

No one's big like Gaston. A kid big like Gaston. No one's got us well cleft in his gym like Gaston. As a specimen, yes, I'm intimidating.

I want a guy like Gaston. I mean seriously, if Belle has any intelligence at all, if she has any sense at all, she will marry a guy like that.

And that is part of the twist of the whole story. You see, Belle, due to a very unfortunate event related to her father, she ends up imprisoned by a beast.

[5 : 32] And while she is imprisoned, much to her shock, she is treated with kindness. In fact, the beast falls in love with her as well.

But she wants nothing to do with the beast. I mean, after all, how could you love someone that looks like that? I mean, look at that face. He's a beast.

And then one day, upon hearing that her father is not doing well, Belle asked the beast if she could be released. And he agrees.

While Belle is away, tending to her father, it dawns on her that she has fallen in love with the beast. And in a shocking turn of events, at least by all worldly standards, Belle ends up marrying not the pick of the village, a man like Gaston.

[6 : 35] She ends up marrying the beast. In fact, if you know the story, it's her love that transforms the beast into a beauty.

And all God's people said, yuck, right? Now, Faith Family, listen to me for just a moment. We all know that Beauty and the Beast is a fairy tale.

We understand that. But it's also one of the most famous examples in movie and literature and film of an unlikely marriage.

I mean, after all, most people would not expect someone as beautiful as a Belle to love someone as beastly as the beast.

And yet, that often happens in life. Does it not, Faith Family? I mean, come on, be honest. There are times when you look at a couple and you think, what in the world is he doing with her?

[7 : 40] Or vice versa, what is she doing with him? In other words, you take a look at a couple and by all appearances, there doesn't seem to be any rational reason for why the two of them would be together.

And your assessment that leads you to that conclusion may be based on their physical attraction, like Beauty and the Beast. Maybe it's based on their financial status. Maybe it's the fact that they don't seem to have anything in common.

Maybe there's a significant age gap between the two. But for whatever the reason, you know that feeling of looking at a couple and saying, that's an unlikely pair.

That is an unlikely marriage. And that, in many ways, has been the story in the book of Hosea.

I mean, after all, what is Hosea, a prophet of God, a spokesman for God, a man called by God, doing with someone like Gomer?

[8 : 44] A prostitute? A whore? What is somebody like that doing with someone like her? And of course, if you're mentally overthinking that example, you're missing the point because the real question would be, what is God doing with a people like Israel?

What is God doing with a people like Israel? Or better yet, come here, faith family. What is Jesus doing with you? What is Jesus doing with you?

Talk about your odd couple. Think of it in the book of Hosea. How can the best possible husband in the universe, the God who is forever faithful, love a constantly wayward, consistently unfaithful, wife like Israel?

I mean, every time He makes her prosper, she becomes a prostitute. He never leaves her. She leaves him time and time again.

He wants her. She wants Baal. And yet, He remains unmoved in His love for her. And eventually, you're just left wondering, what is He doing with her?

[10 : 04] What is He doing with her? The reality is, notice this on the screen, faith family, that God's love is not based on your beauty.

God's love is what gives you beauty. God's love is not based on your beauty, that is your good works, or your earning it, or your living up to an expectation of where you would be loved.

It's His love that makes you beautiful. As I've said time and time again in this series, God's love for you is not based on the fact that you are good or bad, it's based on the fact that you are His.

And it's His love that makes us beautiful. Now, as we come to this final chapter in the book of Hosea, like every love story, and certainly a love story as odd as this one, we ask, how does it end? How does this love story that we've studied for all these different weeks and now 14 chapters, how does it come to an end? And you would think at this point, it'd be like, okay, God finally comes to His senses, right?

[11 : 13] I mean, God finally, the faithful husband who has been forsaken time and time again by this beastly, sinful bride, He comes to His senses and He gets rid of the old hag for good.

Isn't that what you would expect? The wayward wife finally walks away one too many times and the husband calls it quits.

How does this love story end? Verse 4. I will heal their apostasy.

I will love them freely for my anger is turned from them.

That's how this love story ends. Notice here the security of God's love. I mean, if there's one thing that you'd have to say about this faithful husband that is God, it's that He sure is consistent.

[12 : 21] Because the book of Hosea ends the way it's been throughout of God continually loving His people. Let's break down that verse. He says, I will heal their apostasy.

That is, though they have forsaken Me, though they have turned from Me, I will restore them, I will heal them, I will renew the covenant we made together.

