

# Hosea

## *Introduction*

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Hosea 1-3

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Some lessons in life seem to be hard for us to learn, and there is one that has seemingly evaded humanity repeatedly. Since the beginning of time, since creation, men and women have been trying to find fulfillment, meaning, and purpose in anything in life except for God.

How many times can you and I say that we have gone for a specific goal, something that we have strived for, thinking that once we reached that goal, that we then would have fulfillment, that we would have purpose, that there would bring meaning to our life only to find that once we accomplished that goal, it didn't give us that meaning of purpose. It wasn't enough. Let me give you some examples. Maybe it was a health goal that you set for yourself.

You wanted to lose a certain amount of weight, or you wanted to fit into a certain outfit. Maybe you wanted to run a 5K in a certain time, or you wanted to finish a marathon. Maybe you wanted to bench press 300 pounds. You wanted to look a certain way. And you kept telling yourself that once you did, life would be better, and you would have peace, but it wasn't, and you didn't. Maybe it was a financial goal.

You said to yourself, "I want to make a certain amount of money every year." Maybe you had the goal of saving a million dollars for retirement. You wanted to be debt-free. Maybe you wanted to pay off your house, and you kept telling yourself that once you reached that financial goal, life would finally be better and you would have peace, but you didn't. Maybe it was a things goal. You wanted to live in a certain house. You wanted to drive around in a certain car.

Maybe you wanted to save for a new toy. Maybe it was a boat that you could use on the lakes or a television. Maybe it was a vacation home. And you kept telling yourself that once you arrived there that life would be better and you would have peace, but you didn't. Maybe it was a relational goal. You wanted to get married to your soulmate. Maybe you just want to find a boyfriend or a girlfriend. You want to have kids. You want to make great friendships and go through life together.

And maybe you were blessed in your relationship. You are married to your soulmate and your kids are perfect, which if they are, please come talk to me, all right? But you got to that point in your life where you were married, you had the American dream, but it still felt like something was missing. Maybe it was a career goal. You wanted to own your own business. Maybe you wanted to become CEO of some large company, or you wanted to make a name for yourself in some industry.

Maybe you wanted to win a national championship, or you wanted to rise to the top of your profession. Maybe you arrived there and you got there and you realized it wasn't fulfilling. Something was still missing. There are many things that we hope for that we think will bring us joy and happiness and fulfillment. Maybe it's your sports team winning a national championship. Yeah, go blue. You guys love it. All right.

But there's always another year, isn't there? It doesn't last. You don't stay on the top. Maybe your kids are super successful. Maybe you are retired and you're here today and you've got money that is saved and you can travel

and relax, but you still come to church today and you say, "But pastor, it still feels like something is missing." How many people throughout history have arrived at the top of the ladder that they were climbing, only to discover they were climbing the wrong ladder.

Once they arrived, they discovered it wasn't what they thought it would be. Today we're going to start a three-week series in an Old Testament book that not many people spend much time in. It's the book of Hosea. And in this book of Hosea, you and I are going to discover that it has been common for at least 3,000 years for humanity to pursue anything but God, only to find that they are still wanting.

We need to recognize the truth that God is the only one that can fill that desire inside of us. Some people have called it the God-shaped hole in your soul. And anything you try pushing in there besides God only leaves you still feeling empty. Now before we jump into the book of Hosea, since it isn't a popular or well-known book, let me give you some history about the book of Hosea.

Of course, it was written by a prophet named Hosea, but it was put together by a second author or a second person that we don't know. What happened was there was a collection of prophecies by Hosea that existed and were known by the early believers, and someone thought, you know, it's important for us to keep these and to make sure that we preserve them and so they put them together. That's how we have the book of Hosea.

Now these prophecies by Hosea were written down sometime in the middle of the 8th century BC, so around 750 BC, but they weren't put together in book form as we see it until after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, which was in 722 BC. So there was roughly a 30-year period where these prophecies were being spread around, but in 722 after there they were put together.

Now just to give you some contemporaries of understanding where we are in history, the prophet Amos would have been a contemporary prophet of Hosea, which means both Amos and Hosea lived during a tumultuous season of Israel's history, during which six different kings reigned over the course of 25 years.

