

HOSEA

Unfailing Love Changes Everything

JENNIFER ROTHSCHILD

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hosea: Unfailing Love Changes Everything is Jennifer's fifth video-based Bible study with LifeWay. It follows her popular Bible studies, *Missing Pieces: Real Hope When Life Doesn't Make Sense*, and *Me, Myself, and Lies: A Thought-Closet Makeover*.

Jennifer became blind when she was 15 years old and has experienced firsthand how God's unfailing love really does change everything. Now, more than 30 years later as an author and speaker, she boldly and compassionately teaches women how God's love can change them too.

Known for her substance, signature wit, and down-to-earth style, Jennifer weaves together colorful illustrations with biblical truths to help women know and live for Christ. She has shared her practical and inspiring messages to audiences across the country and through media outlets including *The Dr. Phil Show*, *Good Morning America*, *Life Today*, *The Learning Channel*, and *The Billy Graham Television Special*.

She is the featured teacher and founder of Fresh Grounded Faith Conferences and publisher of the popular online magazine for women in ministry called *womensministry.net*.

Jennifer and her husband, whom she calls her "very own Dr. Phil" live in Springfield, Missouri, and have two sons, Connor and Clayton, and a lovely daughter-in-law, Caroline. Besides walking—or being walked by—her little dog Lucy, Jennifer enjoys nature walks with her husband and riding a bicycle built for two.

She is also an avid listener of audio books, a C.S. Lewis junkie, and loves dark chocolate and robust coffee—especially when shared with a friend.

Connect with Jennifer at JenniferRothschild.com/Hosea.



Hey girl! Thanks for choosing to get to know Hosea along with me. My dad used to tell me Hosea and Gomer's story when I was a child but, with his thick southern accent, I thought their names were "Hosear" and "Goma"!

No matter how you pronounce their names though, you will love their story; it's a story of unfailing love—God's unfailing love that changes everything. It transformed a prostitute to a treasured bride and a wayward woman to a restored wife. And it can change us too.

We're all a lot like Gomer—prone to wander. Maybe not unfaithful in marriage or other relationships, but we are all prone to wander from God and our identity in Him.

I've learned the hard way that when I wander away from God, I wonder who I am. But, through Hosea, I got a right view of God and I now have a right view of myself—a loved, accepted and complete woman of God. Oh sister, I want that for you too.

So, here's how we'll do this thing: you spend time with the Holy Spirit during the week doing the daily work. Your group will gather seven times. At each session, you'll say hey to your friends and get to know new ones. Your leader will welcome you and begin with prayer. Then, you'll let me join you through the video—and, I know that means you'll discuss for the first thirty seconds what I'm wearing! But, once you're done with that, I hope our time together will challenge you, comfort you, and clarify something about God or yourself that will help you know Him better and love Him more. After the video, your group will discuss what you've discovered in the homework. You'll find suggested questions on the group page for that week.

Also in the back of this book, in the word to leaders, I've tucked some "love gifts" your leader may want to provide. And you may need to help her out and pitch in to make the love gifts special for you, your leader, and your group each week. I've designed them to reinforce the teaching of Hosea and remind you how loved you are.

While we hang out, you'll hear me call you a "Gomer Girl." And, that is one of the sweetest names you can be called. To be a Gomer Girl means you are loved, accepted, and complete.

So, here we go ... Gomer Girl!

Love, Jennifer

Group Session 1

Rather than a formal leader guide in the back, we've provided what we hope is a simple and functional group plan on these pages with an additional word to leaders in back. Each week will begin with a two-page group guide like this. I suggest that you divide your group time into three parts: 1. Welcome and prayer; 2. Watch the video; 3. Group discussion of the study for the past week and the video.

The session guide for this first meeting is for us to get to know each other. Then we'll each go do our homework (it will be fun, I promise). Each day, plan to spend a few minutes with that day's study. Don't worry if some days you don't get it all. This isn't a race and you can come back later. When we meet next group session, we'll have this week's study to discuss. Now let's get to know each other and I'll join you by way of video.

||||| ||| |||||

Welcome and Prayer

||||| |||||

Four Ingredients in Hosea

1. _____ himself

- Hosea was a _____ who served Israel in the eighth century, B.C.
- Hosea's name means "_____."

2. Our friend, _____

- Gomer means "_____, the filling up of idolatry."
- Gomer's marriage to Hosea represents Israel's _____ relationship with God.

3. _____

Find Jennifer's mint recipe at



4. _____ and _____

- God chose to _____ us just like He chose to love Israel. And we, too, are prone to _____.

