

Pastor Grady Covin  
The Mission  
February 18, 2026

## Hosea 4

I want to thank Brother Todd for teaching last Wednesday. What a blessing to have so many gifted and willing teachers in our congregation. And I'm so thankful we have folks that will step up even at a moments notice sometimes and teach and preach.

Well, tonight we're going to be in Hosea chapter 4, and we're going to see the tone begin to change somewhat. And we're going to move from Hosea's heartbreaking home life into God's courtroom if you will. And if chapters 1-3 have been like a movie that grabs you by the collar, then chapter 4 is going to be that part of that movie where everything comes together, and begins to make sense, as we begin to learn what the movie was all about.

And just to be clear: this isn't just ancient history. This is not just some abstract story in the Bible that has no relevance whatsoever to us. God is actually putting a mirror in front of all of His people, including you and I, and He's saying, "Look! This is where the road leads when you drift."

Most of you know how a car acts when the front end is out of alignment. At first you don't notice it, but over time as it gets worse, if you were to take your hands off the wheel even for two seconds, you'd be over on the rumbling strips on the side of the highway?

Well, Hosea is the rumble strip. The book of Hosea is a warning to anyone who might drift away from the Lord. And so pay attention because it can happen to any of us if we're not mindful and careful in how we live.

Now, if you're just joining us, again we're in the book of Hosea and we're going to be looking at chapter four tonight, but I'm going to go back and very quickly, summarize the first three chapters.

Beginning in chapter one, if you'll remember, God told Hosea to marry a woman named Gomer. She was a woman who God knew beforehand would be unfaithful.

Now, this was not some divine cruelty that God devised against Hosea, but was rather a divine prophecy which would be acted out in his life. And Hosea's marriage to Gomer would become a living parable, which was designed by God to give Israel and us a picture of Israel's relationship to God. And that picture if you will would show how they had treated their covenant with God in a very disloyal and very casual manner.

And then if you'll remember we learned about the children that were born to Gomer and specifically the names that they were given. Their names would actually preach this prophecy.

Jezreel was the first born and he was a son whose name means "judgment is coming", indicating that God was going to Israel for their idolatry and sin.

Lo-Ruhamah was a daughter whose name means "No mercy", which is a reminder that God's discipline is real.

And then there was another son named Lo-Ammi and his name means "Not My people". And God was sending a message that His covenant with Israel did not give them a license to sin.

Yet in the midst of all this warning and judgment, God also promises restoration—He promises that He will again call them “My people.” And so judgment is not God’s last word.

And then in Chapter 2: God describes Israel as an unfaithful bride who chases after her lovers—and chases prosperity, and popularity and idols and alliances with God’s enemies. And who were also guilty of giving credit to their idols for what God Himself had provided.

And so God disciplines, and He exposes, and He strips away their illusions, but then He says something astonishing: He says, “I will allure her... and speak comfort to her.” In other words, God not only promises to punish, but He promises to pursue them with mercy.

And then in chapter 3, last week, we learned how Hosea buys back his wife. But how, he doesn’t just “take her back.” He redeems her! He pays to bring her home. And that’s the gospel-shaped center of this book: God doesn’t win over His people by just being more entertaining than their idols; He wins them over by His unending love, which is a covenant love. And a love that rescues, and disciplines, and restores. And when we talk about a covenant love, we’re talking about a love that is not dependent on us ,or on who we are, or on what we do even. It’s dependent totally and completely on God.

And so with that brief introduction, chapter 4 begins with God essentially saying: “Now let’s talk about what’s really going on in the land—and why.” And the main thought for this chapter is this.

**When people reject the knowledge of God, everything unravels—truth, family, leadership, worship, and even the land itself will suffer.**

And so this chapter is going to be much like a lawsuit, where God is the prosecutor. And He's going to bring charges against the people, and then He's going to identify the causes, and then lastly He's going to declare the consequences.

And so let me just read through the chapter and then we'll come back and look at it verse by verse.

**Hosea 4:1 Hear the word of the Lord, You children of Israel, For the Lord brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy Or knowledge of God in the land.**

**2 By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint, With bloodshed upon bloodshed.**

**3 Therefore the land will mourn; And everyone who dwells there will waste away With the beasts of the field And the birds of the air; Even the fish of the sea will be taken away.**

**4 "Now let no man contend, or rebuke another; For your people are like those who contend with the priest.**

**5 Therefore you shall stumble in the day; The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night; And I will destroy your mother.**

**6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.**

**7 "The more they increased, The more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.**

**8 They eat up the sin of My people; They set their heart on their iniquity.**

**9 And it shall be: like people, like priest. So I will punish them for their ways, And reward them for their deeds.**

**10 For they shall eat, but not have enough; They shall commit harlotry, but not increase; Because they have ceased obeying the Lord.**

