

RECONCILIATION

CORE PASSAGE: HOSEA 1:2-3; 2:19-20,23; 3:1-5; 14:1-4

CONTEXT

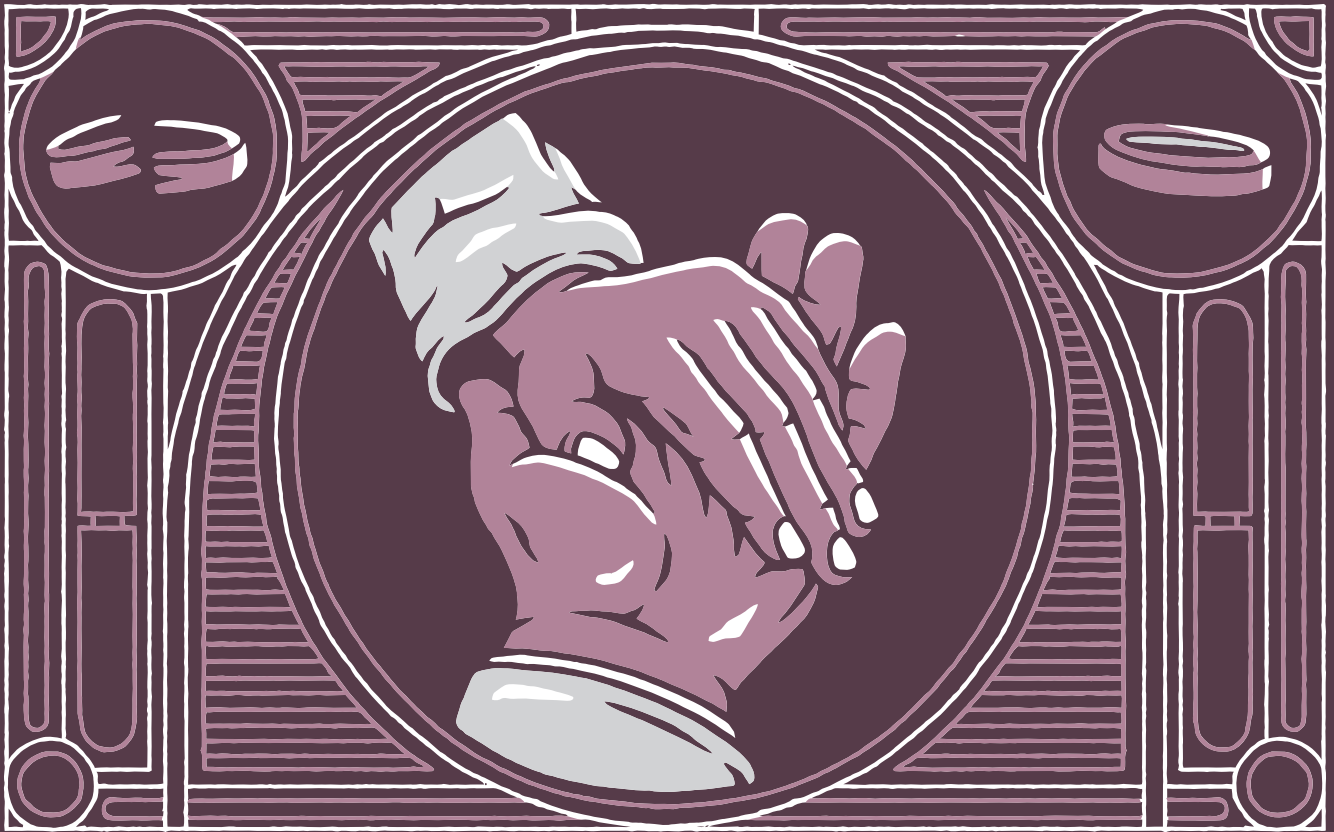
Though he is often listed as a minor prophet in the Bible based on the length of his book, Hosea was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah for many decades. Through Hosea's life and message, God presented His case against Israel, stating, "There is no truth, no faithful love, and no knowledge of God in the land! Cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery are rampant; one act of bloodshed follows another" (Hos. 4:1-2). God used Hosea's family as a picture of Israel's unfaithfulness to Himself, comparing their relationship with that of a husband and an unfaithful wife.

KEY CONCEPT

God in His grace reconciles with His sinful people.

As you examine Hosea 1:2-3; 2:19-20,23; 3:1-5; 14:1-4:

- Contemplate the difficult call of God upon Hosea to marry a promiscuous woman and his willingness to obey.
- Rejoice in the example of Hosea and the greater reality of the faithful love and reconciliation found in Christ.