Secondly, I will love them freely. God is saying, I love My people. Not because I have to. Not because I'm obligated.

There's no arm twisting here, no deal making, no expectations. It's just free, sovereign, unconditional love that God has for His people.

It's crazy. It's absolutely insane. After all that has been said and done, after everything that Israel has done to their faithful husband God, He says, I'll heal their apostasy, I'll love them freely.

[13 : 28] And then the third phrase in that verse, My anger has turned from them. I have no anger towards them at all. It's not, I will love them, but I can't look at their face.

It's not, I will love them, but I'm never going to let them forget it. It's not, I will love them, but they're going to have to sleep on the couch. It's not, I will love them, but if they do this one more time, not at all, not at all, this love story ends with God.

After all of Israel's idolatry and spiritual adultery and under the table deals with Assyria, it is God saying this, I will love them freely.

And there'll be no anger at all. None. None. What. So. Ever. This is God's boundless love for His people.

In fact, then, listen to me for just a minute. This is not just what the Old Testament book of Hosea is saying as it relates to God and Israel. This is what the New Testament book of 1 John says about Jesus and His bride.

[14 : 44] Look at 1 John 4 and verse 10. 1 John 4 verse 10 says, In this is love.

This is important. Not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

In other words, faith family, you and I did not love God first. He loved us. We were not even able to love Him.

It's like that old song, Oh, how He loves, or, Oh, how I love Jesus. Oh, how I love Jesus. Oh, how I love Jesus. Because, He first loved me.

You see, without God's love, we are unable to love Him, for dead people don't love very well. And the good news of this truth, notice this on the screen, is that His love for you is not conditioned on your love for Him.

[15 : 59] That's incredible news. This proves the fact this is love, that God loved us, not that we loved Him. It means that there's no conditions to His love. It's not, I love you if you love me, or I love you because I knew you were going to love me.

No, God simply put His love upon us. He didn't love you because of conditions. He loves you unconditionally.

Which means, faith family, God loved you before, God loves you now, and He will love you forever, freely. This is God's amazing and boundless love.

But it gets even better. According to Hosea 14, 4, and 1 John 4, 10, now think about this, faith family, zoned out, zoned right back in, right here.

What this means, is the only thing God feels for you, is love. The only thing, the only thing, He feels for you, is love.

[17 : 09] That's it. Hosea puts it this way, my anger, my anger, is turned away. 1 John 4, puts it this way, Jesus, is the propitiation, for our sins.

Propitiation, just simply means, the wrath, substitute. In other words, all of the righteous anger, and it is a righteous anger, all of the righteous anger, that God has towards us, and our sin, was placed on Jesus Christ, at the cross.

And that means, the only thing, He feels for you, even in your mess, is love. It's the only thing, He feels for you.

It's not 50-50, it's not 90-10, it's not 99.9, and .1, it's 100% love. It's not love, with a little bit of frustration, love, with a little bit of hesitation, love, with some uncertainty, love, with resentment, it's only love.

It's not love, in the past, but not love, in the present. It's not love, in the past, in the present, but not in the future. It is love, in the past, love, in the now, and love forever more.

[18 : 25] That is God's love for you, in the person, of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus took, God's anger, the righteous anger, that our sin deserved, because Jesus took that, the only thing we receive, is God's love.

That's how secure, that is how secure, God's love for you is, in the person, of Jesus Christ. Now, the reality, of God's love, everything that I have just said, over the past, several minutes here, ought to, shock you.

It ought to be, the most shocking news, you've ever heard, in your life. It, you ought to almost, be appalled, at such, a statement.

Now, I'm going to try, to illustrate this. I'll probably get in trouble, as a communicator, I probably won't, communicate it well, so give me grace. But, I'm going to try, to give an example, to help you feel, how shocking, this is, that God would love us, this, way.

Let me show you something, okay? Hang with me, think with me for a minute. Go back, to Hosea chapter 13, and verse 16. This is Hosea 13, verse 16. It's the last verse, of Hosea 13, and it says this, Samaria, that is Israel, the northern kingdom, shall bear her guilt, because she has rebelled, against her God, and they shall fall, by the sword, their little ones, shall be dashed, into pieces, wow, and their pregnant women, ripped, open, wow, that's not a verse, you find on a coffee mug, very often, at all.

