

[4 : 02] Sebastian is a jazz pianist who loves traditional jazz music and wants to preserve that tradition. And so his intention is to open up his own jazz club.

Both Maya and Sebastian are passionate people, driven people. And that's why they hit it off so well. It's why they almost immediately fall in love.

They inspire one another. They see one another through many obstacles. They provide each other the kind of energy they need to endure. And it's just obvious.

It's so obvious that they're meant to be together. And that's why the ending of that film left so many people in the audience, so many people who had watched the film upset.

It was controversial to so many people that loved the movie. Because what happens is in the closing scene, Sebastian is playing the piano in his jazz club.

[5 : 21] And as he is playing, Maya starts to think about all their future together. And all of what it would be like together.

And all the kinds of things that they would experience together. And it's so obvious that they're meant to be. And then the ending.

If you're thinking about what happens is that they're meant to be. If you're thinking about what happens is that they're meant to be. If you're thinking about what happens is that they're meant to be. If you're thinking about what happens is that they're meant to be. If you're thinking about what happens is that they're meant to be. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[7 : 22] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Faith family, let me ask you this.

[9 : 54] Have you ever had that feeling? Have you ever experienced that feeling when something did not end the way it was supposed to? Have you ever had that feeling?

Something did not end the way? The way it was supposed to? The relationship didn't end the way it should have. Didn't end the way it should have. That game didn't end the way it should have. That game didn't end the way you thought it should.

That story didn't end the way it should. That story didn't end the way you thought it was going to end. That life wasn't supposed to end that way.

My guess is we've all experienced that feeling before. We all know that feeling before. We all know that feeling of saying, wait a minute. That's not the right ending to the story.

Faith family, that's exactly the way we feel when we get to the end of the book of Hosea. And here's what I mean by that. This great Old Testament love story is supposed to end on the final note of the movie, on the final note of the song with happily ever after.

[11 : 04] But instead, the movie, the book ends like this. Look at it again in verse 9. Whoever is wise, let him understand these things.

Whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them. But transgressors stumble in them.

And if you've been following along with the book at all, you're like, wait a minute. That's not the ending of a great love story. And that's not how this great love story of Hosea and Gomer and God and Israel is supposed to end.

Maybe the book should have just stopped in chapter 14, verse 4. Look at that. It says, I will heal their apostasy. I will love them freely.

For my anger has turned from them. Now that's more like it. That's a happily ever after story or ending to a love story.

[12 : 05] We might think that's how the book is supposed to end, but it doesn't. The final scene in the movie, the final note in the song, or let me be more specific.

The final verse in the book doesn't end the way one expects. In fact, let me be even more specific. Now listen, listen closely, Faith Family.

What happens in this final verse is that it jumps genre. We've been following along with the genre of prophecy.

prophecy. And all of a sudden, the film ends, the book ends with wisdom. It's prophetic genre the whole way through.

And then the final note of the song is like something out of the book of Proverbs. In fact, this whole book follows the normal pattern of prophetic literature.

[13:04] You have the indictment against Israel. You have the verdict that comes from God. You've got judgment that's declared. And then you've got the promise of restoration. This is all the kind of thing that you would see in other prophets.

It follows the proper structure and the proper patterns of a prophetic kind of book. And then this verse.

And the reader is left to think, wait a minute. That's not quite the ending we expected to receive. It's almost like this. Imagine you've been watching a dramatic thriller.

And it's been full of tragedy and suspense and kind of just on the edge of your seat kind of intensity. And then you get to the very final scene and they tell a joke.

It's a 10 second clip of comedy. And you're like, what? Wait a minute. I thought I was watching this. And now all of a sudden you end it like that.

[14:11] That's what the book of Hosea does. In fact, notice the language again. Look at verse nine. Whoever is wise, let him understand these things.

Whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right and the upright walk in them. But transgressors stumble in them.

Look at that language. Wise, discerning, understanding, ways of the Lord. The upright, for instance, is mentioned like 50 times in the book of Proverbs.

Transgressors stumble. My point is, if I had time, which I won't take the time, but go read Psalm 1. Go read Psalm 1 as a good example. And you'll be like, wait a minute.

This looks much more like kind of wisdom literature than it does prophetic literature. So what's going on here? What's happening here?

[15:16] Because when this kind of shift at the end takes place, it ought to grab our attention. We ought to be asking, why? What is the author trying to do here?

