

An Unfaithful People Receive Love

Summary and Goal

With great power, God delivered the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, led them for forty years through the wilderness, and then finally enabled them to conquer the land of Canaan—filled with people mightier than themselves—so that they could live there. Though it seems most logical that people who had been the recipients of these great gifts would have endured in praise of the One who gave them, sin never follows logic. The hearts of the people turned away from their faithful God and went to pursue others gods, other nations, other created things. By His grace, God endured Israel leaning on their idols, which inevitably collapsed beneath them, and invited them to turn and run back to His loving embrace.

Session Outline

1. God's love remains steadfast toward His unfaithful people (Hos. 2:16-23).
2. God's love pursues His unfaithful people and purchases them out of slavery (Hos. 3:1-5).
3. God's love invites His unfaithful people to repent (Hos. 14:1-4).

Background Passage: Hosea

Session in a Sentence

God faithfully loves His people even when His people are unfaithful and fail to love Him.

Christ Connection

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

Missional Application

Because God loves us even though we are unlovable people, we tell others the good news about our amazing God, who pursued us at great cost to Himself.

Group Time

GROUP MEMBER CONTENT

Introduction

EXPLAIN: Use the paragraph in the DDG (p. 57) to lay out the pattern of many fairy-tale relationships.

In most fairy tales, there are two main characters: a lovely princess and a handsome prince. The prince goes out to seek this princess, primarily for her beauty but sometimes also for her talents and magical powers. And it is a good thing he goes after her—because she is always in need of rescue. Every great princess finds herself captured by someone evil and powerful, and only a heroic and courageous man can set her free.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What are some fairy-tale stories or movies that fit this pattern? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

EXPLAIN: Comment on how the fairy-tale formula *compares* and *contrasts* with the love story revealed in the Book of Hosea.

- *Compares:* The Book of Hosea includes a heroic and courageous man who sets his princess free from her evil captors.
- *Contrasts:* Hosea's story differs from the fairy-tale formula because Gomer, Hosea's "princess," is not desirable. No words describe her beauty, talents, or gifts. Instead, Gomer was a "woman of whoredom." Though Hosea was faithful to her, she was not faithful to him. Through their marriage, God was going to show His people what they were like in their relationship with Him.

SUMMARIZE: In this session, we will look at the prophet Hosea's relationship with Gomer. The people of Israel were like Gomer, an adulterous people who had been casting off their intimate covenant with God to pursue all sorts of idols. But thankfully in this true story, God revealed the greatest hope: He is the greater Hosea. He is the husband who will not give up on His bride. He would pursue her and do everything necessary to restore her to the marriage covenant. The gospel, our true fairy-tale story, reveals that the beautiful, powerful, and holy King of all creation comes to rescue us, an adulterous people who do not deserve such grace.

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Point 1: God's love remains steadfast toward His unfaithful people (Hos. 2:16-23).

READ Hosea 2:16-23 (DDG p. 58).

¹⁶ “And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’ ¹⁷ For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. ¹⁸ And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. ¹⁹ And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. ²⁰ I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

²¹ “And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, ²² and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, ²³ and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’”

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 58) to explain the backstory of how God used Hosea's marriage to Gomer to portray His love for His people. Connect this relationship to the marriage between Christ and the church realized in the *gospel*.

The Lord called the prophet Hosea to act out through his life and marriage a picture of God and Israel. So Hosea sought out Gomer, a woman of promiscuity, and married her, made his home with her, and bore children with her (1:1–2:1). God wanted Israel to see that He didn't just call them to be His people because He wanted servants who obeyed out of rigid duty; He called them as a wife to draw near to Him in love.

- Gomer was not sought out to be a maid, a personal assistant, or simply a companion; she was not a servant to be tolerated. Hosea made her his wife to be loved, known, and cherished. So too was the nation of Israel as the Lord redeemed her from slavery in Egypt as His covenant people.
- *Gospel:* We as God's people, as God's church, are to be wedded to Jesus (Eph. 5:22-33). We are to be known, loved, cherished, and drawn in with great intimacy in our relationship. Christ did not die and rise to make us hardhearted soldiers who bow our knees but steel our hearts. He went to the greatest lengths and paid every price and bought us out of slavery to sin so that we, the church, would draw near with delight and call Him husband.

