

The Books of Hosea, Joel, and Amos

Lesson 1: A Prophet, a Wife, and a Faithless People -- Hosea 1:1–2:23

Imagine being asked by God to live out the message you are supposed to preach. Not just to speak it from a safe distance, but to wear it, to feel it in your own home, to let it cost you something. That is what happened to a man named Hosea. The word of the Lord came to him in the days of kings whose names we can barely pronounce, and it came with a command that must have stopped his heart: go, marry a woman who will break it. Most of us spend our lives trying to avoid that kind of pain. Hosea was sent straight into it, because God wanted Israel, and us, to see what His own love had been feeling all along.

We do not always think of God as someone whose heart can be wounded. We picture Him as far above us, untouched, serene. But here in Hosea, the curtain pulls back, and we find a God who knows what it is to be loved and then forsaken. The marriage of Hosea and Gomer is a living parable, an acted sermon. Every time Gomer wandered, Israel was meant to recognize her own face. And every time Hosea went looking for her anyway, Israel was meant to glimpse the relentless, refusing-to-quit love of the Lord who made her His own.

Then come the children, and with them three names that fall like verdicts. Jezreel, a place of bloodshed and coming judgment. Lo-Ruhamah, which means no mercy. Lo-Ammi, which means not my people. Can you feel the weight of those words? They are the names of a relationship coming apart at the seams. A people who had once been gathered, pitied, and claimed are now being told what their sin has earned. Sin always names us before it ruins us, and the names it gives are never kind.

But this is where Hosea becomes one of the most hopeful books in all of Scripture. Before the first two chapters are done, God reaches past the verdict to a promise. The very names that spelled rejection are turned inside out. No mercy becomes mercy. Not my people becomes you are my people, and they answer, you are my God. Centuries later the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter would lift these words off the page and lay them over the church, where Jew and Gentile alike are gathered in (Romans 9:25–26; 1 Peter 2:10). So lean in. This story is about a faithless people and a faithful God, which means, if you have ever wandered, it is also about you.

Group Discussion: Hosea was asked to embody his message by marrying Gomer, letting his own heartbreak preach what words alone could not. What does it tell us about God that He chose to reveal His love this way, and where in your life have you seen a hard, lived-out obedience say more than words ever could?

Personal Reflection: The names Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi were eventually reversed into mercy and belonging. Is there a name your past or your sin has tried to give you that God wants to replace with His own naming of you as His? What would it take to believe Him?

Read Hosea 1:1–2:23

Study Questions

1. Hosea 1:1 anchors the prophecy in the reigns of named kings of Judah and Israel. Why does it matter that God's word comes to real people in real history, and what does this opening teach us about how God works through actual times and places rather than abstractions?
2. God told Hosea to take a wife knowing the heartbreak it would bring, so that his life would preach his message. Where is God asking you to let your own life, and not only your words, become the sermon He is preaching to those around you?
3. Trace the meaning of the three children's names in Hosea 1:4–9: Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah (no mercy), and Lo-Ammi (not my people). What do these names reveal about the seriousness of covenant unfaithfulness and the just consequences of persistent sin?
4. Lo-Ammi declares that a once-claimed people had become not God's people. Have you ever sensed a distance growing between you and God, a drift toward not my people? What specific steps return a wanderer to the Lord?
5. In Hosea 1:10–11 the verdict is suddenly reversed: the children of Israel will be as the sand of the sea, gathered together under one head. How does God's character explain this turn from judgment to restoration without God ceasing to be just?

6. Hosea 2 pictures God pleading with an unfaithful people, even hedging up her way with thorns so she cannot find her lovers. How have you experienced God lovingly blocking a path you were determined to take, and how did you respond?
7. In Hosea 2:8 God says she did not know that He gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil she lavished on idols. What does this reveal about the nature of idolatry and ingratitude, and how does forgetting the Giver lead a heart astray?
8. God promises in Hosea 2:14 to allure her, bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. Where might God be drawing you into a quieter, harder place in order to win back your heart, and will you let Him speak there?
9. Hosea 2:19–23 reaches the heart of these chapters: God betroths His people to Himself forever in righteousness, mercy, and faithfulness, turning Lo-Ruhamah into mercy and Lo-Ammi into 'you are my people.' Paul and Peter apply these very words to the church (Romans 9:25–26; 1 Peter 2:10). What does this passage teach about the depth, cost, and reach of God's covenant love that redeems the unfaithful and gathers a people to Himself in Christ?
10. Looking back across Hosea 1–2 as a whole, where has the Lord most pressed on your heart, and name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through this story of a faithless people and a faithful God?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Romans 9:25–26, Paul applies Hosea’s ‘not my people’ becoming ‘my people’ to the gathering of Jews and Gentiles into the church; 1 Peter 2:10, Peter calls believers those who once were not a people but now are the people of God who have obtained mercy; Ezekiel 16:1–14, God’s covenant love for an unfaithful people pictured as marriage; Jeremiah 3:6–14, the Lord pleads with backsliding Israel to return; Ephesians 5:25–27, Christ’s redeeming love for the church as His bride

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