

You Want Me To Do What?

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- [0 : 0 0] As many of you know, I've been involved in ministry for a long time. And I've had some interesting experience. Unfortunately, I've also known some not-so-great experiences.
- I've known a few pastors that have been involved in some kind of scandal. Not very good. I don't know the last time I heard that. It just hurt me to the core.
- Today, I'm going to talk about a prophet that was involved in a scandal. Only, well, normally pastors get involved in a scandal that hurts the cause of Christ.
- This scandal advanced the cause of God. As the pastor mentioned, there are different encounters. Jacob wrestled with God. Moses met God.
- And burning bush. Isaiah had a dramatic vision. And so they were given different tasks. Isaiah was told to speak to a stubborn, unrepentant people.
- [1 : 0 7] People who would not listen. Again, there are other things. Moses was called the latest people. We have different gifts. Different gifts.
- Different abilities. I remember growing up in the church and I thought, well, I can't sing and I don't have the gift of evangelism. Therefore, I'm not gifted.
- I don't matter. Nothing counts. I don't know that God has given me different gifts. And those gifts are okay. I'm going to read from Hosea chapter 1, verse 1 to Hosea chapter 2, verse 2.
- It's page 1360 in your few Bibles in front of you. Because not everybody knows where the book of Hosea is. It's a different kind of book. The word of the Lord came to Hosea, son of Beri, during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Ezekiah, kings of Judah.
- And during the reign of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel. When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, Go marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her.
- [2 : 1 4] For like an adulterous wife to land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord. So he married Gomer, daughter of Bibliam. And she conceived and bore him a son. Then the Lord said to Hosea, Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel.
- And I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. And that day I will break Israel's bow in the belly of Jezreel. So Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, Call her Lohumama, which means not loved.
- For it will no longer show love to Israel, that it should all forgive them. Yet it will show love to Judah, and it will save them. Not by bow, sword, or battle, or by horses and horsemen.
- But I, the Lord their God, will save them. After she'd weaned Lohumama, Gomer had another son. Then the Lord said, Call him Lohami, which means not my people.
- For you are not my people, and I am not your God. Yet their Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In a place where it is said, You are not my people, they will be called children of the living God.

[3 : 24] The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together. They will anoint one leader and come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel. Save your brothers, my people. I know your sisters, my loved one.

In the different encounters, God speaks different ways. And what's really different about Hosea is not how he encounters, there's no mention of her burning bush.

We don't even know how God spoke to Hosea. What's different is what he said. The commission. And I've got it up there in the screen, different translations of the passage.

Where he says in chapter 1, verse 2. Go marry. And then the words are either translated as a prostitute or simply an unfaithful or immoral woman.

Translations vary. Really don't know. That's one of the reasons I called the sermon, you want me to do what? Because what did he command Hosea to do?

[4 : 31] And the other reason is, what? I mean, how many of you would really relish the idea if God told you to go to where the streetwalkers hang out and pick one for a wife?

Doesn't that sound great? What a horror. That's unbelievable that God would ask such a thing. But God did.

And that's why people have come up with all kinds of reasons to say, oh, no, no. God would never ask Hosea to do such a thing. But God asked some incredible things of his prophet.

You know? Shave your hair. Shave your hair. You know? Cook your food over dung. All kinds of other things he asked them to do. But one of the things that people said, well, this book story is not really literally true.

It's allegorical. And there's problems with that. It just, I remember my, one of my preachers, one of my, sorry, one of my professors, I used to repeat over and over again.

[5 : 41] If the common sense makes sense, I must seek no other sense. And it makes sense. There's no way. And it doesn't make. The other thing is, is that there's so many details in there that don't make sense allegorically.

Why would Gomer be in there? There's no significance of that. And then they're talking about the weaning of the children. That's, what's the point of that? If it's an allegory.

Because it, the other thing is that people have said, well, God commanded Hosea to marry a woman who later became unfaithful.

The problem with that is that it says, go marry an adulterous wife or whatever. And so it seems like, you know, God said, pick among these wicked, wanted women, pick the one you like.

Not a great choice. The other thing is that she may have been a prostitute dedicated to the worship of Baal.

[6 : 49] And that's a detail I won't go into. Or an or not prostitute. We don't know. Well, we don't know. The thing of it is, is that Hosea's marriage is what the book of Hosea is all about.

