stoned to death in the Valley of Achor. (Achor means "trouble".) Hosea 2:15 says that the Valley of Achor will become "a door of hope". What might be a Valley of Achor (a place of trouble or pain) in your life that God wants to redeem and turn into a door of hope?

4. It says that Hosea buys Gomer back for *“fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley”* which is the same equivalent as 30 shekels. 30 shekels is the same price that Jesus was sold by Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed him by turning him over to the Roman authorities. How do you feel knowing that Gomer was purchased for the same price Jesus was betrayed for?

5. Write out a few sentences about what it means to you that God invites us to call Him our husband. How does this invitation shift your idea of marriage and God?

Prayer Time:

God, I thank you that you paid the ultimate price for me with the life of your only Son Jesus Christ. Thank you that I am worth that much to you. I ask that you would redeem the mistakes I have made in the past. Will you replace my past places of pain with your goodness and hope? Will you forgive me for my sins? I confess that I have loved other things more than you. Please forgive me and redeem my mistakes for your glory. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

If you have never asked Jesus to forgive your sins and be the Lord of your life, we want to invite you to do that now. Romans 10:9 says, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” If you believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins and you're ready to put your faith in Him, we invite you to say the prayer below as a way of inviting Him into your heart:

Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I believe You died for my sins. Right now, I turn from my sins and ask that you would forgive me for my sins. I confess You as my Lord and Savior and commit to following you all the days of my life. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer for the first time, please let us know by emailing women@cachurch.com and we will celebrate with you and give you next steps on your spiritual journey. If you weren't ready to pray that prayer and want to talk with a pastor about any questions you might have, please email us and we'd love to talk with you.

WEEK FOUR: Note Time _____

WEEK FIVE: Return To The Lord

This week we will be exploring what it means to return to God. Repentance means turning away from something, or doing a 180 from whatever is hurting you or someone else. This week we are going to spend some time focusing on repentance. The Lord makes it clear to Israel that they need to repent, to turn away from other gods and turn back to Him. If they don't, there will be consequences. Let's not forget to focus on where we are headed back to - God's loving arms - and avoid dodging off to other worthless gods. Get ready for a mouthful of judgment because Israel is about to get reamed and called out! But hang in there, the invitation back is coming.

Reading Time:

Read Hosea 4:1 - 6:3

*Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites,
because the Lord has a charge to bring
against you who live in the land:*

*"There is no faithfulness, no love,
no acknowledgment of God in the land.*

*2 There is only cursing, lying and murder,
stealing and adultery;*

*they break all bounds,
and bloodshed follows bloodshed.*

*3 Because of this the land dries up,
and all who live in it waste away;
the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky
and the fish in the sea are swept away.*

*4 "But let no one bring a charge,
let no one accuse another,
for your people are like those
who bring charges against a priest.*

*5 You stumble day and night,
and the prophets stumble with you.*

So I will destroy your mother—

6 my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.

"Because you have rejected knowledge,

*I also reject you as my priests;
because you have ignored the law of your God,
I also will ignore your children.
7 The more priests there were,
the more they sinned against me;
they exchanged their glorious God for something disgraceful.
8 They feed on the sins of my people
and relish their wickedness.
9 And it will be: Like people, like priests.
I will punish both of them for their ways
and repay them for their deeds.*

*10 "They will eat but not have enough;
they will engage in prostitution but not flourish,
because they have deserted the Lord
to give themselves 11 to prostitution;
old wine and new wine
take away their understanding.
12 My people consult a wooden idol,
and a diviner's rod speaks to them.
A spirit of prostitution leads them astray;
they are unfaithful to their God.
13 They sacrifice on the mountaintops
and burn offerings on the hills,
under oak, poplar and terebinth,
where the shade is pleasant.
Therefore your daughters turn to prostitution
and your daughters-in-law to adultery.*

*14 "I will not punish your daughters
when they turn to prostitution,
nor your daughters-in-law
when they commit adultery,
because the men themselves consort with harlots
and sacrifice with shrine prostitutes—
a people without understanding will come to ruin!*

