

Study Prophecy – Become Prophetic, Week 1

Hosea 14:1–7

Today we begin a twelve-week journey through the **Minor Prophets**.

They're called *minor* not because they're in a minor league, or they're less important, but because their books are **shorter** than the “major” ones like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

The twelve Minor Prophets are:

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

So, next twelve Sundays we'll delve into each Prophet.

The goal in this series is not just to **study prophecy**, but to **become prophetic**.

What I mean by that is, we speak God's truth **boldly** and **humbly** into the world we're living in today.

As someone said, “**Prophets are not fortune-tellers. They are forth-tellers.**”

Meaning, being prophetic is not just about predicting the future — it's more about **revealing God's heart in the present**.

The first step to be prophetic is to open our ears and hearts to God's Words. Let His truth shape and transform us — and as we are changed, we live it out.

Like a lamp cannot be put under a bushel, we shine God's truth in our time and place. That's what it means to be a prophetic voice.

So, that's our goal in this series — to study prophecy so that we might **become prophetic people/church**. I pray that as we listen to God's living Word — “**sharper than any two-edged sword... discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart**” (*Hebrews 4:12*) — will pierce and renew us deeply to know Jesus and make Him known for the glory of God alone by the help of the Holy Spirit.

Let's begin with a prayer.

(Prayer)

Today, we hear God’s voice through the prophet *Hosea*.
His name means “*God saves*” or “*God delivers*.”

First, let’s look at the world where Hosea lived in.

He ministered around **752–722 BC** in the **northern kingdom of Israel**.

After King Solomon, Israel was divided into two kingdoms. One on the top was Northern Israel and Judah on the bottom. Hosea lived in Northern Israel, so his message is primarily for Northern Israel – but not exclusively. Because he did mention Judah several times in his book (cf. 4:15; 5:5; 12:2).

Look at how this book begins: “**The word of the Lord that came to Hosea... in the days of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel.**” (*Hosea 1:1*)

That means Hosea preached during the reign of **Jeroboam II**.

Historians say outwardly, it was a time of prosperity—one of those “good times” in Israel’s history.

The economy was booming. Trade was thriving. The temples were beautiful.

If you looked at Israel from the outside, you might have said,

“They’re doing great! God must be blessing them.”

But the truth was just the opposite.

Underneath the surface, **Israel was falling apart**.

They looked fine on the outside, but inside, they were dying — spiritually, morally, and politically.

And that, we experience, too.

We can look perfectly fine on the outside — but inside, something’s not right. Something’s not filling. Something’s missing. Life feels out of sync.

That was Israel’s condition.

And here’s the irony:

Even in this hollowed life, the people were still very *religious*.

The altars were full, the songs were loud, the sacrifices were impressive.

But something was terribly wrong —

They had **confused God with Baal**.

Some of you may wonder, “Wait a minute! What do you mean by Israelites being confused God with Baal?”

Baal was the Canaanite god of **fertility** — how on earth people of God mixed up Baal with one true God?

But oh boy, that happens, isn’t it?

Who is Baal? He was a pagan god believed to control rain and harvest. So, his worship promised prosperity and wealth. What’s really mind-blowing is how people worshiped Baal. It was just utterly unholy and disgraceful. In order to “wake him up” and make him act, their worship was all sensual, idol offerings, and temple prostitution.

The problem is, Israel began to worship God like Baal. They didn’t reject God. They kept God’s name – but they used God’s name in vain.

They started treating God like Baal. “God, please bless me. Give me what I want. Make me happy.” They worshiped the right God, using the right name, gathering at the right place, but in the wrong way with a wrong heart.

So, to them God said,

“They made kings, but not through me... with their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction.” (Hosea 8:4)

In other words, they wanted God’s blessings, but not God’s holiness.

They wanted His rain, not His righteousness.

They were religious but had no knowledge of God.

God makes it clear: **“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...”** (Hos. 4:6).

They don’t really know Me.

They don’t really have a relationship with Me.

They have relationships with other things.

That’s what Hosea calls **spiritual adultery**.

That's still a warning for us today.

We may not bow down to Baal, we may not have the golden calf in our front yard, but we may bow down to our comfort, success, and pride. We may use Christian words, sing Christian songs, and live a “religious” life — but it might be for the wrong reasons. We worship but this worship may not really about one true God. We might just want a god who fits our needs, who blesses our plans, who approves our desires.