Sometimes the commissioning, the vision of Isaiah, for instance, filled his message. And he talked on and on again about the Holy One of Israel. You see that throughout the book of Isaiah.

And Hosea, it's all about unfaithfulness. You know, adultery, all kinds of things. How did, you know, it really, things.

And he lived it out for years. Sometimes in the Bible, we sometimes forget that one note says in one verse it's talking about years. One such verse is verse 8, chapter 1.

It says, after she'd weaned lower her mama, Gomer had another son. Weaning in that time took two or three years. So you put two or three years between each child.

- [7 : 57] And then sometime before the first child comes in, comes. His marriage lasted a while. And then in chapter 2, Hosea says to his children, rebuke your mother.
- So they must have been reached the age where they could talk. So he lived a long time in a marriage that wasn't the greatest. I had a wonderful marriage.
- But his wasn't. Also, several kings are listed. It's a long time. He prophesied for a long period. And he lived it out. He lived out his message.
- Over and over again, the people would have said, what? I mean, think about what would happen if the people saw Hosea going out and picking this wanton woman as his wife.
- What would they think? Wouldn't that have got their attention? What are you doing? The thing of it is, this passage of Scripture, though it's troublesome to say the least, teaches us some wonderful truths about God.
- [9 : 14] One is that God loves the unlovable. Which is great. Because that's what I'm like. I'm unlovable. Well, whatever.
- And Hosea loved Gomer despite her actions. He loved her. And he demonstrated God's love for Israel.
- Who could love an unfaithful wife? But he did. He kept on loving her. And it's interesting enough that not only was she not such a great woman when he married her, she fell back into sin again.
- And he's kept loving her. And he kept on loving her. And that's what it's like for us. All of us fall into sin from time to time. It happens.
- And God never, ever, ever stops loving us. And then, it also says that God disciplines the ones he loves.
- [10 : 20] It's interesting to look at the things about the discipline of God for the people of Israel. People have kind of interesting concepts of God.
- One of them is a concept like the force of Star Wars. That God is some kind of impersonal force. Some kind of deity who just set the world in being and left alone.
- And God really is above all human emotions. God can't love. God can't hate. Nothing. He's above all that. Hosea speaks dramatically that that is not the case.
- God loves deeply. Much more than we will ever love. And it hurts God when we're unfaithful to him. And the other is that, oh, God is such a loving God.
- That he would never discipline people. You know, he would, oh, he would never send anybody to hell. He's just not like, he's not that type of God. Well, that's not true. And it talks about here.
- [11 : 27] And we talk about some of the punishment. And the children's names talk about the punishment. Lohuamah means not loved. Talk about no longer showing love to the people.
- Jezreel talks about the massacre that Jehu executed in the belly of Jezreel. And he says, that would be punished. And then the climax, the peak of it all, is at the end when he says, call him Lohu, Lohami, which means not my people.
- For you're not my people. And I'm not your God. God says, I'm going to reject you. You're not going to be my people.
- If you continue on in this way. And then chapter two is a really interesting chapter. I remember doing a study of that with some people. And I asked them, is the chapter two about Hosea and Gomer, or is it about the people of Israel?
- And they go like, it's mixed all in there. Sometimes you're not sure whether he's talking about Gomer or whether he's talking about Israel.

[12 : 37] It starts off talking about Gomer. He says, rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for you're not my wife and I'm not her husband. Let her remove the alt-altest look from her face and unfaithfulness from between her breasts.

But then it goes on to other things that, you know, a maker like a desert turn in a parched land. That's talking about Israel. It goes in together. Israel had wandered away.

The language of divorce is used in some ways. But Hosea is not saying he's going to divorce Gomer. No. It's all about restitution.

And not vindictiveness. Not retribution. Those of you who have caught the news down south may have heard the word retribution time and time and time and time again.

That is not the way God works. God works in restoration. He wants to discipline us to bring us back to him. Not to punish us in the sake of punishment, but to discipline for the sake of bringing us back to him.

[13 : 50] And you may have not liked chapter 1 verse 2 where it says, go come marry a promiscuous woman or a harlot or whatever you want to put it.

That's not a pleasant thing to say. It doesn't sound good at all. But if you think that was bad, listen to chapter 3 verse 1.

