



# Strange Love

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

**GUIDE BOOK**





## BIBLE READING PLAN

### ROMANS, 2 & 3 JOHN & JUDE

#### WEEK 2: *July 26 – August 1*

#### Extra Reading

- Romans 3:1-20
- Romans 3:21-26
- Romans 3:27-4:8
- Romans 4:9-25
- Romans 5:1-5

- Psalm 101
- Psalm 102
- Psalm 103
- Psalm 104
- Psalm 105

#### Here's some tips to help you approach your own bible reading this week:

- Choose a time in your day that can be your regular Bible reading time.
- Don't expect you can live like a monk in solitude. If the only time you have involves kids playing around you, or at the breakfast table with others, or during your commute, that's fine.
- Before you read the passage, pray to God for help in concentrating, understanding and applying God's truth to your life.
- Read the passage/s. If you have time, read it twice to help the words sink deeper into your thinking.
- Think about what this passage says about Jesus and your response to Him.
- Finish with prayer. A helpful approach to personal prayer is the 'ACTOR' approach

**ADORATION** - "I love you..." Praise God and express your love to him.

**CONFESSION** - "I'm sorry..." Admit to God how you've failed him.

**THANKS** - "Thankyou for..." Thank God for what He's done for you.

**OTHERS** - "I pray for..." Pray for other people who you know need help or need to know God.

**REQUEST** - "Please..." Ask God for what is needed.



# BIBLE TALK NOTES

Sunday 25 July

THE PROPHETS

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

## INTRODUCTION

# HOSEA & THE OLD TESTAMENT

Next week we start our new series through the Old Testament book of Hosea. We hope that while it will challenge us, it will also thrill, excite, and inspire us as we study it together and discover God and the gospel of Jesus in its message.

Studying Hosea may sometimes feel like we're walking through a forest in which we might start to feel a bit lost, and understandably so – it comes with strange language and it's set in another historical time – the nation of Israel in the 700sBC. So this week isn't about walking through that particular forest of Hosea, but taking a helicopter joy ride to look above and over and see how Hosea fits within the wider story of the bible. And here's the incredible thing to realise – Hosea isn't a random book within a collection of random old religious messages – there really is a single thread and story that ties it all together!

Let's start with some helpful introductory words from Nick Page in his book, 'The Bible Book, A User's Guide' when he offers some thoughts about the Old Testament:

### **It wasn't written by Christians**

The Old Testament is only given that title when it is put together with the New Testament – that is, when it is part of the Christian Bible. It is 'old' because, it describes a relationship with God that was preparatory to, and superseded by, the new relationship revealed through Jesus Christ.

### **It was written over a huge period of time**

The Old Testament comes from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds and took around 1,500 years to put together (compared to the New Testament which covers a period of about 100 years). So the culture described in the early parts of the Old Testament can differ from the later parts.

### **It was specifically organised and edited**

The Old Testament is a collection of documents that were deliberately edited and gathered together by a series of editors and compilers. That means it is hard to give a specific author and date for many of the books.

Speaking of 'organised', the Old Testament has been traditionally grouped in this way:

LAW	HISTORY	WISDOM AND POETRY	PROPHETS
Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Joshua Judges Ruth 1 and 2 Samuel 1 and 2 Kings 1 and 2 Chronicles Ezra and Nehemiah Esther	Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs	<b>Major Prophets*</b> Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.  <b>Minor Prophets*</b> Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

\* Major and Minor Prophets does not refer to importance but to length.

There are different ways of talking about the groupings within the Old Testament. When the resurrected Jesus said in Luke 24:44, *"This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms,"* this was Jesus' way of speaking all of the Jewish Scriptures, our Old Testament.

One further thing to realise - the books of the Bible are presented one after the other, but it's not always the case that each follows chronologically on from the one before. There is overlap. In the case of Hosea, his ministry was during the time of certain Kings of Judah and Israel (Hosea 1:1) who you can read about in 2 Kings 15-17.

**DISCUSS** - what would be the parts of the Old Testament that you are most familiar with, and also least familiar with?

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## HOSEA & THE PROPHETS

When you think of a 'prophet', maybe you think of a crusty old man with a beard and robe, standing on a street corner, shaking his knobby finger at those who pass by, shouting, *'Repent ye sinners, judgement day is coming!'*. But in fact, the prophets of the Old Testament came in many shapes and sizes. Certainly we'll discover that Hosea is quite different from that image. But there are two common themes that flow through the message of all the prophets: Judgement and Hope.

**DISCUSS** - Using the bible timeline infographic on page 8, locate where Hosea would be, and then talk about – what has happened in the the past that has led to the prophets speaking a word of judgement, and why they can also promise a future day of hope?

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## HOSEA & THE COVENANTS

The word 'covenant' is not a word we commonly use today. It means a solemn promise and oath, a legally binding agreement. Significantly for our study of Hosea, marriage is a covenant. In the world of the Old Testament, a 'covenant' would sometimes come in the form of a treaty, made between a ruler and his people - with obligations for protection and provision, but also with conditions of obedience and loyalty. Typically, to 'make a covenant' was more literally to 'cut a covenant' involving sacrifices and blood!

**Read Genesis 15:2-19**

**DISCUSS** - Undeniably there is a strangeness to this event, but what are the features that stand out for you in this covenant making moment with Abraham?

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This agreement and oath that God makes with Abraham and his descendants forms the backbone to the story of God and his relationship with Israel throughout the Old Testament.