There must be something important going on. And here's the answer. Here's the answer. The reason why the book of Hosea ends the way it does. The reason why it ends with wisdom is because Hosea, the author, is asking the reader to go back and look at the book practically.

Go back and look at the book practically. Because that's what Proverbs are meant to do. Proverbs are about everyday life. They're about practical living decisions that you make and how you spend your money and the way you talk.

Or whether you're a hard worker or lazy. It's all about practical life. And so what Hosea is doing beautifully and inspired of God is to go back and look at all the things that you've learned practically. So notice here, for instance, the proverb of Hosea. The proverb of Hosea. What is Hosea trying to teach us practically? And here's my best attempt.

[16:31] If I were to take the book of Hosea and put it into a proverb to kind of condense it all down to a proverb, here's what it would be. Notice it on the screen. The one who loves the Lord lives the good life.

For what you love determines how you live. The one who loves the Lord lives the good life. For what you love determines how you live.

That, at least in my estimation, is the Hosea proverb. It is the wise saying, the practical advice of the book of Hosea.

Now let me prove it. Let me take some time just to kind of unpack that proverb phrase by phrase.

First, the one who loves the Lord. The one who loves the Lord.

You see, faith family, the primary issue that God has with the people of Israel in the book of Hosea is their lack of love for Him.

[17:35] That's the primary issue. The ultimate indictment against them. The ultimate controversy against them. The ultimate issue God has is they're not loving Him.

Let me give you a few examples of that. Hosea chapter 4 verse 1. Hosea chapter 4 verse 1. Hear the word of the Lord as prophecy coming from Hosea.

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.

Here's another example. Hosea chapter 6 verse 4. What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away.

Here's another. Chapter 6 verse 6. Chapter 6 verse 6. For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice. In other words, it's clear to see, faith family, that the issue God has with Israel is that they don't love Him.

[18 : 47] And that is, after all, the first and most important commandment, to love God. They had entered into a covenant with God where they would love Him and obey Him, and they have not.

They stood there at Mount Sinai in that marriage ceremony, that covenant ceremony, and they said, we do. And yet they have been unfaithful ever since.

They've gone after, as we've seen in the book of Hosea, other lovers. So, the proverb put positively is the one who loves the Lord. That's what God wants.

He wants you to love Him. And so, that's, I believe, the first part of the Hosea proverb. The one who loves the Lord, second part, lives the good life. Lives the good life.

You see, the book of Proverbs is all about living the good life. Now, faith family, you can describe that in different ways. You can say the good life, or the beautiful life, or as we see in Hosea 14, 9, the stable life.

[19 : 53] But it's all the blessed life. It's all the same kind of point. That is, the beautiful life, the good life, comes when you love God.

Now, let me show you that from the book of Hosea. It's been very clear to see here in chapter 14. Look at verse 1. Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

So, God begins by saying, come to me. Return to me. That is, love me again. Come back to your first love. And now look at verse 4. And I will heal your apostasy.

I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. You return to me, and you are healed.

You are restored. You are made whole.

You are brought back to a healthy place. And then look at how this gets described in verse 5. I'll be like the dew to Israel. He shall blossom like the lily, take root like the trees of Lebanon.

[20 : 56] His shoots shall spread out. His beauty shall be like the olive, this fragrance like Lebanon. They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow. They shall flourish like the grain.

They shall blossom like the vine. Their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon. You see, in other words, your life will be flourishing. You will, we talked about this in last week's sermon.

You'll have a prosperous life in God. In God. Okay? You'll have a beautiful life. You'll have a stable life. You'll have a life that is prosperous and flourishing.

And in verse 9, we see you won't stumble. That is, you'll have a stable life. Here's the point, is that the one who loves God, the one who comes to God as their first love lives the good life.

They experience the blessed life that is only found in God. Or you might put it this way, the good life is the God life.

[22 : 00] The good life is the God life, the one who loves God. So, I believe the Hosea proverb is, the one who loves the Lord lives the good life.

The whole book is about loving God. And when you love God, as you see in chapter 14 and other places, life is prosperous. It flourishes. Here's the third part of the Hosea proverb.

That is, because what you love determines how you live. Because what you love determines how you live. The one who loves the Lord lives the good life. Because, or for, what you love determines how you live.

