

God's Faithful Love for an Unfaithful People

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[0 : 00] Alright, I want you guys to imagine you're 20 years old again. And if you're not 20 yet, then just pretend you're 20 years old.! Suffered a tragic loss, and this loss really brought you two closer together.

In the past few months, you've been able to share your dreams with her, your fears with her. You've helped her to understand what is meaningful to you. You know her laugh, you know her favorite song, and you know the way her eyes light up when she's excited.

You've invested so much time into this relationship. It's almost as if your lives are intertwined. After a few months, you propose to this lovely lady.

And then shortly after that, you get married. And you continue to get to know this lady. And each day, you understand her more and more. What she likes, what she doesn't like. But after a couple years, you notice a shift.

You notice that she starts to say less. There's less laughter when she's around. And sometimes you wonder if she even notices you. Maybe she's just stressed or tired.

[1 : 26] So you give her the space that she needs. After all, you were warned that in marriage there would be rough patches. And maybe this is just one of those. But the distance continues to grow.

And the conversations continue to become more brief. The smiles, they become rare. And the feelings that you once shared are slowly slipping away. You notice that her attention turns to other things.

And she starts making choices without you. Those little gestures that used to show love are now absent. Every day, the life that you built together. The dreams you shared.

The laughter. The late night talks. The sacrifices. They all seem to be fading away. The closeness that once brought joy to your life and to this relationship.

That same closeness now brings aching. You wonder, does she even remember that you love her? And then one day, you experience tightness in your chest.

[2 : 28] The betrayal that you suspected has been confirmed. Your wife has been unfaithful. Turning away from the love and intimacy that you two have built over time. The pain is sharp because you've invested so much into this relationship.

And the love and trust that you've built is now shattered. It feels like your heart has been ripped out. The love that you thought was all good now brings discomfort as well.

At its highest, this love is something that you may only experience through marriage. But at its lowest, it leaves you filled with doubt and regret. You have a choice.

Do you walk away from this relationship that you once held so dear? Or do you hold on to hope of restoration? This is the picture that God paints with Israel.

He loved them and they continued to walk away. Chasing after idols and turning away from that relationship that they once had. God's heart was aching. But he was still longing for a return.

[3 : 36] Before we jump in to the passage, I'm just going to give you some context to help you understand how shocking this truly is. So Hosea lived in the northern kingdom of Israel. This was about 750 years before Jesus.

On the surface, Israel was a very prosperous land. The economy was booming. Cities were being built. Everyone was comfortable. It was a great time in Israel. At least on the outside.

But on the inside, they were straying from God. They were chasing after idols. Going through the motions. They still brought sacrifices to the temple. They still sang songs.

But they started to worship Baal. Who was a Canaanite god of fertility and rain. They believed that Baal would give them good crops, strong herd, and wealth.

The Israelites would say that they trusted in Yahweh. But their idol worship would say otherwise. They wanted God's blessing, not his lordship. That is where Hosea comes in.

[4 : 37] Let's turn to Hosea 1, verses 2 to 11. 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. She has married Gomer, daughter of Diblim. 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.

In that day, I will break Israel's bow in the valley of Jezreel. Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, Call her Loruheima, which means not loved.

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, not by bow, sword, or battle, or by horses and horsemen.

[5 : 46] But I, the Lord their God, will save them. After she had weaned Loruheima, Gomer had another son. Then the Lord said, Call him Loamai, which means not my people.

For you are not my people, and I am not your God. 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 will come together. They will appoint one leader, and will come up out of the land.

For great will be the day of Jezreel. Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for this day that you've given to us, and just the opportunity that we can come and gather together, and just hear from your word.

And I pray that these words that you've given to us in Hosea, that we would be open to hearing what you want us to hear from this passage, and that you would just give me the words to speak, and that I would be able to just share what you want me to share.

[7 : 00] I pray these things in your name. Amen. All right. Sin is not just breaking God's rules. It's breaking God's heart. 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. In verse 2, God tells Hosea to marry a promiscuous woman. That word means having many partners.

This is a living picture of Israel's spiritual adultery. Why would God want someone to marry such a sinner? Like, that doesn't make sense. Hosea is a prophet of God, and he's using this prophet to marry a sinner, a promiscuous woman.

But what is more shocking is that this is a picture of God's relationship with Israel. Israel disobeyed. They betrayed a covenant of love. They wandered morally, and they wandered relationally.

They traded the God who brought them out of Egypt for gods made of wood and stone. They were chasing after idols, trusting foreign alliances, seeking satisfaction in things that couldn't love them back.

[8 : 21] This brought a lot of pain to God. The pain of being replaced. The ache of loving someone who runs away and keeps running away. Hosea shows us that sin doesn't just offend God's holiness.