*15 "Though you, Israel, commit adultery,
do not let Judah become guilty.*

*"Do not go to Gilgal;
do not go up to Beth Aven.
And do not swear, 'As surely as the Lord lives!'
16 The Israelites are stubborn,
like a stubborn heifer.
How then can the Lord pasture them
like lambs in a meadow?
17 Ephraim is joined to idols;
leave him alone!
18 Even when their drinks are gone,
they continue their prostitution;
their rulers dearly love shameful ways.
19 A whirlwind will sweep them away,
and their sacrifices will bring them shame.*

*5 "Hear this, you priests!
Pay attention, you Israelites!
Listen, royal house!
This judgment is against you:
You have been a snare at Mizpah,
a net spread out on Tabor.
2 The rebels are knee-deep in slaughter.
I will discipline all of them.
3 I know all about Ephraim;
Israel is not hidden from me.
Ephraim, you have now turned to prostitution;
Israel is corrupt.*

*4 "Their deeds do not permit them
to return to their God.
A spirit of prostitution is in their heart;
they do not acknowledge the Lord.
5 Israel's arrogance testifies against them;
the Israelites, even Ephraim, stumble in their sin;
Judah also stumbles with them.
6 When they go with their flocks and herds
to seek the Lord,*

they will not find him;
he has withdrawn himself from them.
7 They are unfaithful to the Lord;
they give birth to illegitimate children.
When they celebrate their New Moon feasts,
he will devour their fields.

8 "Sound the trumpet in Gibeah,
the horn in Ramah.
Raise the battle cry in Beth Aven;
lead on, Benjamin.

9 Ephraim will be laid waste
on the day of reckoning.
Among the tribes of Israel
I proclaim what is certain.

10 Judah's leaders are like those
who move boundary stones.
I will pour out my wrath on them
like a flood of water.

11 Ephraim is oppressed,
trampled in judgment,
intent on pursuing idols.

12 I am like a moth to Ephraim,
like rot to the people of Judah.

13 "When Ephraim saw his sickness,
and Judah his sores,
then Ephraim turned to Assyria,
and sent to the great king for help.
But he is not able to cure you,
not able to heal your sores.

14 For I will be like a lion to Ephraim,
like a great lion to Judah.
I will tear them to pieces and go away;
I will carry them off, with no one to rescue them.

15 Then I will return to my lair
until they have borne their guilt
and seek my face—
in their misery

they will earnestly seek me."

6 "Come, let us return to the Lord.

He has torn us to pieces

but he will heal us;

he has injured us

but he will bind up our wounds.

2 After two days he will revive us;

on the third day he will restore us,

that we may live in his presence.

3 Let us acknowledge the Lord;

let us press on to acknowledge him.

As surely as the sun rises,

he will appear;

he will come to us like the winter rains,

like the spring rains that water the earth."

Question Time: _____

1) In Hosea 4:1, what are the three charges that God brings against Israel?

There is no _____, no _____, no _____
of God in the land.

2) According to Hosea 4:6, why are God's people destroyed?

3) In Hosea 4:10-11, what are the two things that God says take away their understanding? How do you relate to these two things in your own life?

4) Who does God say He will punish for the sins of prostitution and adultery (Hosea 4:14)? What is your reaction to this? How does it make you feel that God defends women?

5) In this passage, how many times do you see the word priest? How does this affect your understanding of how seriously God takes leadership and spiritual authority over others? Our God is a God of justice, and He will not let people who abuse power and their position get away with it. God defends the meek and humble and oppressed.

Process Time: _____

This judgment we are reading about is getting to the very heart of the issue: Israel's hearts! Israel is turning to other gods, namely to Baal, and prostituting themselves at the temples to worship Baal and not God. Men and husbands would give their daughters and wives to the shrines to be temple prostitutes in hopes that Baal would grant them favor and bless their harvest. The sin of sexual immorality is not something new: this is all too familiar in our own culture. Promiscuity is glorified and even celebrated in our world today, but it is not something God takes lightly. God designed sex to be the seal of a marriage covenant, and therefore condemns any sexual relationship that is outside of marriage or before marriage.