Four of those kings were murdered by their successors while in office, one was captured in battle, and only one, Menachem, was succeeded by his son in a natural shift of power. Nothing is known about Hosea outside of this specific book. We don't hear of Hosea in any other Scripture, and we don't hear of Hosea in any extra biblical literature that we have. This is all we have about Hosea.

Now you need to know that Hosea is writing his prophecies concerning the northern nation of Israel. If you remember when God brought His people into the Promised Land and they ask for a king and they become a nation, you have King Saul and then you have David and you have Solomon and you have kind of the golden years for the nation of Israel, but shortly thereafter, these 12 tribes begin to fight amongst themselves, and there is a division in the people of Israel. The nation divides.

And so you have the northern kingdom of Israel, which is made up of ten tribes and the southern kingdom of Judah. Hosea is from the northern nation of Israel, and that's what his prophecies are concerning. And a fun biblical fact that you can impress your friends with, Hosea is actually the only writing prophet that's from the northern nation of Israel. All the others come from Judah. So he's the only one that gives us a perspective of somebody that was there.

Now as we are in the book of Hosea, you and I need to understand that Israel is going to be punished by God because of their disobedience to Him. Israel as a nation has turned away from God, they've turned away from Yahweh, and they have begun to worship other gods. They've put their trust in their military strength, and they were trying to live like the rest of the world, even though God had said, "You are to be my special possession, my special people.

I want to reveal myself to the world through you." And so you are to be holy, you are to be set apart, and they were doing anything but. And so God is going to use the nation of Assyria to send them into exile and to judge

them for their actions. But luckily for you and I, it's not the end of the story. Even in Hosea, it's not the end of the story.

We will see God's grace, we will see God's mercy, and we will see God's love even in the midst of their disobedience, understanding that God does the same for us. He continues to show us mercy, grace, love, and forgiveness even in the midst of our disobedience. We're going to try to get through Hosea chapter 1, 2, and 3. It's a big job, so I'm going to try to go fast, all right? So if you have your Bibles, you can open up to Hosea chapter 1, verse 1, and while you're doing that, I will pray and then we will jump in.

Heavenly Father, I pray that our hearts and our minds would be open to hear from you today, Lord, that we would be reminded that there is not a single person here, especially me, that can stand before you and be righteous on my own doings. Instead, we are sinners that have been saved by grace. And so we come before you with grateful hearts, and if there are any here that have not received that grace and mercy, I pray that they would receive that today, that they would accept your forgiveness and proclaim you as Lord of their lives.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Hosea chapter 1: 1 begins, "The word of the Lord that came to Hosea, son of Bay Area, during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam, son of Jehoash, King of Israel.

Now, I'm just going to pause on verse 1 because I want you to be reminded that Scripture is not a book of fables and fairy tales that are good to use for teaching character and discipline, but Scripture is a book about real people, in real places, and at a real time in history. There is a reason that when you read the beginning of these books that we have, that we call Scripture, that we are given real kings, real lands, real people, real stories.

This is not fiction. It's meant to be taken as history. I just want to make sure we all understand that. At least that's my perspective based on what I read. All right? We go on to Hosea chapter 1 verse 2. "When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, 'Go marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her. For like an adulterous wife, this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.

So he married Gomer, daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. We have to stop here because things get strange really quick, don't they? I mean, you're reading this and it's not what you expect to read in the Bible. It's not what you expect to read at the very beginning of the story. Here we read that God tells Hosea, this prophet, to marry an adulterous woman, and letting him know this is going to serve as a picture, a real-life story, an example of the relationship between God and Israel.

We're going to get a word picture here. The Israelites are God's chosen people, and Israel has been unfaithful to their God. They have been like an adulterous woman in a relationship, and so I want you to marry an adulterous woman so you know what it feels like and for a picture for everybody else to see. Now, we don't have anything recorded in the story of what that conversation looked like between God and Hosea.

Did Hosea argue with God? I would have, right? Did he say, "You know what? Is there a different word picture we can use, God, please? You know Is there anything else that we can do to get Israel's attention? Did he ask God to find a different prophet?" We don't know that. All we see is the obedience in verse 3, "So He married Gomer. He was obedient to God." Now, I'm not sure which is worse. The fact that she was an adulterous woman or the fact that her name is Gomer, right?

