

Sunday, December Thirteenth

Thirty-year-old Becky Sharrock has a special ability – she can remember practically everything in vivid detail. This rare condition, known as hyperthymesia, allows Becky to recall details and situations with unusual ease. Because only a few people in the world (i.e. under 10) are known to exhibit this condition, very little is known as to how someone can remember so many things. In today's passage, God demonstrates His ability to remember everything that Israel had done in their past, and in doing so, determines a course of action.

Read: Hosea 7:1-16

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How does verse 2 speak to Israel's sin and God's memory?

Because God is a just God, He does not overlook or forget sin. Instead, all sin must be accounted for. This is what Jesus accomplished on our behalf when He died on the cross – He accounted for all of our sin.

- As Israel continued to turn to idols, what did they simultaneously fail to do? (see the end of verse 7)
- Who did Israel turn to? (see verses 11-12)
- What was the end result? (see verse 13)

By running *toward* other nations for help, Israel was also running *away* from God. How exactly would this all play out? We'll find out together...next week!

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Consider someone who has recently wronged you. In what ways are you trying to hold them accountable for their actions? How might the Gospel message change the way you interact with them?

Questions? Comments? Contact Pastor Chris at chris.futch@oursaviorfl.org or (727) 344-2684.

Read through the Bible



Hosea Week 1



A Ministry of the Live Love Nation

Monday, December Seventh

Welcome to our two-week journey through Hosea! This booklet is laid out to help you walk through a portion of the events in Hosea every day. Whether you start off your day with this, find some time during your lunch break, or sit down with it before you go to bed, the hope would be for you to engage with the Bible on a consistent basis as God engages you and calls you into His story. May your journey be filled with newfound perspective as you dive into this account of repentance and redemption! – Pastor Chris

Read: Hosea 1:1-11

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

Hosea's name in Hebrew means 'salvation' – an appropriate meaning for what we will read over these next two weeks.

- What did God command Hosea to do? (see verses 2-3)

At this point in history, Israel had (once again) been unfaithful to God by turning to false gods and idols. And yet, God remained faithful. Within this framework, Hosea was commanded by God to be faithful to an unfaithful wife as a way of mirroring this tattered relationship between God and Israel.

- What names did God give Hosea and Gomer's children, and what was His reasoning? (see verses 3-11)

Much like Gomer represented an unfaithful Israel, the names of their children represented the kinds of judgments that God would bring upon His people. Notice, though, that with each of these judgments also comes a promise of restoration (e.g. v. 7).

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

As you begin this journey through Hosea, take some time to think about what is meaningful in your life right now. What are you thankful for? What are you concerned about? In what ways are you looking to grow? Take some time to pray through these things with your heavenly Father. He's listening!

Saturday, December Twelfth

When a child wants something from her parents, she will sometimes use flattery to get what she wants. "Hey, mommy. You look so beautiful today! Can I have some candy?" "Hey, daddy. You're the best daddy in the whole wide world. Can I watch a show?" What the child often forgets is that her parents can almost immediately see right through the façade and discern her ulterior motives. In today's passage, God sees right through Israel's flattery, and lets them know it.

Read: Hosea 6:1-11

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What is Israel's attitude toward God? (see verses 1-3)

The people of Israel were confident (dare we say, overconfident) that God would heal them ("As surely as the sun rises..." – v. 5). The fact that He had restored the people of Israel time and time again gave them good reason to have this sort of confidence.

- Take a look back at 5:15. Does Israel's response in 6:1-3 indicate that they did what God asked them to do in 5:15?

In 5:15, God had asked the people of Israel to repent. But nothing that they said in 6:1-3 indicates that they did that. Instead, they took the opportunity to try and flatter God in the hopes that He would heal them quickly so they could get back to their regularly scheduled lives. Israel was treating God like a genie in a bottle.

- How does God respond to Israel? (see verses 4-6)

God is clearly not impressed with Israel's flattery. Instead, He throws their own words back at them by describing their love for Him as "the early dew that disappears" (v. 4). God does not want our flattery or sacrifice. He desires mercy (v. 6).

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

God does not need our works. He simply calls on us to repent. Take some time today to confess your sins and receive His forgiveness.

Friday, December Eleventh

Do you remember the movie *It's a Wonderful Life* with Jimmy Stewart? There's a scene in the middle of the movie when the main character, George Bailey, finds himself in trouble and goes to the evil Mr. Potter for help. To George's dismay, Potter is unable to help him. In today's passage, the people of Israel go to a nearby neighbor for help, but to their dismay, he is unable to help them.

Read: Hosea 5:1-15

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

As you've likely gathered by now, Hosea's language is somewhat poetic and hard to understand. There are also a bunch of historical figures and geographic areas that require a strong knowledge of the Old Testament. While we will focus on specific words and phrases over these next few days, our main goal will be to capture the broader themes of what God is trying to communicate to His people through the prophet Hosea.