Ladies, this is where it gets real for us. Our hearts matter to God, and what we do with our bodies affects our hearts. Who we give our bodies away to matters. God desires for us to only give our bodies to our husbands in the covenant of marriage. What we do

sexually does affect our worship and the quality of our relationship with God. Sex is something our culture tells us to run to as women in order to feel loved and chosen. But the truth is that you already are loved and chosen, and out of that identity God wants you to be faithful to Him and not to degrade yourself or your body. The Bible says our bodies are temples (1 Corinthians 6:19). The passage in Hosea refers multiple times to a "heart of prostitution" and calls out the abuse of power and the adultery of His people in trying to seek love in other places.

Sexual immorality carries with it a heavy burden of shame, and our Father does not want us to live in shame. He wants to take the shame off of you and me, to wash us clean, to remember the sins of our past no more and remove any of the indignity that we have experienced or felt or caused in our decisions with our bodies. He is a God of redemption who wants to redeem us, just like He redeemed Gomer. He invites all of us, no matter what we have done, to receive His forgiveness through Jesus Christ and repent and turn back to Him.

If you are currently struggling with any area of sexual sin, I encourage you to find a trusted friend and invite her into your struggle to pray for you and to help with accountability. You deserve freedom and are worth fighting for! God forgives us for our sins and helps us in our weaknesses.

If you have been a victim of any form of sexual exploitation or abuse, God's heart and our hearts break for you. That is not God's intention or design for you, and it is not your fault. We serve a God who can heal our past and restore what has been broken. If you have experienced sexual abuse, trauma or exploitation in any forms, we encourage you to talk to a pastor on staff or a professional counselor who can walk with you through the healing process towards freedom in Jesus. If you want to meet with a women's pastor or trained counselor, please email us at women@cachurch.com.

You are dearly loved and chosen, dear one, and what's happened to you does not define you. We stand with you in Christ and remind you of your true worth and value as His beloved.

Holy Spirit Time: _____

Sit with the Holy Spirit and ask Him to meet with you. Is there an area of sexual sin, past or present, that you need to confess and ask God's forgiveness for? Or is there an area of sexual abuse that you want to sit with the Lord in and ask for His healing, freedom and wholeness? What is a picture or word that represents what is keeping you from our loving Father? Invite the Holy Spirit to show you where you need to be released, healed and restored. Write down anything you see or hear or feel.

If this feels too painful, would you invite the Holy Spirit to show you a person who is safe for you to talk to and process this with, who can help you along on your healing journey?

Application Time: _____

- 1) Our sexuality is a beautiful, complicated and at times painful and shameful part of our humanity. Write a letter to God about your own sexuality and your journey with Him. This is between you and Him. Share your heart on where you are and confess any areas of sexual sin. Remember, shame is from the enemy, not from God. He loves you and wants the best for you. He removes our shame and guilt, and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

- 2) Is there any area of your life where you need to return to the Lord? What would it look like for you to do so? Can you name anything in your life that keeps you from trusting God or being close to Him?

- 3) In reading this week's lesson on repentance, where do you feel there is a need for you to "turn" in your life, or do a 180?

- 4) God called out the Israelites for not understanding and for lacking knowledge. How does your own lack of understanding or knowledge get in the way of your relationship with God? Is there anything you can do to acknowledge Him today?

- 5) What or who are you tempted to give your heart away to, and why? How does this affect you?

Prayer Time: _____

God, we invite you into our mess. Please forgive us for all the ways we have sinned against you. Forgive our promiscuous hearts that turn away from you to other things. We want to come back to you, we don't want to give ourselves away to idols that don't satisfy. We want to live in the Truth, and the Truth is, You are enough!

Something I want to confess is: I have _____

Please forgive me for _____

I confess I have loved _____ more than you, and I no longer want to do that. I want to love you more.

