

# Sermon: The God Whose Love Hurts and Heals

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you.

Hey, Faith Family. If you've got your Bible, turn to Hosea chapter 4. Hosea chapter 4. We're continuing in our series called Boundless. We've been in now, this is our third week, looking at the boundless love of God here in the book of Hosea.

Very intense book, but a deeply exciting book as we discover the depths of God's love for us. We've talked about the three main themes in the book of Hosea, God's wayward people, the nation of Israel.

We've talked about God's judgment that would come upon them. But how even through all of that, God is a faithful God. And He is always loving, boundless in His love, even towards His wayward people.

And so we're going to look at the next section in this book, which is chapter 4 through chapter 6 and verse 3. There's chapter 1, then chapter 2 and 3 go together, and then chapter 4 through verse 3 of chapter 6.

[ 1 : 32 ] So that's going to be our focus for today. So if you have your Bible, look here at Hosea chapter 4. We're just going to read the first three verses as we introduce this next section.

Hosea 4 and beginning at verse 1 says, Hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel. For the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.

There is no faithfulness or steadfast love and no knowledge of God in the land. There is swearing and lying and murder and stealing and committing adultery, and they break all bounds and bloodshed and follows bloodshed.

Therefore, the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens and even the fish in the sea are taken away.

Let's pray together. God, thanks for our time to now be in Your Word today. Pray that You would speak to us Your Word by Your Spirit as we gather here with Your Word in front of us.

[ 2 : 37 ] God, would You teach us once again how amazing and boundless, unconditional, outrageous, scandalous Your love really is for Your people.

Talk to us today. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, when I was growing up, he was one of the most famous actors and comedians on television and in the movies.

He was famous for his bit on Saturday Night Live, movies like Groundhog's Day, movies like Caddyshack was one of his famous ones.

I'm obviously referring to the actor Bill Murray. Bill was one of my favorite comedians growing up, one of the most famous ones, and one of his movies that I enjoyed most of all was a movie called What About Bob?

What About Bob? It was a story about Bill Murray playing a character who was a disturbed individual and suffered from a lot of different phobias.

[ 3 : 42 ] According to Bob, he had obsessive compulsive disorder, a panic disorder, he was a hypochondriac, and he suffered from separation anxiety.

But thankfully for Bob, he meets a man by the name of Dr. Leo Marvin. He was a published psychiatrist. And Bob becomes convinced that Dr. Marvin can fix him of all of his problems, can solve all of his issues.

But then a problem occurred. Dr. Marvin informs Bob that he and his family are going to go away for several weeks on vacation.

Bob will have to see one of Dr. Marvin's colleagues. And not only that, but Dr. Marvin gave Bob very specific instructions that Bob was not to contact him whatsoever at any point while he was on vacation.

But Bob couldn't help himself. But don't be mad. Bob, your behavior is completely inappropriate. You're angry.

[ 4 : 58 ] No, no, I don't get angry. Well, you're upset. I don't get upset. Well, then let's have a little talk. Bob, I do not see patients on vacation ever. How many ways can I make that clear?

Now, what I'd like you to do is to get on this bus and go back to New York. I can't. I'm totally paralyzed. I'm all locked up. You got yourself here. Barely. Well, getting back will be therapeutic. But can't we just have a little talk? Bob, you are testing my patients. Come on. I've come so far. I'm baby-stepping. Bob. I'm doing the work. I'm baby-stepping. I'm not a slacker. Listen to me. Check it out.

Look at him. I'm in really bad shape. Come on. Please. Bob. Please. Bob. Give me. Give me. Give me. I need. I need. I need. I need. Give me. Okay. All right. All right. It's two o'clock.

Go to the bus station. Buy yourself a ticket home. And then wait for me. Faith family, can you relate to Bob? I don't mean that you have a phobia or anxiety issues necessarily.

[ 5 : 59 ] I mean, have you ever reverted back to old patterns or behaviors and did what you knew you shouldn't do?

You did what you had been commanded not to do? For instance, maybe you were in a situation where you knew you were to stop drinking, but you took a drink anyway.

You knew that you should eat healthy, but you just couldn't resist the junk food. You knew that that purchase didn't fit into the budget, but you purchased it anyways.

You knew that you needed to slow down from your busy lifestyle, but it just never happened. Look at me here for just a second.

All of those of you that are watching today, every single one of us knows what that's like. We know exactly what it's like to know what to do and yet fail to do it.

[ 7 : 02 ] And that's also true when it comes to the issue of sin. We know what God has commanded us to do. We know what God has given us instructions.

He's made it very clear. And yet, we go ahead and do the opposite. And we're not alone in that. The Apostle Paul, for instance, says this in Romans 7, verse 15, Anybody out there today relate to the Apostle Paul?