TIMELINE

Elijah Performs Miracles and Prophecies to Israel (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2)

Jonah Prophecies to Israel and Nineveh (2 Kings 14; Jonah 1–4)

Israel's Kings Persist in Doing Evil in the Lord's Sight (2 Kings 14–17)

Elisha Performs Miracles and Prophecies to Israel (2 Kings 2–13)

SESSION STUDY: Hosea Prophecies to Israel and Judah (Hosea 1–14)

Assyria Besieges and Conquers Israel, Deporting the People (2 Kings 17)

Daily Readings

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: Hosea 1–3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: Hosea 8–10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: Hosea 4–5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: Hosea 11–14 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: Hosea 6–7 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 89 |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

GOD'S LOVE IS BASED PURELY ON HIS COMPASSION AND CHARACTER (HOSEA 1:2-3; 2:19-20,23).

Underline each word used to describe Israel's unfaithfulness, and circle each word used to describe God's character.

2 When the LORD first spoke to Hosea, he said this to him: Go and marry a woman of promiscuity and have children of promiscuity, for the land is committing blatant acts of promiscuity by abandoning the LORD. **3** So he went and married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

.....
19 I will take you to be my wife forever. I will take you to be my wife in righteousness, justice, love, and compassion. **20** I will take you to be my wife in faithfulness, and you will know the LORD. . . . **23** I will sow her in the land for myself, and I will have compassion on Lo-ruhamah; I will say to Lo-ammi: You are my people, and he will say, "You are my God."

LEADER NOTE: The prophets of the Old Testament ordinarily spoke messages given by God about the state of Israel and warned people against coming judgment incurred by their unfaithfulness to the Lord. Often the prophets fulfilled their calling through public oration or mighty acts. God commanded Hosea to do something different—acting out his assigned message.

Hosea's prophetic ministry was unique, to say the least. God instructed him to marry an adulterous woman and raise a family with her, symbolizing God's faithful love for His unfaithful people: the Israelites. In this way, Hosea's life showed the people a picture of their own "blatant acts of promiscuity by abandoning the LORD" (1:2).

Hosea obeyed God's command and married a woman named Gomer, who fit God's description of "a woman of promiscuity." She most likely was a prostitute, although her life may simply have been characterized by sexual activity within the community. Gomer bore Hosea three children of questionable parentage, and God gave each of their children names that symbolized Israel's unfaithfulness (vv. 3-9).

LEADER NOTE: God gave each of Hosea's children unique names. Their firstborn son's name was Jezreel, a reference to God's fulfilled judgment on Ahab's house by Jehu now coming upon Jehu's house for their continued idolatry (2 Kings 9:24–10:11; Hos. 1:3-5). Gomer's daughter's name, Lo-ruhamah, meant "No Compassion," symbolizing Israel's coming exile at God's hand for their sin (1:6). Gomer's second son's name, Lo-ammi, meant "Not My People," symbolizing the result of Israel's broken covenant promises with God—divorce (1:8-9).

What has been the hardest thing the Lord has called you to do?

Notes

Hosea's broken family on account of his wife's unfaithfulness may have been cause for a declaration of divorce, but the Lord was still working through this situation. Hosea's family was a call to repentance in his generation and an opportunity for God to teach the Israelites about His compassion and mercy (1:10). The Lord promised Israel, despite their unfaithfulness, "I will take you to be my wife forever" (2:19). To the nation He had declared "No Compassion"—"Lo-ruhamah"—He promised compassion. To the people He called "Not My People"—"Lo-ammi"—He will call them "My People" (2:23). God's love for Israel was not dependent on Israel's faithfulness; rather, His love was rooted in His compassion and character. Even though His bride—Israel—was unfaithful, God's mercy led Him to love His wife.

God has not changed (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; Jas. 1:17). Even though we were dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), God had mercy. In fact, Hosea was not the only one to marry an unfaithful wife. Ephesians 5:25-26 pictures Jesus Christ as married to the church: "Christ loved the church and gave himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her." One day the Bridegroom will come for His bride (Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2), and the church will be with Jesus forever. God loves His unfaithful people because of His unchanging compassion and character.

Why is it important that God's love for Israel was rooted in His character and not Israel's faithfulness?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

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CHRIST AS RECONCILIATION: Ever since the fall of the first man and woman in the garden of Eden, God and human beings have been estranged. Sin resulted not only in an estranged relationship with God but also in enmity between God and humanity. Sin is an infinite offense against an infinite God. Thankfully, God loves His enemies and sent Christ to be the reconciler between us and God. Through Christ's death, God provides the means whereby that broken relationship is restored and renewed (Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:18-19).

