

### Lesson 1: A Match Made in Heaven

Hosea 1:1 – 2:1

1. You might have heard that ‘Christianity is all about having a relationship with God; it’s not rules;’ it’s not about being religious! In what way is this a helpful or unhelpful description of the Christian faith?

There is really no such thing as a meaningful relationship that’s void of rules. Take, for example, marriage. Marriage is the strongest and most intimate relationship two people can enter, but it’s built upon basic rules such as the two parties being faithful to one another and ‘forsaking all others so long as they both shall live.’ It would be a very brave, or perhaps more accurately a very stupid, husband who commits adultery and then objects to his wife’s displeasure by appealing to the fact that marriage is about relationship, not rules!

The book of Hosea is about an unfaithful people, a broken marriage, and the relentless love of a gracious God. It’s a story that takes us back to the very beginning of creation, where, following the rebellion of Adam and Eve and the entrance of sin and death into God’s good world, God chose Abraham and his descendants, the Israelites, to be his special people. Through God’s loving initiative, they entered into a covenant relationship with him (cf. Genesis 17:7-8; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Zechariah 8:8), through which he would save humanity from sin and death.

However, like all meaningful relationships, this one, too, had rules. These rules weren’t about how the Israelites were to live to earn God’s favor and so save themselves. Instead, the Bible is very clear that only God can save. In fact, that’s precisely what he’d done for Israel. He saved them from slavery in Egypt and then gave them the law to show them how to live as his special people. Fundamentally, their relationship with God was to be exclusive in which there was no place for other gods (Exodus 20:2-3).

Sadly, however, like Adam and Eve, the Israelites failed to be faithful to God. They turned away in worship of other gods (cf. Hosea 2:5,8). Therefore, though God remains faithful to his covenant promises and constant in his love for Israel, he sends the prophet Hosea to announce to the Israelites that they have sinned so grievously against him that a time of judgment is coming.

### Read Hosea 1:1 - 2:1

2. What does it mean that the Word of the Lord came to Hosea (Joel 1:1, Micah 1:1, Zephaniah 1:1, Malachi 1:1, 2 Timothy 3:16, and 2 Peter 1:20-21)?
3. What does God call Hosea to do in verse 2?

4. Why does God ask Hosea to do this (i.e., what was his purpose - note the word 'for' or 'because')?
  
5. What is Hosea's marriage to Gomer illustrating?
  
6. Describe how the names of Hosea and Gomer's children symbolize different consequences Israel faced as a result of rejecting God:
  - a. Jezreel ("God scatters")
  
  - b. Lo-Ruhamah ("Not loved")
  
  - c. Lo-Ammi ("Not my people")
  
7. To gain insight into the total depravity to which Israel sank, read the following: (1 Kings 16:29-33; 18:4; 2 Kings 9-10:28; 16:3).
  - a. How did Ahab lead Israel away from God?
  
  - b. What did Jezebel do to many of the prophets of God?
  
  - c. What did God promise to do to the house of Ahab, King of Israel, and his wife, Jezebel (2 Kings 9:6-10, 30-37)?
  
  - d. What do you learn about God from what happened to Ahab and Jezebel (Romans 1:18; 2:5)?
  
  - e. How did Jehu go beyond the command of God? (2 Kings 10:1-17)?

8. Despite the devastating judgment that will come upon Israel, God speaks of a brighter future ahead. Answer the following:
- a. What does ‘Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered’ allude to, and why is this significant (cf. Genesis 22:17-18; 32:12; Romans 9:6-9; 11:25-27)?
  - b. What promises are made in Hosea 1:10 - 2:1 (in verse 10, Jezreel refers to ‘sowing, or scattering seed’)?
  - c. How are these promises fulfilled in Jesus and the establishment of the church (cf. Mark 15: 2, 26; John 11:50-52; Romans 9:25-27; 1 Peter 2:9-10)?

### **Think/Grow/Live**

9. As you see how God eventually judged Israel, what warnings do you see for America? Is there any hope that God might have mercy on America? What could bring this about (2 Chronicles 7:14)?
10. What does Hosea’s marriage to Gomer teach us about God and his relationship with us?
11. In many ways the great reversal of this passage is the story of all true Christians (i.e. from ‘Scattered’, ‘No Mercy’ and ‘Not My People’ to ‘Planted’, ‘You have received mercy’ and ‘You are my people’). Discuss the following:
- a. How does this truth challenge or enhance your understanding of God’s love (Ephesians 3:18)?
  - b. How does it help you in your fight against sin?

- c. Since coming to Christ, you may not have abandoned him and pursued other gods outright, but are there areas where you are tempted to flirt with other gods or ways in which you have become cold in your love for God?
  
- d. How can you help one another stay faithful to God and fight spiritual adultery?

### **Prayer Points**

- Thank God for his relentless love, expressed most clearly in the underserved gift of his son, Jesus, who died for our sins to reconcile us to God.
  
- Ask God to forgive you for how your love has grown cold and help you be faithful to him.