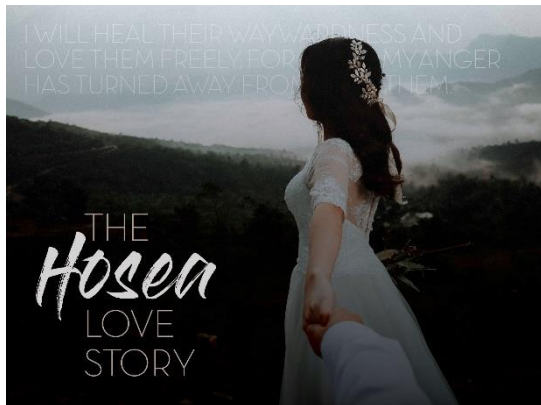


Hosea – The Love Story



The book of Hosea tells the breathtaking love story of a preacher and a prostitute. It is a marriage made in heaven.

It's a story with all the elements of an award winning screen play. And yet, Hosea is neither a euphoric romance novel nor cliché Hollywood drama. It is a tale of true love which is real and raw, taking us to the heights of soul satisfying splendour and the depth of heart crushing betrayal.

Significantly, as we are given this window into the lives of The Preacher and The Prostitute we see a reflection of ourselves. Their marriage, with all its complexity, is a living drama of God's relationship with his people.

It's a story about God's vow and His church, the bride. A bride of value and beauty, who is prone to wander in rebellion, but always in the thoughts and affection of God's redeeming love.

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Read Hosea 1:1-2:1

Allow the passage to wash over you, confront you, challenge you. After reading – what stands out? What questions do you have? What images come to your mind?

Reflect on the Talk

How did God speak to you during the talk. What insights did you gain about yourself, God and life?

Study Questions

Who are you in the story? Why?

How is God depicted in the story? Does this in anyway challenge or expand your understanding of God – explain.

How is sin depicted in the story?

How does our sin affect God in the story? How is this confronting for us?

Why do you think unfaithfulness is such a big deal to God?

What are some ways in which people today are unfaithful to God?

What are some ways in which the church today is unfaithful to God?

How do you think Hosea's neighbours might have responded to the announcement of the naming of his children? What names might bring the challenge of the gospel to your culture?

How does God's anger towards our sin reveal God's love for us?

Hosea 1:10 is a promise first by Hosea to the Jews. But in Romans 9:22-26 Paul applies it to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God. Explain Paul's logic.

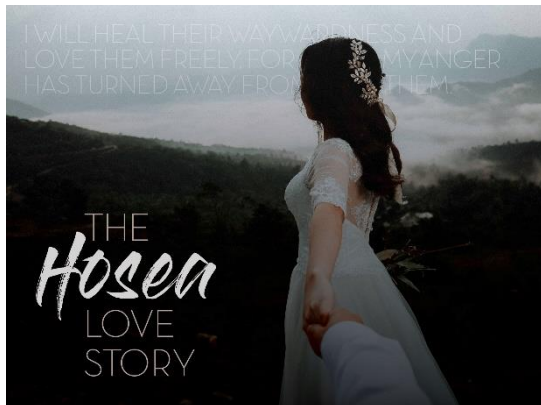
In 2:1 God tells Hosea to say to Israel "you are my people" and "you have received mercy" Who do you know needs to hear these words?

Final thought...

The message of Hosea is a plea from God to us to turn away from sin, adultery and spiritual unfaithfulness. What areas in your life do you think God is challenging you about?

Prayer...

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Read Hosea 2:2-13

Allow the passage to wash over you, confront you, challenge you. After reading – what stands out? What questions do you have? What images come to your mind?

Reflect on the Talk

How did God speak to you during the talk. What insights did you gain about yourself, God and life?

Study Questions

Do you ever think, 'Grace means it doesn't matter if I sin because I'll be forgiven'?

Why does it matter when Christians sin, and how does Hosea 2 help us answer this question?

How does God respond to our sin?