**Read Exodus 24:7-8**

Using the infographic on page 8, discuss the context of this covenant moment and what stands out for you here?

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**Read Deuteronomy 4:25-31**

Using the infographic on page 8, discuss the context of this covenant moment and what stands out for you here?

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**Read 2 Samuel 7:8-16**

Using the infographic on page 8, discuss the context of this covenant moment and what stands out for you here?

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**Read Ezekiel 16:1-14**

Using the infographic on page 8, locate the time of Ezekiel. It's interesting to note that while Ezekiel was a prophet to the southern kingdom of Israel known as Judah (following a time of civil war), Hosea was prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel known as Israel or Ephraim.

The prophet Ezekiel is looking back on the history of Israel, starting with God's call on Abraham. What imagery does God use to talk about the covenant relationship He has with this people?

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Starting next week we'll see that Hosea and Ezekiel use similar intimate terms to speak of the relationship between God and his people..

As stated earlier, the prophets spoke a word of judgement but also a word of hope. **Read Jeremiah 31:31-34**

The arrival of Jesus comes in the New Testament account of events. But why is Jesus the key to unlocking the meaning of the Old Testament?

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Why is the hope of the prophets, a new covenant to come, in fact a better covenant?

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## PRAYER

It's been a while since our groups have been together so share some things in life so we can pray for each other. But also, take the time to praise God that He is a covenant keeping, promise keeping God, whose faithfulness was ultimately shown in the coming and dying of Jesus.

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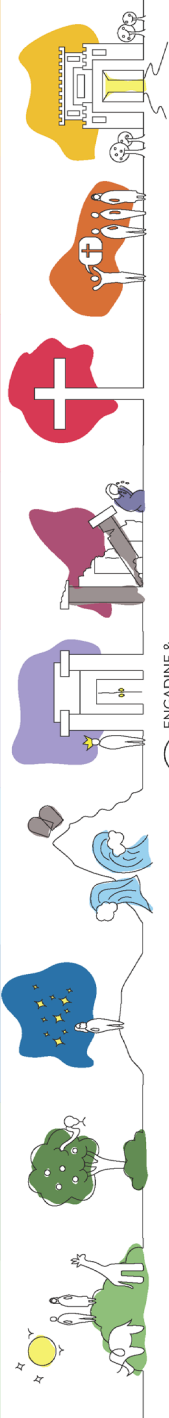
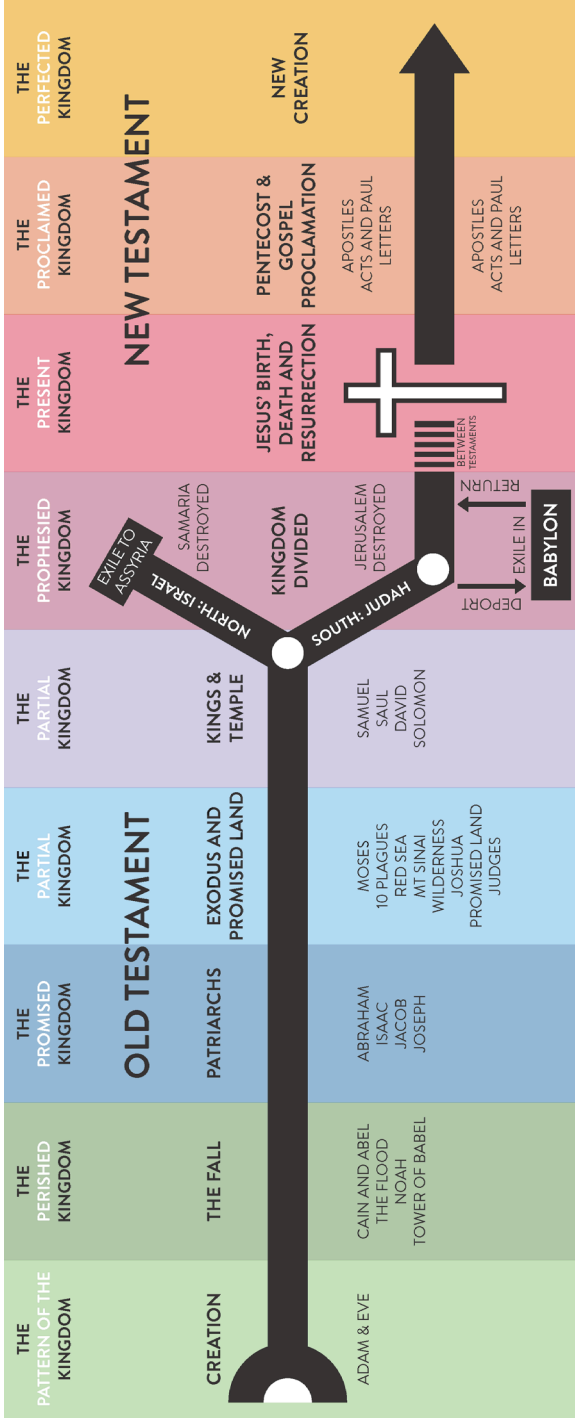
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## SUGGESTED RESOURCE



In preparation for next week, watch on YouTube The Bible Project video - **Hosea**



ENGADINE &  
HEATHCOTE  
ANGLICAN



LIFE is a series for anyone and everyone interested in exploring or re-exploring Jesus, or even just asking big questions in life. Whether you're brand new to Christianity or have been a Christian your whole life, LIFE provides time and space to ask questions or just sit back and listen. It will be run on a Monday night (with a COVID safe plan) and childminding is available.