The Lord said to me, go show love to your wife again. Though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites.

So they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes. First of all, he had to marry her in the first place. Then she became unfaithful. And then God says, take her back.

What? And then he does take her back. Verse 2, chapter 3. So I bought her for 15 shekels of silver and a homer and a letheke of barley.

[14 : 51] She was so sold into her sinful life that she was literally a slave. So, so, so sunk into deprivation.

And the interesting, you look at it, it says, why is 15 shekels of silver and a homer and a letheke of barley? The normal price for buying back his slave was 30 shekels of silver.

But Hosea, it appears, did not have that much money. So he reached in and says, well, I got this much money and I can give you this much grain as well. He was a poor man and he took all he had to buy back his wife.

Think about what God did to buy us back. How much it cost him. Again, I talked about scandals.

Think of the scandal. When Hosea married the sinful woman. Think of all the neighbors and everybody. What are you doing? And then she leaves him and starts wandering away to other people.

[15 : 54] It's even mentioned when it talks about the second and third child. Now they've not even mentioned that they're Hoseas. We don't know. Maybe they are. Maybe they're not.

So she falls in life. And then imagine the horrible scandal when he goes out and a great cost buys her back. How many people would do such a thing?

But it talks about forgiveness. How could anybody friv such an action? But that's what it teaches us.

That God forgives the unforgivable. Imagine at times in your life you thought, I've done something unforgivable. God couldn't forgive me for that.

Or my spouse couldn't forgive me for what I've done. Or my kids can't forgive me for what I've done. But that's not the way it is. God forgives the unforgivable.

[16 : 59] And Hosea demonstrated that in a vivid way. I remember hearing about one commentary. The title of this commentary in the book of Hosea. The cross of Hosea.

Because like no other prophet, it really illustrates the love of God. And what it's all about. And God forgives the unforgivable.

Isaiah 55, 7 says, Let the wicked forsake his way. And the evil man of thoughts, let him turn to the Lord. And he will have mercy. And to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Forgives the unforgivable. That's really good news. Because we've done stuff that seems to be unforgivable. In Luke chapter 7, there's a little story.

Refer to verses 36 to 39. Story about Jesus. When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

[18 : 00] A woman in the town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating the Pharisee's house. She came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears.

Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would know who was touching him.

Of what kind of woman she is, that he is a sinner. She is a sinner. It was a scandal for Jesus just to allow a sinful woman to touch him.

Think about the scandal when Hosea married a sinful woman. Think about the further scandal when she left him for other lovers.

And the further scandal when he bought her back at great cost. It's great news that God loves the unlovable.

[19 : 04] It's not so great that he expects us to love the unlovable. It's great news that God disciplines us with the purpose of restoration and things.

And not distribution. But he expects us to discipline those we love with the same kind of loving attitude. It's great news that God forgives the unforgivable. Because we've all done things that seem to be unforgivable.

But God expects us to forgive. Peter asked Jesus, how many times should I forgive my brother?

Up to seven times? Jesus said, no, no, way beyond that. Keep on. Keep on. And then he relayed the parable of the unmerciful servant. And he said, this is how your Father, Heavenly Father, will treat you if you don't forgive others.

And then the Lord's Prayer. What does that end with? If you don't forgive those who sin against you, your Heavenly Father will not forgive you for your sins.

[20 : 11] God expects, demands that we love the unlovable. Discipline those we love and forgive the unforgivable. He expects us to follow the example of Hosea in doing that.

Not in marrying that kind of woman. But loving the unlovable and forgiving the unforgivable. It expects us to follow the example of Jesus and doing the same things. And in our own strength, that's impossible.

How on earth can we love the unlovable and forgive the unforgivable? We can't. But the Holy Spirit within us, if we confess our sins and turn to him in faith, we can do that.

God calls us to follow the example of Jesus and Hosea. It's tough. It's tough. I won't say that it's easy.

People say that the Christian life is easier. You're deluded or trying to sell you something. It's not that way. But it's the greatest love ever.

[21 : 21] Greatest life. And I've served God for years and I thoroughly enjoy it. But it's not easy. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, give us the strength, the grace, the power to love the unlovable.

Unforgivable and forgive the unforgivable because that's what you've done with us. We pray these things in the name of the one who sacrificed everything for us, even Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.