Please forgive me, and help me to turn away from the sin I am in and run towards you. I want to be near you and for you. I trust that you will satisfy me and provide for me in all the ways I need, unlike my idols that can't heal me. You are the true healer and my redeemer.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

WEEK FIVE: Note Time _____

WEEK SIX: American Idols In The Making

This week we are going to be talking about idols. You may have a funny image in your mind of a small carved statue, or maybe Simon Cowell comes to mind or Randy Jackson (former judges on the TV show American Idol). But what we are actually talking about this week is anything that replaces or reduces God. Idols are anything that we make bigger or more important than God, and it doesn't have to be things; it can be people, ideas, concepts, wishes, desires, hopes, you name it.

Reading Time:

Read Hosea 7:1 - 8:14

*1 Whenever I would heal Israel,
the sins of Ephraim are exposed
and the crimes of Samaria revealed.
They practice deceit,
thieves break into houses,
bandits rob in the streets;
2 but they do not realize
that I remember all their evil deeds.
Their sins engulf them;
they are always before me.*

*3 "They delight the king with their wickedness,
the princes with their lies.
4 They are all adulterers,
burning like an oven
whose fire the baker need not stir
from the kneading of the dough till it rises.
5 On the day of the festival of our king
the princes become inflamed with wine,
and he joins hands with the mockers.
6 Their hearts are like an oven;
they approach him with intrigue.
Their passion smolders all night;
in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire.
7 All of them are hot as an oven;*

*they devour their rulers.
All their kings fall,
and none of them calls on me.*

*8 "Ephraim mixes with the nations;
Ephraim is a flat loaf not turned over.
9 Foreigners sap his strength,
but he does not realize it.
His hair is sprinkled with gray,
but he does not notice.
10 Israel's arrogance testifies against him,
but despite all this
he does not return to the Lord his God
or search for him.*

*11 "Ephraim is like a dove,
easily deceived and senseless—
now calling to Egypt,
now turning to Assyria.
12 When they go, I will throw my net over them;
I will pull them down like the birds in the sky.
When I hear them flocking together,
I will catch them.
13 Woe to them,
because they have strayed from me!
Destruction to them,
because they have rebelled against me!
I long to redeem them
but they speak about me falsely.
14 They do not cry out to me from their hearts
but wail on their beds.
They slash themselves, appealing to their gods
for grain and new wine,
but they turn away from me.
15 I trained them and strengthened their arms,
but they plot evil against me.
16 They do not turn to the Most High;
they are like a faulty bow.
Their leaders will fall by the sword*

*because of their insolent words.
For this they will be ridiculed
in the land of Egypt.*

*8 "Put the trumpet to your lips!
An eagle is over the house of the Lord
because the people have broken my covenant
and rebelled against my law.*

*2 Israel cries out to me,
'Our God, we acknowledge you!'*

*3 But Israel has rejected what is good;
an enemy will pursue him.*

*4 They set up kings without my consent;
they choose princes without my approval.*

*With their silver and gold
they make idols for themselves
to their own destruction.*

*5 Samaria, throw out your calf-idol!
My anger burns against them.*

How long will they be incapable of purity?

*6 They are from Israel!
This calf—a metalworker has made it;
it is not God.*

*It will be broken in pieces,
that calf of Samaria.*

*7 "They sow the wind
and reap the whirlwind.*

*The stalk has no head;
it will produce no flour.*

*Were it to yield grain,
foreigners would swallow it up.*

*8 Israel is swallowed up;
now she is among the nations
like something no one wants.*

*9 For they have gone up to Assyria
like a wild donkey wandering alone.
Ephraim has sold herself to lovers.*

10 *Although they have sold themselves among the nations,
I will now gather them together.
They will begin to waste away
under the oppression of the mighty king.*

11 *"Though Ephraim built many altars for sin offerings,
these have become altars for sinning.*

12 *I wrote for them the many things of my law,
but they regarded them as something foreign.*

13 *Though they offer sacrifices as gifts to me,
and though they eat the meat,
the Lord is not pleased with them.*

*Now he will remember their wickedness
and punish their sins:*

They will return to Egypt.

