

Sermon: Purchasing a Prostitute

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 June 2020

Preacher: Dr. Wes Feltner

[0 : 00] ■■■■■■■■■■ ■■■■■■■■■■ DimaTorzok Hey, Faith Family. If you've got a Bible, turn to the book of Hosea.

Hosea chapter 2 is going to be our passage today. This is part 2 in our series called Boundless, as we look at the boundless love of God here in the book of Hosea.

Now, if you missed last week, I want to encourage you to go back and to watch the first message. In that message, we gave an introduction to the book. Some of the main themes that we'll be looking at, we looked at Hosea chapter 1.

And so, definitely encourage you to go back and check that out if you missed last week. Today, we're going to look at Hosea chapter 2 through the end of chapter 3. We're going to keep the sections together so that we understand the flow of the book.

And what this book is all about, what Hosea is all about, is teaching us the fact that God has a boundless love for His wayward people.

[1 : 26] That no matter who you are, no matter what you've done, and no matter where you are, you're never outside the bounds of God's love.

That's what the book of Hosea is all about. We're going to see that again today as we look at this passage. For our scripture reading, we're just going to look at the first five verses of Hosea chapter 2.

So let's look here. Hosea chapter 2 and verse 1 says, Say to your brothers, This is God's word.

Let's pray together. Father, we do thank you for the book of Hosea. Thank you for what it teaches us. I pray that you would help us understand as we look at your word today, just how outrageous and scandalous your love for us truly is.

Help us feel your love and experience your love in new and fresh ways. And we pray all this to the glory of the name of Jesus. In His name, Amen.

[3 : 22] I'd like to start today by discussing the differences between football and baseball. Have you ever stopped to consider the differences between these two sports?

For instance, baseball is played on a diamond in a park. The baseball park. Football is played on a gridiron in a stadium like Soldier Field.

Baseball begins in the spring, the season of new life. Football begins in the fall, when everything is dying. In football, you wear a helmet.

In baseball, you wear a cap. In football, you receive a penalty. In baseball, you make an error. Oops, my bad.

In football, there's hitting and clipping and late hits and unnecessary roughness. In baseball, there's a sacrifice. Football is played in any kind of weather.

[4 : 28] Rain, snow, sleet, fog. In baseball, if it rains, we don't go out and play. Baseball has the seventh inning stretch.

Football has a two-minute warning. If baseball game goes long, you have what's called extra innings. But if a football game goes long, you have what's called sudden death.

In baseball, up in the stands, there's a picnic feeling. In football, up in the stands, you can be sure that at least 27 times, you're capable of taking the life of a fellow human being.

And finally, the objectives of these two sports are completely different. In football, the object is for the quarterback, the field general, to be on target with his aerial assault, riddling the defense by hitting his receivers with deadly accuracy in spite of the blitz, even if he has to use the shotgun.

With short bullet passes and long bombs, he marches his troops into enemy territory, balancing this aerial assault with a sustained ground attack that punches holes in the forward wall of the enemy's defensive line.

[5 : 50] In baseball, the object is to go home and be safe. Now, some of you may recognize what I just read to you.

It didn't originate from me. It's a comedy bit by the late George Carlin. And it's absolutely brilliant. And the reason why it's brilliant is because it is a clinic in the power of metaphor.

What's the point that Carlin is trying to make with that bit? His point is this. Baseball is a softer or safer sport than football.

But of course, if he would have just said, baseball is softer than football, or baseball is safer than football, it would not have had hardly any impact at all.

We might have understood it intellectually, but we wouldn't have been able to feel it. We wouldn't be able to visualize it. And the truth is, faith family, that kind of power of metaphor is something that we see around us all the time.

[7 : 04] We experience it in so many different ways. I mean, think about it. It's why we have music. It's why we write poetry. It's why we read stories.

Or go to the movies. Or enjoy art. For example, I could talk about my inner struggles, or battles with anxiety, or I could paint this.

I could talk about love. Or I could read this. What light through yonder window breaks, it is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

Or I could say, I am addicted to you. Or I could play this. You're at school, Tennessee West, yeah.

You're at sweet strawberry wine. You're as warm as a glass of brandy.

[8 : 27] And honey, I stick stone on your love all the time. Now that, fate family, is something that you can feel.

And that's the power of metaphor. You know this. Metaphor has a way of helping us feel what would otherwise only be information.