It wounds his heart. Have you ever been in a conversation with somebody who's glued to their phone? Maybe you're pouring your heart out or sharing something important, and mid-sentence you hear that ding.

Their eyes flick down. Their thumbs start moving. Right then you notice that you've lost them. What you're telling them now is just going over their head. They're focused on their phone and what's in front of them.

They're there physically, but they're not very present. If you've ever been on the receiving end of this, this isn't a great feeling. You might wonder, are they even listening? Or do they even care what I have to say?

This is a glimpse of how God felt with Israel. They still went to the temple. They still offered sacrifices. They still said the right things. But their hearts were somewhere else.

[9 : 28] How often do we do the same? Show up to church, sing the songs, read our Bible, but our hearts are miles away. God doesn't want half of our hearts.

He wants the whole heart. God doesn't just want our attendance, but he wants our affection. He doesn't just want our obedience, but he wants our heart. We may not bow to idols of stone, but our

hearts can still chase after things like success or money, pleasure, control, comfort, approval. I want you to ask yourself, where has your heart drifted? When we treat God like a background app, open but not active, we betray a relationship with him.

Even in our half-heartedness, God continues to call us to come home. God's love is so real that he refuses to ignore our sin.

Each of Hosea's children receive names that symbolize judgment. 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.

[10:46] And that day I will break Israel's bow in the valley of Jezreel. Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, call her Loruheima, which means not loved, 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, not by bow, sword, or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the Lord their God, will save them.

After she had weaned Loruheima, Gomer had another son. Then the Lord said, call him Loamai, which means not my people, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.

So the first one we see is Jezreel. This is a reminder that violence and bloodshed will bring Israel's downfall.

And then the second child, we see Loruheima, which means not loved, representing God's withdrawal of mercy. And the third child, Loamai, which means not my people, symbolizing a broken relationship.

[12:01] Imagine naming your kids names like this. Not loved, not my people. Like, in this world, I can't imagine anybody doing that.

And if they did, we would wonder if they're a psycho. But this just truly shows how serious God was in this moment. Each name shows the heartbreak of God.

These names aren't random, but it shows that God's love is not sentimental, it is holy. His justice flows from his love, because his love knows how harmful sin is.

God's judgment is a father who refuses to let children ruin themselves. God is saying, you have broken my covenant, and I will let you feel the weight of it, not to crush you, but to awaken you.

When I was younger, I didn't understand the rules I was given. There were things that I wanted to do, like run out onto the street to go and grab a ball, or stay up all night and watch TV.

[13:01] I didn't understand why I wasn't allowed to do that, but when I pushed those rules, there was discipline. And it felt unfair. Sometimes I wondered, why do my parents not like me? They don't let me do these things.

But what I couldn't see is that they're actually doing it out of love. These boundaries weren't punishment, but they are protection. If they were to just let me do what I wanted to do, I could have ended up getting hurt or doing something that I would regret doing.

That's the kind of love that God has for His people. He sees us living in sin, and He doesn't just sit there and say, I'll let sin destroy you. But He wants us to come to Him, and He wants to protect us, and that's why there is judgment.

We often think that the worst thing God can do is discipline us, but the real tragedy is if He stopped caring enough to confront us.

When God confronts us, it's grace in disguise. Think about it. Grace doesn't always feel good at first. God's plan is always redemption.

[14:06] Instead of asking, why are you doing this to me? Ask God, what are you doing in me? I'm going to repeat that. Instead of asking, God, why are you doing this to me?

The question we should ask is, God, what are you doing in me? When we feel the sting of conviction, we're truly feeling the touch of a God who still loves us.

Even after heartbreak and correction, the story doesn't end in despair. The same God who shows judgment in verses 4 to 9 is the same God who brings hope in verses 10 to 11.

Even when God's people break His heart, He refuses to let the story end in rejection. His love moves towards restoration. After all, the heartbreak, the warnings, the names of judgment, God's tone changes.

It's like the storm clouds break and light shines through. Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where I was said to them, You are not my people.

[15:16] They will be called children of the living God. The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together. They will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.

This tells us that God's mercy has the final word. Love doesn't ignore sin. This is the gospel foreshadowed through Hosea.

Judgment isn't the destination, but it is the doorway to restoration. God's love runs towards His people. I want you to turn to Luke 15, the story of the prodigal son.

We're going to read verses 20 to 24. So He got up and went to His father.

While He was still a long way off, His father saw Him and was filled with compassion for Him. He ran to His son, threw His arms around Him and kissed Him. The son said to Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against You.

[16:27] I am no longer worthy to be called Your son. But the father said to his servant, Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him.

Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate. So in this story, we see a young man who demands his inheritance early and then runs off and wastes it all, leaving him broke and starving. And when he realizes how far he has fallen, he walks home feeling unworthy, feeling shame, feeling judgment. But his father sees him and he doesn't just wait for him to come to him.

He runs to him. The act of him running shows that he's excited to see him. He isn't just waiting there for him. And he gives him a robe, a ring, feast, and he says, my son was lost.

[17:30] Now he is found. This is what Hosea 1, 10 to 11 is describing. God doesn't wait at a distance, but he runs towards his people. He doesn't just ignore sin, but his mercy is stronger.

Maybe you've walked away from God. Maybe your love for him has grown cold. And maybe you feel like you're too far gone to return. But both Hosea and Luke 15 show us that God's heart still beats for his people, including those who wander.

The same God who said, you are not my people, is the same God who says that you are sons and daughters of the living God. His mercy doesn't rewrite the past, but it redeems it.

So as we look at Hosea 1, we can feel the weight of it pressing down. Each name, Jezreel, Lo-Ruhema, Lo-Ami, all of these feel like a final verdict, like God has given up.

Maybe it feels like that covenant is shattered, the intimacy is gone, but just when you think it is over, we see the word yet. 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.

[18:53] The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together. They will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel. The word yet shows the divine mercy breaking through the silence.

A God who refuses to let sin have the last word. God is saying, yes, yes, they've been unfaithful, yes, they've turned away, but I'm not done, my covenant still stands.

And then if you look at Hosea 3, verse 1, the Lord said to me, go show your love to your wife again. Though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress, love her as the Lord loves the Israelites. Though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes. Hosea 3, 1 helps tie the whole passage together. God tells Hosea to love your wife again.

The Hebrew word for show your love is talking about compassion, not just a passive feeling, but it's a deliberate choice to love someone who has wounded you.

[20:05] This story here that we see in Hosea is the same story that we see throughout the gospel. A God who chooses to love his people even when they choose to fall away and stray from him.

Throughout Hosea 1-3, God isn't trying to shame Israel, but he is revealing brokenness in hopes that they will return home to him.

God's goal is always redemption, not rejection. Imagine Hosea standing in the marketplace and he hears that Gomer has been sold to slavery.

The woman who was once his wife sharing that table with him is now being sold to strangers. He could have said she made her bed, let her lie in it.

But we see in Hosea 2, So I bought her for 15 shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethic of barley. Then I told her, You are to live with me many days.

[21 : 09] You must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man and I will behave the same way towards you. So he walks into that marketplace and there was probably people whispering like, Oh, that's Hosea.

That's the husband of this slave here that's choosing to live this way. But yet, he decides to buy her back and we see verse 3 showing what Hosea said to her.

You are to live with me many days. You must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man and I will behave the same way towards you. This is not just Hosea's voice but this is also God's voice when we see the gospel.

We are those people, we are Gomer in that marketplace and Jesus comes in and decides to buy us back. We're bought with a price and we see that when we look at Jesus on the cross and this price is not just 15 shekels, this price is so much more.

This is what Hosea foreshadows, not God walking away but God walking towards us and pursuing us. In Hosea's day, he said, You are not my people, I am not your God.

[22 : 28] And Paul picks up these same words in Romans 9, 25 to 26. As he says in Hosea, I will call them my people who are not my people and I will call her my loved one who is not my loved one.

And in the very place where it was said to them, you are not my people, there they will be called children of the living God. What Hosea foreshadows in his book, Jesus fulfills a love that goes further, that pays an even bigger price and welcomes even more.

So will you choose to keep running or will you return to Christ? Will you choose comfort and distraction or will you surrender to a love that restores? Are you okay with being called not my people or do you want to be called children of God?

This story doesn't end in shame, it ends in hope. These people were once called not my people, now they are called children of God. Even in unfaithfulness, God is faithful.

Even when we run far, his mercy runs further. Even though we broke a covenant, God's covenant still remains. Maybe your heart feels distant, maybe you have gone through the motions, still showing up to church, still singing the songs, but inside your heart has grown cold.

[23 : 58] I want this story here from Hosea, to be a reminder and an invitation from God to return. God is calling us to return to him. Let's pray.

Lord, I thank you for these words that you've given to us in the scripture and I pray that we would just throughout this day and throughout this week be able to reflect on the ways in which we may have strayed from you or wandered from you and just be able to reflect on which idols we're chasing after.

It may not be idols of wood or stone but idols like comfort or approval or money and I pray that we would just be able to reflect upon those and turn to you with everything and that we wouldn't continue to run but that we would love you wholeheartedly.

Praise things in your name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.