**11 “Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.**

**12 My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, And their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, And they have played the harlot against their God.**

**13 They offer sacrifices on the mountaintops, And burn incense on the hills, Under oaks, poplars, and terebinths, Because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters commit harlotry, And your brides commit adultery.**

**14 “I will not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry, Nor your brides when they commit adultery; For the men themselves go apart with harlots, And offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot. Therefore people who do not understand will be trampled.**

**15 “Though you, Israel, play the harlot, Let not Judah offend. Do not come up to Gilgal, Nor go up to Beth Aven, Nor swear an oath, saying, ‘As the Lord lives’—**

**16 “For Israel is stubborn Like a stubborn calf; Now the Lord will let them forage Like a lamb in open country.**

**17 “Ephraim is joined to idols, Let him alone.**

**18 Their drink is rebellion, They commit harlotry continually. Her rulers dearly love dishonor.**

**19 The wind has wrapped her up in its wings, And they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.**

**Let's pray.**

And so let's look at this verse by verse.

**Hosea 4:1 “Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel, for the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land. There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land.**

Now, that word “Hear” in this verse is not a suggestion; it's a summons like one would hear in a courtroom. “Hear ye, hear ye”, God is about to bring a legal case against the nation of Israel.

And notice on trial are not just a few bad apples in the community. The charge is against **“the inhabitants of the land.”** In other words, everyone will be judged. And even though there might be a few Godly people still left in Israel, God was going to judge the nation as a whole. And even the good people would suffer as a result. In other words, He was judging the majority.

And He says, three things are lacking in this nation. He says, “There is no truth, and there's no mercy and there's no knowledge of God, in the land.”

And by the way, this “knowledge of God” is not just knowing “about God”. This knowledge means to have an ongoing deep personal relationship with God, and for us it would mean our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Somebody may say, I know my wife. And another may ask, how do you know your wife? And they say, “Well, I know her birthday and I know her favorite color and I know her favorite restaurant.”

But that’s not knowledge—that’s not really knowing your wife. Those are answers to a trivia quiz. To truly know your wife is to have an ongoing personal, intimate, relationship with her. And though it may include the answers to those questions and more, that’s not all there is to it.

And so to truly know God is not just to know a lot about the Bible, or to even to know a lot of facts about God. It’s more than that. And for us as Christians, it can only come through the power of the Holy Spirit. And that only after we confess sins, and ask forgiveness for our sins, and turn from our sins to God.

And the health of a nation is dependent, not just on their “head knowledge’ of God, but rather on their personal relationship to God, which will be reflected in the way that they live their lives.

In other words, they will follow God, and they will obey His commandments.

And so this was the basis for God’s judgment against the nation of Israel. They had not kept the law. And they had not kept the promise they made to God, when God made His covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai.

In Exodus 19:8, I believe it is. They said, “**All that the Lord has spoken we will do,**” That was their promise, but that promise was soon broken. And just as Gomer didn’t take her marriage vows very seriously and went to live with another man, so too did Israel renege on her promises to God, and turned to pagan idols. And so there was no faithfulness or truth in the land, and no loyal love to the Lord.

And when people reject God's covenant, they begin to have problems with each other, because the Ten Commandments deal with our relationship with each other. And the laws of our land are based upon these precepts.

Even today, our laws are based on the Ten Commandments as are the laws of any Christian nation.

That's why the State of Alabama requires that the Ten Commandments be posted in every school. And there's a bill that was just introduced that would expand that to every classroom.

And the reason is not to force feed religion on anyone, but to remind us that it is God's law, the Ten Commandments that our law is based upon. And when nations stray from that law, chaos and confusion and eventually destruction will come to that nation. And that was what was about to happen to Israel.

**“There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land.**

And the result is look at verse 2.

**2 By swearing and lying, Killing and stealing and committing adultery, They break all restraint, With bloodshed upon bloodshed.**

And everyone of those sins is the breaking of one of the Ten Commandments.

And so there was no mercy in the land. There was no love for one's neighbor, no compassion for the poor and needy. And so the people were hardhearted toward one another; and falsehearted toward God.

And their basic sin was ignorance; there was “no knowledge of God in the land.”

**Verse 6 says , My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.**

And we've already talked about how that means more than just a general knowledge about God; it refers to a personal knowledge of God and an intimate relationship with God. And again, for us, it's to have a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

And so the Judge points to the Ten Commandments and he reminds the people of how they had violated His law by telling lies, and murdering, and stealing, and committing adultery. And as a result, they had brought suffering to themselves, and to the land, and even to the animals.

God's covenant promise was that He would bless the land if the people obeyed Him, but that He would punish the land if they disobeyed. And that's in Leviticus 26 and also in Deuteronomy chapters 27–28.