Commentary: Christ has come to make us brothers, friends, servants, and ambassadors, yes. But the pages of Revelation testify, alongside Hosea, that Christ has come for a bride (see Rev. 19). This may feel and sound a little weird, especially for men. We should keep in mind that the emphasis is not on a physical, sexual relationship but on the oneness exemplified between a husband and wife. Plus, the analogy is communal, not individual. The church is the bride of Christ, not individual Christians.

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 58) to fill in the story that led to God’s words in 2:16-23. Connect God’s plans for Israel, to be pictured in Hosea’s marriage, with the purpose of the *gospel*: to cleanse a people for Christ to be His pure, holy bride.

Hosea’s marriage was far from perfect. In fact, sometime after marrying and having three children, Gomer left Hosea and returned to her life of promiscuity, now adultery. But God would soon command Hosea to pursue Gomer once again. To prepare Hosea for this call, the Lord told him more about His love for His people and how He loved them though they turned again and again to other lovers, whoring after other gods. And one day, His love for His people would transform them into a faithful bride.

- In verses 19-20, God describes the way He will bring His idolatrous people back to Himself as follows: “I will betroth you to me.” Three times He says this. This reference to betrothal refers to a man’s pursuit of a virgin maiden to wed. How could Israel be considered a pure virgin maiden after her idolatry? How could we?
 - *Gospel:* This degree of purity is only possible if the sins we have committed in our spiritual adultery are *fully* forgiven and as good as *forgotten*—only if they are cast away as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12; Isa. 43:25). The blood of Christ provides this forgiveness for us (1 John 1:7,9). When we stand before Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb, we won’t be an adulterous bride clothed in a gown stained by our iniquity. Through the cross, Christ has made us clean by faith. We will be clothed in fine linen, white and clean—the spotless bride that He has purchased for Himself to make her righteous and what she does righteous (Rev. 19:7-8).
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INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 What are some ways God’s people today demonstrate unfaithfulness to God? (*hypocritical in calling out the world for the same sins of which they are guilty; refusal to love their brothers and sisters in Christ; choosing to ignore Jesus’ command to make disciples of the nations; holding grudges against others instead of forgiving as they have been forgiven*)

Point 2: God's love pursues His unfaithful people and purchases them out of slavery (Hos. 3:1-5).

READ Hosea 3:1-5 (DDG p. 59).

¹ And the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.” ² So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. ³ And I said to her, “You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you.” ⁴ For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. ⁵ Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 59) to emphasize what it took for Hosea to *show* love to Gomer in obedience to God's command. Connect this to the God's love for Israel and God's love in the *gospel*.

God commanded Hosea to go to Gomer and *show* love to her. Gomer had run off to a lover, but it appears her status had sunk much lower. Hosea couldn't just find Gomer and take her home because in her pursuit of other lovers, she had fallen to the status of a slave. The only way to get Gomer back was to purchase her. A cost had to be paid to redeem her from slavery, which resulted from her promiscuity, her sin. Hosea's love for Gomer cost him something: he had to seek her out and pay the price for her freedom.

- Love is more than a feeling of affection. If Hosea's love for Gomer were measured only by his feelings for her, then perhaps there would be nothing to show. But the kind of love that God has for His people, the kind of love He wanted demonstrated through Hosea, is a **covenant love**—a love rooted in a promise and guaranteed by a commitment to pay whatever cost is necessary for that love to continue.
- Again, God wanted Hosea's pursuit of Gomer to reflect His pursuit of Israel. The love that God had for Israel was a love not merely felt but one that demanded to be shown. And the people would recognize His goodness to them.
- *Gospel:* We too were slaves when God came after us. In our pursuit of other lovers—other things that we thought would satisfy and give us pleasure and meaning—we were nothing more than slaves to sin. The price that God paid for us in Christ was much steeper than thirty shekels. Our slavery to sin was an infinite debt against an infinitely holy God; an infinite price had to be paid to ransom us out of such slavery. And with something much more costly than silver or gold, God paid for this bride (see 1 Pet. 1:18-19). The precious blood of Christ—of infinite worth and value—was the sole payment that could be accepted for so great a debt. As God told Hosea to go and love Gomer and pay whatever price was necessary to restore her to their covenant, God knew that one day He would do the same in Christ to reconcile His people to Himself.

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 59).

God Is Love: The imperfect love that human beings share between one another is a **dim** reflection, a sign that points to the perfect love that resides within God. The greatest act of love by God toward humans isn't the giving of earthly goods but the giving of Himself in **Christ** so that we might become **reconciled** to Him.

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

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 59) to connect Hosea's desire to be Gomer's sole affection with God's desire for His people to worship Him only. Then explain the *gospel* connection.