14 *Israel has forgotten their Maker
and built palaces;*

Judah has fortified many towns.

*But I will send fire on their cities
that will consume their fortresses."*

Question Time: _____

God refers to Israel's idolatry using multiple metaphors in this chapter. Let's explore what He uses and what they mean. In each verse list the thing that God is comparing Israel (or Ephraim) to and what you think it means:

	Bible Verse	Image	Interpreted Meaning
1	Hosea 7:4-7	Oven	Inflamed sexual and political passions
2	Hosea 7:8-10		
3	Hosea 7:11-12		Lacking wisdom, turned to Assyria and got destroyed
4	Hosea 7:16		

Process Time: _____

Idols are so very dangerous because they promise to fill our identities, but they cannot. That is often why we unintentionally worship idols, because we are looking for our identities in the things that we don't think we have. For instance, if a woman feels unattractive, the temptation might be to idolize beauty because she believes if she is beautiful then she will be loved and chosen. The problem is that what we idolize doesn't define us and can't complete us, so instead we end up worshipping something that doesn't satisfy and proves costly. We become a slave to something that cannot give us our value or worth, because we can only find our true value and worth in God.

Israel worshipped other gods and sold themselves to other lovers, and we do the same thing. One of the easiest idols to worship is the idol of self. We can become our own gods- doing whatever we want whenever we want to, seeking to satisfy our wants and cravings above everything else. And while it may feel easier and more enjoyable to put ourselves at the center of the universe, it's always more costly and less satisfying because anything we worship above God leads to pain, while God Himself is the only One who can lead us to abundant life and fulfillment in Him.

Holy Spirit Time: _____

Ask the Holy Spirit to gently, in His tender love and care, show you anything in your life that has become more important to you than God. What do you see? Draw it below, and as an act of prayer and worship, confess to the Lord any idol that has captivated your heart more than Him. Invite the Holy Spirit to fill you afresh with a desire and hunger for God alone.

Application Time: _____

- 1) Do I trust that God is who He says He is, and that He will do what He says He will do, or do I keep a plan B just in case?

- 2) Do I really want God to be sovereign and in control of my life, or do I want to be in control of my life?

- 3) Time to do a little reflection on what our idols might be. Jennifer Rothschild, who wrote *Hosea: Unfailing Love Changes Everything*, came up with a brilliant reflection tool to help detect where our idols might be, so let's dive in and see what we find. We'll examine what Rothschild calls the 6 D's to figure out what idols we are actually serving. Reflect and answer the following questions.

DESIRE:

- How much do you desire certain people, relationships, security, acceptance, identity, appearance, etc.? Is there something you want so much that you'd do anything to get it?

>> "If you can't do without it, it may be an idol."

DWELL:

- What do you think about a lot or dwell on?

>> "If it's the first and most frequent thing on your mind, chances are it's an idol."

DEFEND:

- What do you defend, make excuses for or justify?

>> "If you use rationalizations, you're probably dealing with an idol."

DEDICATE:

- What are you committed to, or what in your life do you consistently find a way to make happen?

>> "If you find a way to make it happen, even if it requires secrecy or sacrifice, it may be an idol."

DENY:

- What are you denying or trying to keep hidden? What are you afraid that others will find out?

>> "If you have to deny what you are doing, thinking about, or wanting, you may be trying to hide an idol."

DEPEND:

- What do you depend on to make you feel complete or okay?

>> "If it is your "old faithful" that you run to for a quick fix, chances are you've got an idol."

Looking at your responses to the 6 D's, what might some of your idols be and how are they doing with satisfying you? Do they deliver what you want from them? Why or why not?

