



For February 14th, 2010

Midlothian Bible Church

Life In Focus

Examining Life Through the Lens of Scripture



Minor Prophets

Intro to Hosea

MBC Mission Statement:

Building God's family by developing intimate followers of Jesus Christ.

Grow Mature Reproducing Disciples

Raise Christ-centered Families

Adore the Triune God

Communicate Him to our Culture

Express our Faith Globally

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Every day we take for granted something that has the potential to change our lives. Early in the morning, throughout the afternoon and before bed this inexpensive powerful necessity silently does its job asking little in return. It faithfully serves the adventurous gaze of a child as well as the aging glare of an adult and like a well-trained pet, speaks only when spoken to. Years often pass before we understand how loyal, patient, honest, and selfless this friend has been, but when that moment comes you can almost see it smile at its recognition. In whip-like fashion, heads turn, lean in, and disappear, shocked at why it took so long to see the penetrating revelation of the image of "me." If we dare to truly open our eyes to what it shows, this thin piece of reflective glass can shatter idols, build dreams, and influence kings. Yet it waits, but not forever, for the response of its admirer.

Ever since the discovery of brass and shining metal, when people could finally see for themselves what others and water could only muddle, there has perhaps been no other tool used to shape people than that of the mirror. In fact, Scripture is replete with examples of God challenging those who dare to follow by confronting them with what he has seen all along. The NT book of James uses the mirror as an example of how Scripture can change our lives if we look into it with a teachable heart and change what it reveals. In the OT, God often asked his messengers to act out his message for his people through a visual representation of their waywardness. For the next few weeks, we will spend time in probably the best example of this as God asks the OT prophet Hosea to mirror to Israel his unfailing love for them despite their blatant, shameless unfaithfulness. In the effort of understanding this message, don't look away too quickly for what God might reveal to you. What mirror would he use to illustrate your life and faithfulness?

Day One

Background on Hosea

Digging
Deeper



- o **Change:** King David illustrates this best in *Psalm 139:23-24*. Why? What is he willing for God to do? How willing are you to see what God reveals in your heart?

Scripture Memory

Hosea 2:19-20

"In that day...I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD."

English Standard Version

It is important to hide God's Word in our heart. Each week we will provide a section of verses you can use to enjoy this benefit.

Tips:

1. Use a familiar, reader-friendly version.
2. Write the vs. on a 3x5 card. Carry it with you.
3. Repetition is key.
4. Focus on content.

◆ Introduction:

☞ "Hosea has been called the 'death-bed prophet of Israel' because he was the last to prophesy before the northern kingdom fell to Assyria (about 722 B.C.). His ministry followed a golden age in the northern kingdom, with a peace and prosperity not seen since the days of Solomon. Unfortunately, this prosperity led to moral decay, and Israel forsook God to worship idols. So God instructed Hosea to marry a prostitute, whose unfaithfulness to her husband would serve as an example of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. Hosea then explained God's complaint against Israel and warned of the punishment that would come unless the people returned to the Lord and remained faithful to him. The book shows the depth of God's love for his people, a love that tolerates no rivals." (ESV Intro to Hosea).

◆ Study: Read *Hosea 1-3*.

☞ Today's reading is meant as an overview to familiarize yourself with the passage. We will unpack each chapter in the following days, but before we do, let's spend some time getting a feel for what is taking place. What do you see happening in what you read? What has Israel done to God? How did he respond?

☞ Why do you think God had Hosea do what he did to illustrate unfaithfulness? Why is this still such a powerful illustration?

☞ If you were to pause in the "mirror", what would God reveal about your walk with him? Where have you flirted with being unfaithful to him? Where do you need to change?

◆ Reflect:

☞ Close today in prayer. Ask God to open your eyes to see what he wants you to see. Ask him to make you willing to change.