GOD IS READY TO HEAL AND SAVE HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARE READY TO TURN TOWARD HIM (HOSEA 3:1-5; 14:1-4).

Circle each instance of the words “turn” and “return.”

1 Then the LORD said to me, “Go again; show love to a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, just as the LORD loves the Israelites though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.” **2** So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and nine bushels of barley. **3** I said to her, “You are to live with me many days. You must not be promiscuous or belong to any man, and I will act the same way toward you.” **4** For the Israelites must live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, and without ephod or household idols. **5** Afterward, the people of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come with awe to the LORD and to his goodness in the last days.

1 Israel, return to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity. **2** Take words of repentance with you and return to the LORD. Say to him, “Forgive all our iniquity and accept what is good, so that we may repay you with praise from our lips. **3** Assyria will not save us, we will not ride on horses, and we will no longer proclaim, ‘Our gods!’ to the work of our hands. For the fatherless receives compassion in you.” **4** I will heal their apostasy; I will freely love them, for my anger will have turned from him.

Even when we are far from God, He desires for His people to turn toward Him so they may receive healing and salvation. Israel had forsaken their covenant with God in egregious ways. They worshiped the Canaanite god Baal (2:8,13,16-17) and attributed their prosperity to false gods (2:12). Because of this, Hosea prophesied the consequences of Israel’s unfaithfulness: the Lord would expose their shame (2:3,10) and take away their provision (2:9,12). Still, God desired Israel’s repentance and remained faithful to her. He patiently waited for Israel to return to Him so that He may heal and free them.

LEADER NOTE: It is easy to condemn Israel for their egregious sins, thinking we are somehow better. But God’s Word says, “If we say, ‘We have no sin,’ we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9). Everything written of Israel is a warning for us (1 Cor. 10:11-14).

In what ways have you, like Israel, been unfaithful to the Lord?

God instructed Hosea to go again and love Gomer “just as the LORD loves the Israelites though they turn to other gods” (3:1). Hosea had to buy Gomer back. It is not clear why Gomer needed to be redeemed, but she did, and Hosea paid that price. Hosea’s pursuit of Gomer and his desire to remain faithful to her illustrates God’s covenant relationship with His people. Though God would exile His people in punishment, He would still pursue them in compassion.

LEADER NOTE: Hosea 3:4-5 prophesies Israel’s exile and restoration:

“The Israelites must live many days without king or prince . . .

Afterward, the people of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king.” Contained in this prophesy about Israel’s immediate future is a promise about Israel in the last days, when she will be led by the Son of David, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

God’s readiness to accept Israel’s “repentance” (14:2) points to His character. When Israel returned to Him, He was ready to forgive their sin, save them from their enemies, and let them experience His love and compassion once more. God is ready to heal and save His people when they are ready to turn toward Him (2 Chron. 7:14). God’s readiness to accept His people’s repentance is ultimately exhibited in the gospel of Jesus Christ. God is always ready to heal His people when they repent and turn to Him—this is the heart of gospel reconciliation (Rom. 5:6-11).

How have you experienced healing from your sin when you turn to God in repentance?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

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Though Gomer was unfaithful, God commanded Hosea to take her back in love and compassion, symbolizing God’s own love and forgiveness for His people, Israel. One day, Israel will return and seek after the messianic King, Jesus (Rom. 11). Through faith in Jesus, all who believe are forgiven and reconciled with God because of God’s grace and mercy.

ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: As people arrive ask: “When have you done something wrong and someone showed you grace and forgiveness, either as a child or an adult?”

CONTEXT

SAY: When people show us grace and forgiveness, most of the time we feel humbled and grateful. And we should feel that toward God especially because He is a forgiving and gracious God. To fully understand today’s text, it must be read in light of the full story of Scripture. The story of Hosea, who prophesied to both Israel and Judah, reminds us that God is faithful even when His people are unfaithful, which is constant. He is good even when His people are sinful; He is merciful even when His people deserve wrath.

RECAP

ASK: What was one key idea that stood out to you in your personal preparation this week?

SUMMARIZE: Display **Pack Item 9: You Will Know the Lord** where the group can see it as you help recap the Bible passage. Say: “Today’s account in Hosea begins with the Lord commanding Hosea to take a promiscuous woman, Gomer, as his wife. Scripture tells us that Hosea and Gomer had children, perhaps while she was committing adultery, and then she left. But even then, the Lord instructed Hosea to reconcile his relationship with Gomer. Throughout this story of redemption and reconciliation, the Lord compared the relationship of Hosea and Gomer with the covenant relationship of the Lord and His people.”