Prayer Time: _____

Lord, help me to see my idols the way you see them. Help me to be humble in heart and willing to choose your path over mine. I know you are the only God who can satisfy me. I lay down my idols and ask that you would help me trust that you are enough and that I don't need a plan B. I confess that I so often want to be master of my life, but I give you that role in my life now. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

WEEK SIX: Note Time _____

WEEK SEVEN: Forgetting Our First Love

We have a tendency as humans to be forgetful. Have you ever forgotten to lock your door, or pick up a child from school, or bring your lunch to work? We all have short lived memory lapses sometimes, but when it comes to remembering the God of the world who created us in love and saves us, it's hard to plead innocent of forgetting His existence and greatness. And yet that's what we do all the time. We forget that everything in the earth is the Lord's and that everything we have is from Him. In today's passage we will see the Lord calling Israel to remember who He is and all He has done. We will do the same in our study guide this week!

Reading Time:

Read Hosea 11:1-7 and 13:1-6

Hosea 11:1-7

- 1 *"When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.*
- 2 *But the more they were called,
the more they went away from me.
They sacrificed to the Baals
and they burned incense to images.*
- 3 *It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
taking them by the arms;
but they did not realize
it was I who healed them.*
- 4 *I led them with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love.
To them I was like one who lifts
a little child to the cheek,
and I bent down to feed them.*
- 5 *"Will they not return to Egypt
and will not Assyria rule over them
because they refuse to repent?*
- 6 *A sword will flash in their cities;
it will devour their false prophets*

and put an end to their plans.
7 *My people are determined to turn from me.*
Even though they call me God Most High,
I will by no means exalt them.

Hosea 13:1-6

When Ephraim spoke, people trembled;
he was exalted in Israel.
But he became guilty of Baal worship and died.
2 *Now they sin more and more;*
they make idols for themselves from their silver,
cleverly fashioned images,
all of them the work of craftsmen.
It is said of these people,
“They offer human sacrifices!
They kiss calf-idols!”
3 *Therefore they will be like the morning mist,*
like the early dew that disappears,
like chaff swirling from a threshing floor,
like smoke escaping through a window.

4 *“But I have been the Lord your God*
ever since you came out of Egypt.
You shall acknowledge no God but me,
no Savior except me.
5 *I cared for you in the wilderness,*
in the land of burning heat.
6 *When I fed them, they were satisfied;*
when they were satisfied, they became proud;
then they forgot me.

Question Time: _____

- 1) What metaphor is being described in Hosea 11:1-5? If you are a parent, how do you feel when your children forget what you have done for them? As a child yourself, how often do you take for granted the things your parents (or other people close to you) do for you?

- 2) Hosea 11:7 is a telling statement. What is the result of the people's actions? Do you think the Israelites' actions were intentional or not?

- 3) In Hosea 13:2, who has become the new master? Who is creating the gods and who is worshipping them?

- 4) Describe in your own words what happened in Hosea 13:6.

Process Time:

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." - James 1:17

Everything in our lives is a gift from God. The problem with the Israelites is that they forgot about God. It's not that they stopped worshiping God altogether, but they turned to another god and added him into the mix. They prayed not only to the Lord our God, but they prayed to Baal and any other deity who might be able to give them what they want. The problem is that when they got what they prayed for, they didn't give credit where it was due. Instead, they used the good and perfect gifts that the Lord had given them to sacrifice to their idols, whom they falsely believed had heard their prayers. Hosea says that they even kissed the calf-idols! They got lost in their thinking, trapped in all their worldly ideals and superstitions. They started thinking that good things were coming from places other than the only true source of goodness.

We can do the same thing. We can have a tendency to think things are ours - that we earned them, that it was our hard work, that it was our gifts and abilities and brains and connections and intuition and influence and charisma and looks... the list goes on. The problem is that all good things are from the Lord! Every good thing in our lives, from our families to our bodies to our houses to our talents, are all gifts to us from God. But often we can get prideful about ourselves and our lives, and instantly we become our own little idols, thinking we are "self made" or we "did it all by ourselves". Israel forgot that it was God who brought them out of slavery, God who provided for their daily needs with bread and water and oil and wine, God who cared for them and God who healed their wounds.