[20 : 17] That's the kind of verse, that probably many of you, wish that I would just skip. What's that verse about? Okay, think with me for just a minute, will you faith family, think with me. That verse, is simply referring to, the judgment, that's going to happen, when Assyria, takes Israel, Samaria, captive.

Okay, in prophetic, imagery, there is going to, be bloodshed, there is going to be, loss of life, there is going to be, judgment, that comes upon Israel, when Assyria comes, and takes them captive.

Now here's my question, does that bother you? Does that verse bother you? I guarantee you, it bothers a lot of people, if you don't believe me, the next time you're at a Bible study, or the next time you're, talking to a, a lost co-worker, just read them that verse, and make note, of their initial reaction, well, how could a God do that?

How could, how could God be a God of love, and stuff like that happen? And they'll get appalled, and they'll get outraged, and they'll be, they'll be shocked, by such a verse.

Now, hold that thought, and let me give you an illustration. Okay, I'm not trying to be political, I'm not trying to be cultural, I'm trying to be biblical. As many of you know, in the last few weeks, right here in the city of Minneapolis, we experienced the tragic death, of George Floyd.

[21 : 52] Tragic, absolutely tragic. And as many of you know, our city, and really, our country, ever since, has been outraged, at that event.

And rightly so, in many ways. Rightly so. There ought to be a sense of outrage. But here's my question. Here's my question, okay? And I say this with the purest of hearts, I hope that I will communicate this well.

Here's my question for you. Which of the following outcomes would be most outrageous? Which of the following outcomes would be the most outrageous?

The officer, charged with the death of George Floyd, stands before the judge, and receives justice.

He gets what he deserves. Will people be outraged by that? Not at all. They'll say, he deserved that. There ought to be consequences.

[22 : 57] There should be judgment for that. No one will be outraged, at justice. But, what if, the officer charged with the death of George Floyd, stood before the judge, and the judge said this, all charges, are dropped, and you're free to go?

Are you, are you kidding me? Do you know how people would respond to that kind of verdict? Our culture, and I'm not giving commentary on one side or the other, I'm just saying, our culture would be outraged.

In other words, faith family, please listen, what is outrageous, what is almost impossible to think of, when it relates to sin, is not justice, it's mercy.

mercy is what is outrageous. And, listen to me, while I can't speak to the details related to the death of George Floyd, I most certainly can speak to the details related to the death of Jesus, namely, it was our sin that nailed him there.

Faith family, you and I are spiritual murderers, in the first degree, deserving far more than Assyrian destruction, we deserve eternal damnation, and yet, because of Jesus, the verdict over our life is, I will love you freely, and my anger is turned away.

[24 : 56] That's outrageous. That's outrageous. And if you will honestly stop and think about it, faith family, the love of God for sinners, is far more outrageous than the judgment of God.

Now you say, why are you doing all this? Here's why I'm doing all this. And I'm doing it as a pastor. I'm hoping I'm communicating this well. We will read the last verse of Hosea 13, about the judgment coming upon Israel with the Assyrian captivity, and we will be outraged.

How could God? I can't. And then we will read in chapter 14, God saying, I will love you freely. And we're kind of like, yeah, that sounds about right.

And it shows you how little we really understand about the insanity of God's love for us.

It really is an outrageous love. God says to His wayward people, when it's all said and done, and the love story comes to a close, here's how it ends.

[26 : 14] I will heal you, and I will love you freely, and there will be no anger for you whatsoever.

That's the security of the love of God in Hosea 14. Now, the challenge for us as believers, the challenge for us is how do we live in that?

How do we live in that love? Well, 1 John, I think, is helpful again here. Here's 1 John 4, verse 16. 1 John 4, verse 16. So we have come to know and to believe.

We've come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in Him.

Here's the important thing. This is so critically important, Faith Family. Christians. Christians are those who not only know God's outrageous, boundless love, but they also believe it.

[27 : 18] They don't just know it. They believe it. That is, they live in it. Because the reality is, and I've addressed this several times in this series, is we're much like the prodigal son.

You remember the prodigal son on his way home to the father? He's thinking it is mine. At best, I'm a slave. At best. There's no way I'm treated like a son.

There's no way I should be treated like a son. At the very best, I'll be a slave at my father's home.

And yet, what Hosea 14 teaches is, not only is God's love for you secure, is that God's love for you is sincere.

Like, you don't have to doubt it. You don't have to question whether or not everything I've just said for the past several minutes is true. You're secure, but the security of that love is sincere.