Anybody understand exactly what that's like to want to do what's right and yet fail repeatedly to do it? And this is the Apostle Paul who struggled with not doing what he knew he was supposed to do. And it's not just the Apostle Paul, the Apostle Peter as well. This is what is said of him in Galatians 2, verse 11, But when Cephas, that is Peter, came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

For there were certain men that came from James, and he was eating with the Gentiles. But when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

[ 8 : 34 ] And the rest of the Jews, look, acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. And when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas, to Peter, before them all, If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

Faith family, that's the rock. That's Peter, the Apostle Peter, who is a hypocrite, according to the Apostle Paul, who knew what to do, and yet repeatedly failed to do it.

All of us are just like Bob. We've been given clear instructions, but we slip back into cycles and patterns of disobedience that goes against God's commands.

And that is exactly what the nation of Israel is doing here in the book of Hosea. Israel, like us, like Bob, like Paul, like Peter, was turning their back on the instructions and the commands of God.

Look at verse 1 of chapter 4. Hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel. For the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.

[ 10 : 09 ] There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, no knowledge of God in the land. There is swearing and lying and murder and stealing and committing adultery and they break all bounds.

And bloodshed flows bloodshed. This is a summary of the waywardness that's taking place within the nation of Israel. And God here gives three specific issues that He has with His people.

There is a controversy that God has with His own people. Three things. Number one, they disobey the law. They disobey the law.

They're unfaithful. Israel was a bride that said, I do, but didn't. That's what she was.

She continued to disobey and was unfaithful to the law of God. The sins mentioned in verse 2 are violations, you know this, of the Ten Commandments.

[11:09] And if you've listened to last week's message, here's what you know. The law, the Ten Commandments, those were the vows of which the nation of Israel said, we do.

Yes, we will be obedient to that. Yes, we will do that. Yes, we promise to be faithful. And yet here they are in the book of Hosea violating those vows.

Israel throughout the book is seen as a faithless bride who continues time and time again to go against the law of God.

That's the first controversy or issue that God has with the people of Israel. Number two, not only that they disobey the law, but they lack love. They lack love.

The text says that in addition to the unfaithfulness of Israel, that is the breaking of the law, Israel also has no love for God. She is a wife that has no feeling, no affection, no passion for her husband.

[12:12] The thrill is gone. This gets further explained when you go to chapter 6. Look over at Hosea chapter 6 and verse 4. What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?

That is the northern kingdom. What shall I do with you, O Judah? That is the southern kingdom.

Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away.

The metaphor, the imagery there is that your love, Israel, is like fog in the morning. It is there for a short time, but quickly fades away.

Now look at what is said in verse 6. This is Hosea 6 and verse 6. For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. In other words, here is what that verse means.

Israel, you are going through the external motions. You are offering up sacrifices. You are making burnt offering. But that is not what I want.

[13:18] What I want is your affection. I want your love. Israel, in relation to God, was in a loveless marriage.

She was going through the motions, but there was no real affection for God. Her love was like the morning fog that was here for a moment and then quickly vanishes away.

Faith family, have you ever been there spiritually? Are you there today spiritually? There is just no affection for God.

You are just kind of going through the motions. Well, that was the nation of Israel. A bride who not only violated the law, but had no love.

Number three, the controversy that God has with Israel, the issue that He has with His bride, is they refuse God's lordship. They refuse God's lordship.

[14:22] But in verse 1 of chapter 4, it mentions that they had no knowledge of God in the land. Now, that phrase, no knowledge, does not mean that they cognitively did not understand who God is.

Nonsense. These people had memorized the Torah for Pete's sake. They knew who God was intellectually. They knew who God was cognitively.

That's not the issue. The Hebrew word that is used here for knowledge was used in the ancient Near East as not recognizing the authority.

That is, acting like you don't know they exist. It was a violation of the authority of God. So, their knowledge here is more of a, I don't care what you say attitude.

Have you ever had parents, children that do that? I don't care what you say. I'm going to do what I want to do. That's exactly what Israel is doing. So, here's the summary of Israel's relationship with God.

[15:34] God being faithful. Israel being unfaithful. Israel did this. She broke her vows. That is, broke the law. She had no affection for God, even though she was going through the motions.

And thirdly, she didn't even recognize God's authority in her life. Well, no wonder God has a controversy with them. No wonder God has issues with His people.

And the question then becomes, why is Israel doing these things? Why is Israel behaving badly? Well, chapter 5, verse 3 tells us.

Look at verse 3 of Hosea chapter 5. I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from me. For now, O Ephraim, you have played the whore.

There's that common theme in Hosea. Israel is defiled. Their deeds are not permitted them to return to their God. For there is a spirit of whoredom within them, and they do not know the Lord.