- How had God chosen to respond to Israel as a part of His judgement? (see verse 6)
- What did Ephraim and Judah try to do, and what was the result? (see verse 13)

At this time in history, the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms. Ephraim represented the northern kingdom and Judah represented the southern kingdom. Notice that when the people of Israel realized they were in trouble, the first person they turned to was the king of Assyria, not God. This action by Israel underscores how much they had come to not rely on God for anything.

- What did God want Israel to do? (see verse 15)

God wanted Israel to repent, and He was going to wait like a lion in a cave until they did so.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

When difficult situations arise, who do you often turn to for help? How might you more intentionally seek God during those times?

Tuesday, December Eighth

Over the past few decades, homebuilders in the Tampa Bay area have come across an increasingly difficult situation: there's no land to build new homes! As a result, many contractors and entrepreneurs have taken on the challenge of restoring older homes. The process might seem simple enough, but it oftentimes requires careful planning and execution. In today's passage, God lays out a careful plan of how He is going to restore an unfaithful Israel and draw them back to Him.

Read: Hosea 2:1-23

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How do verses 2-13 describe God's judgment upon Israel?

Israel had broken its relationship with God ("she is not my wife, and I am not her husband" – v. 2). While He intended to bring judgment upon Israel, notice that the judgment had a purpose – to draw His people back to Him ("Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.'" – v. 7).

- How do verses 14-23 describe God's restoration of Israel?

Take a look again at verse 14 – "I am now going to *allure* her." The verb 'allure' simply means to powerfully attract or charm. This specific wording suggests that God isn't going to force them back to Him against their will; they are going to *desire* to return to Him. In this way, Israel, after exhausting every wrong turn, will remember the love that God had for them and turn back toward Him. In doing so, God will restore His relationship with them ("You are my people"; and they will say 'You are my God.'" – v. 23).

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

In what ways does God allure you to Him? Think of times where you have wandered astray and consider how God has drawn you back to Him. Spend some time in prayer thanking God for His continued faithfulness toward you.

Wednesday, December Ninth

“On the fifth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...five golden rings!” For hundreds of years, it has become the custom for a man to propose to the woman he is courting by getting down on one knee, asking her to marry him, and offering her a ring. In doing so, the man demonstrates his unconditional love for her as well as his intention to marry her. In today’s passage, Hosea – even though he is already married to his wife, Gomer – demonstrates his unconditional love for her.

Read: Hosea 3:1-5

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What sort of love does God ask Hosea to show to his wife? (see verse 1)

Despite the many ways that Israel had been unfaithful to God, He nonetheless still loved them. In the same manner, God commanded Hosea to show this same kind of unconditional love to his unfaithful wife.

- What price did Hosea pay to get Gomer back, and what did He ask her to do? (see verse 2-3)

In offering up what he did to purchase Gomer from her life of prostitution, Hosea demonstrated that He was willing to go above and beyond what was required in order to demonstrate his unwavering faithfulness to his wife.

- How do the events in verses 4-5 mirror what happened between Hosea and Gomer in verses 1-3?

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

During this Christmas season, we remember that God demonstrated His unconditional love for us by coming into this world and paying the ultimate price for us on the cross. Take some time today to reflect on Romans 5:8 and consider how this verse speaks to today’s story from Hosea as well as your own story.

Thursday, December Tenth

In *The Lion King*, an adult lion named Simba returns to his childhood home to find it very different than when he originally left it. In place of the luscious trees and energetic wildlife were shriveled branches and bones. How could such a drastic change have happened? In today’s passage, God finds a very different Israel than before. In place of a people who had obeyed His laws and trusted in Him were a people who had turned away from His decrees and had instead placed their trust in false gods and idols.

Read: Hosea 4:1-19

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What charge does God bring against Israel? (see verse 1)

This is a pretty serious charge! No faithfulness to God? No love for God? No acknowledgement of God? Unfortunately, this is how unfaithful Israel had become. They had completely scrubbed God from their daily lives.

- How do verses 7-8 describe the condition of the spiritual leaders of Israel?

The priests were supposed to help lead people to God. They were supposed to teach them God’s decrees and remind them of His laws. And yet, just like their fellow Israelites, they had fallen away from God and had proven to be unfaithful. In this sense, the priests had become a reflection of the people they served, even participating in their scandals (v. 8).

- How do verses 10-13 describe Israel’s devotion to false gods and idols?

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

Take a look again at verse 1. In what ways does it describe the current state of our world today? Take some time to intentionally pray for people you know who do not acknowledge God. Pray that God would soften their hearts to the good news of Christmas.