Here's why I'm saying that. This is exactly what the book of Hosea is intending to do when it comes to the love of God. And you see, for those of you watching this today, I could say to you, God loves you.

And you might agree with that. You might amen that. You might intellectually know that. You might even be able to quote John 3.16. But do you feel it? Like, if I were to say to you instead, God's love for you is like a man named Hosea who was married to a woman named Gomer.

And Gomer was not only unfaithful, she became a prostitute with many lovers. And not only was she a prostitute with many lovers, she had multiple children with those many lovers.

[9 : 46] And in light of all of her unfaithfulness, in light of everything she did to her faithful husband, her husband responded to her like this.

Hosea 1.10. Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered.

And in the place where it is said to them, You're not My people, it shall be said to them, Children of the living God. And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head, and they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

Chapter 2, verse 1. Say to your brothers, You are My people, and to your sisters, You have received mercy. That faith family is outrageous.

That's insane. Nobody responds that way. Nobody loves that way. And yet that is how God has loved you in the person of Jesus Christ.

[11 : 00] That metaphor, that imagery of faithfulness and unfaithfulness and all that the book of Hosea is stirring up in our minds helps us be amazed at the amazing love of God.

It's the power of metaphor. And that's what Hosea is trying to capture us with. And that metaphor continues as you enter into chapter 2.

Look at chapter 2 and verse 2. Notice the imagery here. Plead with your mother, plead. For she is not my wife. That is, she's not acting like my wife and I'm not her husband.

That she put away her whoring from her face. Her adultery from between her breast. Lest I strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born.

And make her like a wilderness, like a parched land. Kill her with thirst. Upon her children also I will have no mercy. Because they are children of whoredom. For their mother has played the whore.

[12 : 05] She who conceived them has acted shamefully. Why? Because she said, I'll go after my lovers who give me bread and water and wool and flax and oil and drink.

In other words, this is a metaphor of spiritual adultery. It's a metaphor, a symbolism of spiritual adultery.

When I say metaphor, here's what I mean. The issue here in the text is not actual adultery.

It's idolatry. This is very important. Adultery is only the metaphor that's describing the sin which is idolatry.

That's what's happening. And this imagery of marriage and unfaithfulness is used to describe the relationship between Israel and her faithful husband, God.

[13 : 07] You see, the Bible describes, this is so important, faith family, hear this. The Bible describes our relationship with God as that of a covenant or a marriage.

That is, when you became a Christian, if you are a Christian, you looked to God and said, I do. That's what you did.

You made a covenant. You made a marriage-like commitment to God. You didn't say, I promise I'll become a better person or I promise I'll clean up my act or I promise I'll turn over a new leaf.

That's not what you said. What you said, if you're a Christian, is God, I love you more than anything else. That's what it means to be a Christian.

And that's what Israel did when she entered into a marriage covenant with God. Let me show you where it happened. Notice in your Bible, Exodus 19 and verse 7.

[14 : 07] Exodus 19 and verse 7 says, So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. And the people answered together and said, Now note this, All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.

Have you ever heard that language before? Have you ever been at a wedding ceremony where you had a spouse to be say to the other person, I do.

Well, that's what Israel did. She looked at the covenant laid out before her. She looked at the things that God was asking of her and she said, I do.

It was a marriage covenant. And that's why throughout the Scripture that metaphor, that imagery continues. For instance, Isaiah chapter 54.

Notice this, Isaiah 54 verse 5 says, For your maker is your husband. The Lord of hosts is His name and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth He is called.

[15 : 19] For the Lord has called you like a wife, deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God.

So the language in the Old Testament referred to Israel is that of a marriage with God. Now, if you think that's only an Old Testament thing, then go to the New Testament. Ephesians 5, when it talks about husbands and wives, it's a picture of what?

Christ and His bride, the church. Or Revelation chapter 19 and verse 7 says this, Let us rejoice and exalt and give Him the glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.

So everybody right here, faith family, listen up. Here's the point I'm trying to make. And it's unpacking the imagery, the metaphor that's used throughout the book of Hosea. And that is this, when you enter into a relationship with God, it's a covenant.

It's like a marriage relationship where you say, God, I love you more than anything else. It's why, of the Ten Commandments, the first commandment is, you're to have no other gods before me.

[16 : 40] Well, Israel had a long track record of loving other gods, of worshipping other things before God, of committing spiritual adultery like is described in the verses that we just read.

But what does this practically look like? When the rubber meets the road, what does it really look like to commit spiritual adultery or idolatry?