Romans 1:25 says it best:

"They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised."

We need to be careful how we live, so that we don't start thinking that the good things in our life are because of us and from us. When we do this, we wind up prideful, forgetting our first true love: God.

Holy Spirit Time: _____

Invite the Holy Spirit to remind you of all the areas of your life where you have seen the Lord's faithfulness. Where your memory fails you, ask Him to be your perfect memory and for Him to uncover any gift, blessing or fulfilled prayer that you might have forgotten over the years. Write down whatever you hear, feel or sense, and then spend time thanking the Lord for each act of faithfulness in your life.

Application Time: _____

- 1) Have you ever taken credit for something that you didn't do, or for something that wasn't yours?

- 2) Pause and think about the good things in your life. Write them down as they come to mind. Now go through the list and put a "G" next to everything that God has given to you. Looking over the list, how many of those things with a G next to them have you thanked Him for? Spend some time thanking Him and acknowledging that everything good is from Him.

3) Where do you have a tendency to forget God's goodness? How can you take an action step to remind yourself that everything good you have is from God?

4) How might forgetfulness cause you to wander from God? What does it look like for you to remember that God is your first love?

Prayer Time: _____

Father, today I remember your faithfulness. I praise you for every good and perfect gift in my life. All glory and honor belongs to you. You are most worthy of our praise and most worthy of our adoration. I ask that you help me remember all the ways you have been good to me, and I ask for your forgiveness for ways I have taken credit for things that you have actually done for me on my behalf. I am grateful to be your daughter. Increase my faith and teach me your ways, that I may always remember your great faithfulness to me. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

WEEK SEVEN: Note Time

WEEK EIGHT: His Love Never Fails

This week we are going to look at how faithful our God is, even when Gomer, Israel, you and I are not faithful to Him. In His steadfast love, God continues to pursue us and have mercy on us and rescue us. Let's dive into the reading this week. Last week was a lot of judgment, but hopefully you made it out intact and with the grace of Jesus as your guide!

Reading Time:

Read Hosea 11:8-11 and 14:1-9

Hosea 11:8-11

8 *"How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, Israel?
How can I treat you like Admah?
How can I make you like Zeboyim?
My heart is changed within me;
all my compassion is aroused.*

9 *I will not carry out my fierce anger,
nor will I devastate Ephraim again.
For I am God, and not a man—
the Holy One among you.
I will not come against their cities.*

10 *They will follow the Lord;
he will roar like a lion.
When he roars,
his children will come trembling from the west.*

11 *They will come from Egypt,
trembling like sparrows,
from Assyria, fluttering like doves.
I will settle them in their homes,"
declares the Lord.*

Hosea 14

1 *Return, Israel, to the Lord your God.*

Your sins have been your downfall!
2 Take words with you
and return to the Lord.
Say to him:
"Forgive all our sins
and receive us graciously,
that we may offer the fruit of our lips.
3 Assyria cannot save us;
we will not mount warhorses.
We will never again say 'Our gods'
to what our own hands have made,
for in you the fatherless find compassion."

4 "I will heal their waywardness
and love them freely,
for my anger has turned away from them.
5 I will be like the dew to Israel;
he will blossom like a lily.
Like a cedar of Lebanon
he will send down his roots;
6 his young shoots will grow.
His splendor will be like an olive tree,
his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon.
7 People will dwell again in his shade;
they will flourish like the grain,
they will blossom like the vine—
Israel's fame will be like the wine of Lebanon.
8 Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols?
I will answer him and care for him.
I am like a flourishing juniper;
your fruitfulness comes from me."

9 Who is wise? Let them realize these things.
Who is discerning? Let them understand.
The ways of the Lord are right;
the righteous walk in them,
but the rebellious stumble in them.

Question Time: _____

- 1) What is the reason that God gives for not destroying Israel in Hosea 11:9?

