

Over the course of the next few days we are going to focus on “loving relationships”. We will focus on what it means to be in loving relationships with God, our neighbors and our families.

We will learn and zoom in on our theme scripture....

Matthew 22:36-40

³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’^[a] ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^[b] ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

This is what Jesus calls the greatest commandments; “every other commandments hangs on the two.”

In a time in which there is so much hate and division in the world, we will learn the importance of moving with every action and decision that we make, rooted in love.

Lets go LOVE!!!

DAY 1

You Don't love God? Whats wrong with you?

Scripture Hosea Chapters 1-3

Introduction and Overview of Hosea 1 and 2

The story we are looking at today from the Book of Hosea is a reflection that shows how God loves His people and how He expects His people to love Him. The scripture is two parallel stories: one of Hosea and his wife Gomer and the other, God and His people.

Imagine God and His Prophet to His people, Hosea, having a conversation about love and relationships. The people of God are a people who have an up and down relationship with God. A relationship in which the people of God constantly turn their backs on Him and he constantly chases after them to get them back.

In Chapter 1 of Hosea, Hosea the prophet and God are having a discussion about God and His relationship with His people. Hosea recognizes this unusual back and forth relationship that God and His people have. And the question is asked Why? Why does God love His people so much?! Why does He constantly chase after them?

God, in all his wisdom, doesn't answer the question directly. Instead He tells Hosea to go get married to a woman named Gomer. Gomer was a woman who belonged to the streets. She was a prostitute who laid with a lot of men. Can you imagine your Pastor coming to church and telling everyone God has told him to marry a prostitute woman? Bazaar! Right?

Nevertheless, similar to God and His people, Hosea marries and loves Gomer in the midst of all her brokenness. Hosea marries and falls in love with her; he gives her the world: houses, vineyards, rose gardens, parties and feast. Whatever she wanted Hosea gave it to her. After a while she starts getting pregnant and ends up having three children. But come to find out none of the children belonged to her loving Husband Hosea.

After some time went by Gomers time at home became less and less. Hosea would turn over at night and Gomer wouldn't be there. Hosea's heart was broken not only has his wife cheated on him but her actions have gotten her into a lot of trouble. She stopped coming home because she became a prostitute again and was sold into slavery.

That leads us to Chapter 2 and 3. Let us take a look at how Hosea responds to his wife and how God responds to His people...

Hosea 2
New International Version

2 ^[a]“Say of your brothers, ‘My people,’ and of your sisters, ‘My loved one.’”

Israel Punished and Restored

2 “Rebuke your mother, rebuke her,
for she is not my wife,
and I am not her husband.

Let her remove the adulterous look from her face

and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts.

3 Otherwise I will strip her naked
and make her as bare as on the day she was born;

I will make her like a desert,
turn her into a parched land,
and slay her with thirst.

4 I will not show my love to her children,
because they are the children of adultery.

5 Their mother has been unfaithful
and has conceived them in disgrace.
She said, ‘I will go after my lovers,
who give me my food and my water,
my wool and my linen, my olive oil and my drink.’

6 Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes;
I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way.

7 She will chase after her lovers but not catch them;

she will look for them but not find them.

Then she will say,

‘I will go back to my husband as at first,
for then I was better off than now.’

8 She has not acknowledged that I was the one

who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil,

who lavished on her the silver and gold—

which they used for Baal.

9 “Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens,

and my new wine when it is ready.

I will take back my wool and my linen,
intended to cover her naked body.

10 So now I will expose her lewdness
before the eyes of her lovers;
no one will take her out of my hands.

11 I will stop all her celebrations:
her yearly festivals, her New Moons,
her Sabbath days—all her appointed festivals.

12 I will ruin her vines and her fig trees,
which she said were her pay from her lovers;

I will make them a thicket,
and wild animals will devour them.

13 I will punish her for the days
she burned incense to the Baals;

she decked herself with rings and jewelry,
and went after her lovers,
but me she forgot,”
declares the LORD.

¹⁴ “Therefore I am now going to allure her;
I will lead her into the wilderness
and speak tenderly to her.

¹⁵ There I will give her back her vineyards,
and will make the Valley of Achor^[b] a
door of hope.

There she will respond^[c] as in the days of
her youth,
as in the day she came up out of Egypt.