Look at verse 5 again of chapter 2. For their mother has played the whore who has conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, I'll go after my lovers, watch this, who give me my bread and my water and my wool and my flax and my oil and my drink.

Here's the first thing. You're going to notice this on the screen. Idolatry is looking to other things to give you what only God can give you.

Idolatry is looking to other things to give you what only God can give you. See, faith family, listen, the reason that Israel is worshipping other gods is because they thought those gods would give them what they needed.

[18 : 02] In fact, in this particular context, it's the god, most people call it Baal, I believe it's pronounced Baal, but either way, we'll call it Baal, and Asheroth, the goddess.

Baal and Asheroth were the god and goddess of fertility, rain, and land. Well, if you're living in an agrarian culture, you need the land to be fertile.

You need crops. You need oil and bread and water and wool. You need these things. And so, Israel turned her attention to Baal and to Asheroth for the fertility of the land, that is, to give them what they needed to be their provider, to provide bread and water and oil and the things of life.

So, practically speaking, what it means to commit spiritual adultery or idolatry is to look to other things in the world to provide what you need rather than God.

That's the first aspect of idolatry as it's explained here in this passage, but here's the second. Look at verse 8. Hosea 2 and verse 8 says, But she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold which they used for Baal.

[19 : 39] Here's the second aspect of Israel's idolatry. Hang with me. Idolatry is not only looking to other things to give you what only God can give you, but it's giving thanks to other things for what God has given you.

It's not just looking to other things for what only God can give you. It's giving other things all of the gratitude and appreciation and praise and glory for what God gave you.

You see, not only did they look to Baal to make their land fertile, but when the land, listen, listen, when the land was fertile, they had bread and wine and clothing, they gave thanks to Baal instead of God.

That's whoredom. That's spiritual adultery. That is idolatry. And as if it wasn't bad enough that Israel was looking to other gods to give them what only God can give them and gave those gods thanks and gratitude for what God actually did give them, notice also that Israel went so far as calling God Yahweh, they called Him Baal.

Look at chapter 2 and verse 16. Chapter 2 and verse 16. And in that day declares the Lord, you will call me my husband, watch, and no longer will you call me my Baal.

[21 : 26] Let me put that in perspective. I told you the book of Hosea is not PG. It's probably rated R or worse. Let me put this faithfully in the text, let me put this in perspective.

You are married to a wife who looks to other lovers. not only does she look to other lovers, but she gives her other lovers thanks for paying the mortgage you paid.

And not only does she give thanks to her other lovers for the mortgage that you paid, she calls out their names when you're in bed together.

That is exactly how Israel's idolatry is described in Hosea chapter 2.

Here's the summary. You'll notice it here on the screen. The summary is this. Israel's idolatry is that Israel cheats on God, credits the false gods for all that she's received, and calls God the name of the other gods.

[22 : 50] What a whore. is the whoredom, that's the spiritual adultery, that's the idolatry of the nation of Israel.

And you and I do the exact same thing. One writer puts it this way, quote, so it is with modern idolatry as well.

Oh, we don't want to be ruled by alcohol or drugs or sex or gambling or food or anything. No, we want, listen, we want these substances or activities to give us what we want.

A good feeling, a better self-image, a sense of power, or whatever our heart is craving.

Close quote. Come on, faith family, be honest. We are just like the nation of Israel. We frequently look to other things to provide for us what only God can.

[24 : 00] I'll give you some examples. If only the stock market would provide for me. If only my spouse would perform for me. If only my religious activity would get the deity on my side.

If only my team would win, then I would get the thing I'm after the most. We don't call them Baal, but nevertheless we have an idol just like Israel did.

In fact, I was thinking of this as I was preparing. If you want to discover the idols of our day, just look at all the TV stations on television.

Sports channels, food channels, sex channels, finance channels, politics channels. We have 24 hour channels dedicated to our lovers.

We look to politics and money and food to give us the things we desire the most when we have said I do to God.

[25 : 15] That, faith family, is exactly the spiritual adultery of the nation of Israel here in Hosea 2. And what do you think happens when the land is not fertile? Answer, we blame God.

Isn't it true that we thank the false gods for success and we blame the real God for suffering? That'll preach right there.

We celebrate the false gods when we're successful and we blame the real God when we suffer. Or notice this on the screen. In prosperity you forget God, in adversity you blame God, and in both you forsake God to worship other gods.