Hosea restored Gomer as his wife, and he desired a holy covenant with her. He wanted *all* of her affection committed to him and him alone. He wanted her united to her husband and faithful to him so that she could be his and he hers. God had rescued and would rescue Israel once again out of their slavery for the same reason—not so they could live as they pleased but so they could finally be free to worship Him alone.

- When God sent Moses to lead His people out of their slavery in Egypt, Moses was to tell Pharaoh to let the people go so they could worship God (Ex. 7:16; 8:1). His heart for Israel was that they would be free to worship Him alone. Whether from physical slavery or spiritual slavery to idolatry and sin, God wanted His people free so they would be His people and He would be their God (Hos. 2:23).
 - *Gospel:* We were in slavery to sin. We were serving a harsh master whose intent for us was death. But through Jesus, God paid the price and bought us out of slavery, not so that we could be free to do as we pleased and attempt to rule ourselves but so that we could be united to Him in a holy covenant. He desires *all* of our affection. He wants us committed to Him, and He promises to be committed to us. We have been bought for a price and with a great purpose—that we would praise our God who has set us free and joined us to His Son in an eternal marriage covenant.
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INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What does the purchase price of Christ that God paid to redeem sinners reveal about His love for humanity? (God's love is sacrificial; God takes the redemption of sinners personally; God will not fail to accomplish His plans to redeem and sanctify the bride of Christ, the church)

Point 3: God's love invites His unfaithful people to repent (Hos. 14:1-4).

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Hosea 14:1-4 (DDG p. 60).

¹ Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. ² Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, "Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips. ³ Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy." ⁴ I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 60) to highlight God's initiative in calling Israel to repentance and what that repentance must look like: **turning from idolatry and turning to God.**

The Lord took the initiative in the repentance of Israel by calling on them to return to Him. All the words that He had spoken to Hosea and the actions Hosea had carried out were to show Israel that they were stumbling in their sin and needed to return to Him. To truly return to God, Israel had to do two things: **1) confess and turn away from the idols she had trusted in and 2) turn back to God with a heart full of trust.** Amazingly, God invites sinners to repent and offers the promise of compassion, healing, love, and a turning of His anger.



Voices from Church History

"O to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be! Let Thy grace, Lord, like a fetter, Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee: Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love; Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it; Seal it for Thy courts above."¹

—Robert Robinson (1735-1790)

Repentance must involve both **turning from idolatry and turning to God.**

- **1) Turning from Idolatry:** If Israel had simply tried to return to God while still holding on to her idols, her worship would have remained divided; she would still be an adulterous wife to Him.
- **2) Turning to God:** If Israel tried to turn away from idols without trusting in God, then her repentance would have been incomplete and short-lived. God does not want us merely to abstain from evil; He wants us to be in relationship with Him.
- There is no neutrality in our hearts; we will put our trust in and worship something: either God or our idols. Repentance must involve **giving up idols and returning to God** or else it is no repentance at all.
- *Gospel:* When we hear the gospel and grasp it in faith, our repentance is twofold. **1)** We confess that our deceitful hearts were treasuring and trusting in false gods that could not save. **2)** We turn to Jesus believing that He and He alone is the salvation that we need.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 What characteristics mark true repentance of sin? (a humble heart before God and others; agreement with God that something is sin; belief that the Lord responds favorably to repentance; a desire not to commit the sin again; repentance must be coupled with faith in Jesus; the Holy Spirit is working in him or her; must have a heart to worship the forgiving God)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 60) to emphasize that God did all that was necessary to bring His people Israel back to Himself. Connect this to God's work in Christ in the *gospel* for believers to belong to Him.

It is important to notice that Gomer never initiated in their relationship; Hosea was the one who pursued. The only time we see Gomer initiate was when she ran off with other men. The only hope that Hosea and Gomer's relationship would last was that Hosea would never give up on pursuing her. And so it is with God in His relationship with His people: God initiates, God pursues, God never gives up on His people, or there is no hope.