[ 16 : 36 ] So, these verses answer the why. So, at the beginning of chapter 4, you see kind of what they're doing, and now you see why they are doing it. This is the source of their waywardness, namely, that they are worshiping other gods.

And we've talked about that a lot already in this series, that imagery of whoredom. And it's just a metaphor for seeking other gods above Yahweh.

Baal, Asheroth, and these other things. And so, here's something that's so incredibly important, okay? If you've zoned out, zoned back in, this is really important.

Notice this on the screen. Before sin is an action of the hands, it is an affection of the heart.

That's really, really important. Before sin is ever an action of the hands, that is something that you do, it's an affection of the heart.

[ 17 : 36 ] In other words, the reason why Israel is behaving badly, chapter 4, verse 1 and 2, is because inwardly, she loves other things more than God.

It's interesting that in church life, and in Christian life, and in counseling life, we almost always focus on the action, rather than the affection.

Look at me right here, okay? Those of you tuning in, look in real closely. Your issue is not pornography. Your issue is not anger.

Your issue is not lying. Your issue is not being constantly obsessed with the size of your butt. Those are not your issues.

Your issue is that within, there is a longing, an affection, for something to be your God, to play the role of God in your life, and that's why you act out in those ways.

[ 18 : 43 ] Behaviors are nothing more than the warning lights. On the dashboard of your life, pointing you to where your real God is.

If you really want to discover the behavior, or the action, you've got to follow the affection. Jesus said, where your heart is, that's where your treasure is.

That's what's really going on. So, what do you love? What do you really love? What are your goals? What really matters to you?

What makes you feel safe? What makes you feel successful? What do you dream about? What do you talk the most about? What do you spend most of your time and money on? What are those things your heart really, truly loves?

And what this is getting at is what J.R.R. Tolkien is trying to describe and illustrate in The Lord of the Rings, with the ring itself. This obsession that this ring will give you what you want.

[ 19 : 48 ] If I could just get the ring, I'd have power. It would answer all my questions. It would solve all my problems. For Israel, their ring, the thing they had to have, their obsession, their heart's affection, was prosperity.

Look at how well things are going. Look at how prosperous the land is. And that's what led them to the behavior of worshiping Baal. So Israel was not only unfaithful to God, but she had no affection for God.

She didn't recognize God's authority. Why? Because her heart has been drawn to other gods. How does God respond? How does God respond to a wife who is behaving badly?

Who not only has hands that are sinning, but a heart that is wayward and sinful? How does He respond? Look at verse 9 of Hosea chapter 5.

Verse 9 says, Ephraim shall become a desolation. In the day of punishment among the tribes of Israel, I make known what is sure. The princes of Judah have become like those who move the landmark.

[ 20 : 59 ] Upon them I will pour out my wrath like water. Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, because she is determined to go after filth.

Suffering is coming Israel's way. This is frequent in the book. You remember back in chapter 1, Jezreel, the first child.

Bloodshed, judgment from the valley of Jezreel. The book is repeatedly talking about how the discipline of God is going to come into Israel's life.

And we know that practically was the nation of Assyria. Assyria is on the rise. And as I mentioned last week in 722 B.C. There will be bloodshed. And there will be judgment upon God's people.

In other words, notice this on the screen. God is going to wound His wayward wife. God is going to wound His wayward wife.

[ 22 : 00 ] This is the discipline of God. And I was talking with a friend today, in fact. We were having breakfast together. And he was sharing how in his life several years ago he lost his wife to a long battle.

And he said, even though it wasn't because of any sin that he had done or his family had done, like is the case for the nation of Israel, but not the case for him.

But nevertheless, he said when he went through that suffering, he remembered going through a time where he looked to God and he said, God, you hurt me.

You cut me. You wounded me through this suffering. And he said he really learned through that process of God wounding him and cutting him, bringing suffering into his life, that that is the love of God.

That God was doing a work in his life, that he was going to learn things about who God was. He would have never learned any other way.

[ 23 : 14 ] You see, like a surgeon, God cuts His people to bring good in their life.

That's what He's doing here with the nation of Israel. That's what He says is coming, and it does.

And of course, how does Israel respond to this warning of judgment and discipline from God?

This is crazy. Look at verse 13 of chapter 5. Verse 13 says, When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to the great king.

But he is not able to cure you or heal your wound. Do you know what Israel does? Israel realizes they're in trouble, realizes that they're in a mess, and instead of going to God for healing, she goes to other gods again.

She goes to the king of Assyria. And by the way, a little side note here, in the ancient Near East, kings were often seen as either gods or a vessel of the gods.

[ 24 : 22 ] And so, in a very real way, Israel is going to Assyria saying, Can you get me out of this mess? Can you get me out of this wound?

Basically, Assyria is on the rise. And so, politically, Israel reaches out to see if they can make some type of an agreement where Assyria will not bother them.