¹⁶ “In that day,” declares the LORD,
“you will call me ‘my husband’;
you will no longer call me ‘my master.’^[d]”

¹⁷ I will remove the names of the Baals from
her lips;
no longer will their names be invoked.

¹⁸ In that day I will make a covenant for
them
with the beasts of the field, the birds in
the sky
and the creatures that move along the
ground.

Bow and sword and battle

I will abolish from the land,
so that all may lie down in safety.

¹⁹ I will betroth you to me forever;
I will betroth you in^[e] righteousness and

justice,
in^[f] love and compassion.

²⁰ I will betroth you in^[g] faithfulness,
and you will acknowledge the LORD.

²¹ “In that day I will respond,”
declares the LORD—

“I will respond to the skies,
and they will respond to the earth;

²² and the earth will respond to the grain,
the new wine and the olive oil,
and they will respond to Jezreel.^[h]”

²³ I will plant her for myself in the land;
I will show my love to the one I called
‘Not my loved one.’^[i]”

I will say to those called ‘Not my people,^[j]
‘You are my people’;
and they will say, ‘You are my God.’”

Hosea 3

Hosea’s Reconciliation With His Wife

1 The Lord said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.” **2** So I bought her for fifteen shekels^[a] of silver and about a homer and a lethek^[b] of barley. **3** Then I told her, “You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward

you.” **4** For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. **5** Afterward the Israelites

will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days.

Hosea Does the Unthinkable

Hosea’s heart was shattered by his wife’s disloyalty yet he still loved. She hurt him time and time again and he still loved her. God told Hosea to do the unthinkable, to “go get his girl” God told him to redeem his wife. Gomer was being sold as a slave. Hosea must have cried out to God, "She's thrown my love away. Why should I have to buy back what is already mine?"

Hosea was a faithful husband; Gomer was an unfaithful wife. God is the faithful lover of our souls. We are often faithless, prone to wander and turn our back on God.

Hosea and Gomer's story is the story of God and Israel. It is also our story. When we, like Gomer, were enslaved to sin, God bought us back. When we found ourselves stuck in chains we never intended—chains of insecurity, discontentment or fear—God freed us.

When we, by our very nature, threw God's love away, He redeemed us

God's Unconditional Love and Act of Redemption

When Hosea bought Gomer back, when he redeemed her, he did so with 15 shekels of silver and 5 bushels of barley (Hos. 3:2). When God redeemed us, He paid the ultimate price with the blood of His Son (I Pet. 1:18, 19).

Gomer did not deserve to be redeemed. Her behavior did not merit such mercy. Israel did not deserve God's faithful betrothal. Their unfaithfulness did not merit such mercy. You and I do not deserve salvation. Our sin does not merit such mercy.

- Why does God continue to give His unconditional love to a people who continually throw it away?

It's not because we deserve it; it's because His mercy demands it. Aren't you glad God does not treat us as our sin deserves? (Ps. 103:10) God chose you and loves you. This love story is your story. Even if you are faithless, He will remain faithful.

- If you are enslaved, God will buy you back.
- If you are lost, God will find you.
- If you are ashamed, God will cover you.
- If you wander off, God will bring you home.
- If you give up on Him, God will not give up on you.
- No matter where you are, God sees who you are, and He loves you.

Through the story of Hosea, God tenderly touches your arm and whispers, "Come home. My love sets you free. When you get tired of striving and wandering, I'll be there to draw you to Myself again and remind you who you are in Christ."

How Your Story Connects with Hosea's

That's the message of the whole Bible, isn't it? At a manger in Bethlehem, God entered the slave market where all of us were putting ourselves up for auction, prostituting ourselves and our humanity to a lesser life. But on the cross, Jesus paid the full price for our freedom.

He bought us back.

This is the scandal of God's love—His loving desire to make us His people and the full persons He intended us to be.

God's response to you is the same as it was to Israel. **He will heal your faithlessness. He will love you freely.** God has written on your very life the words *I love you*. He values you so much that He enters into covenant with you, redeems you and remains faithful to you.

May we never carelessly throw away what cost God so much. Oh, what love!

Now after hearing how much God loves us...

What gets in the way of you loving God with your whole being?

What can we do moving forward to start loving God better?

What can you commit to this week to start loving God with your whole being?