LIFE runs as a 5 week series starting **Monday 2nd August 7pm** at the Hub, but come to whatever session you can. Feel free to come check it out and if it's not for you, no pressure you don't have to come back.

# Strange Love

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

## Definition of *'strange love'*

**a:** an unexpected, peculiar love.

**b:** a love expressed because of commitment and mercy, not because it is deserved.

**c:** a love that flows from God's heart of unrelenting grace; a love utterly unlike our own.

**d:** the message of Hosea.

<sup>8</sup> *"How can I give you up, Ephraim?  
How can I hand you over, Israel?  
How can I treat you like Admah?  
How can I make you like Zeboyim?  
My heart is changed within me;  
all my compassion is aroused.*

<sup>9</sup> *I will not carry out my fierce anger,  
nor will I devastate Ephraim again.  
For I am God, and not a man—  
the Holy One among you.*

**Hosea 11:8-11**

# THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Welcome to our Growth Group study series on the book of Hosea. This Old Testament book is sometimes overlooked by Bible readers (and even Bible teachers!) yet it contains amazing insights into God's perfect nature, and – in stark contrast – how sinful and broken humankind is. At its core, Hosea is a powerful love story, what we might even call a strange love story! Here we see a faithful God who relentlessly pursues an undeserving, adulterous people who He is determined to make His own. Hosea will help us understand the earlier covenant promises of God that we see in the Old Testament, while directing us to the Saviour who was to come.

Hosea comes in the form of prophetic/symbolic language, along with referring to events, and places that will often be unfamiliar to us, but rather than trying to trace down every detail, over the next six weeks we will be approaching Hosea using a framework that looks at four interconnected themes. These themes will be explored by focusing on the 'Who', 'Why', 'What' and 'How' of Hosea. Each week we will reflect upon and discuss:

- 1. WHO** is truly at the centre of the book of Hosea, and what it teaches us about His character;
- 2. WHY** He is doing this work, and what this work reveals about human nature and our desperate need for His redemptive love;
- 3. WHAT** He is doing throughout the book that helps us to see His redemptive love in action; and
- 4. HOW** He is working through His Covenant promises, and how this points us ultimately to Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection.

We pray that this study series helps you to better understand God and the incredible love He has for His people, while encouraging you to respond to this love yourself.



## BIBLE READING PLAN

### ROMANS, 2 & 3 JOHN & JUDE

#### WEEK 3: *August 2-8*

- Romans 5:6-11
- Romans 5:12-21
- Romans 6:1-14
- Romans 6:15-23
- Romans 7:1-6

#### Extra Reading

- Psalm 106
- Psalm 107
- Psalm 108
- Psalm 109
- Psalm 110

#### Here's some tips to help you approach your own bible reading this week:

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**REQUEST** - "Please..." Ask God for what is needed.



## STUDY 1

# **GOD'S COVENANT LOVE**

## HOSEA 1:1-2:1

Hosea was a prophet of God during the 8th Century BC, in the final years of the divided nation of Israel. This nation, which had long before been promised to the Israelite patriarch Abraham (see Genesis 12:1), had split some 200 years earlier into (1) the Northern Kingdom – known as 'Israel', or sometimes 'Ephraim' – and (2) the Southern Kingdom – known as 'Judah' (please refer to the attached map). Hosea's prophecies are dated as occurring sometime between 760 and 720 BC, either shortly before or at the actual time of the fall of the Northern Kingdom to the Assyrian Empire's military forces.

The closing years of the Northern Kingdom were a very dark time for God's people. Although this was a period of relative material prosperity, it was at the same time a period of great spiritual idolatry. God's people had turned to worshipping a foreign weather and fertility god named Baal, which involved disgraceful, open acts of immorality at pagan shrines. Israel had lost its way and turned its back on the true God, the One Who had rescued them from Egypt and brought them into the promised land. The judgement that God had repeatedly warned them about came in the form of foreign invasion and complete military defeat. In Hosea's day, the people of the Southern Kingdom were doing slightly better, spiritually speaking, however they too would experience God's judgement for their unfaithfulness through total military defeat by the Babylonian Empire 136 years later.



## **? REFLECTION POINT 1 - WHO?**

Who is at the centre of the story being played out in the book of Hosea?

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As you read through this part of Hosea, think about what is being revealed about God's character.

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## **READ HOSEA 1:1 – 2:1**

This opening section introduces us to the prophet Hosea, his wife Gomer, and Gomer's three children. The NIV rendering of God's first command to Hosea is perhaps a little more polite than other versions. By contrast, for example, the ESV presents God's directions as "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord" (Hosea 1:2). The wording of 1:3 indicates that Gomer's elder son, Jezreel, is Hosea's natural child, however the more vague wording of 1:6 and 1:8 suggests the possibility that Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi are in fact children of Gomer's infidelity. The names given to Gomer's children are rich with meaning in the context of Israel's longstanding Covenant with God.

Does this part of Hosea offer you any new insights into God's nature? If so, consider sharing your thoughts with the larger group.

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## **? REFLECTION POINT 2 - WHY?**

Why is God doing all of these things? What does the book of Hosea reveal to us about human nature and our need for God's redemptive love?

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**1.** Do any of the characters in this part of Hosea cause a reaction in you? If so, what sort of reaction? Do you find yourself identifying with any of them? Why?

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**2.** Do you find anything about God's command to Hosea to "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her" (Hosea 1:2) objectionable and/or confusing? What are the objections that are raised for you?