God really means it. And let me show you three reasons, very quickly in Hosea 14, why not only can you be secure in God's love, but you can see the sincerity of God's love.

[28 : 24] Here's the first thing that I want you to see, is look at God's pleading. Look at God's pleading. This is chapter 14, verse 1.

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Look at God's pleading. In other words, God, through the prophet Hosea, is calling out for Israel, return to the Lord.

Return to the Lord. And of course, that's something that happens repeatedly throughout the book of Hosea. And here's my question for you, okay? Faith family, look here for just a minute. Why does God repeatedly tell His people to come to Him?

Because He really wants them to come to Him. He wants you. He's pleading. And the reason He's pleading, return home, come back, is because He wants you.

And God is not the type of God that does not mean what He says. So, notice this on the screen. We need to stop dwelling on what you think God should say, and start dwelling on what God has said.

[29 : 44] Stop dwelling on what you think God should say. The prodigal son, my father's never going to accept me, I'll only be a slave, probably won't even let me through the front door. Stop dwelling on what you think God should say, and actually dwell on what God has said, which is, come to me.

Come to me. I love you. I will love you freely. I mean it. Come home. You see, just because you don't think God loves you doesn't mean that He doesn't love you.

In fact, in this unlikely marriage that is you and Jesus, I'm quite certain He's the rational one. I'm quite certain that He's the one that speaks the truth.

And so, faith family, in black and white letters, God is saying to His people, I want you. Come home. Come home.

Look at His pleading. If you ever doubt how sincere God is, look at His pleading. Here's a second thing that I would show you about the sincerity of God's love is look at God's pattern.

[30 : 52] Look at God's pattern. I take this from verse 2. Take with you words and return to the Lord.

Say to Him, Take away all iniquity, except what is good, and we will pay with bulls and the vows of our lips. Assyria shall not save us. We will not ride on horses.

We will say no more, our God, to the work of our hands. In you, the orphan, finds mercy. Now, I don't have the time to break down every little phrase in verses 2 and 3.

Here's basically the summary of what those verses are saying. It's this. If you go to God, come to God with your words. If you go to God with lips of praise, it speaks about the vows of our lips.

So, if you come to God with praise, with praise on your lips, acknowledging your idolatry, the text talks about Assyria shall not save us.

[31 : 55] We'll no longer say our God to the work of our hands. In other words, if you'll come to God with praise on your lips, acknowledging your idolatry, which is what Israel would be doing here, here's what's going to happen.

Just like an orphan, you receive mercy. Just like an orphan, you receive mercy. Here's the question. Look at me. Has God ever, ever, ever, ever rejected a genuine heart?

No. God has a pattern of showing mercy. Hello? I mean, talk about Israel. At this point in Hosea and Old Testament history, God is like, I'm pretty sure I've got a resume that is impeccable when it comes to showing you mercy.

I have received you back time and time again. The problem is, is that you and I, like orphans, is that we've been so used to rejection that it's hard for us to really accept that will be accepted.

[33 : 10] We forget the pattern of mercy that God has shown us. Now, this is a story I've shared before, but I think it really speaks to this.

It's about Ernie Johnson. Many of you will know Ernie Johnson. He's a broadcaster for TNT, covers the NBA. Well, he and his wife, Cheryl, have adopted several children.

In fact, here's a picture of two of their older children named Ashley and Allison that they adopted from foster care system. Now, Ashlyn and Allison were bounced around for quite a bit during their life.

They had learning disabilities. They had been abused at times in their life. And what Ernie said was that one of the biggest hurdles that he picked up on early on when they came into their family, one of the biggest hurdles was getting them to accept, we're not going to send you back.

We're not going to send you back. And he said where he really noticed this was in a conversation between Allison and his wife, Cheryl.

[34 : 20] His wife, Cheryl, had just finished explaining to Allison that this was her forever home. This is your forever home.

And Allison looked at Cheryl and said, well, how long will forever be this time? How long will forever be this time?

You see, the pattern of their life had been rejection, rejection. You're not loved. You're not accepted. And so it was hard for them to comprehend that this could actually be a forever home.

Faith family, God has a resume throughout all of redemptive history that when you come to Him with a genuine heart, He always shows you mercy.

Do you doubt how sincere this love is for you? If you do, look at His pleading. Come home. Come home.

[35 : 34] He doesn't just say that to say it. He means it. And not just that. Look at His pattern. Time and time and time again, He has shown you the grace and love that you do not deserve.