That is the human condition of our hearts. Every one of us. We are a wayward wife who has loved other things, looked to other things to provide for us, celebrated those things instead of God, and called those things our God.

Now part of identifying what your idol is, is to use this and say what is the thing I'm thankful for the most? What is the thing that I can't do without?

[26 : 35] What's the thing that I fear losing? And that will get you down the path of discovering your other lover, of discovering the idol of your heart.

So the first section here is we see Israel's idolatry, her idolatry, the metaphor of spiritual adultery. She cheats on God, credits her lovers with the gifts of God, and calls God the names of the false God.

So here's the question, how would you respond? Faith family, if you've zoned out, zone right back here, how would you respond? You discover that your husband is sleeping with a prostitute, he credits her, not you, for the reason the kids have turned out so well, and at night, when you sleep together, he keeps calling out all the other names of his other women.

How would you respond? How would you respond? Well, here's how God responds to his wife of whoredom. Here's how God responds to his unfaithful people, and it's easy to see, look for the three therefore's.

Three therefore's in the text that show us the three responses of God. Here's the first one. Look at verse 6. Chapter 2, verse 6. So we've just seen the whoredom of Israel, the idolatry of Israel.

[27 : 58] Now here's the first response. Therefore, I will hedge up her way with thorns. I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths.

She shall pursue her lovers, but not overtake them, and she shall seek them, but shall not find them. Then they shall say, I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me than now.

In other words, here's the first thing that God does in response to his unfaithful wife, is God removes. God removes.

Here's what I mean. Israel, follow me, you with me? Israel is worshipping Baal because Israel wants fertile land.

I want crops and wool and bread and oil and something to drink. So, she's worshipping Baal because she wants a fertile land. So, what's the first thing God does?

[29 : 01] Listen, this is so important. He cuts off the fertile land. Drought. There are no crops because Israel has forgotten that those things come from God.

Let me translate that into our day. Because his wife is addicted to pills, he flushes her drugs down the toilet. Because his wife is addicted to driving away, he slashes her tires.

Because his wife is in love with the economy, he shuts down the economy. Why? Notice this on the screen. This will preach. because as long as she keeps experiencing fertile land, she'll keep loving the other man.

As long as she keeps experiencing fertile land, she'll keep loving the other man. So the first response of God, hang with me, is He removes.

He removes the fertile land so that Israel is not experiencing the very thing she's looking to bail for. And here's the next response.

[30 : 15] Verse 9 of chapter 2. Verse 9 of chapter 2. Therefore, I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season.

I'll take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness. Now I will uncover her lewdness inside of her lovers, and no one shall rescue her out of my hand.

And I will put an end to her mirth, her feast, and moons, and sabbaths, and her appointed feast. I'll lay waste her vines and fig trees, of which she said, these are my wages, which my lovers have given me, and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall devour them.

Here's the second thing God does. His response to His wayward wife is first to remove the things she's longing for. Secondly, is God reveals.

God reveals. Okay, this is so important. Please, faith family, don't zone out. Okay, listen to this. Israel is looking to Baal for fertile land. When God, response one, removes the fertile land, what that does is it reveals that Baal is a really bad provider.

[31 : 32] He's a really bad lover. Because he's not giving her the thing she wants. Come on, hang with me. The whole point of her idolatry is she's looking to other lovers to get what she wants, namely a fertile land.

So when God removes the fertile land, action one, what it reveals, action two, is that these lovers make a whole bunch of promises they can't fulfill.

she begins to see that the wine you're drinking, as Dave Matthew says, ends up drinking you. It's something that doesn't fulfill what it promises to fulfill.

And now she realizes that Baal couldn't give her what she wanted Baal to give her. Think of it this way, faith family.

If you look to the economy to provide, and the economy tanks, you realize pretty quickly that the economy is a bad lover.

[32 : 39] That's the second response that God does to his wayward wife. He's revealing to her and to us the unsatisfactory nature of false gods.

Now, I really hope you're still with me. Because it's this third step, this third response that just blows my mind.

He, first step, removes so that he can second step, reveal all of which is to lead to the third response that God gives.

Notice the third, therefore, in verse 14. therefore, behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her.

Do you know what? The revealing and the removing was all intended to do was to get this whoring wife, to get this unfaithful wife to the point where God could romance her, where he could wine and dine her.

[33 : 51] God seduces her, speaks tenderly to her. He takes her out for a candlelight dinner. He doesn't even make her sleep on the couch. Faith families see the power of this metaphor.