How do people today try to achieve a sense of identity or self-worth, and what fruit does this produce in their lives?

Identify some of the of the key relationships that influence who you are within community?

How do you fulfill your commitments to these various relationships?

To what do people in your context attribute their past or present blessings?

What should Israel have done when she enjoyed good harvests?

How should we respond when we are successful?

Give examples from your experience of God blessing people by withdrawing His blessings.

If God needed to get your attention how might He go about it?

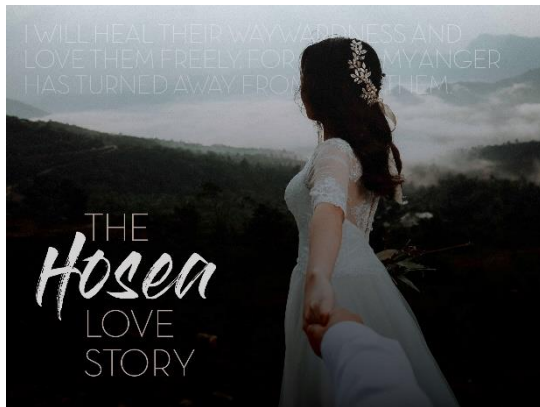
What do you think it means to be satisfied in the Lord?

Final thought...

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Read Hosea 2:14-23

Allow the passage to wash over you, confront you, challenge you. After reading – what stands out? What questions do you have? What images come to your mind?

Reflect on the Talk

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Study Questions

Verse 14 is probably the most beautiful statement of Hosea. What does it mean for God to “Allure” us? How does he do this?

The wilderness reminds us of the time between Egypt and the Promised Land. A time of covenant renewal. A time of the 10 commandments – so that we might know how to live under God’s rule. It is also a place of isolation. God wants to allure you into the wilderness to renew his covenant with you so that you will change the way you are living. What does this mean for you?

Keep reading – what promises does God make to Israel? Make a list. When and how are these promises fulfilled?

Who will accomplish all these things? How does this give us confidence that in fact it will happen?

Hosea looks forward to what God will do through Jesus. The renewal of all things will take place when Jesus returns. But the renewed marriage has already begun. Compare Hosea 2:23 to 1 Peter 2:10. How do these verses shape our identity and the way we should live?

Andrew spoke in his summary of three things to meditate on. Discuss – agree - disagree. How do these ideas impact you?

1. Our greatest problem is not sin, it is idolatry.
2. God will do whatever it takes to win our hearts back.
 - He will frustrate us
 - He will remove his blessing from us
 - He will allure us and speak tenderly to us.
3. The goal of God’s love is to bless us so that we can truly worship Him.

This whole passage is about the heart - our heart before God. Read Proverbs 4:23. How are you guarding your heart?

Final thought...

Prayer...

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Read Hosea 3:1-5 & 11:1-11

Allow the passage to wash over you, confront you, challenge you. After reading – what stands out? What questions do you have? What images come to your mind?

Reflect on the Talk

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Study Questions

Read again 3:1-5

Try and retell the story – what is happening? What is Hosea going through? What is Gomer experiencing? Where is their relationship at?

There are many images in the bible of our relationship with God. Father – child. King – servant. Shepherd – sheep. Why does God want us to know him as a husband?

Andrew stated in his talk that a husband a wife speak of three great truths. Priority, Intimacy and transformation

How are you making God a priority in your life?

How are you developing intimacy with Him?

How is God's love transforming you?

Hosea and Gomer are now back together – living in the same house but there is not intimacy. In a sense it is a sad situation. Married but apart. How can this be a reflection on our relationship with God?

Read 11:1-11

In what ways does your experience of family life help you understand God's relationship with His people?

How is divine anger different from most human anger?

How can God be both determined to judge and save at the same time?

How does God the lion roar today?