- Note God's initiative in this passage: *God* called Israel to return. *He* would forgive. *He* would heal their apostasy. *He* would love them freely. *He* would turn His anger away. Without God's initiative, without God's promises of favorable response, Israel would remain in their slavery. Israel could only receive God's relationship in repentance, and in response to this pursuit, they would worship their faithful Husband.
 - *Gospel:* Our story is the same. *God* has called us sinners out of slavery to sin. And by faith in Jesus, *God* has forgiven us. *God* has healed our apostasy. *God* has loved us freely. *God* has turned His anger away from us. *God* has initiated everything and done all that is necessary to bring you to Himself. *He* offered up His only Son on the cross so that *He* could pursue you with all His goodness and love. What response can you give? Repent from your idols *and* turn to Jesus with a heart of faith and with a heart of worship to this faithful God who has called you and done all that is necessary to lead you to Him.
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INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 How does God's work in our salvation attack our pride? (our salvation is God's work through and through; we contribute nothing to our salvation, only receive it by grace through repentance and faith; God loved and pursued us while we were still sinners and opposed to Him; Jesus laid His life down for those who rejected His rightful authority as Creator)

My Mission

EXPLAIN: The steadfast love of God never ceases. He will continue to pursue His people with His merciful, forgiving love. His is a love that removes pride, brings repentance, and causes hearts to worship. What happens to people who have experienced a love like this? They won't be able to keep such a love to themselves. It is a love that works first on our own hearts and then flows out to others. Like Hosea, we will show mercy to the undeserving and offer forgiveness to the sinner; we will pursue the hardhearted and love the unlovely. By God's grace, we will point others to Jesus and He will capture their hearts, just as He first captured ours.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 61), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God's Word.

Because God loves us even though we are unlovable people, we tell others the good news about our amazing God, who pursued us at great cost to Himself.

- **What steps of faith will you take in response to God's unending pursuit of sinner and saint?**
- **How can your group grow in encouraging full repentance in one another's lives?**
- **How will you show God's pursuing love in Christ to a "Gomer" in your life this week?**

Voices from the Church

"Jesus will join himself to an unfaithful wife—you and me—and make us his pure bride. He will go to the slave market of sin and buy us back at the cost of his own blood."²

—Nancy Guthrie

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, great is Your faithfulness and great is our unfaithfulness. Forgive us for our presumptuous idolatry and promiscuity. Thank You for Your steadfast love for us, a love that You have proven to us in sending Your Son, Jesus, to redeem us from our willful slavery. Help us to live in the love You have poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit as we seek to proclaim Your love to unlovable sinners like us. Amen.

PACK ITEM 8: OUR BRIDEGROOM: Cut out these bookmarks and pass them out to group members to remind them that Jesus redeemed His church with His precious blood.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the **Daily Study** devotions in their DDG (pp. 62-64), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use **Encourage One Another** (p. 65) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God's Word.

Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The **Daily Study** devotions in the DDG (pp. 62-64) will help group members get into God's Word and study it for themselves. **Encourage One Another** (p. 65) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 62-64) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for **Day 2** as a part of point 1 in the session: **Every single thing we have is from the Lord. Yet we regularly take all of these gifts and spend them on our own pleasures instead of offering them to God in worship.**



Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God's Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 1:** “The sinful tendencies of our hearts will always cause us to drift away from worshiping God to worshiping created things.”
- **Day 5:** “Repentance isn't just a one-time experience when we first turn to Jesus; it's a daily action of confessing all the ways we forsake God and trust in idols.”



Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God's Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member's DDG (p. 65) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using *The Gospel Project* in their groups.

- **Encourage group members to consider ways they can love the people around them who would seem unlovable and undesirable by the world.**
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.

Additional Commentary

Point 1: God's love remains steadfast toward His unfaithful people (Hos. 2:16-23).

“The restored relationship will mean that the woman will no longer call her husband *my master*, which in Hebrew is my ‘Baal,’ the title used for foreign gods (2:16,17). Instead she will lovingly refer to him as *my husband*. The climax of this section is the complete renewal of the covenant relationship as the Lord affirms: *I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord (2:20)*. In Hosea’s day, a betrothal ceremony was far more binding than a mere engagement is today. It was the first step in marriage. Thus God is not simply taking back an errant wife, he is starting the marriage all over again. His betrothal gifts to his beloved include *righteousness, justice, love, compassion and faithfulness (2:19-20)*. These characteristics will define their new relationship. They are the characteristics of God himself, and they are also the characteristics that he will instill in and expect from his people. The promised restoration will be holistic and complete, involving even the animals and the environment (2:18,21-23). In this way Hosea indicates that the ideal is for God’s people to live in right relationship with God, with each other, and with the environment. As with ancient Israel, our relationship with the Lord is restored not because of us, but first and foremost because of the grace of God.”³

“The day of restoration will not be for Hosea’s generation. Instead, the remnant of the northern kingdom will return to its allegiance to Yahweh, and their exclusive marriage relationship will be restored. This time it will be a perfect union and will last forever. Yahweh will be husband, and it will be as if Baal had never existed. A covenant will be crafted with all of creation in mind. All wars will cease, and there will be peace under the protection of Yahweh. The names of Gomer’s children are reversed. Jezreel plants instead of using aggression and military might. ‘No compassion’ has compassion poured out on her, because now Israel is God’s people for all time.”⁴

Point 2: God's love pursues His unfaithful people and purchases them out of slavery (Hos. 3:1-5).