Israel not only runs after other lovers, she has multiple lovers. She not only has multiple lovers, she looks to them as her main provider. And not only that, she thanks them instead of God.

Oh no, in fact, she even calls the one true and living God the names of the false God. And how does the faithful husband respond to his unfaithful, ungrateful, whoring wife?

He takes her out and celebrates their anniversary. Verse 15, And there I will give her her vineyards and make the valley of Accor a door of hope.

And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth. Watch this as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

[35 : 09] The anniversary of when God married his people. Keep reading in verse 16, And in the day declares the Lord, you shall call me my husband and no longer call me my Baal.

I will remove the names of Baals from her mouth and they shall be remembered by name no more. And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the fields and the birds of the heavens and the creeping things of the grounds and I will abolish the bow and the sword and the war from the land and I will make you lie down in safety.

And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice and in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness and you shall know the Lord.

That faith family is the boundless love of God. It's outrageous.

Nobody responds this way. You know there's no way you respond this way. You have a people that don't just go to another lover.

[36 : 19] They go to multiple lovers and they give thanks to those multiple lovers and they call out their name instead of your name. And what is your response? To slowly woo them back to you so that you can pour out your boundless love on them.

It's outrageous. It's totally outrageous. And until you see just how outrageous the love of God really is, you'll never feel how outrageous His love is for you.

Isn't this a beautiful passage? First five verses describe in a metaphor way the spiritual adultery of Israel. The rest of chapter two describes the three responses that the faithful husband has towards his unfaithful wife.

And now you see the powerful metaphor of chapter three. Look at verse one. And the Lord said to me, go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.

So I bought her with fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a letharic of barley, and I said to her, you must dwell as mine for many days.

[37 : 51] You shall not play the whore or belong to another man, so will I also be to you. two. So powerful verses.

And here's what's happening in chapter three. In chapter three, the imagery of chapter two gets brought back into the metaphor of Hosea and his wife, Gomer.

God, in his relationship with Israel, chapter two, get imaged now in chapter three with Hosea, the faithful husband, and Gomer, the unfaithful wife.

Gomer has left her husband for these other lovers. Not only that, she has become a prostitute, and here's the metaphor, here's the imagery in chapter three, is that Gomer has now returned to the auction block.

She's returned to the auction block, and you can imagine the crowd of men that have gathered around, each one ready to take their turn.

[39 : 03] And as the crowd gathered, the bidding started. One man yells, I'll bid four shekels of silver for that whore. Another man yells, I'll bid five.

Another man screams, I'll bid six. And then all of a sudden from the back of the crowd shouts the voice of a loving husband.

Fifteen shekels and a homer and letharic of barley. Sold! And everybody in the crowd is stunned.

Who would pay that for a prostitute? and Gomer starts the shameful walk back to Hosea.

Clothes ripped blood on her body. She's limping because of all of her activity. And she comes to Hosea and receives a loving embrace.

[40 : 21] And a husband that takes her to now love her like she's never been loved before.

That family is the love of God for His people. let that picture sink in.

Are you ready? Are you ready? Picture God paying for a prostitute.

That's exactly what Hosea does. He buys Gomer this prostitute of a wife back into His possession so He can love her fully.

That is the boundless love of God for you in the person of Jesus Christ. Do you feel that?

[41 : 37] I mean, do you really feel that? love because that's the truth. Listen, listen, that's the real truth behind the lyrics you sing in that old hymn when you sing that He sought me and He bought me with His redeeming love.

You sing those lyrics so flippantly. Do you know what's behind the He sought you and He bought you with His redeeming love?

It's God through the cross purchasing a prostitute. That's what's behind those lyrics through this imagery of Hosea.

The price of your prostitution was crucifixion. The price of our idolatry and sin was the purchasing of God's people through the death of His Son.

Are you starting to feel the love of God for you in the person of Jesus Christ? That's the powerful metaphor of Hosea.

[42 : 58] Oh, it is literally true. Oh, it literally happened, but it is painting a picture for us that is preparing us for Jesus Christ.

Because the truth is, we are Gomer. We have forsaken our marriage to God. We have turned to other lovers, and yet when we were placed on the auction block of salvation, and one lover said, I'll pay four, and another lover said, I'll pay six.

The voice of a husband shouted from the background, I'll pay it all, with three nails and a cross.

And through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, God purchased us for His love.

That faith family is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that truth is more than a metaphor.

[44 : 20] Let's pray. pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.