

H O S E A

A Call to Return

Discussion Facilitation Guide

- Final chapter of Hosea
- God's tone shifts from judgment to tender invitation
- Key theme: repentance leads to restoration

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Hosea 14:1–3 (ESV)

A Plea to Return to the LORD

[1] Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

[2] Take with you words
and return to the LORD;

say to him,

“Take away all iniquity;
accept what is good,
and we will pay with bulls
the vows of our lips.

[3] Assyria shall not save us;
we will not ride on horses;
and we will say no more, ‘Our God,’
to the work of our hands.

In you the orphan finds mercy.”

The Call to Return

- "Return, Israel, to the LORD your God" (v. 1)
- Acknowledge that sin has caused your downfall
- Bring words, not just rituals — confess with your lips
- Reject false saviors: Assyria, horses, idols
- True repentance is specific and verbal, not merely symbolic

Discussion *What do we turn to instead of God when life gets hard?*

Hosea 14:4–7

- [4] I will heal their apostasy;
I will love them freely,
for my anger has turned from them.
- [5] I will be like the dew to Israel;
he shall blossom like the lily;
he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon;
- [6] his shoots shall spread out;
his beauty shall be like the olive,
and his fragrance like Lebanon.
- [7] They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow;
they shall flourish like the grain;
they shall blossom like the vine;
their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon. (ESV)

God's Promise of Healing

- "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely" (v. 4)
- Restoration is total — roots, branches, beauty, and fragrance
- Fruitfulness and flourishing follow genuine repentance
- God's anger has turned away — grace is freely given
- Rich imagery: dew, lily, cedar, olive tree, fragrant Lebanon

Discussion *What does restoration look like in your own life?*

Hosea 14:8–9

[8] O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?
It is I who answer and look after you.
I am like an evergreen cypress;
from me comes your fruit.

[9] Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;
whoever is discerning, let him know them;
for the ways of the LORD are right,
and the upright walk in them,
but transgressors stumble in them. (ESV)

Idols vs. the Living God

v. 8

- Ephraim declares: "What more have I to do with idols?"
- A turning point — renouncing false sources of life
- God responds: "I am like a flourishing juniper"
- All fruitfulness comes from God alone, not our own effort
- Our productivity, security, and joy are rooted in Him

Discussion *What idols compete for your devotion today?*

Closing Wisdom & Application

v. 9

- "Who is wise? Let them realize these things" (v. 9)
- The ways of the LORD are right
- The righteous walk in them; the rebellious stumble

Closing Reflection *How will you respond to God's invitation to return?*

Closing Prayer

Lord, we return to You.

We confess that we have stumbled in our sin, and that our own hands have built the idols that pulled us away from You. We have looked to other things — our own strength, our own plans, the approval of the world — to give us what only You can give.

Forgive us. Take away our sin and receive us graciously.

We lay down our Assyrias — the alliances we've made with things that cannot save. We release our horses — the strategies and striving we've trusted more than Your provision. We will no longer call the work of our hands our god.

Make us wise enough to know this. Make us humble enough to live by it. May we walk in Your ways — not stumbling in rebellion, but moving forward in the freedom of those who have returned and been welcomed home.

We come back to You today.

Amen.