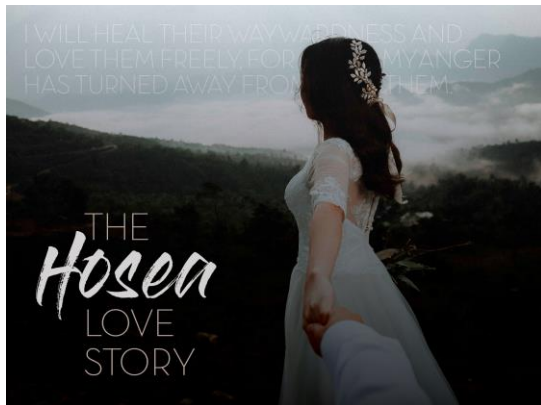
How does Hosea 11 renew your understanding of God?

How does Hosea 11 affect your understanding of mission?

Final thought...

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READ HOSEA 6-7

Allow the passage to wash over you, confront you, challenge you. After reading – what stands out? What questions do you have? What images come to your mind?

REFLECT ON THE TALK

How did God speak to you during the talk? What insights did you gain about yourself, God and life?

STUDY QUESTIONS

Read again 6 -7

Verses 1-4 start off well with Israel seeking to return to God but we soon discover that they are only halfhearted. Unable to keep their promises. How does this describe us? In what ways can we be halfhearted in our love for God?

Hosea 6 says that people are like a morning mist (6:4), overheated oven (7:4), a half-baked loaf (7:8), a deluded old man (7:9), a senseless bird (7:11), a self –preoccupied prayer (7:14) and a faulty bow (7:16). Which of the human descriptions grip your imagination and why?

What is it about Israel's worship that God detests?

Israel was trying to deceive God – offering sacrifices to Him while at the same time worshipping Baal. In the end they deceived themselves. How does false worship lead to self-deception? Explain.

Hosea and Jesus say: “I desire mercy (steadfast love), not sacrifice” What might this look like for us and for our church?

True and false worship.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 - What does true and false worship look like?

Read Matthew 7:15-23 - What does true and false worship look like?

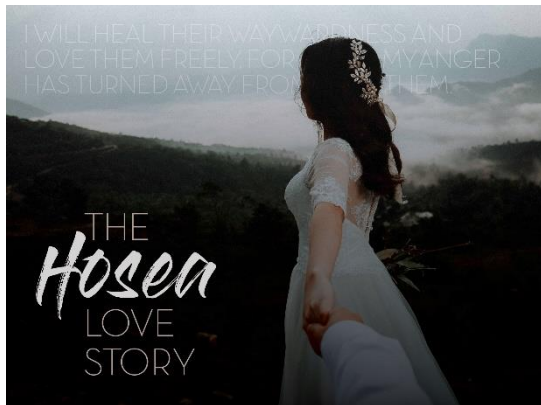
Read Matthew 23: 25-28 - What does true and false worship look like?

FINAL THOUGHT...

It seems that YHWH hates false worship. He detests false sacrifice. What He wants is our heart – poured out in love for Him. How can we protect, guard and nourish our heart to be soft before God.

PRAYER...

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READ HOSEA 14

Allow the passage to wash over you, confront you, challenge you. After reading – what stands out? What questions do you have? What images come to your mind?

REFLECT ON THE TALK

How did God speak to you during the talk? What insights did you gain about yourself, God and life?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are the different ways that Hosea uses the term 'turn' or 'repent' in Chapter 14?
2. Review again how you would complete these sentences:

I will be really happy when...

My future will be secure if...

Why are we so tempted to put our hope in other things? How do we resist this and stay devoted to the Lord?

In what areas of your life do you find it most difficult to relinquish control?

3. Hosea invites you to 'take with you words'.
If you were to compose your own liturgy of turning what words will you bring to God?
This might include words you would use to ask for forgiveness, to renounce false security and to express your faith in God's fatherly love.
4. Looking back, in what ways have you seen God's blessing in or over your life that has allowed you to flourish in your faith and/or relationships?

Who do you remember with fondness because of the way God used them to bless you?

How could you be one of those people whom God uses to be a blessing to others?

FINAL THOUGHT...

How has God spoken to you through the message of Hosea?

PRAYER...