Day Two

Hosea's Family

Digging Deeper



- **Date and Time:** Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel from about 760 to 715 B.C. (approx. same time as Amos). As we learned yesterday, he was the last prophet to speak before Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C.
- **What's in a Name?** In our culture, names rarely hold the significance they year ago. In our passage today, we are introduced to a few names they are very important to understanding the message of Hosea.
 - ▶ *Hosea* - "Yahweh has Saved" - variation of Joshua/Jesus.
 - ▶ Hosea's Children:
 1. *Jezreel* - God Scatters/Sows
 2. *Lo-Ruhamah* - No Mercy; Not Loved
 3. *Lo-Ammi*-Not My People.

◆ **Introduction:**

- ✦ God's covenant relationship with His people Israel is central to the messages of the eighth-century prophets Hosea, Amos, and Micah. Each of these prophets accused God's people of violating the obligations of the Mosaic Covenant and warned that judgment was impending. Despite painting such a bleak picture of the immediate future, these prophets also saw a bright light at the end of the dark tunnel of punishment and exile. Each anticipated a time when the Lord, on the basis of His eternal covenantal promises to Abraham and David, would restore Israel to a position of favor and blessing. In fact, the coming judgment would purify God's people and thus prepare the way for a glorious new era in Israel's history. (Chisholm).
- ✦ The Lord used Hosea's literal family/marriage as a physical sign to communicate His message of coming judgment on Israel because of their sin of whoredom, but also communicated the future restoration of Israel, because of His gracious, divine love.

◆ **Study:** Read *Hosea 1*.

- ✦ The Lord commanded Hosea to marry a whore, which illustrated the sinfulness of the land of Israel. What act of whoredom did Israel commit (v. 2)?
- ✦ Even after passing judgments on Israel, as evidenced by the names of Hosea's children, what unconditional covenant did the Lord remind them off to give them hope in verse 10-11 (See Genesis 22:17)?

◆ **Reflect:**

- ✦ How challenging do you think it was for Hosea to obey the Lord in his difficult family situation? What challenging situation do you face and will you obey the Lord when it is difficult?
- ✦ The themes of judgment/discipline and unconditional love are throughout the Book of Hosea - What do these actions tell you about the character of God?

Day Three

God's Mercy and Unfaithful Love

Digging
Deeper



- **Understanding Hosea:** “Under-standing the message of the book of Hosea depends upon understanding the Sinai covenant. The book contains a series of blessings and curses announced for Israel by God through Hosea. Each blessing or curse is based upon a corresponding type in the Mosaic law.” (Chisholm) See Deut. 28-30.
- **Jezeel:** In Chs 1-2, Jezreel is referenced several times. It has a long and varied history in Israel. Some major events occurring at Jezreel include:
 - ▶ Barak’s defeat of Sisera in this plain - Judges 4.
 - ▶ Gideon’s victory over the Midianites - Judges 7.
 - ▶ Sauls defeat at the hands of the Philistines - 1 Samuel 29:1; 31:1-7.
 - ▶ Ahab’s execution of Naboth - 1 Kings 21.
 - ▶ Jehu’s excessive massacre of Israel’s enemies including Ahab/Jezebel in 2 Kgs 9-10

◆ **Introduction:**

↪ These messages of Hosea 2-3 more fully develop the comparison between Hosea’s relationship with his whoring/adulterous wife and God’s relationship with whoring/unfaithful Israel. In both relationships, His gracious restoration follows His righteous discipline/judgment.

◆ **Study: Read *Hosea 2*.**

↪ What do you think the Lord would have done if Israel had stopped her whoring and repented? (2:1-5). What does the Lord do when we repent? Think of an example in your own life.

↪ Even though Gomer/Israel did not repent and had to be punished/disciplined, do you observe any signs of protection for her? (2:6-13). What are they?

↪ What motivates God in vv.2:14-23 to win Israel back? What does this say about the character of God?

◆ **Reflect:**

↪ How has the Lord shown His incredible divine love to all people through His Son Jesus Christ?

↪ How does this incredible love allure you to the Lord? What do you treasure more than this love relationship with the Lord?