Now, if anybody's named Gomer, I apologize. You know, like, that's what your parents called you if you're watching online, you know, but it would be weird to have a wife named Gomer, for sure. Now, as I think about these Old Testament prophets, I'm not sure that I would have wanted to be an Old Testament prophet because it was kind of a mixed bag. You didn't know what you were going to get. You had some Old Testament prophets like Elijah that God had poured His Spirit upon and allowed him to do miraculous things to point glory to God.

And you think, "Well, that would be neat. I would like to be that type of prophet." But then you had other prophets like Ezekiel, whose word picture that he was supposed to live out was to lie on his side on the ground

for 390 days and to cook food over his own dung to survive. As an example of all of the years that they were disobedient to God, and again, I think if I'm Ezekiel, I would say, "God, is there a different way we could show this?" Right?

And then to make things work, after that, he had to flip on the other side for another 40 days and live on his side. Or you had people like Hosea, which were commanded to marry an adulterous woman. You see, as we read Scripture, you will find that God often reveals His complex truths through real-life stories. God uses our life stories to speak about His complex truths.

It's a way for us to understand, and this continues on in the New Testament. What was Jesus' favorite way to teach the people? It was through parables, through stories. It was through things that our minds can comprehend in order to understand a deeper truth about who God is and about what is taking place. And so one of our prayers should be to ask for wisdom, the ability to understand God through these stories, but also the ability to share the truths of God to unbelievers through real-life stories.

I know personally, I learn best through story. I learned best that way, and that's the way that God reveals Himself to us. We go on in verse 4. "Then the Lord said to Hosea about this child, 'Call your son Jezrael, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezrael, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. In that day,' God says, 'I will break Israel's bow in the valley of Jezreel.'" So Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter.

Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call her Loruama, for I will no longer show love to Israel that I should at all forgive them. Yet I will show love to Judah, and I will save them, but not by bow or sword or battle, not by horses or horsemen, but I the Lord their God will save them." After she had weaned Loru Hama, Gomer had another son.

Then the Lord said, "Call him low on me, for you are not my people, and I am not your God." So Gomer has three children: Jezreel, which means God scatters, because God will scatter his people for their sin. Then they have low rule, which means not pitied or not loved, because God is no longer going to show His love to the house of Israel. And then you have low Ami, which means not my people, because Israel had broken the covenant with God and were no longer his people.

So how would you like to have one of those names for the rest of your life? Could you imagine a child dedication service like that? Oh, your name means not loved. Great, you know that's a wonderful, wonderful name. Things seem pretty bleak at this point in the story for Hosea and for Israel. God says, "I am going to withhold my hand of protection from you, and I am going to allow you to suffer the consequences for your actions." Why? Because you need to wake up, and this is the only way that I can get your attention.

And so we learn another truth about God. God allows you and I to go through difficult times to get our attention. I don't know anybody that likes it. I don't know anybody that appreciates it or even asks for it or wants it, but God will allow us to go through difficult seasons for our good. Maybe today you've come to church and you're going through something right now, and you say, "I don't understand. Why is God allowing this to happen?"

Why is God taking me through this?" The appropriate question to ask in that season of your life, which we've all experienced, it's okay to ask God why, and you should say, "God, why am I going through this? What are you trying to teach me?" That should be the question that we ask God. How are you trying to get my attention and what is the purpose behind it? It is God's love that allows us to go through difficult times.

There probably isn't a parent in here who haven't at one point or another allowed your child to make a mistake so they could learn. Now you don't let them play in the street because the consequences are too large, but there's other times, especially as your kids become teenagers, that you allow them to make a mistake so that they can experience the consequence and they can learn from that and grow. God allows us to go through difficult seasons as a point of learning and getting our attention.

Let's go on to verse 10. Yet the Israelites, this is the alternative, right? There's going to be punishment, there's going to be this, but God says, "Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people, they will be called children of the living God." The people of Judah and the people of Israel, the southern kingdom and the northern kingdom, will come back together and they will appoint one leader and will come out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.

God has two options here. Option one, He can totally abandon His people because of their sin and their adultery, which no one would blame Him for. It's what they deserve. Or He can get them back. Here we see that God's love is rich and it's deep. We understand that there's not a person in here that deserves God's love. Instead, He gives it freely. God continues to hold true to His part of the covenant and promise that He had given to Israel.