The land belonged to God and the sins of the people polluted the land. And when they did, God would send things like droughts, and famines, and war sometimes to discipline His people. And so whether it's to bless or to judge, God always keeps His covenant promises.

And then in verses 4-14 God addresses the priests.

**4 “Now let no man contend, or rebuke another; For your people are like those who contend with the priest.**

**5 Therefore you shall stumble in the day; The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night; And I will destroy your mother.**

**6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.**

**7 “The more they increased, The more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.**

**8 They eat up the sin of My people; They set their heart on their iniquity.**

**9 And it shall be: like people, like priest. So I will punish them for their ways, And reward them for their deeds.**

**10 For they shall eat, but not have enough; They shall commit harlotry, but not increase; Because they have ceased obeying the Lord.**

**11 “Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.**

**12 My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, And their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, And they have played the harlot against their God.**

**13 They offer sacrifices on the mountaintops, And burn incense on the hills, Under oaks, poplars, and terebinths, Because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters commit harlotry, And your brides commit adultery.**

**14 “I will not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry, Nor your brides when they commit adultery; For the men themselves go apart with harlots, And offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot. Therefore people who do not understand will be trampled.**

After the division of the kingdom into the North and the South, Israel and Judah, it was Jeroboam I who became king of Israel. After taking office, he set up his own religious system there in Israel. And when he did, many of the true priests fled to Judah.

As a result, he ordained priests of his own choosing and of course, these counterfeit priests knew neither the Lord nor His law. They were just glad to have an easy job that would provide them with free food, and

clothing, and a life of leisure and pleasure, and especially opportunities to socialize with the shrine prostitutes.

And so God through the prophet Hosea says to the corrupt priests, **“Don’t blame the people for what’s happening,” “because they’re just following your bad example!”**

Worldly and ignorant spiritual leaders produce worldly and ignorant people, and this is what will bring destruction to the land.

The phrase **“your mother”** in verse 5, it’s referring to the nation of Israel. Because as goes the spiritual leadership, so goes the church; and as goes the church, so goes morality; and as goes morality, so goes the nation. Because God’s people are both salt and light in a society and when they’re corrupt, society becomes corrupt.

So God rejects Jeroboam’s man-made religion and he warns the priests that their easy jobs are going to soon end in disaster. Because instead of seeking God’s will and God’s counsel, they have consulted their wooden idols.

Also God promised He would cause the population and the produce to decrease. And the priests’ own daughters and daughters-in-law would become shrine prostitutes just like the prostitutes that they were associating with. And so this is a good example of how the sins of the father will be passed down to their children. And here the sins of the priests or so called priests would bring judgment not only to their families, but to the land as well.

And then in verses 15-19 God turns to the spectators in the court.

**15 “Though you, Israel, play the harlot, Let not Judah offend. Do not come up to Gilgal, Nor go up to Beth Aven, Nor swear an oath, saying, ‘As the Lord lives’—**

**16 “For Israel is stubborn Like a stubborn calf; Now the Lord will let them forage Like a lamb in open country.**

**17 “Ephraim is joined to idols, Let him alone.**

**18 Their drink is rebellion, They commit harlotry continually. Her rulers dearly love dishonor.**

**19 The wind has wrapped her up in its wings, And they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.**

Now, the prophet turns to the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, who were on the outside for the time being watching what was going on in Israel. And Hosea’s warning is very clear: don’t meddle in the affairs of Israel, because their doom is sure!

Verse 17 says, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone”.

The people of Judah were supposed to be worshipping in Jerusalem, but instead they went to the hill shrines in Israel, or to the special shrines at Gilgal and Bethel. Hosea calls Bethel “Beth Aven,” which means “house of evil or deceit.” Bethel means the “house of God.” But Israel had turned it into a mockery. And Hosea says, they were like a stubborn heifer, not like a submissive lamb; and God’s whirlwind of judgment was going to come and sweep the kingdom away and nobody was going to stop it.

Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.

And this is the picture of someone who just continues to reject God and will one day face judgment at the white throne judgment.

Or it could be one who knows the Lord, who has been saved, but has wandered away. And maybe you’re here tonight and you fall into one of those categories. Either you’ve never been saved or you’ve been saved but you’ve wandered.

Well, either way God is calling you home tonight. And though we're not going to have a time of invitation as we would on Sunday morning, we are going to come to the altar and pray in a few minutes. And when we do, my prayer for you, is that you'll take that time and ask God to do in your heart whatever He needs to do to ensure you're in good standing with Him.

You don't have to leave here the same way you came. And your just one prayer away from leaving here a brand new person or a revived Christian. So let me pray for us and then we're going to take prayer requests and come to the altar and pray together.