And this too is taught throughout the book of Hosea. That is, how you think and speak and behave is related to what you love.

Let me show you an example of this in Hosea chapter 4 verse 16. Hosea chapter 4 verse 16 says this, Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn.

[23 : 12] Can the Lord now feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture? Now you may say, that's a really odd verse to read. What point does that prove? Let me ask you this.

Why was Israel called a heifer? Why was Israel called a heifer? A cow. Well, do you remember who they were worshipping?

Baal. And do you remember the image that represented Baal? Here it is. A cow. A cow.

In other words, Israel had become like what they worshipped. Israel had become like her idol. Her idol, that thing that she loved more than God, influenced the way that she lived, impacted the life she had.

And you see this, for instance, in the Psalms. Psalm 115 verse 4. Psalm 115 verse 4. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands.

[24 : 18] They have mouths, but do not speak. Eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear. Noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel. Feet, but do not walk. They do not make a sound in their throat.

And then watch this. Those who make them become like them. So do all who trust in them. You become like what you love. You become like what you love. And of course, you know this, Faith Family.

You know this on a very practical way. I mean, for instance, if you are in love with someone, you begin to do things that they like to do.

If you love your kids, you begin to like the things that they like. If you love a group or really want acceptance in a particular group, you begin to adapt your behavior in order to fit in with that group.

[25 : 25] Or you take, for instance, and this is on a small scale, practically. The team that you love. Your favorite sports team. You may wear a certain shirt or hat or license plate.

You may spend money to go to a game. You may restructure your cable TV package to make sure that you can get the game. You may adjust your schedule to make sure that you can watch it when it's on.

You're sad when they lose. You're happy when they win. You talk about the game with others. You have opinions about what plays were run. Here's my point. Your love for that team in this simple example alone has determined the clothing you wear, the way you spend your time, the attitude that you have, whether you're in a good mood or a bad mood, the kinds of conversation you have.

And that's all because you love a football team. How much more a real significant lover. My point is you adapt the way you live.

You adapt your life to what you love. You know this. And so how much more the things that we really cherish.

[26 : 41] Here's the point, faith family. Notice it on the screen. You will resemble what you revere. You will resemble what you revere. You will conform to what you cherish.

It will impact your life. And there may be no greater example of this than the character Gollum in the Lord of the Rings. Let me read just an excerpt of the Lord of the Rings referring to Gollum's obsession with the ring.

Here's what Tolkien writes. At the bottom of the tunnel lay a cold lake far from the light and on an island rock in the water lived Gollum.

He was a loathsome little creature. He paddled in a small boat with his large flat feet peering with pale luminous eyes and catching blind fish with his long fingers and eating them raw.

He ate any living thing if he could possibly catch it and strangle it without a struggle. He possessed a secret treasure that had come to him years ago when he still lived in the light.

[27 : 54] When he still lived in the light. A ring of gold that made its wearer invisible. It was the one thing he loved.

His precious. And he talked to it. Even when it was not with him. He was so obsessed with the ring. He was so in love with the ring that it changed everything about his life. In fact, just even physically in the movie, you see that Gollum goes from looking like this to looking like this.

His idolatry impacted him. In fact, faith family, idolatry makes you subhuman. It makes you subhuman.

And here's what I mean, and I don't have much time here. Let me just say it quickly, is that you were created in all your humanity to love only God.

[29 : 03] To love God as ultimate. And so when you love something other than God as ultimate, you like Gollum become subhuman.

You drift from true humanity to subhumanity because you're loving something other than God.

So what is the proverb of Hosea? What's the wisdom that it's trying to teach? I believe it's this. The one who loves the Lord, that's the main issue, lives the good life.

They prosper. They flourish. For what you love determines how you live. Love God and you get the good life because the thing that you love is going to impact the way you live.

Or, of course, the opposite would be the one who loves other things other than God won't live the good life. You'll live a subhuman life. You'll live a less prosperous life because you're loving something other than God.

[30 : 08] So there you go, faith family. Go love the Lord and live the good life. Is that how that ought to end?

Is that how this sermon should end? Are you sensing a problem at all? Well, you should be. The problem with that proverb is this.

None of us can love God that way on our own. In fact, if the book of Hosea proves anything at all, it proves the fact that we don't love God the way we should.