Four Ways to See Yourself in the Book of Hosea

1. *My* _____—covenant name
2. _____—national identity
3. _____—affectionate nickname
4. _____—influencer

The main character of the Book of Hosea is _____.



Video 1 and Getting to Know Each Other

What is one thing you want your group to know about you?

What drew you to this study?

What do you think of when someone mentions the Book of Hosea?

Do you have a favorite verse or idea from Hosea? If so what?

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JenniferRothschild.com/Hosea

We are the ones God chose and loves.
#HoseaStudy

WEEK ONE

*JUST
BECAUSE
LOVE*

HOSEA

Day 1 THIS IS YOUR STORY

The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and of Jeroboam son of Jehoash, king of Israel.

HOSEA 1:1

You're about to experience a salacious story about an unlikely couple, an unusual marriage, a man in love, and an illicit affair. But this affair was not the end of the marriage; it was the beginning of a love story. A love story that will take your breath away.

This story overflows with failure, selfishness, despair, forgiveness, second chances, and restoration. And you thought this was a Bible Study.

It is! The Book of Hosea is one of the most beautiful and confusing books you will ever read. The story of Hosea and his wife will shock you and warm your heart. The story of Israel and God in the book of Hosea will frustrate you and then fill you with hope.

You will discover that the Book of Hosea is the story of God and Israel, Hosea and Gomer, and ... the story of you. This is your love story.

But, for all its beauty, trying to explain Hosea just about did me in! How do you explain such contrasts of hope and judgment, loyalty and betrayal? I tried to understand it. I tried to organize it. I tried to explain it. Finally, I just had to sit in wonder at the feet of Hosea and his God.

So, I'll tell you right up front—I had no idea how to teach this book!

But, after praying, writing, starting over, rewriting, crying to my editor, and trying some more to find a way to communicate it, I finally found the answer resting on my husband's nose.

Let me explain.

My husband, Phil, got trifocals when he turned 50. If you know my story, you will smile when I tell you that having to wear trifocals at fifty is not one of my issues! (If you don't know why that's funny, read my bio!) Even though I don't have first-hand experience with those eyeglasses, here's what I know about them.

Trifocals help you focus in three distinct areas: distance, intermediate, and near vision. And that's how you need to view Hosea, too. So, girl, put on your spiritual trifocals—we're going to dive into the Book of Hosea. The first time I read the Book of Hosea,

I didn't see it through those three distinct lenses, and it was pretty blurry. As soon as I focused on what seemed like God's love, I would blink and the very next verse was His judgment. Huh? Then, I would refocus and think I was seeing Hosea's and Gomer's love story just to be rubbing my eyes trying to see whom Hosea was talking about. What? It was so confusing.

That's why you need trifocals to see Hosea's book clearly. When you put on your trifocals, you will see these three views:

DISTANCE: According to Phil, when he looks through the top of his trifocals, he can see what is farther away. He uses this part of the lens to drive so he can get a view of the road ahead and find the closest Starbucks® for his coffee-loving wife. So, when you view Hosea from a distance, you can see the historical landscape of Israel at the time of King Jeroboam's reign when the Israelites were prosperous but unfaithful. You get to see the prophet Hosea in action, preaching sermons of judgment and hope to God's rebellious people.

INTERMEDIATE: The middle section of Phil's trifocals help him see what's at arm's length. He's constantly peering through this part to work on his computer or watch Georgia football on TV. So, when you view Hosea at arm's length, you can get a better view of Hosea the husband, his wife, and their family situation. Remember this basic orientation: Hosea's book is a sermon and his life is the illustration. His love for his unfaithful wife reflects God's redemptive love for Israel.

NEAR: This is the bottom part of Phil's trendy Warby Parker-framed trifocals and it lets him use close-up vision for reading his wife's books or threading a needle to sew on his own missing buttons because he is a major-stud husband. So, for us, this is the lens through which you read Hosea to see what's right under your nose. It helps you see yourself in the story of Israel. It allows you to see yourself in the story of Hosea and Gomer. With this view, you can see who you are and how dearly loved you are. It lets you see that Hosea is your love story.

Oh, you will be so glad you chose to get to know Hosea! And I'm so glad to have you along with me. If you sometimes feel lost or disoriented though, you're in good company. I'm there too. But Dr. Phil tells me that's part of getting used to trifocals. If you turn your head too fast you may feel dizzy. In those moments hang onto the main theme of Hosea. God loves us so much that even when we've betrayed His love, He comes looking for us.

HOSEA

He buys us back, takes us home, cleans us up, and keeps loving us. Who wouldn't endure a little dizziness for a love like that?