Here's what's happening, faith family, is that the nation of Israel, even after God wounds her, is still turning to something else to bring healing in her life.

And we do the same thing, do we not? God cuts us and we run to alcohol. God cuts us and we run to money. God cuts us and we run to our family thinking, Maybe they can heal us.

Maybe they can make things better. Notice this on the screen. Most of us run to false doctors rather than the great physician. Most of us run to false doctors rather than to the great physician.

[ 25 : 32 ] But what you learn and what Israel learned in verse 13 is this, He's not able to cure you. They're not able to help you.

Only God can do that. As I thought about that idea in the text, it reminded me of a story about Gerald Barnes. Gerald Barnes, you see here, he was a chief physician at a very prominent health clinic.

He was loved by his patients. He was admired by many of his colleagues. But there was a big problem with Gerald. He wasn't a doctor. He was actually a con artist.

You see, in the late 1970s, Gerald changed his name to impersonate an orthopedic surgeon in California. Later, when he was discovered, court documents revealed that he had performed medical examinations on hundreds of other patients.

And things started to unravel. This is crazy. When a 29-year-old man came to him complaining of diabetic symptoms. And instead, he was prescribed drugs for vertigo.

[ 26 : 51 ] Two days later, that patient was found dead. Because of a diabetic coma. Faith family, look at me. False doctors provide faulty solutions.

Assyria can't save you. Money can't save you. Family can't heal you. Israel has committed all these things because she's wayward in her heart.

So God cuts his people because he loves his people. But instead, they run after false doctors. And what they discover in the process is they cannot heal the wound.

And at some point, you have to realize that the only one that can heal your wound is the great physician. And that's exactly what Israel finally realizes.

Look at how chapter 6 begins. Verse 1. Come, let us return to the Lord.

[ 27 : 56 ] For He has torn us. That is, He's cut us. He's wounded us. That He, and only He, may heal us. He has struck us down.

And He will bind us up. There's wonderful truths in that verse. Verse 2, just quickly, would be number 1. Israel finally comes to their senses.

Israel finally returns to God. To the great physician. To the one true and living God. But not only is that great news. Not only is that exciting.

But the second great truth here is God is right there waiting for them. He hasn't gone anywhere. He's been waiting for them to return.

Do you know the good news of that faith family? Are you listening right now? Child of God. He hasn't left you. He hasn't given up on you. He hasn't shut the door on you.

[ 28 : 56 ] He hasn't shut His heart on you. No, He is the loving Father who's waiting patiently for the prodigal. He's the loving spouse waiting to receive His wayward bride.

And when you return, He will love you and heal you of all your wounds. That is the boundless love of God.

Do you see it? As we've seen it every week in the text. Oh, I hope you're seeing it, faith family. Only Israel commits these acts of waywardness. Why? Because her heart is wayward.

What happens? God cuts her. And what does she do in response to that? She runs to false doctors and false saviors to heal her until she discovers they can't heal our wounds.

And then she returns to the great physician, to her faithful husband. And he is right there, ready to receive her.

[ 30 : 01 ] That is the love of God. Don't care what you've done. Don't care where you are. Child of God, He hasn't left you. He's waiting on you to run to Him.

And how will He heal you? The answer is in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He heals you in Jesus. You say, there goes that pastor again.

He's always bringing Jesus into it. I don't see Jesus anywhere in Hosea. Nowhere at all. Where in the world are you getting that this healing is found in Jesus?

Look at chapter 6, verse 2. After two days, He will revive us.

And on... You're kidding. On the third day, He will raise us up that we may live before Him.

[ 31 : 04 ] Does that sound familiar to you? On the third day, He will raise us up.

Listen to me, faith family. How does healing come? For Israel and for you. Healing comes through a single Israelite who, unlike Israel and us, was actually faithful to God in every way because He fulfilled the law.

This one Israelite who, unlike Israel and us, actually loved His Father with all His heart. This one single Israelite who, unlike Israel and us, recognized His Father's authority when He cried out in the Garden of Gethsemane, Not my will, but your will be done.

Jesus is the true and greater Israel. Jesus was everything Israel was not.

And Jesus is everything you are not. And on the cross, Jesus was wounded for your unfaithfulness and my unfaithfulness so that His faithfulness would be credited to us.

[ 32 : 40 ] As the Bible says, He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon Him was the chastisement, the discipline that brought us peace. And with His wounds we are healed.

Faith family, let me ask you this. When it comes to the love of God, what about Bob? When it comes to the love of God, what about Bob?

That is, what about those people who keep doing the very thing they've been told not to do?

Answer? They're invited to come to God.

Because God never goes on vacation when it comes to you. He is the faithful spouse and the gracious Father who can't wait to welcome you home.