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Some well-meaning commentators try to explain Gomer's promiscuity as not literal but simply illustrative, arguing that a holy God would not approve the violation of a marriage covenant. However, it is probably best to accept a plain reading of the first three chapters of Hosea, given that they are autobiographical in nature. The precise point of Hosea literally marrying an unfaithful wife, is that God's people were literally being unfaithful to Him. In the next study we will see how Hosea reconciles with Gomer as a prophetic picture of God winning his unfaithful people back to Himself.



### **REFLECTION POINT 3 - *WHAT?***

What is God doing in the book of Hosea that helps us to see His redemptive love for His people?

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Like much Old Testament prophecy, Hosea's writings contain more pronouncements of judgement than blessings, at least in simple numerical terms. This opening section of Hosea certainly sets the tone of judgement prominent in the remainder of the book. However, a careful reading of the book reveals incredible promises of redemption for a people God has chosen to be His own. We should be careful to not lose sight of the hope on offer to us as we read the book of Hosea. We will see in future studies how, unlike a humiliated husband, God gently woos His wife back with terms of endearment.

**3.** What examples of God's grace can you see in this part of Hosea?

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**? REFLECTION POINT 4 - HOW?**

How is God working through His Covenant promises throughout the book of Hosea, and how does this point us to Jesus?

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**4.** How does Hosea 1:10 relate to the promise made to Abraham (see Genesis 13:16, 15:5 and 22:17)?

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**5.** Can you see any hint of Jesus contained within Hosea 1:11 (see Ephesians 1:22-23)?

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**? WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

How can you use this section of Hosea to bring you to greater repentance, strengthen your faith, and serve and worship God more effectively?

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File: Kingdoms of Israel and Judah map 830.svg. (2021, May 9). *Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository*. Retrieved 01:50, June 8, 2021 from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Kingdoms\\_of\\_Israel\\_and\\_Judah\\_map\\_830.svg&oldid=559058555](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Kingdoms_of_Israel_and_Judah_map_830.svg&oldid=559058555).



To find out more about our Weekend Away and to register go to our "What's On" section at [christcentral.org.au](http://christcentral.org.au)



## BIBLE READING PLAN

### ROMANS, 2 & 3 JOHN & JUDE

#### WEEK 4: *August 9-15*

- Romans 7:7-25
- Romans 8:1-11
- Romans 8:12-17
- Romans 8:18-30
- Romans 9:31-39

#### Extra Reading

- Psalm 111
- Psalm 112
- Psalm 113
- Psalm 114
- Psalm 115

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# BIBLE TALK NOTES

Sunday 8 August

HOSEA 2:2-3:5

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

## STUDY 2

# GOD'S REDEEMING LOVE

HOSEA 2:2-3:5

In our last study, we read that God commanded Hosea to "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord" (Hosea 1:2). The section of Hosea we are looking at this week opens with a devastating pronouncement by God against His people Israel: "...she is not my wife, and I am not her husband" (Hosea 2:2). The seriousness of this declaration by God cannot be overstated. In Exodus 19, we can read that at Mount Sinai after rescuing them from slavery in Egypt, God established Israel as a holy nation in Covenant relationship with Himself. And now, this Covenant appears to be lying in tatters. If the story of God's love for His people were a Hollywood production, this would surely be the 'boy loses girl' moment. But of course the story doesn't end there. God will not allow His Covenant to fail. He will fix this mess! God will take the initiative Himself and win His unfaithful wife back, restoring her to the marriage relationship.



### REFLECTION POINT 1 - WHO?

Who is at the centre of the story being played out in the book of Hosea?

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As you read through this part of Hosea, think about what is being revealed about God's character.

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## READ HOSEA 2:2 – 3:5

**1.** One way to tell who a story is really about is to look at which character dominates the dialogue. Go back to the reading, and take careful note of the statements made by God beginning with 'I will'.

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On a second reading, were you surprised by how many times God says 'I will'? Around half of these statements relate to God displaying His righteous jealousy (Hosea 2:2-13), with the rest relating to His plan to reclaim His bride (Hosea 2:14-23). In Hosea 3:1-2, God commands Hosea to reconcile with his wife, and to do so at his (ie. Hosea's) own expense! Hosea's obedient response is a prophetic act, indicating how God intends to win back His wayward wife. It is important to bear in mind while reading Hosea that God is the aggrieved party – the jilted lover – who nonetheless takes the initiative to, and personally bears the cost of, repairing the shattered relationship. We are the undeserving recipients of His relentless love.

**2.** What do the various 'I will' statements of Hosea 2:2-23 teach us about God's character?

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**3.** What does God's willingness to bear the cost of restoring the Covenant relationship (Hosea 3:1-2) teach us about His love for us?

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## REFLECTION POINT 2 - *WHY?*

Why is God doing all of these things? What does the book of Hosea reveal to us about human nature and our need for God's redemptive love?

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Israel was so blinded to God's loving provision that they credited the foreign god Baal with the good things they enjoyed (Hosea 2:5), despite God alone being their provider (Hosea 2:8). Now the time had come for God to show His people in the most effective way possible that in fact He was their provider: by retracting His blessings. He warned that He would take away their grain, wine, wool and linen (Hosea 2:9), stop their celebrations and festivals (Hosea 2:11), and destroy their vines and fig trees (Hosea 2:12). God, in His grace, had spoken this warning much earlier through Moses in Deuteronomy 8, and now Israel would need to face the consequences of her unfaithfulness.