- 2) Fill in the blanks for the following passage from Hosea 14:1-2, and then answer the questions below.

_____, *Israel, to the Lord your God.*

Your _____ *have been your downfall!*

Take _____ *with you*

and return to the Lord.

Say to him:

"Forgive all our sins

and _____ us graciously,

that we may offer the fruit of our _____.

What are the commands the Lord gives to the Israelites in this passage?

What are they to take with them?

What sins do you think Hosea is pleading with Israel to ask for forgiveness?

3) List all of the metaphors used in Hosea 14:5-8 to describe Israel. What do these images conjure up?

4) Hosea 14:9 is the closing verse of the book of Hosea. In your own words, what is the author's main point?

Process Time:

Have you ever had a friend or family member that continued to wrong you or hurt you? At some point in time, most of us have had to say "enough!". The difference between us and God is that He never gives up on us. Even though we continue to fail Him, trust in other things above Him, chase other idols and worship other things, He never gives up on us. His love endures forever. It isn't because we are GOOD that He loves us, but it is because He is GOD.

Think over your life and some of the mistakes you have made, or times that you have failed yourself or others. If we were honest enough to make a list, it would likely be painfully long. The Israelites had their fair share of stuff that they did wrong too, as did Gomer. Read the following Bible passage from the apostle Paul about how humanity has rebelled against God and fallen further into sin. Underline all the mistakes listed here that could have applied to the Israelites, Gomer, or us that would be reason for God to say "enough!"

Romans 1:29-32 (ESV)

"29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them."

We have all turned away from the living God and chased lesser things. In His judgment, God has the right to give up on us and say, "that's enough, no more, I'm done with you." But He never does. His love doesn't allow Him to ever give up on us, because He created us and loves us and sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to save us. What a merciful God!

Holy Spirit Time: _____

Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal the depth and width and height of God's never-ending love for you. What does it look like, feel like, taste like? Note any imagery or senses that come to mind as you meditate on how endless God's love is for you. Ask the Spirit to reveal to you the difference between the world's concept of love and God's perfect definition of love.

Application Time: _____

1) In the beginning of Hosea 14, we see God's call for Israel to return to their God. He invites them to bring their words to confess their sins and honor God with their praise. In the space below, what words do you need to bring to God to confess your sins and give Him praise for who He is?

2) Read the Bible verse below and let it wash over you. What is your response to God from this verse?

*"I will heal their waywardness,
and love them freely,
for my anger has turned away from them."* -Hosea 14:4

3) As we close out on the book of Hosea, look back through your past notes and jot below any truths that you have learned about God over the last eight weeks that you want to carry with you. When your group meets, share with them the most important lesson(s) you have gleaned in reading Hosea.

- 4) How can your group be praying for you to live out the truths that you have gained in the book of Hosea? What does it look like for you to live as God's beloved starting today?

- 5) What would it look like for you to commit to taking one action step for the next month to live out the truth that you are loved and chosen? This may be Scripture memory, finding a prayer partner, going to counseling for past wounds, committing to fighting the lies daily, etc. What would it look like for you personally to live out the message of Hosea, that God's unconditional love is your identity? Be creative!

Prayer Time: _____

Read and reflect on this beautiful prayer written by Jennifer Rothschild from the perspective of our Heavenly Father calling His daughters home. May her prayer bless you and minister to you today. Hear the voice of God speaking to your heart:

"Beloved, you are worthy and significant. I love you and accept you and when you embrace that truth, you will find the completeness you long for. You have been trying to become who you already were. You have been striving for what you already possess. You have been seeking what is already yours. Return with me... return to me. Reclaim what is yours in me. I have pulled you towards me with cords of love, not chains of condemnation. I don't want you to wear that yoke of slavery when you should be clothed in the garment of a beloved bride. You are worth the cost of this redemption to me. I will always see you as beautiful for you are mine. I will always think of you as lovable because I love you."

- Jennifer Rothschild, *Hosea: Unfailing Love Changes Everything*

WEEK EIGHT: Note Time _____