It reveals how frequent we fall short of loving God. I mean, Israel throughout the book of Hosea, though she had said, I do, repeatedly didn't.

That's her story. That's her history. That's her resume. You remember, don't you, the two primary metaphors in the book of Hosea?

[31 : 15] The two primary metaphors that were used against Israel. The first was that of a wayward wife, a wayward life. Look at Hosea chapter 2 and verse 19.

Hosea chapter 2 and verse 19 says this. I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice and steadfast love and in mercy.

I will betroth you to me in faithfulness and you shall know the Lord. That is, you are married to God. You are God's bride.

We know, of course, in the New Testament, we're the bride of Christ. We have entered into covenant with Jesus. You are his wife. But do you know what kind of wife you are?

A whore. And I'm not trying to be provocative. God is trying to be provocative. I'm just communicating the very language that the book of Hosea uses.

[32 : 15] We are a wife to Jesus. We are the bride of Christ. But the kind of bride we are is a whore. Look at how this gets taught clearly in the book of Hosea, which we've looked at many times.

Hosea 2 and verse 2. Hosea 2 and verse 2. Plead with your mother. Plead for she is not my wife and I'm not her husband. She's put away. She's to put away her whoring from her face, her adultery from between her breasts.

And look at verse 13 of chapter 2. Verse 13. I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with the ring and jewelry.

She went after her lovers and forgot me, declares the Lord. In other words, Israel's history proves that she's an unfaithful wife.

What's seen as spiritual adultery in the book of Hosea, that is idolatry. Notice it on the screen. Idolatry is spiritual adultery.

[33 : 20] Just like God told Hosea to go marry a prostitute and have children with a prostitute while she would continue being a prostitute. In the same way, God married Israel knowing full well the whoring she would do.

Knowing full well the idolatry she would involve herself in. And yet, who would marry a whore? God would.

God would. And God did. Think about it this way. For while we were yet sinners, Christ died. That is, Jesus died not once we got our act together.

Not once we cleaned up our lives. He died while we were still a mess. While we were still in our sin. He loved us.

The second metaphor that we've seen throughout the book of Hosea is not just a wayward wife, but a rebellious son. A rebellious son. Let me show you this in Hosea 11.

[34 : 27] Hang with me. Hang with me. Hosea 11 and verse 1. It says, When Israel was a child, I loved him. And out of Egypt I called my son.

The more they were called, the more they went away. And they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burnt offerings to the idols. In other words, in addition to being a wayward wife, Israel was the Old Testament version of the prodigal son.

Constantly running to other gods. But God, praise him, never stopped loving his rebellious child.

Never stopped loving his wayward son. Here's what he says in Hosea 11. Hosea 11, verse 8. How can I give you up, O Ephraim?

How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Adma? How can I treat you like Zeboim? My heart recoils within me. My compassion grows warm and tender.

[35 : 31] God can't help but to love his child. He will not let them go, though they have turned from him many times.

And I've probably said this a hundred times in the book of Hosea. God loves you not because you're good or bad. He loves you because you're his. He doesn't love you because you're good or bad.

He loves you because you are his. And as parents, we know this just on a small level, right? I mean, why do you go to that fifth grade school band concert?

Is it because you love out-of-tune, glass-shattering, poorly-produced concerts? Of course not. Is it because you love fifth graders? Of course not.

It's because you love a fifth grader. There is a fifth grader that you have set your heart on and that you love more than anything.

[36 : 29] And if that's true of you being sinful, how much more is that true for your heavenly Father who is perfect? Don't you see?

He adores you. He loves you because you are his. And that's why he never gives up on you. That's why he never will give up on you.

Because the reality is you didn't perform to gain his love and you can't perform to lose his love. And why is God able to love you this way?

As we've looked at just a few weeks ago, it's because when you, as a repeatedly disobedient child, put your faith in Jesus, the perfectly obedient son, his life of obedience becomes your life of obedience so that whatever is said of Jesus is said of you, including this is my son in whom I love. Faith family, unless you're prepared to say that God doesn't love Jesus, you can never say that God doesn't love you. Notice this on the screen.

[37 : 42] What matters is not how you think God should feel about you, but how God actually feels about you. What matters is not how you think God should feel about you, but how God actually feels about you.

So here's my point thus far. Okay, you with me? The proverb of Hosea is the one who loves the Lord who lives the good life because what you love determines how you live. That's clearly the teaching of the book of Hosea.

The problem is, as is clear throughout the book, is we don't love God that way. We don't love God that way. Certainly not on our own.

If we set out to, I'm going to love God with all my heart, we, like Israel, will fail time and time and time again. But yet what we have seen is God's unrelenting, boundless, unconditional love towards you.

And let me ask you, after 11 weeks of hearing about God's boundless love, how does it make you feel towards God? What has it done in your relationship with God?

[38 : 53] Listen, if the truth of God's love has actually started to sink in, then what's happened is it started to warm your heart for God.

It has started to stir up your affections for God. It has increased your worship and longing for God. And that is the practicality of the book of Hosea. That's the practicality of the book of Hosea. You say, Pastor, what do you mean?

Follow me for just a moment. Listen, this is such good news. If the proverb of Hosea, and I believe it is, is this, the one who loves the Lord lives the good life for the life that for your life is determined by the one you love.

If that's true, and yet we are entirely unable in and of ourselves to live up to that proverb, just like Israel.

[39 : 55] And after all, our history proves this. Then what should you do? What should your response be? And here it is. You should rest daily in God's love for you.

You should rest daily in God's unchanging and boundless love for you. You need to be convinced every day that God loves you.

You need to believe, Romans 8, that there is nothing at all that can separate you from the love of God.

Why? Because as you remain in His love, as you believe His love, as you accept the reality of His love, you naturally start to love God and in return, live the beautiful life.

As you rest in His love and accept the reality of His love, you begin to naturally love God back.

[41 : 13] How could you not? And then as a result, you live the beautiful life. Notice this on the screen. Resting in God's love for you revives your love for God, resulting in a beautiful life.

Resulting in a beautiful life. That is what's so practical about the book of Hosea. You don't need five steps to the love of God or five creative ways to love God more.

Nonsense. That's not a practical sermon. Here's a practical sermon. Rest in God's boundless love for you. Because as you do, you will love Him more.

You can't help but to love Him more. And the result of that will be the prosperous life, the beautiful life. And so the key is to be absolutely convinced of God's love for you.

And that's why the next series, starting here in just a couple weeks, is going to be in the book of 1 John. The next series is going to be in the book of 1 John because it's in the book of 1 John that we learn things like this.

[42 : 34] Here's 1 John 4, verse 16. 1 John 4, verse 16. So we have 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. In other words, we're going to complement the book of Hosea with the book now of 1 John.

Because if Hosea is teaching us that if you'll learn to remain in God's love and live in God's love and rest in God's love, then you'll love God and have the beautiful life, then why don't we study a book that's all about teaching us how to live in God's love, how to know and believe the love of God for us.

And that's the series, Lord willing, will begin in just a couple of weeks. Faith family, have you ever experienced the feeling that something ended in the way it wasn't supposed to?

That something ended in the way it wasn't supposed to? The story ended in a different way than you expected? Well, faith family, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, if you're a Christian, if you're a child of God, you most certainly know that feeling because that's your story.

[44 : 09] Your story, like Israel, is that of a wayward wife. Your story, like Israel, is that of a rebellious child. And yet, your love story will not end the way it's supposed to with separation from God.

Your story is going to end with the boundless, eternal love of God for you in Christ Jesus. All because Jesus took the life that you should have received in the end, and He is giving you a life of happily ever after.

That's the good news of the gospel in Hosea. Let's pray together. God, thank you so much for all that you've taught us these last several weeks in the book of Hosea.

Thank you for the wisdom and the practicality we've looked at today. The one who loves the Lord lives the good life because what we love determines how we live.

And yet, the reality is we fall short of loving you so many times. And so our approach cannot be that of law. It must be that of love, namely to rest in your love, which in return will result in naturally loving you.

[45 : 35] So help us know and believe the love of God for us in Christ Jesus. And we pray it in His name. Amen. Thanks so much for being a part of our service today online.

And we hope it's been a blessing to you. We'd love to hear from you. Reach out to us at Faith Family Church. You can email us at ForTheGospelGatherings at gmail.com.

ForTheGospelGatherings at gmail.com. Let us know. Is there something we can pray for you about? Is there a decision that you would like to speak with someone about? We would be more than happy to follow up with you and minister to you in whatever way God would have us do that. So thanks so much again for worshiping with us today. We'll see you back here next week.