That's God's accusation to His people through the prophet Hosea.

God says:

“There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.” — Hosea 4:1–2

The irony is the people still crying, **“My God, we know You!”** “We worship you!” (Hosea 8:2), but God said, **“You’ve rejected what is good. (You rejected Me!)”**

And He says,

“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” — Hosea 6:6

They kept the form of religion but lost the heart— and it really broke God's heart.

Then God asked Hosea to do something shocking.

God says: **“Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord.” (Hos. 1:2)**

You might say, “You gotta be kidding me!”

‘Is that really in the Bible?’

But Hosea obeyed! He married **Gomer**, a prostitute.

And just as God warned, she was a woman of unfaithfulness. She betrays him — again and again. She leaves him, she chases other lovers. She broke the covenant – over and over. She broke Hosea's heart – over and over.

But here comes the point: her story is a mirror of Israel's relationship with God. God wanted to use Hosea's life as an illustration to *live out* His own heartbreak.

So, every time Gomer walks away, it's as if God is saying, **"That's what My people are doing to Me."** You break my heart. You break the covenant "like Adam" (6:7). Your hearts are divided. You don't really know Me. It really breaks my heart.

The consequence of leaving God is that they ended up living with a **deep emptiness and restlessness** in their souls.

God said, ***"They sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."*** (Hosea 8:7)

Now, to **sow** means to plant seeds. But Israel's seed was **wind** — invisible, fleeting, and empty. So, it's like they were investing their lives in things that could never last. Things that may look promising, but in the end, has no substance.

And what was the result? God says they will **reap the whirlwind** — not just nothing, but destruction. Because the **whirlwind** is a violent storm — destructive, out of control, devastating.

So, all their effort, all their striving – apart from God –, led only to ruin.

That's how sin works, doesn't it? It always starts small — just a little compromise, a small lie, a little bit of lust (just one picture, just one video) — but it grows. It multiplies. And soon, it spirals into a storm that wrecks your souls, your relationships, and ultimately separates you from God Himself.

The thing is God allows His people to face the consequences of their own choices, that's His **judgment**. God just leave them to live in their sins.

But what's really fascinating from reading Hosea is that even in judgment, I could hear God's love still runs deep for His people.

God says, **"How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? ... My heart recoils within Me; My compassion grows warm and tender."** — *Hosea 11:8*

It's like: You rejected Me. You abandoned Me. You were unfaithful to Me. You committed adultery against Me. But how can I give you up! How can I abandon you! Because I still love you! My love for you has not broken.

We hear the same heart in the last chapter of this book.

God still calls His people:

“Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God... I will heal you backsliding; I will love you freely.” — *Hosea 14:1, 4*

What God saying here is not, “I’ll love you if you change.”

He says, “I will love you so that you can change.”

Just come back to me – just as you are.

My friends, that’s **grace**.

Hosea’s marriage is just a wonderful picture of the Gospel.

We are Gomers. Think about this— how many times do we act unfaithfully to God? Not once in a while, but even every day? Just like the hymn goes: **We prone to wander. We prone to leave the God we say we love.**

But God’s love is different. God displays His kind of love through the visual display of Hosea’s own life. Because when Gomer sold herself into slavery again,

God told Hosea,

“Go again, love a woman who is loved by another... as the Lord loves the children of Israel.” — *Hosea 3:1*

So Hosea went, paid the price, and brought her home again.

And friends, that’s what Christ has done for us.

Just like Hosea **pursued, paid, and restored** his unfaithful wife. Jesus did the same. What’s the gospel? God so loved the world (you and me) – even before we loved Him – that He gave His only Son. Jesus paid the price for our sins with His own precious blood. And He promises us a new and resurrected life as we believe in Him.

God says: “I will say to those who were not my people, ‘You are my people,’ and they will say, ‘You are my God.’” (Hos. 2:23; Rom. 9:25) – God’s love precedes our loves to Him.

Beloved, that’s the heartbeat of Hosea: God’s abounding love towards these rebellious, unfaithful, undeserving people.

And God still calls:

“Come home.”

“Take words with you and return to the Lord.” — *Hosea 14:2*

Last Thursday, my family and I were driving by the Poolesville, MD area, and it was around the lunch time, so we looked for a restaurant in the local.

What do I do when I try to find a decent restaurant in a new place? Yelp. I found one on Yelp, so we went there. The yelp was right. The parking lot was almost full. It was very busy restaurant.