TRANSITION: Scripture reveals an overarching pattern in human history in which the Lord gives a command, His people break that command, and repeatedly the Lord, in His loving-kindness, draws them back to Himself. This faithful and unfaithful relationship comes to a head at the cross, where Jesus paid the ultimate price so a guilty people might be seen as blameless before Him. Let’s take a closer look at a couple of instances in Scripture where the Lord reconciled what man had broken.



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Key Concept: God in His grace reconciles with His sinful people.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Notes

CHART: Direct your group to page 74 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Radical Reconciliation.” Recreate this table on a board so you can record the group’s responses as they interact with Scripture.

Radical Reconciliation			
Examine the following biblical accounts of separation and reconciliation to better understand what God has done for us in Jesus.			
	ACTIONS	RESPONSE	RECONCILIATION
Joseph and His Brothers (Genesis 45:1-15; 50:15-21)			
The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)			
Paul and Peter (Galatians 2:6-16; 2 Peter 3:15-16)			
Hosea and Gomer (Hosea 3:1-5)			

INSTRUCT: Divide the group into three smaller groups. Assign each group one of the three non-Hosea accounts listed above. Instruct the groups to read the passage(s) and record notes about the stories that answer questions such as: “What initially caused the damage in the relationship?” “What responses facilitated the reconciliation?” and “How was the reconciliation affirmed?” Instruct one person from each group to transcribe their findings on the board while participants record these in their PSG as well.

DISCUSS: What are some common themes in these stories? How are these themes found in the larger story of Scripture?

SAY: It is not a stretch to see ourselves as the offenders in these stories, whether toward God or others. So often we are unfaithful, yet the Lord is always faithful, pursuing us, drawing us to repent, and reconciling with us when we do.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Hosea 3:1-5.

Notes

DISCUSS: Lead the whole group through the Actions–Response–Reconciliation activity for the relationship between Hosea and Gomer, recording conclusions on the board.

CONNECT: Help your group see how the situation between Hosea and Gomer illustrated the situation between the Lord and spiritually adulterous Israel, as well as our own sinful state. God’s people would soon experience destruction and exile by the Assyrians for their broken vows to the Lord. But the Lord also promised to buy them back, to bring them back, and to be their God forever. The same pattern is on display in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sinners, enemies of God, are pursued by the love of the Lord to draw them to Himself, and those who repent, trusting in Jesus, who paid the ultimate price for our freedom, are reconciled to God for all eternity. Jesus is the better Hosea.

DEBRIEF

God did not instruct Hosea just to marry Gomer but to love her. How are we as believers called to love others, even those who wound us?

(PSG p. 74) What does Hosea’s pursuit of Gomer teach you about God’s pursuit of you?

SUMMARIZE

Lead the group to review the key concept, inviting them to share ways today’s group experience helped them better understand the concept of reconciliation. May we never forget that God’s loving-kindness calls us to repentance. In Christ, we are no longer bound by our sin nor defined as enemies of His holiness. Rather, we have been set free and are now known as co-heirs of the kingdom of God. When we fail, may we be quick to return to our good and faithful God.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 75). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Hands** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: Romans 3:23 says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” We all have broken God’s law, and our sin has earned us eternal separation from Him (Rom. 6:23). But with Christ, we are saved by faith, not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:8-9). Understanding our inability to reconcile ourselves to God is paramount to understanding the gospel.

What are some specific ways you have broken God’s law and need reconciliation?



HEART: Those who have been born again experience life in a new way (John 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17). Yet we also anticipate a day when our reconciliation to God is finally complete. On that day, the Scriptures say: “He will wipe away

every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4). The anticipation of full and final reconciliation with God comforts us during this life of pain and brokenness.

How does the anticipation of full reconciliation with God for eternity strengthen or comfort you today?



HANDS: The forgiveness and reconciliation we receive from God leads us to reconcile with others (Eph. 4:32). In fact, as followers of Jesus, we have received the ministry of reconciliation, in which we are ambassadors of God and share His mission, pleading with people to be reconciled to God through Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-20). We are compelled to reconcile with others and to help others be reconciled to God as we reflect the character of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Who do you need to forgive and reconcile with, and what steps will you take to do so?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- For further study, read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, noting how the Lord's extension of reconciliation toward us is also a call to extend reconciliation to those who have wronged us.
- In what areas of your life does sin have a stronghold? Know that you can go to God for mercy and forgiveness and help.
- Who do you know that needs to hear of God's mercy and forgiveness in Jesus Christ, the better Hosea? Reach out to them this week.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 75 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 89:13-18 with your group, thanking God that He pursues us to reconcile us through the righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ.