

[3 : 54] They're before my face. By their evil they make the king glad, and the princes by their treachery. They are all adulterers. They are like a heated oven, whose baker ceases to stir the fire. From the kneading of the dough until it is leavened. On the day of our king, the princes become sick with the heat of wine. He stretched out his hand with mockers. For with hearts like an oven they approach their intrigue. All night their anger smolders, and the burning it blazes like a flaming fire. All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their rulers. All their kings have fallen, and none of them calls upon me. And just even reading that text, you see these are difficult words. These are hard things to understand. So pray with me. Pray for me now as I try to make this challenging text applicable for us. Let's pray. God, thank you for the time that we now have in your word.

[4 : 56] And the truth is, all of your word is applicable. All of your word is useful for knowledge and instruction and correction. And so, Holy Spirit, come and guide me now.

Come and meet us here as we look at your word and speak to us. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear what you have for us today. In Jesus' name, amen.

It was an early March morning when Albert and his wife Rita loaded their Chevy Astrovan and took out from their home in British Columbia, Canada.

Their destination on this road trip was Las Vegas, Nevada. Albert was scheduled to attend a trade show there for his job.

But rather than go the direct, normal route, Albert and Rita decided they'd take the scenic route. They decided they'd travel down Highway 51 in Idaho.

[5 : 56] And then eventually, of course, they'd make their way back to the main road that would take them on down to Vegas. In fact, a few days before the trip, Albert had purchased a Magellan GPS, but he never even had taken it out of the box.

And as the trip went on and the day got darker, Albert and Rita realized that they couldn't find the main road. They were lost and they didn't know how to get back to the main route.

And so they decided that they would consult their GPS. They assumed that the nearest town was Mountain City, Nevada. And so they entered that into the GPS as their destination.

The directions then led them down a very small, dirt road. And eventually, they came to what was a very confusing three-way split, a crossroads.

And they decided, based on their GPS, what they thought was the best way to go. Unfortunately, that's when things got worse. In fact, had Albert been driving during the daytime, he might have noticed that as he kept driving, he was actually going deeper and deeper into the Jarbage Mountains.

[7 : 17] The road kept twisting and turning. It would go down and back up. And eventually, the road got so narrow, they couldn't drive any further.

And so they decided that they would just stop there for the night. It was too dark to go back. Albert and Rita never made it to the trade show.

In fact, just a few weeks later, the police would call off their search that covered four states and over 3,000 miles.

Two months later, three hunters were passing through that same area, and they noticed a Chevy Astro van.

A woman, near death, barely managed to open the sliding van door and stick her head out.

[8 : 19] It was Rita. She was then airlifted to the hospital where she barely survived. Albert? His remains were found several miles away on the side of a mountain as he had journeyed off to find help.

Faith family, look here for just a moment. Have you ever been lost? Have you ever veered off course? Have you ever gone astray?

I mean, you set out to follow the recipe exactly as it was written, but it didn't quite turn out right. You set out to follow the coach's play exactly as he had instructed, but things fell apart.

You tried to follow the instructions that you were given, but things just didn't turn out the way you thought they would. But let me ask you this. Has that ever happened to you spiritually?

Have you ever gotten off course in your spiritual walk with God? You set out to follow the rules. You set out to obey God.

[9 : 30] You set out to keep your promises. But somewhere along the way in the journey of faith, you found yourself way off course.

That is exactly what we have been looking at the last several weeks in the book of Hosea as it relates to the nation of Israel. They had been rescued from Egypt, delivered from Pharaoh's hand. They had been protected through the Red Sea. They'd been brought to Mount Sinai where God would lay out for them their wedding vows, the commands, the groundwork of what it would be to live in relationship with Him.

And Israel said, we do. And they meant it. They wanted to obey God. They wanted to follow God. They wanted to worship God.

But as time went on, the marriage drifted. At least as it relates to them towards God. And they found themselves worshipping other gods.

[10:34] What the book of Hosea calls spiritual adultery. And this reality here in the book of Hosea is what is being pictured in this relationship between Hosea and Gomer.

Hosea, this faithful husband and Gomer, the prostitute wife. A woman who no doubt she did not set out to be a whore, but drifted over time.

And yet in all of that, God never stopped loving His people. Look back in chapter 2 and verse 14.

Chapter 2 and verse 14 says, Therefore I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her.

And there I will give her vineyards and make the valley of Ekor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

God is wooing back His wayward wife. She has gone astray. She has gone off course. She is out in no man's land, worshipping other gods and other idols.

[11:48] And God wants to bring her back on the right path. He wants to bring them back to Him. And so it's time for Israel to wake up from their waywardness and to realize just how far off course they have become.

And what we find in our section for today, in chapters 7, 8, 9, and even into 10, is God exposes some things that were the results of their idolatry.

Or He helps them understand what their idolatry really is. And so what I've decided to do, because again it's a very complicated section of Scripture, is I've decided just to step back from the text in a very practical way and give you four simple questions.

Four questions for you to help identify those idols in your life, like Israel, so that you can get back on the right path with God.

That you can repent of your waywardness and return to God. That's really what this section is all about. And I hope that this will be very practical and helpful for you.

[13:05] Here's the first thing that we're going to see in this section. The first word and question is this. Passions. Passions. Passions. What are you emotionally invested in?

What are your passions? What are you emotionally invested in? Because that will help you identify your idol so that you can return and get back on the right road in walking with God.

Let me show you this in the text. I find it in chapter 7 and verse 4. Chapter 7 and verse 4. It says, They are all adulterers. Now remember, that's not actual adultery.

That's actual idolatry. It's spiritual adultery. They are like a heated oven whose baker ceases to stir the fire from the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.

On the day of our king, the princes become sick in the heat of wine. He stretches out his hand with mockers. For with hearts like an oven, they approach their intrigue.

[14:12] All night their anger smolders. In the morning it blazes like a flaming fire. All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their rulers.

All their kings have fallen, and none of them calls upon me. Now you may say, what in the world is that talking about? Okay? What's going on here? What I'm going to do in all these is I want to explain what it means in the text.

Okay? What it meant for Israel. What this language actually means. And then we're going to step back and say, well how does that apply to my life, and what does that look like for me? Okay?

So, what is this language? What is this description all about? Well we know from verse 4, follow me, God is describing Israel's idolatry.

What's called you adulterers. They're all adulterers for. That is, they all worship other gods. They all commit idolatry. And then He gives them some imagery that explains that.

[15:15] And it's an imagery of an oven that keeps getting hotter and hotter. The baker keeps stirring the fire. Their hearts are like an oven.

In other words, what's being described in this text is a burning passion that's gone out of control. Okay? That's what the text is talking about. It's a burning passion that's gone out of control.

To give you a few examples, a little Johnny Cash, Ring of Fire. You remember the lyrics of that song? I fell into a burning ring of fire. I go down, down, down.

But the flames go higher. That's exactly what Hosea chapter 7 is talking about. This burning passion that's gone out of control.

Or if you prefer John Cassidy and the Beaver Brown Band that sings, Hearts on fire. Strong desire rages deep within.

[16:17] That's what this complicated text is talking about. It's talking about a desire that's gone out of control. Like an oven. Your passions have consumed your life.

And they've consumed your life and for Israel in a way that started to affect other people. For instance, in verse 7, it says, They devour their rulers.

Their kings have fallen. In fact, think of this faith family. Historically, Israel had six kings in the period of about 10 years.

Four of them were assassinated. In other words, what's happening here is people are burning with this passion for power. Political power.

And they wanted that power so much that it was literally impacting other people. Kings were dying because of this passion gone out of control.

[17:16] So what this text is teaching is that their passion for their idol, in this case, political power, had gotten so out of control like a fire in an oven that it was leading them astray.

They were off course with God because their passions had gone out of control. Now listen, faith family, passions are great. There's nothing wrong with passions.

God has given you passions. That's a good thing. The danger occurs when your passion becomes consuming. When you're like the burning oven here in Hosea chapter 7 and it causes you to sin against others.

That's when it's become an idol. That's when it's become a God in your life. Now that's what it was for Israel. Let me give you some examples for us.

You can be passionate about sports. You can be passionate. Many people are passionate about sports. There's not a problem with that in and of itself. The problem is that passion for a sports team, that passion for competition can become so consuming that it leads you to act out in sinful ways.

[18:34] Your team loses and you're devastated. You throw something through the TV. Your family walks in and you're like, would you just get out of here? Like leave me alone.

And you're acting out against others. Your team loses and you just disappear for days. In other words, your passion, which in and of itself would be okay, has burned out of control so much that it's actually impacting others around you, that it's leading you to sin.

That is when you know it's become an idol. Think of it this way. I hope you're with me, Faith Family. Your passion for sports has become greater than your passion for God.

It has a hold on your life. It's consuming you in some way. And so if you would ask yourself, what am I emotionally invested in?

What are those things that I am really passionate about, but passionate in a way that can lead to unhealthiness, sinful things? For some of you, it's politics.

[19:48] Have you looked at the culture you're living in right now? I mean, politics is ablaze. People are outraged when it comes to politics because politics is their God.

And it can happen in many other ways. It could be being respected or appreciated by others. But here's the first thing that I want you to identify like with Israel. What are your passions?

What are you emotionally invested in? Because if you will follow them, it may very well lead you to your idol and help you get back on track in worshiping God above all other things.

Here's number two. So the first was passion. The second is pride. The second is pride. Or the question would be, what do you put your confidence in? What do you put your confidence in?

Now let me show you this in the text so that you can see it in Israel's life. Chapter 7, verse 10. Chapter 7, verse 10. Notice the phrase, The pride of Israel testifies to His face.

[20:55] Yet they do not return to the Lord their God. They're off track. They're somewhere out in the mountains, in the wilderness. Nor seek Him for all this. So notice the phrase, the pride of Israel.

Okay? Where they're putting their confidence, if you will. And this idea was actually introduced back in chapter 5, verse 5. Notice the same phrase again. The pride of Israel testifies to His face. Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in His guilt. Judah shall also stumble with them. And so you've got the pride of Israel that's being identified in this passage.

And for Israel, it was their national identity. It was who they were. They were, after all, the people of God. They're the people of David. They're the people who was given the law.

They're the people of Moses. That couldn't be said of Assyria. That couldn't be said of Egypt. That couldn't be said of other nations. They had this national identity, this national confidence that they believed they were owed things.

[22 : 02] And that's what they put their confidence in. In their minds, they were a superior nation. They were overly confident in and of themselves. And so, that's what's happening here in this particular passage that helps them discover and identify what their idol was, what they were worshiping.

But what does that look like for us? Well, what is it that gives you confidence in life? Like, what's the thing in your life that that's your pride?

That's what makes you feel like you matter. Let me give you a few examples. Maybe for some of you, you feel like you're prettier or you're more attractive than anybody else in the room.

And so, physical beauty is what you look to to kind of pride yourself in. Or, maybe it's more education. You went to a better school than other people.

Or, you have more education than other people. And so, there's kind of a sense of I'm smarter than most of the people that I work with or in my family. And that pride, that confidence is in education.

[23 : 14] Maybe it's money. Maybe you have more money than most people. And so, your confidence, your pride is kind of in your financial security. Maybe, think of this on another way, maybe you have suffered more than other people.

And so, when it comes to the issue of suffering, you feel like, well, you know what? I've learned more. I've gone through more. I've faced more difficulty than anybody else. And that has a sense of making you in some way better than those who haven't suffered like you.

Maybe it's the accomplishments of your children. Maybe it's how traveled you are. Maybe it's that you have a great marriage. Have you thought about that? Like, I see all these other marriages falling apart, but our marriage, it's strong.

It's a great marriage and that becomes your pride. That becomes what you're confident in. And if you're not careful, here's, think about this. Here's what's interesting.

Your healthy marriage, your great marriage, can actually be your adultery. Now you think about that. That is, you're loving your spouse, you're loving your good marriage more than you love God.

[24 : 30] You have more confidence in your marriage than you have confidence in Christ.

Meaning, that's an idol. Your good marriage has actually become a form of spiritual adultery.

Let me give you an example in my life to just help make this practical. For me, often in my life, it's theology. It's theology. I mean, let's be honest, we all knew it wasn't going to be good looks, okay? It's theology. And so like, I can be in a room and we can be talking about sports and it's kind of like, yeah, you know, I can carry on a conversation there. I like sports, no big deal.

We can talk about politics. Yeah, you know, I've got opinions on that and, you know, can talk about that. But then theology comes up and something inside all of a sudden feels like, now I can own this conversation, okay?

I can hold my own with other people when we start talking about theological things. And what's happening inside me is that sense of, okay, this is something that makes me matter.

[25 : 37] Now all of a sudden in the room and in the conversation or in the circle of friends, I've got a pride or a confidence in which I can look to to make me significant in that moment.

Notice this on the screen and again, this is as it relates to my life. My false God is often my knowledge about the true God. That'll preach.

My false God can often be my knowledge of the true God. because that's the thing I'm looking to to make me feel like, okay, I matter now.

I have identity now. Now all of a sudden I'm an important person in the room when I never needed that because I have Christ. He is all the confidence I need.

And isn't this exactly what the Apostle Paul talks about in Philippians chapter 3? Philippians chapter 3 and verse 4. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also.

[26 : 47] I mean, if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day the people of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of Hebrew, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

But whatever gain I had, I count as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I might gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

So faith family, look right here. Again, trying to be faithful to the text in Hosea. Israel had a pride. The pride of Israel. It was an idol. It was something that they looked to to give them identity other than the fact that God was their identity.

And if we will follow our pride, follow those things that when that topic comes up or that issue comes up, I well up with pride.

[28 : 06] You're well on your way of discovering your idol, that thing that you're worshiping more than God and it will help you begin to return to the right road, to repentance with God and worshiping Him above all things.

So number one, follow your passions in terms of leading you to your idol. What are you emotionally invested in? Number two, follow your pride. What are those things that give you more confidence than your confidence in God?

And here's a third one, is promises. Promises. That is, what expectations devastate you if they're not met? Promises. What expectations devastate you if they're not met?

Now let me show you this in the text where I get it from Hosea. This is chapter 8 and verse 4. Chapter 8 and verse 4. They made kings but not through me.

They set up princes but I knew it not. With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction.

[29 : 15] For their own destruction. Now stop and think about that imagery that's happening here. Basically, Israel is taking gold and silver and they're fashioning idols from it.

these things that they will look to and worship. And they're doing so with the hopes that these idols will solve their problems. That they will help them prosper or make their crops grow.

And so, in other words, they're shaping this silver and gold and forming these idols with the hopes that, listen, these idols will deliver their hopes and dreams.

They have expectations that they will get from these things what they want. These idols are making promises that if you'll just worship me you'll be taken care of.

But the problem is, the text says, these idols do not deliver. In fact, they end up causing more problems than what they actually solve.

[30 : 12] In Israel's case, they wanted salvation and what they received was destruction. And so, here's the reality is everybody in their life leans up against some kind of wall.

Something that you expect is going to hold you up. Is going to give you what you need. Something that you can trust in. Something that you can believe in. But what happens when that wall falls?

What happens when you put all your hopes into this? And all your expectations into this? And all the promises that you hope to receive in this?

And then that wall crumbles. That's exactly what's happening here in Hosea. They fashion these idols but what they get is destruction when they had hoped for salvation.

Let me read you a quote from C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity that I think really gets at this. He says this, most people if they have really looked into their hearts would know that they do want and want acutely something that cannot be had in this world.

[31 : 27] There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give you but they never quite keep their promise. The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love.

First think of some foreign country. first take up some subject that excites us. Our longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning can really satisfy.

Now I'm not speaking of what would be ordinarily called an unsuccessful marriage or holiday or learned career. No. I'm speaking of the best possible ones.

There was something we have grasped at in that first moment of longing which fades away in the reality. I think everyone knows what I mean.

The wife may be a good wife and the hotels and the scenery may have been excellent. Chemistry may have been an interesting job but listen, something has evaded us.

[32 : 31] We put all our expectations, all our hopes that these things would fulfill those promises, would give us what we really want and the wall doesn't hold us up.

What are those things that you're looking to to fulfill those ultimate needs? Security, identity, purpose, and yet time after time after time after time, they have let you down.

And there are so many examples, faith family, of relationships that you've looked to to be everything that you need out of life and they've let you down.

You thought being wealthy and having a successful career would ultimately fulfill you but like Israel, those idols leave you empty.

And so, follow, what are you looking to to solve your promises? To give you those things that you deeply long for?

[33 : 33] And that will help you discover where your idol truly is so that you can repent of that idol and give your love ultimately to the Lord.

Here's the fourth and final thing that we'll look at today is not just follow your passions in terms of where do they lead to find your idol? Or follow your pride.

What's the things that you're looking to for confidence? Or what are those promises that you think others will deliver on? And then finally is panic. Panic.

What do you fear losing the most? What do you fear losing the most? Now let me show you this in the text. Look at chapter 10 now and verse 5.

Chapter 10 and verse 5 says, The inhabitants of Samaria tremble for the calf of Bethaven. Its people mourn for it and so do its idolatrous priests, those who rejoice over it and over its glory for it is departed from them.

[34 : 35] The thing itself shall be carried to Assyria as tribute to the great king. Ephraim shall be put to shame and Israel shall be ashamed of his idol.