Remember when He called Abraham, he said, "I will make you into a great nation. Your descendants will be like the sand on the seashore and the stars in the sky. And God says, I will remain faithful to that promise, even though you have walked away from me. You will once again unite and you will have a leader. Understand that it is prophecies like this in Hosea that caused the religious leaders during Jesus' time to have the belief, there is no way Jesus can be our Messiah because He is not this military leader or ruler that is bringing back Israel as a world power.

They were looking for an earthly kingdom. God was talking about a heavenly kingdom. They just misinterpreted this prophecy a little bit. We see here in the story that God's love goes beyond our disobedience. Aren't you grateful that God's love goes beyond our disobedience? That's grace, that's mercy, that's love. Let's move on to chapter two, verse one.

Say of your brothers, my people, and of your sisters, my loved one, here is this continued transition. God cannot stay angry forever. We see a wonderful picture of a God that reveals what his true character is. Many times you would hear people say, "Well, the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament don't seem like the same God." Well, all you have to do is look at books like Hosea, where you see a God that is filled with love and grace and mercy.

You see a God that longs to forgive and wants us to know Him. This is a complete renewal of their relationship. Notice that He is saying of your brothers, My people, and of Your sisters, My loved ones. That's the opposite of what Hosea and Gomer had to name their children. God is still going to be just. He is still going to be faithful. He is not going to abandon us or leave us. Let's go on to verse 2.

He says, "Rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband. Let her remove the adulterous look from her face and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts. Otherwise, I will strip her naked, and I will make her as bare as on the day she was born. I will make her like a desert and turn her into a parched land, and I will slay her with thirst. I will not show my love to her children because they are the children of adultery.

Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said, "I will go after my lovers who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my olive oil, and my drink." Therefore, God says, "I will block her path with thorn bushes. I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. She will chase after her lovers but not catch them. She will look for them but not find them.

And then she will say, I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now." Does this sound a little bit like the prodigal son story? They go off thinking they know what's better. She goes off thinking that she knows what is going to bring fulfillment in life and purpose in life. She feels like something is missing. The prodigal son goes away thinking that he can live life to the fullest and it's going to bring fulfillment, and they only come to the conclusion, "You know what?

I was better off before." The grass is not always greener on the other side. All of the things that we try to pursue only lead to heartache, stress, and loss. One of the things that I have found to be true about sin in my own life and as I talk with others, is that sin is appealing at first. It is true that sin brings temporary pleasure, but it's also true that that turns into a lifetime of pain.

Sin brings temporary pleasure that brings a lifetime of pain. Eventually, we all realize that we're broken. We all need help. And for some of us, God needs to place those thorn bushes in our way, and we have to run into them a few times before we learn, right? We all know people that have to learn the hard way over and over again, and God is placing those thorn bushes around us for our protection not to hurt us. And yet we run into them.

Eventually, we realize we're all broken. We all need help. Israel as a nation seems to go through this cycle repeatedly in the Old Testament. It seems that nearly every generation wanders from God when things are going well, only to eventually return to Him when they need Him. How many of us does that explain our testimony as well? Life is good. We don't need God. Something bad happens. Oh God, we need you, right?

This is the cycle that is repeated over and over, and we should be grateful for God's forgiveness and grace. We go on in verse eight. We read that she has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold, which they used for Baal. Therefore, I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, which were intended to cover her naked body.

So now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers. No one will take her out of my hands. I will stop all of her celebrations, her yearly festivals, her new moons, her Sabbath days, all of her appointed festivals. I will ruin her vines and her fig trees, which she said were her pay from her lovers. I will make them a thicket and wild animals will devour them. I will punish her for the days that she burned incense to the baals, and she decked herself out with rings and jewelry and went after her lovers.

But me, she forgets, declares the Lord. There is a punishment that is going to come. These very people who received their gifts, remember this is an analogy. The Israelites, the very gifts that they had received from God, the food, the drink, the safety, the protection, all of those things, instead of thanking God for them, they dedicated them to other gods to the Baals. Can you understand how God would feel about that? Can you understand how would you feel, angry, betrayed, frustrated, hurt, want revenge?

