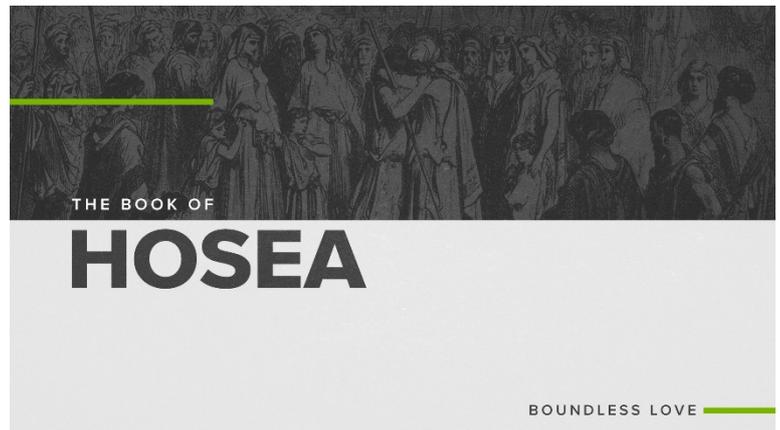


# HOSEA

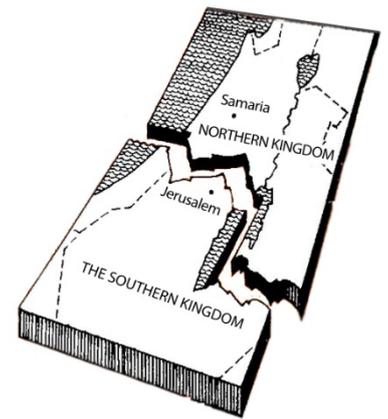
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If you are married, what was the best advice that you received before your wedding? If you are not married, what advice would you give to those getting married?



Hosea is essentially a love story, but with several twists. His ministry “embraced the critical years of religious decline and decay in the northern kingdom, from about 750 b.c. until a few years before the fall of Samaria in 722 b.c. Hosea’s preaching focused on Israel’s breach of her covenantal relationship with God, mixing the pure worship of the Lord with the idolatry of the surrounding peoples (religious syncretism<sup>1</sup>), and on the impending judgment. However, Hosea’s proclamation of the nature of God’s love sounds a more positive note in the book.”<sup>2</sup>

“Even though the failed and restored marriage of Hosea and Gomer is present only in the first three chapters, the controlling metaphor of covenant Israel as an unfaithful wife exerts an implied presence throughout the book.”<sup>3</sup>



1. Read **Hosea 1-3**, taking the time to reflect upon phrases and words used, new things learned, repeated phrases, words you’re unsure of the meaning, questions you’re asking and listening to what God is saying. Think particularly about the four main players – God, Hosea, Gomer, Israel:
2. God tells Hosea to marry Gomer, who is referred to as a prostitute and will prove to be an unfaithful wife (Hos. 1:2). The command states literally, “Go take to yourself a wife of fornications.”<sup>4</sup> Yet Hosea’s broken marriage reflects Israel’s unfaithfulness to God. What does this story reveal about the nature of God’s covenant with Israel? (See also Ex. 6:6–8; Ezek. 16:8–14.)

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<sup>1</sup> the amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought. "interfaith dialogue can easily slip into syncretism" (Oxford Languages online)

<sup>2</sup> *New Geneva Study Bible*, introduction to Hosea, “Date and Occasion” (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Leland Ryken and Philip Graham Ryken, eds., introduction to Hosea, “Format and Distinguishing Features,” *The Literary Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Edward McComiskey, “Hosea,” *The Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 12.

3. Consider the names of the children born in chapter 1 (see also 1 Kings 21 re Jezreel). What do these names reveal about the potential outcomes for Israel because of their unfaithfulness to the Lord?

4. Read Hosea 2:5-13. How do idols deceive those who worship them, and describe God's response when idolaters refuse to repent?

5. What would idolatry look like in our own culture, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century church, and our own lives?

Baal was the weather-god worshiped in Syria-Palestine, who had control over agriculture and fertility, rainfall and productivity. Since ancient Israel was always an agricultural society, Baal worship was of unrivaled importance.... One major aspect of Baalism touches on this prophet's message: the religion's appeal to human sexuality (see Isaiah 57:3-10).... Hosea understands the strength of Baalism's appeal to the sex drive by way of ritual prostitution." (ESV, introduction to Hosea, "Purpose, Occasion, and Background.")

6. Read Ephesians 5:25-27 and consider how these verses describe Christ's love for the church. How does the book of Hosea refine our understanding of God's love for us in Christ?

7. Look at Hosea 2:19-20 again. To what degree do the Lord's loving words of commitment to His people speak personally to you as coming from the Lord? What do they mean for you?

8. What do the first three chapters of Hosea communicate most to you about the heart and character of God? What does God especially want you to understand about the relationship He desires with His own?

## JOURNALING

How has God been speaking to you through this beautiful story of boundless love?

Write out your prayer to God in response to how the message of Hosea has been speaking to you.