Day Four

Israel's Return

Digging
Deeper



- **Whoredom:** “For post-fall humanity, adulterated by sin, the Bible unfolds the drama of a loving God winning back to himself ‘a pure bride for her one husband’ (2 Cor. 11:2). Human marriage as original and ideal, defined in Gen. 2:23-24 provides the pre-understanding necessary for spiritual ‘harlotry’ to function as a meaningful moral category in the covenanted people’s perception of themselves and of their ‘marital’ obligations to their Lord, until the biblical drama reaches its eventual [*completion*].” From its beginning, Hosea’s prophetic ministry was shaped by the theme of Israel’s whoredom as they pursued other gods and departed from strict faithfulness to Yahweh. (Ortlund, *Whoredom*, p. 50)

◆ **Introduction:**

- ✦ “The book of Hosea is an unusually powerful book because the prophet ministered out of his deep personal emotions. His intellectual appeals to the Israelites in his day, and to us in ours, arose out of great personal tragedy in his own life. We might say that he cried out as he bled. Hosea appreciated the pain that God felt over His people’s apostasy, as no other prophet did, because he felt the intense pain of his wife’s unfaithfulness. Hosea could speak of the deepest things in the economy of God because he entered into fellowship with God in God’s sufferings (cf. Phil. 3:10). That is the reason this book is so appealing and so powerful.” (Constable). There is no better place where we see the passion of Hosea than in his own words of how he brought his wife back.

◆ **Study:** Read *Hosea 3*.

- ✦ What made the difference for Hosea in going after his wife? Why do you think he agreed to go after her and bring her back?
- ✦ What do we learn about God from the actions of Hosea in vv.1-3?
- ✦ What does v.4 predict? And what does v.5 promise?
- ✦ What significance does the phrase “David their king” have? What does the phrase “in the latter days” mean?

◆ **Reflect:**

- ✦ Put yourself in Hosea’s shoes for a moment. Could you ever do what he did? Where does God call us to show this kind of love to others? Where do we struggle the most in displaying it? How did Christ display this kind of love? How are you becoming like him?

Day Five

The Mirror

Digging
Deeper



- **Values of Hosea.**
“The permanent values of this book are its revelations of sin, judgment, and love. Hosea reveals what sin is at its worst. It also reveals the nature of judgment. Third, it reveals the unconquerable force of true love”. (Constable).

- **Family Exercise:**
How could you share what you’ve studied with your family? What examples would you give to illustrate Gomer’s/ Israel’s sin? How would you teach your children about God’s faithful compassion? What “mirror” could you use?

Life In Focus © is a weekly sermon-based ministry serving Midlothian Bible Church and is written by Layne A. Mershimer (marsh@att.net), Pastor of Adult Ministries. Days Two and Three are adapted from a previous study written by Bob Stanbery. Learning takes place in the context of community, so we encourage you to interact with the lesson and send your questions. Our prayer is that L.I.F. will help you grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

◆ **Introduction:**

- ↪ What ever time of day finds you doing this study, stop and go gaze into a mirror somewhere in your house. Look past the hair, make-up, or occasional wrinkles. Look deeper into what the Spirit has been teaching you this week. What do you see? Ask yourself if you are displaying the attributes of Christ in your life? What would the mirror reveal about your faithfulness to God? What would it show about your love for others? Who would it challenge you to forgive? To go after? In today’s lesson, we jump ahead to the NT and turn on the light to look into the mirror of the book of James. It can reveal powerful things and yield extraordinary results, but it all depends on what you do when you walk away from it. We can in no way aspire to exhibit the character of Hosea, if we refuse to listen and do what God challenged him to do. Today we have that chance.

◆ **Study: Read James 1: 21-25.**

- ↪ What are we to lay aside? Why is this necessary in order to receive what God wants us to receive?
- ↪ What does it mean to be a *hearer* of the word? Contrast this with also being a *doer* of the word. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate yourself on doing both?
- ↪ What is promised for the one who looks into the Word of God and, like someone would make the necessary changes a mirror reflects, obeys what they find?

◆ **Reflect:**

- ↪ How does this principle in James apply to our study in Hosea? What changes has God challenged you to make this week? How do you plan to act on what the Spirit revealed to you?