“God is not going to totally abandon his people. There will come a time when they *will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king (3:5)*. God will remember the covenant he made with David and restore his people (2 Sam. 7:12-16). This reference to David also points to Jesus Christ, a descendant of David. The promise of restoration was partially fulfilled at his first coming. Its complete fulfillment will take place only *in the last days*, when the nation of Israel will acknowledge Christ as their Messiah. We are all sinners like Gomer [Rom. 3:23] . . . Thus we are all estranged from God. It is only through grace that he reaches out to us and pays the price to redeem us and bring us to himself. But the price he paid was far higher than the price Hosea paid for Gomer. Jesus Christ had to come into this world and give his life on the cross to enable each of us to be reconciled to the Lord. He had to shed his blood for our redemption.”⁵

“Although the text does not name the **adulteress** (Hebrew *na'aph*), clearly the audience is expected to assume that the symbolism of Hosea’s marriage to Gomer continues here. Hosea is commanded, **Go again** (Hebrew *'od*, ‘still’), indicating repetition and return. The woman toward whom the prophet must **show love** (Hebrew, *'ahav*, ‘do acts of love for, be loyal to, treat with affection and tenderness, prefer’) is identified both as an ‘adulteress’ and as **a woman who is loved** [Hebrew, *'ahav*] **by another man** (Hebrew *rea'*, ‘lover, companion, friend’; cp. Songs 5:16; Jer. 3:20). The Lord’s explanation for such a difficult instruction sustains the parallel He established between Hosea’s marriage to Gomer and His relationship with His people. Just as Gomer had given herself to the desires of ‘another man,’ Yahweh’s people were turning to **other gods**. That Hosea **bought her** indicates that whatever Gomer’s status, someone accepted the payment specified, which exceeded the price of a female slave (cp. Ex. 21:32; Lev. 27:4). She may have become a slave to pay an overwhelming debt. Perhaps her lover insisted on payment before allowing Hosea to take her home. In any case, the transaction gave Hosea the legal right to do with her as he pleased, even to put her to death for adultery. Yet his response was to take her again as his wife.”⁶

Point 3: God’s love invites His unfaithful people to repent (Hos. 14:1-4).

“**Take with you words** means to know ahead of time what you will say. Hosea then gives the words of repentance and confession that the people should use before the Lord (vv. 2b-3). These verses are peppered with terms from the covenant that express God’s grace and the proper response of gratitude: **take away all iniquity** evokes Ex. 34:7 (‘forgiving’; cf. Ps. 32:5), while **pay with bulls the vows of our lips** probably describes peace offerings (cf. Ex. 24:5; Num. 7:88), in which the grateful worshiper enjoys a meal in God’s presence. This is what Israel can expect, if only they will **return to the Lord**. Also (Hos. 14:3), no longer will they place their trust in foreign princes (such as **Assyria**) or in implements of warfare (**horses**); neither will they worship handmade gods (cf. 13:3-4).”⁷

“Throughout the book of Hosea ... the prophet repeatedly stresses the fact that Israel is apostate (see 4:15-19; 5:3; 6:10-11; 9:10-17; 10:5-8; 11:2,7,12). Here, Yahweh promises to ‘heal’ their apostasy. This metaphor implies that apostasy is more than an act of the will, but is also a kind of mental derangement (or spiritual blindness) that God himself must cure. Here, too, is the paradox of Hosea. The book repeatedly calls upon the people to choose to turn back to Yahweh, but at the same time implies that they cannot turn back without a saving act from Yahweh.”⁸

References

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4. Keren E. Morrell, “Hosea,” in *The IVP Women’s Bible Commentary*, eds. Catherine Clark Kroeger, Mary J. Evans, and Elizabeth Kroeger Elliot (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011) [Wordsearch].
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7. Robert I. Vasholz, “Hosea,” in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 1641-42, n. 14:2-3; n. 14:4.
8. Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, vol. 19*a* in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2003) [Wordsearch].