That's how you and I would respond if somebody acted this way towards us. But look how God responds in verse 14. "Therefore," I would expect Him to say, "Therefore, I'm going to bring down fire from heaven," right, and destroy them all. That's what I would expect to come next. But he says, "Therefore, I am now going to allure her. I will lead her into the wilderness and I will speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and I will make the valley of a core a door of hope.

There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the day that she came out of Egypt. In that day, declares the Lord, "You will call me my husband. You will no longer call me my master. I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips, and no longer will their names be invoked. In that day, I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky, and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle, I will abolish from the land so that all may lie down in safety.

I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you in righteousness, in justice, in love and in compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness and you will acknowledge the Lord. And in that day, I will respond, declares the Lord. I will respond to the skies and they will respond to the earth, and the earth will respond to the grain and the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil, and they will respond to Jezrael. It will be filled with blessing again. I will plant her for myself in the land.

I will show my love to the one I called not my loved one. And I will say to those called not my people, you are my people, and they will say, "You are My God." This is grace, isn't it? This is mercy. This is love. This is forgiveness.

There is nothing that the Israelite people did to earn that. There is nothing that Gomer did to earn what Hosea would do for her. And there is no way that we can repay it.

It's a gift that we simply need to receive. God promises to restore us and to make us whole again. He promises to erase our shame and to erase our guilt. And even though we have walked away from Him, He still wants a relationship with us even after we intentionally walked away from His grace. You see, as we read the story, we say, "Man, I would never want to be Hosea," but then as we read the story, we find out we all are Gomer, aren't we?

We are all the person that has walked away from a loving Heavenly Father that cares for us. We're not going to take the time to read through chapter 3, but in that chapter, God tells Hosea, "I want you to go and buy your wife back from her lovers." She has a debt to them that she can't pay, so I want you to take money and I want you to go buy your wife back. He is to do for Gomer what God has done for us.

It will be a visual reminder of the grace and the love and the forgiveness that God offers to you and to me. And so maybe you're here today and you show up and you say, "Man, I just feel empty today. I feel like something is missing. I've attained some of my goals. I've climbed the ladder, but now that I'm there, I still feel like something's wrong. The joy, the happiness was fleeting. It only lasted for a moment.

Today, I want to remind you that only God can fulfill your inner desire. Only God can give you meaning and purpose in this life. I'm not telling you that goals are bad. In fact, I think goals are very healthy and they're very good. But if you reach those goals without Jesus, the good feelings will be so very temporary. And you can talk to anybody that has experienced that. They don't bring ultimate fulfillment without Jesus.

And so today my goal is to help you find fulfillment in Jesus. It doesn't matter what you've done or how far you have turned away from Him. He has gone to every extent to get you back, but He won't force it. It's your choice. Why? Because a forced relationship can never be a loving relationship. Love has to be a choice by both parties, and so God longs for you to come back and to choose Him.

Take time to admit and to recognize the goal that you're currently striving for without Jesus will not bring fullness. It will not bring happiness. What is it that actually will bring happiness and peace in your life? One of the good things that I think you can do is to talk with somebody that has accomplished one of the goals in life that you have and ask them how it felt when they finally got it, when they finally received it. How long did it last?

Many times we see those that are in positions or have gained things that we think is our desire, and it's so heartbreaking when those individuals end up taking their own lives and people look at that and they say, you had everything. Why would you do that? It's because they were missing Jesus. All of those things were empty without Jesus. So what is stopping you today from submitting to Jesus?

Understand that He has come back to you, He is longing for you to have a relationship with Him, and He's available anytime. If you have any questions, I pray that you would come talk with me. The prayer team will be up here. You can talk to them. You can come do your business with God at the altar. No one's going to bother you. My desire is that you would submit to Jesus today, that you would come back and know how much he truly loves you. There's not a single person here that deserves it or earned it, no one.

We are all Gomer in the story. We need Jesus' grace. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I thank You that You loved us enough that You sent Jesus to die on the cross in our place, that You offer us Your forgiveness and Your grace and Your mercy, not because of anything we've done, but simply as an act of love.

And so may we turn back to You no longer calling You our Master, calling you our husband, calling you our friend. We thank You for Your grace. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.