**4.** Speaking about Israel, God says that He will "block her path with thorn bushes" (Hosea 2:6) and that "She will chase after her lovers but not catch them" (Hosea 2:7). What do these verses tell us about human tendency to sin?

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**5.** In what ways today do we place our faith in idols (which can include people, organisations, social structures etc.) other than God? How might we remedy this misplaced faith?

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### **REFLECTION POINT 3 - WHAT?**

What is God doing in the book of Hosea that helps us to see His redemptive love for His people?

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You may have noticed a distinct turning point in this week's reading, which occurs at Hosea 2:14. Up until that point, God is displaying His righteous jealousy for the wife who abandoned Him for another lover. From Hosea 2:14, He then shifts to announcing His plan to reclaim the adulterous bride that is rightfully His.

**6.** How should we understand repentance in the light of God who decisively acts for redemption as seen in Hosea 2:14-23?

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**?** **REFLECTION POINT 4 - HOW?**

How is God working through His Covenant promises throughout the book of Hosea, and how does this point us to Jesus?

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**7.** What might it mean that "...the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king" (Hosea 3:5), considering that King David had died centuries earlier?

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**8.** How might Hosea's purchase of his own lawful wife (Hosea 3:2) be a foreshadowing of Jesus' ministry (see 1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23)?

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**9.** Three times in this section of Hosea, God refers to a future time, with the words 'In that day..' (Hosea 2:16, 18 and 21). What might this be referring to, and what promise does it hold for believers today (see 2 Peter 3:10-13)?

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## **? WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

How can you use this section of Hosea to bring you to greater repentance, strengthen your faith, and serve and worship God more effectively?

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**GUESS WHO'S  
COMING TO  
LUNCH**

Sunday  
22 August

 **SIGN UP TODAY**  
[christcentral.org.au/guess](http://christcentral.org.au/guess)

Join us for a mystery lunch on the 22 August! It'll be a great chance to get to know others by sharing a meal at homes near you. The mystery is that you won't know who is joining you for lunch until you arrive. Sign up as a host or a guest then we will let you know on the morning where you're headed!



## BIBLE READING PLAN

### ROMANS, 2 & 3 JOHN & JUDE

#### WEEK 5: *August 16-22*

- Romans 9:1-13
- Romans 9:14-29
- Romans 9:30-33
- Romans 10:1-13
- Romans 10:14-21

#### Extra Reading

- Psalm 116
- Psalm 117
- Psalm 118
- Psalm 119
- Psalm 120

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## STUDY 3

# THE WAYS WE REJECT GOD'S LOVE

HOSEA 4:1-6:3

Before we delve into this week's section of Hosea, it may be helpful to 'zoom out' a little and locate our current position in the flow of the book. The first three chapters of Hosea have set the scene for the remaining chapters by detailing the shocking (at least to our ears) instructions of God for Hosea to live out a broken marriage as a metaphor for Israel's rebellion, and God's determination to redeem His people. From now until the end of the book, we simply have prophetic language about sin, judgement and promise for ultimate restoration, with the theme of Covenant marriage always there in the background.



### REFLECTION POINT 1 - WHO?

Who is at the centre of the story being played out in the book of Hosea?

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As you read through this part of Hosea, think about what is being revealed about God's character.

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### READ HOSEA 4:1 – 6:3

Did you notice that this section of Hosea opens with language resembling legal proceedings: "Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land." (Hosea 4:1)? Having graphically portrayed the nature of Israel's unfaithfulness through Hosea's marriage to Gomer, God now elaborates on all He has against His people. The primary charge against Israel is turning away from God in preference to idols, specifically

Baal. But, before addressing Israel's sin of idolatry, God addresses what it is they are **failing** to do. Right off the bat, God makes a devastating threefold accusation against Israel: "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land" (Hosea 4:1).

**1.** How do the first two of Israel's failings in Hosea 4:1 – "no faithfulness" and "no love" – contrast with God's character as revealed within the book of Hosea (for example, see Hosea 2:19-20)?

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God is abundantly clear in His word that He will simply not tolerate idolatry in any form. The first of the Ten Commandments explicitly forbids it (Exodus 20:3), and the New Testament reminds us of its dangers (see, for example, Colossians 3:5; Romans 1:22-23).

**2.** Why is the act of idolatry such a grievous insult to God?

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## **?** REFLECTION POINT 2 - *WHY?*

Why is God doing all of these things? What does the book of Hosea reveal to us about human nature and our need for God's redemptive love?

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It may be tempting for us to think that we don't worship idols today – after all, probably none of us bow down before, and seek guidance from, wooden statues like the Israelites evidently did (Hosea 4:12). But idols can take many forms, such as our careers, reputations, money, entertainment, health, technology (yes, even our beloved phones!) and endless other distractions from God. A useful way to identify the idols in our lives is to think about what things we turn to, that reduce our sense of needing God. Just as Israel turned to Baal for favourable weather and fruitful harvests, we are all guilty of turning away from God in our search for such things as security, affirmation, identity and pleasure.



**3.** Think about what things you turn to, in the times when you should only be looking to God. Why is it so hard for us to let go of these idols?

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**4.** Idolatry comes as a consequence of rejecting God's authority (see Romans 1:21-23, 25). Do you think it's human nature to reject God's authority? How would you respond to someone if they told you they don't believe the Gospel message is necessary because 'deep down all people are basically good'?

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**5.** Re-read the following verses: Hosea 4:4-5, 9, 18; 5:1, 10. What do you notice about the nature and extent of Israel's spiritual corruption?

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### **? REFLECTION POINT 3 - *WHAT?***

What is God doing in the book of Hosea that helps us to see His redemptive love for His people?

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While Israel was unashamedly worshipping Baal, they arrogantly refused to return to God, or even acknowledge Him (Hosea 5:4). They thought they could manage just fine without Him. Even when they made an effort to seek God by offering sacrifices, it was a mere religious formality – a loveless gesture – and He does not respond (Hosea 5:6). God would need to discipline His people in love before they would return and acknowledge Him, and this is a theme that can be seen throughout today's reading.

**6.** In His judgement against Israel, God stated "I will discipline all of them" (Hosea 5:2). As dreadful as this prospect is, what hope is there to be seen in the word 'discipline' (see Hebrews 12:6)?

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**?** **REFLECTION POINT 4 - HOW?**

How is God working through His Covenant promises throughout the book of Hosea, and how does this point us to Jesus?

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We noted earlier God's threefold accusation against Israel: "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land" (Hosea 4:1). The third failing – that there is "no acknowledgement of God in the land" seems puzzling given that, despite their obvious spiritual corruption, the people nonetheless continued to seek God with sacrifices (Hosea 5:6). It would seem they knew about God, but did not actually know God, and this had resulted in their destruction (Hosea 4:6).

**7.** How should a Covenant people who know God behave toward Him?

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**8.** Re-read Hosea 6:3. In the light of the gospel of Jesus, His death and resurrection, what are some of the things that your knowledge of God entails, that you want friends and family to know about too?

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9. How is Hosea 6:2 ultimately fulfilled by Jesus (see Matthew 16:21; Luke 9:22)?

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**?** **WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

How can you use this section of Hosea to bring you to greater repentance, strengthen your faith, and serve and worship God more effectively?

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## BIBLE READING PLAN

### ROMANS, 2 & 3 JOHN & JUDE

#### WEEK 6: *August 23-29*

- Romans 11:1-10
- Romans 11:11-32
- Romans 11:33-36
- Romans 12:1-2
- Romans 12:3-8

#### Extra Reading

- Psalm 121
- Psalm 122
- Psalm 123
- Psalm 124
- Psalm 125

#### Here's some tips to help you approach your own bible reading this week:

- Choose a time in your day that can be your regular Bible reading time.
- Don't expect you can live like a monk in solitude. If the only time you have involves kids playing around you, or at the breakfast table with others, or during your commute, that's fine.
- Before you read the passage, pray to God for help in concentrating, understanding and applying God's truth to your life.
- Read the passage/s. If you have time, read it twice to help the words sink deeper into your thinking.
- Think about what this passage says about Jesus and your response to Him.
- Finish with prayer. A helpful approach to personal prayer is the 'ACTOR' approach

**ADORATION** - "I love you..." Praise God and express your love to him.

**CONFESSION** - "I'm sorry..." Admit to God how you've failed him.

**THANKS** - "Thankyou for..." Thank God for what He's done for you.

**OTHERS** - "I pray for..." Pray for other people who you know need help or need to know God.

**REQUEST** - "Please..." Ask God for what is needed.



## STUDY 4

# GOD'S DISCIPLINING LOVE

## HOSEA 9-10

This week's study looks at perhaps the bleakest section of Hosea that we will cover in this series. It reveals how, because of Israel's defiance and unfaithfulness, their miraculous rescue from bondage and slavery in Egypt is about to be reversed. Hosea will compare the behaviour of the present generation with episodes from some of Israel's darkest history. Hope would appear to be in short supply in these chapters. However, God's faithfulness to His Covenant promises remain. He will use whatever means necessary to bring His people back to Himself.



### REFLECTION POINT 1 - *WHO?*

Who is at the centre of the story being played out in the book of Hosea?

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As you read through this part of Hosea, think about what is being revealed about God's character.

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## READ HOSEA 9 - 10

Through Hosea, God draws attention to three specific incidents in Israel's past to highlight how rebellious and wicked His people had become:

- 1.** Firstly, He charges Israel with having "sunk deep into corruption, as in the days of Gibeah" (Hosea 9:9). The account of Gibeah (told in Judges 19) involves uncontrolled lust, sexual perversion, murder and complete disregard for both God and people
- 2.** Secondly, in Hosea 9:10, He draws connections between the people's idolatry and that of their ancestors at Baal Peor (as told in Numbers 25), where 24,000 Israelites died under God's judgement
- 3.** Finally, He refers to Israel's wickedness at Gilgal (Hosea 9:15), where Saul was made the nation's king (1 Samuel 11:15), the people having defiantly rejected God as their king

Of the whole book, Hosea 9 contains some of the most powerful and confronting indications of God's outright disgust in the behaviour of His people, declaring "I hated them there" and "I will no longer love them" (v.15), and promising that "Even if they bear children, I will slay their cherished offspring" (v.16).

**1.** How might we make sense of God's expression of hatred, and withdrawal of love (Hosea 9:15), in the context of His Covenant relationship with his people?

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**2.** Sometimes people want to unhelpfully divide the Old Testament from the New Testament, as if they contain the stories of two separate Gods. But how does Hosea 10:8 and then Jesus' words in Luke 23:30 and also Revelation 6:15-17, show us how God is consistent and true in his response to human evil?

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**3.** What does Hosea 10:10 teach us about God's sovereignty?

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## **? REFLECTION POINT 2 - *WHY?***

Why is God doing all of these things? What does the book of Hosea reveal to us about human nature and our need for God's redemptive love?

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**4.** Why was material prosperity such a pitfall for Israel (Hosea 10:1)? Is prosperity as spiritually dangerous for believers today (see Matthew 6:24)?

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**5.** Referring to the people of Israel, Hosea 10:2 states that "Their heart is deceitful, and now they must bear their guilt" (see also Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 12:34). Does this help us understand human nature and our desperate need of God's grace? If so, how?

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## **? REFLECTION POINT 3 - *WHAT?***

What is God doing in the book of Hosea that helps us to see His redemptive love for His people?

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**6.** Re-read Hosea 10:12. What evidence of God's redemptive love can be found in this verse?

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## REFLECTION POINT 4 - HOW?

How is God working through His Covenant promises throughout the book of Hosea, and how does this point us to Jesus?

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God's Covenant with Abraham included the promise of a land for His chosen people (see Genesis 12 and 15). His Covenant with Moses detailed the behaviours required of His people to remain in the promised land (see Exodus 19 and 24; Deuteronomy 8:1-20). It was by Covenant that Israel enjoyed rest in their own land. However, remaining in the promised land depended upon Israel's continued obedience to God's rules. The people could not plead ignorance: Moses had clearly set out the consequences of disobedience under the Covenant (see Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

In Hosea (see for example Hosea 9:3) we see a reversal of the Exodus: the people have defied God's authority, and as a result will be returned to the state of oppression under which they suffered for so long in Egypt. God is clearly working through His Covenant promises, even when doing so entails returning Israel to their state of bondage and slavery. And yet, God is not finished! His discipline is not meant ultimately to destroy but to redeem.

**7.** The land promised to God's people was to be a place of rest (see Joshua 1:13). Yet after taking the land, Israel continued to struggle against her enemies, both internally and externally. Might our ultimate "Promised Land" be found elsewhere (see Matthew 11:28-29)?

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**8.** How does the progression of Hosea 10:9-12 show us that God's discipline is intended to restore His people to Covenant relationship with Him?

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## **? WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

How can you use this section of Hosea to bring you to greater repentance, strengthen your faith, and serve and worship God more effectively?

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To find out more about our Weekend Away and to register go to our "What's On" section at [christcentral.org.au](http://christcentral.org.au)



## BIBLE READING PLAN

### ROMANS, 2 & 3 JOHN & JUDE

#### WEEK 7: August 30-Sep 5

#### Extra Reading

- Romans 12:9-21
- Romans 13:1-7
- Romans 13:8-10
- Romans 13:11-14
- Romans 14:1-12

- Psalm 126
- Psalm 127
- Psalm 128
- Psalm 129
- Psalm 130

#### Here's some tips to help you approach your own bible reading this week:

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**OTHERS** - "I pray for..." Pray for other people who you know need help or need to know God.

**REQUEST** - "Please..." Ask God for what is needed.



# BIBLE TALK NOTES

Sunday 29 August

HOSEA 11

A series of horizontal dotted lines spanning the width of the page, intended for writing notes.

## STUDY 5

# GOD'S UNRELENTING LOVE

## HOSEA 11

Last week we looked at how Israel, because of their defiance and unfaithfulness, would experience a reversal of their miraculous rescue from bondage and slavery in Egypt almost 700 years earlier. We saw how Hosea used three vivid images to describe Israel: (1) 'grapes in the desert', a people fruitful and flourishing when God first encountered them (Hosea 9:10-17); (2) 'a spreading vine', to remind the people that they had once prospered under God (Hosea 10:1-10); and (3) 'a trained calf', as a reminder that they had once willingly obeyed God. In this week's study we see Hosea use a fourth, surprisingly intimate image to show how God relates to His people. This week's section of Hosea contains what some consider to be the very heart of his message, revealing God's tender, fatherly love for His people, and foreshadowing another, lasting Exodus for His people.

### REFLECTION POINT 1 - WHO?

Who is at the centre of the story being played out in the book of Hosea?

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As you read through this part of Hosea, think about what is being revealed about God's character.

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## READ HOSEA 11

**1.** Re-read Hosea 11:3-4. What reactions does this image of God provoke in you? What does it teach us about how God relates to His people?

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**2.** Re-read Hosea 11:8. Does anything about this verse surprise you? What does it teach us about how God feels toward His people?

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**3.** Speaking on God's behalf, Hosea says "I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man" (Hosea 11:9). In what ways is God's response to being offended against different to ours?

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### REFLECTION POINT 2 - *WHY?*

Why is God doing all of these things? What does the book of Hosea reveal to us about human nature and our need for God's redemptive love?

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In Hosea 11:8, God reveals something of His heart toward Israel. This powerful expression of feeling is understandable in the context of Hosea 11:1-2. God loved Israel as a son, and rescued them from bondage and slavery in Egypt (Hosea 11:1). But the more He called them, the more they went away from Him. In fact, not only did they turn away from God, they turned to idols instead (Hosea 11:2). Hosea 11:7 suggests that Israel did not casually stray from God, but was actively determined to turn their backs on Him. This behaviour exposes the perversity and fickleness of humans, but God's reaction in Hosea 11:9 highlights His Covenant faithfulness.

**4.** How is our response to God's calling on our lives different when we understand Him to be our loving father?

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**5.** What is identified in Hosea 11:5 as the cause of Israel's return to bondage? What do we need to foster in our own lives in order to overcome pride and stubbornness (see Psalm 51:17)?

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### **REFLECTION POINT 3 - WHAT?**

What is God doing in the book of Hosea that helps us to see His redemptive love for His people?

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Hosea 11 beautifully showcases God's redemptive love in response to His people's rebelliousness. Although God had brought them out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1), Israel responded by turning to false gods (Hosea 11:2). Even though God taught, healed and guided Israel with fatherly kindness and love (Hosea 11:3-4), the people responded by hardening their hearts against Him (Hosea 11:5). They would need to be disciplined by being returned to a new Egypt, Assyria (Hosea 11:5). Yet God, in His love, announces a second Exodus (Hosea 11:10-11) before the punishment even arrives!

**6.** Re-read Hosea 11:10-11. The second Exodus described here was not intended only for the people of ancient Israel. Humans continue to live in bondage to sin today. How does Jesus' ministry fulfil this section of Hosea (see John 10:27; 14:2-3)?

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## REFLECTION POINT 4 - HOW?

How is God working through His Covenant promises throughout the book of Hosea, and how does this point us to Jesus?

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In Hosea 11:9, God states that – in His compassion (v.8) – He will in fact not carry out His fierce anger against Israel. The statement within that verse “I am God, and not a man” echoes another passage found in the Old Testament:

*God is not human, that he should lie,  
not a human being, that he should change his mind.  
Does he speak and then not act?  
Does he promise and not fulfill?*

**(Numbers 23:19)**

God appears therefore to be making a Covenant oath, committing Himself to mercy toward His people. This creates a degree of tension with the numerous references to discipline and judgement throughout the book of Hosea. God is simultaneously determined to judge and determined to save.

**7.** What key Biblical event allowed God to both carry out His fierce anger in response to our sin, and show His children mercy (see Romans 3:23-26; 1 John 4:10)?

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**8.** As God's son, Israel was called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1), however through their unfaithfulness eventually returned to slavery. How is it that Christians can have hope that they will be permanently delivered from bondage to sin (see Matthew 2:14-15; Romans 8:29)?

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## **WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

How can you use this section of Hosea to bring you to greater repentance, strengthen your faith, and serve and worship God more effectively?

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## BIBLE READING PLAN

### ROMANS, 2 & 3 JOHN & JUDE

#### WEEK 8: *September 6-12*

- Romans 14:13-23
- Romans 15:1-13
- Romans 15:14-21
- Romans 15:22-33
- Romans 16:1-16

#### Extra Reading

- Psalm 131
- Psalm 132
- Psalm 133
- Psalm 134
- Psalm 135

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**REQUEST** - "Please..." Ask God for what is needed.



## STUDY 6

# OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S LOVE

## HOSEA 13-14

This is the final study in our series on the book of Hosea. Over the past five weeks we have seen how God spoke through Hosea, warning Israel of their imminent ejection from the promised land because of their idolatry and spiritual adultery. We have seen how the themes of judgement, discipline and punishment run consistently throughout Hosea, but never without the corresponding themes of love, redemption and Covenant fulfilment. In this week's study we see a final expression of God's anger against Israel and finish on a passionate call for His people's repentance, with promises of restoration for those who would turn back to Him.

### REFLECTION POINT 1 - *WHO?*

Who is at the centre of the story being played out in the book of Hosea?

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As you read through this part of Hosea, think about what is being revealed about God's character.

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## READ HOSEA 13-14

**1.** Hosea 13:3 presents four images of Israel contaminated by their idol worship (morning mist, early dew that disappears, chaff swirling from a threshing floor, and smoke escaping through a window). How is God contrasted to His people in Hosea 13:4?

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**2.** God refers to Himself in Hosea 13:9 as Israel's "helper". What does God's willingness to step down and help undeserving sinners teach us about His character?

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### REFLECTION POINT 2 - *WHY?*

Why is God doing all of these things? What does the book of Hosea reveal to us about human nature and our need for God's redemptive love?

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**3.** Hosea 13:6 sets out a sin pattern that is common to humans in every age, not just in Hosea's time. Does Hosea 13:4 provide a strategy to break this pattern? If so, what is it? According to Hosea 13:7-8, where does this pattern lead to if unbroken?

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**4.** Re-read Hosea 13:10. Human government does have its place in God's present order (for example, see Romans 13:1, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 2:13-14) however, we must be very clear about the limits of human authority. What are the risks of trusting human authority instead of God's authority?

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**5.** Hosea 13:13 likens Israel (and by extension, us) to a child without wisdom. Is human wisdom sufficient to accept God's ways (see 1 Corinthians 2:14)?

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### **REFLECTION POINT 3 - *WHAT?***

What is God doing in the book of Hosea that helps us to see His redemptive love for His people?

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Despite all of Israel's sin and rebellion documented throughout Hosea, in the closing chapter of the book God issues an invitation to return to Him – even prescribing a prayer of repentance (Hosea 14:2-3), followed by details of a guaranteed result (Hosea 14:4-7). It is effectively a road map showing us the way home to God.

**6.** What does God's clear desire for us to be reconciled to Him reveal about His love for us?

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## **? REFLECTION POINT 4 - HOW?**

How is God working through His Covenant promises throughout the book of Hosea, and how does this point us to Jesus?

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**7.** Re-read Hosea 14:5-7. In what ways does this passage confirm the Covenant promises found in Genesis 12:1-3?

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**8.** How is God's promise to Israel to "heal their waywardness and love them freely" (Hosea 14:4) fulfilled in and through Jesus (see John 3:16, Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:9-10)?

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## **? WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

Re-read Hosea 14:9. Take a moment to think about how Hosea ultimately points us to knowing God in Jesus. What does it look like to lead a wise and discerning life today?

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