Okay, now what is going on with this passage? Here's what's taking place. Israel is terrified at losing their idols. God has already warned judgment that the nation of Assyria is going to come and the people of Israel and Hosea are hoping that won't be the case because if Assyria comes crashing through, if Assyria comes and overtakes Israel, they're going to lose all their idols. And the text says they tremble at this. It says they tremble for the calf. And the imagery here is of Baal. Notice this picture here of what Baal looks like.

And of course, if we're honest, it looks an awfully lot like this as well. Just saying. Israel here was terrified that if Israel invaded, they would lose their idol.

And they cannot imagine life without their idol. It's kind of like a drug user. If you've known somebody that's been on drugs or around people like that, it's like that's all they think about, it's all they want, they cannot imagine a scenario where they won't get another high.

[36 : 08] Like they can't fathom a future without that drug. And they're terrified at the possibility of losing it.

What is that for you? What's that thing in your life that you would be devastated if you lost that? That life would almost be not worth living if you didn't have that?

And it could be a spouse, it could be a host of things. And so Israel was in a panic. Israel was trembling at the thought that she might lose her idol.

And you know a lot of times as pastors ministry can be that. Where you're terrified that you might not be able to do ministry. Even good things that can become substitutes for God.

So faith family really think about this. You can't study the book of Hosea and not identify your idol. It's what this book is about.

[37 : 15] Because we are like Gomer going after other lovers. And so what are those other lovers in your life? What are those passions that burn out of control?

What's the pride or confidence that you put your identity in? What's the promises that you look to other things to give you?

And what's the panic that you feel when certain things could be taken away or no longer yours?

Why does God give us these verses in order for us to identify our idol?

Why does God give us this so that we will be able to travel back to Him? It's this faith family. He wants you to be where you belong.

And where you belong is with Him. God in this passage is exposing these things in Israel's life because He wants His wayward wife to come back into His arms.

[38 : 18] In fact notice how this section ends. Look at chapter 10 and verse 12. Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap steadfast love, break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the Lord, that He may come and rain righteousness upon you.

What an amazing verse that is. He is saying it's time to seek the Lord. Lord, it's time to recalculate your life and get back on the right path.

But to do that you've got to identify your idol. You've got to call out what it is that you've been worshipping over God. And when you do that, and when you repent, and when you return to Him, what's going to be waiting on you?

A mad, angry husband? No. A silent, won't even speak to you husband? No. What's waiting on you is a God, verse 12 says, who wants to rain righteousness upon you.

That is the boundless love of God. He can't wait for you to return. He welcomes His wayward wife back into His arms.

[39 : 41] And so today, if you're like Albert and Rita, and you've gone off the map spiritually, and whether that's a mile off road, or somewhere way out into the Jarbij mountains, will you return to the right path?

Will you turn from your idols, and will you turn to God? And if you will, He is waiting to rain righteousness on you.

And how do we know that that's true? How do we know that chapter 10, verse 12 is true? Because God sent His Son into the world with specific directions.

And Jesus never once veered off course until He reached the final destination of the cross and the empty tomb.

And He did that because God so loved the world. You see, Faith Family, the good news of the gospel is that Jesus never got lost.

[40 : 51] So that no matter how lost you may be, you're never beyond the bounds of His love. Let's pray together.

God, thank you for this great truth today. Israel was a wayward wife. We too, like we sing in the great hymn, we're prone to wonder, Lord, I feel it.

We're prone to drift. We're prone to get off course. We're prone to get lost somewhere out in the wilderness. But God, thank you that you've given us your word like we looked at today that helps us identify those things that are pulling us away from our walk with you so that we can identify them, we can repent of them, and we can return to our faithful husband, to you, oh God, who is ready to rain righteousness on us in Jesus Christ.

So thank you for your love, for your boundless love, for your wayward people, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Faith family, thanks for worshiping with us today, and we're delighted that you're a part of this ministry, and if you're here and you would just like to reach out to somebody, maybe there's a decision that you've been wanting to talk to someone about, maybe there's a prayer request that you would like to share, and you would like people just to be praying for you, we would love for you to reach out here to Faith Family Church and let us know how we could be ministering to you.

Just drop us an email at forthegospelgatherings@gmail.com, forthegospelgatherings@gmail.com, and we would love to make a connection with you.

[42 : 40] Thanks again for worshiping with us today, we look forward to meeting again next week as we continue in understanding God's boundless love.