

# Lessons from the Book of Hosea

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The book of Hosea is a wonderful little book. It shows God's love and concern for his people. No matter what one does God is always willing to forgive. This book provides an excellent "object-lesson" in God's love and forgiveness.

Hosea opens with an interesting command. God told Hosea, "Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD" (1:2). This unusual instruction served to teach the people of Israel an important lesson. When the people turned away from God, they were actually committing whoredom. They had pledged themselves to God, and breaking that pledge constituted spiritual adultery.

Hosea did as the word had commanded him. He went and took Gomer to be his wife. After they were married, Hosea and Gomer had three children which bore symbolic names. The first child was named Jezreel which means "God sows." God told the prophet to name his son Jezreel, "for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel" (1:4-5). Gomer then bore a daughter named Lo-ruhamah whose name means "not pitied." This name symbolized that the Lord would "no longer have pity on the house of Israel or forgive them" (1:6). The name Lo-ammi ("not my people") was given to the third child. Therefore God told the people of Israel, "You are not my people and I am not your God" (1:9).

Gomer continued to be unfaithful to Hosea even after their marriage. Following all Hosea had done for Gomer, she was still unfaithful and pursued her lovers (2:5; it is interesting

to notice that many of the verses in chapter two can apply to either Israel as a whole or Gomer). She forgot that her happiness came from Hosea and not from her many lovers. No doubt such unfaithfulness broke Hosea's heart.

Gomer's unfaithfulness provided a living testimony to Israel's unfaithfulness. Just as Gomer refused to be loyal to her husband, Israel refused to be faithful to her God. Israel worshipped Baal instead of Yahweh (2:8; 2:13; 2:16; etc. Much of Hosea deals with idol worship). The people were exceedingly immoral. God commented, "There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land. Swearing, lying, and murder, and stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed follows bloodshed" (4:1-2). God loved his people and desired them to return to him. He said, "I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely" (14:4). God's heart was broken because the people refused to repent.

Due to her unfaithfulness, Gomer found herself in a mess. She left Hosea and found nothing but trouble. She apparently became so involved in her sin that she was forced to sell herself into slavery. At this point God told Hosea, "Go, love a woman who has a love and is an adulteress, just as the LORD loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes" (3:1). Hosea went and bought Gomer "for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer of barley and a measure of wine" (3:2). After Hosea had bought her, he told Gomer, "You must remain as mine for many days; you shall not play the whore, you shall not have intercourse with a man, or I with you" (3:3).

What love! After all that she had done, Hosea went and bought his wife as a common slave. Just as Hosea bought Gomer, the Bible teaches that God bought the Christian. "You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with

perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish” (1 Peter 1:18-19). We were in a worse situation than Gomer, and God bought us with an even higher price. What love!

Hosea must have been a wonderful man. He loved and sacrificed unconditionally. We serve a wonderful God. He loved and sacrificed unconditionally.