Here's a third reason why we can know that God's love is sincere. We can know God's love is sincere. And it's found in verses 5-7. But notice the point first. It's God's passion.

Look at God's passion. Verse 5. I will be like the dew to Israel. He shall blossom like the lily.

He shall take root like the trees of Lebanon. His shoot shall spread out. His beauty shall be like the olive. His fragrance like Lebanon.

They shall return and dwell underneath my shadow. They shall flourish like the grain. They shall blossom like the vine. Their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

[36 : 38] Now, let's be honest. Let's be honest. That kind of language doesn't mean much to us. I mean, we read that and we're like, okay, that sounds nice. What in the world does it mean?

Do you have any idea where that language comes from? Bible trivia here. Where does that language come from? The answer is the Song of Solomon.

God's book in the Old Testament of romance, of passion, of love. It's actually, much like Hosea and Gomer, a symbol of God's passionate love for His bride, for His people.

And even, by the way, if you didn't pick up on that being Song of Solomon language, you can kind of see the romantic tones blossoms, blossom like a flower, beauty like an olive, fragrance like Lebanon, dwell underneath my shadow, this kind of taking someone in.

It's the same language, it's the same language used back in chapter 2 of the book of Hosea. When God uses this kind of language, I will allure her, I will speak tenderly to her.

[37 : 56] In other words, what is God doing? How does this love story end? It ends with love.

Passionate love. And if that kind of throws you off, if you think that's weird to talk about it that way, here's what you need to understand.

God's love for you is so intimate, it is so intimate, that the only, like the closest human expression that we can even relate to is romantic passion.

That's like the best we can do humanly speaking is to give that kind of metaphor, that kind of illustration. And so what God is saying to His people is not only am I pleading with you, right, not only do I have a pattern of showing you mercy time and time again, but I have a passion for you, an intimate passion for my bride.

I really, really love you. I'm not playing. I'm sincere.

And this book ends with this kind of declaration of God's desire for His wayward wife. It's unbelievable.

[39 : 20] It's absolutely incredible. So what's the summary of what we've looked at as we close? Is it the love story? The love story that is your relationship to God?

The love story that is your relationship with God ends in love. It ends in love. It's completely secure. There is no doubt at all that in the future and in the now just like in the past your love story is going to end with love.

And if for some reason you don't think that's sincere, if for some reason you don't think that that's true, all you need to do is look at God pleading for you, look at His pattern of mercy for you, and look at His passion.

Look at how much He loves you, and you'll never have to doubt it. So faith family, think about it. God and Israel. Better yet, Jesus and you.

[40 : 32] That is a very unlikely marriage. I mean seriously, who would have ever put the two of you together together?

Who would have ever put the two of you together? And the answer to that question, of course, is God. God put us together. And it's not a joke.

It's not a misprint in your Bible. It is the sincere love of God for you in the person of Jesus Christ. And so sincere is that love that God sent His only Son as a propitiation for our sins.

The good news of the gospel, faith family, is that the beauty became the beast to make the beast beautiful forever.

And because of that, the only thing He feels for you is love. And that is how your love story ends.

[41 : 42] Let's pray. God, thank You for just once again being in the book of Hosea just overwhelms us at this amazing love that You have for us in Jesus.

And I pray that we are like 1 John says, not just knowing it, but we're believing it. That it is sinking in, that we feel it, and that it's transforming us.

And so we thank You for Your love, and we trust and believe that when it's all said and done, forever and ever and ever, the only thing that You will feel for us is love because of Jesus Christ. Thank You for the good news, and I pray, I really pray, that You would help us as people of faith rest in this truth.

In Jesus name, Amen. Well, Faith Family, thanks for worshiping with us today, and I hope that you are being encouraged week after week through our study in the book of Hosea.

[42 : 54] If you're watching today and you would like to reach out to us here at Faith Family, drop us an email, [forthegospelgatherings at gmail.com](mailto:forthegospelgatherings@gmail.com), [forthegospelgatherings at gmail.com](mailto:forthegospelgatherings@gmail.com).

Let us know how we can pray for you. Let us know if you would like to reach out and make contact with someone at Faith Family that could talk with you about how you can have a relationship with God. Maybe there's a decision that you need to make of some kind.

We would be more than happy to talk with you, whatever God is doing in your life. So thanks for tuning in today. Trust that you'll worship with us again next week. We'll see you then.