We sat in and ordered food. When our food came, I asked our server a question I try to ask wherever we go:

“Is there anything we can pray for you?”

Our server smiled and said, “Please pray for peace of mind and a smooth day.”

Interestingly, the woman next to our table heard what was going on, and she said, “Oh, that’s sweet.”

And it turned out that she was the director of that place. I asked her the same question, “Is there anything I can pray for you?” She replied the same thing. Peace of mind and everything goes well. So, I prayed for both of them right there over the meal.

Later, that director sitting next to us, gave me a **pamphlet – I looked into it, and it was about Buddhist meditation**. So, I gently asked, “What led you to Buddhist faith?”

Her answer really surprised me. She said, “Oh, I’m not a Buddhist. I’m a Christian. I go to church sometimes.”

Then she added that she believes all religions have truth and that whatever works for people is fine.

I kind of lost the word what to say, but in that very moment, the words of **Hosea** came to mind. Just like Israel, she may think she was following God, yet what would God say about her worship? What would God say about her faith? I felt the confusion. I felt the lost. And I felt God's broken-heart for her.

So, I shared **Hosea 11:1–4**; I read it to her:

“When Israel was a child, I loved him... I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of kindness, with bands of love.”

Then I told her looking into her eyes,

“God loves you, and He wants your love back. What He desires is not religion—it's relationship.”

Something might have touched her heart. She started opening up a little about herself and told us that she grew up in a Catholic church and it was filled with guilt and judgment. I thought that hurt might have had pushed her away.

We didn't see a dramatic change that moment, but I believe God's love began to stir in her heart, I hope.

Friends, we live in a world not so much different from Hosea's time—wealthy but worried, busy but empty, religious but still lost and confused.

People planting the wind, ending up with reaping the whirlwind.

In such a world, what does it mean for us to be a prophetic voice? And as a prophetic voice, what message are we called to reveal about God?

Here's what God speaks through Hosea; something we must hear and proclaim:

God's love never gives up.

His mercy never fails.

His covenant never breaks.

And God still calls the sinners home to be with Him.

Look honestly at your relationship with God.

Try to listen to His voice: **“When you were a child, I loved you... I took you up by my arms, but you did not know that I healed you. I led you with cords of kindness, with bands of love.”**

Beloved, “God’s love is perfect. He still loves you. His love did not change nor is breakable. He still desires your love in return. What God wants from you is not religion—but relationship.”

God still says today, **“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”** (Hos. 6:6)

Starting this Sunday, we begin our study of the Prophets.

Again, this is not just to know what God once said through a person who lived in the long time ago, but to become the kind of people who hears God’s voice, who understands God’s heart, so that we can break what needs to be broken and heal what needs to be healed.

And we study prophesy so that we can become a prophetic voice today to speak God’s message in this world, calling the lost **home**.

So, I encourage you to continue to read the book of Hosea throughout this week, study it, and listen again and again, and may your relationship with God be restored. And may you go into this broken world carrying God’s heart to all broken and confused people—and declare to them: **“God loves you, and He desires your love in return. What God wants is not religion—but relationship.”**

Let us pray.

Gracious and loving God,

We thank You for the Word today.

We learn from Hosea that Your love runs deeper even when we wander.

You pursue us when we drift, and You pay the price to bring us home.

Teach us to know You not intellectually only, not through other people only, but personally, intimately, and profoundly.

Help us to be a prophetic voice – not only in our words but in our actions so that display the gospel, illustrate Your mercy to a broken world and tell them with your heart to bring sinners home.

If there is anyone who has been backsliding, heal and realign their hearts and lives back to You. If there is anyone in this room who never experienced that radical, matchless love of Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit open their spiritual senses and nerves to know that Your love already poured out for them through Your Son Jesus dying on that Cross – not just for the person before them, but for them also.

Thank you for your steadfast love.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Reflection Questions

1. In what ways might I, like Israel, be **worshiping God outwardly** while my **heart remains distant** from Him?
2. What does Hosea reveal about **God's steadfast love**—the love that **refuses to let me go**, even when I wander?
3. Where is God calling me to **return**—to **repent, restore, or renew** my devotion to Him?
4. What **prophetic voice** is God stirring in me today, and how can I **live prophetically**—revealing His **heart and truth** through both my **words and actions**?