OK. Ready? Let's get oriented. When you look at the Book of Hosea through your trifocals, you will see that the whole book is set within a literary style frame. Hosea was a prophet but he was also a master literary craftsman. His style is eloquent and picturesque—full of simile and metaphor. Great preachers use great illustrations. So Hosea starts his sermon with the guiding visual of his marriage to Gomer. Yes, that is really her name. What were her parents thinking?

Chapters 1–3 are basically a narrative combining prose and poetry. Then, Hosea changes tempo. Chapters 4–14 take the form of ancient Hebrew poetry. They contain most of the story of Israel's failure and God's faithfulness. Some of it is blow-you-away beautiful, some of it is so artsy that it's hard to follow, and then some of it is quite honestly rated PG-13—a bit graphic.

But, the poetry of Hosea serves a purpose. Now, if you have painful memories of some poetry class, or if the only poet you've ever read is Dr. Seuss, please indulge me anyway for a moment. Let me ask you a question.

Why do you think we value poetry even when we may struggle to understand it?

What kinds of ideas do you think poetry can convey that prose cannot?

Don't stress with those questions. I don't know the answers fully either, but I just want you to think about it.

I think we love poetry because prose clearly states, but poetry suggests. With poetry, our hearts understand even when our minds can't explain it. Prose might say "I love you, you're beautiful," while poetry might say:

Oh, that he would kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!
 For your love is more delightful than wine.
 The fragrance of your perfume is intoxicating;
 Your name is perfume poured out.

SONG OF SONGS 1:2-3

Ahhh! Beautiful, isn't it? Now that you have an idea what is in Hosea, adjust your spiritual trifocals and take about 30 minutes to read Hosea. It's only 14 chapters and it won't take you long. Don't get overwhelmed if you get confused. It is confusing! It's not written in a linear fashion. Just try to generally think, is this part talking about God's love and judgment toward Israel, is it about Hosea and Gomer, or is it timeless truth that applies to me? Don't be surprised if some verses make you question why God seems harsh. Also, don't be surprised if after you read a verse that suggests God is done with His people, He turns around a verse later and shows such tenderness that you have to wipe away your own tears. Don't worry, it will make sense by the time we grow through it together. All you are trying to accomplish with this first read-through is familiarity with the book. That's all. So don't stress out. Pour yourself some tea, snuggle up with your new favorite prophet, and enjoy!

Besides, you look absolutely adorable in trifocals!

Happy reading!

HOSEA

Day 2 THE BACK STORY

When the LORD first spoke to Hosea, He said this to him:
Go and marry a promiscuous wife
and have children of promiscuity,
for the land is committing blatant acts of promiscuity
by abandoning the LORD.
HOSEA 1:2

Dizzy yet?

I ask you if you're dizzy because I figure you've read Hosea by now. And, if you have, I wonder if you felt any of the feelings I did. Feelings like awe, confusion, dismay, affection, and frustration. Dizzying, isn't it?

Jot down some adjectives that come to mind when you think of what you read in Hosea.

In a few weeks, when you are an expert on Hosea (wink, wink), we'll come back to this page and see if your adjectives change. I have to be honest. When I read the whole book through the first several times, two adjectives that came to mind were judgmental and harsh. I don't like those words. But, the longer I've studied Hosea, my adjectives changed to words like tender, restorative, and compassionate.

So, if you got a dim view of the message of Hosea when you read it the first time, stay with me, sister. I promise you will understand it better and love it more as we go. What I discovered is that Hosea helped me know myself better and love God more. Don't you want that too? I think you'll experience the same, you'll see.

I can't think of a clever beginning, so without flowery fanfare, let's just do this thing. The rest of this week, we will unpack chapter one so let's start with verse one and get oriented to the place and time Hosea preached.

The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and of Jeroboam son of Jehoash, king of Israel.

HOSEA 1:1

Now, if you started to glaze over by the third name in that list of unfamiliar people, don't worry; I'll tell you what all those names represent! Hosea was a prophet who ministered to Israel, the Northern Kingdom, during the reign of King Jeroboam—let's call him KJ2, okay? And the listing of all those unfamiliar kings indicates that, as Charles Dickens would say, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."¹ If you're not one who glazes over when you read historical detail and want more context, check out the article on the history of this story. Or, you can skip the article in the interest of being expeditious.

📖📖📖📖📖📖📖📖📖📖

Hosea preached in, and to, the Kingdom of Israel (a.k.a. the Northern Kingdom, or the 10 northern tribes) during their final years as a nation. Under kings David and Solomon, Israel had been united. But after Solomon died, during the reign of his son Rehoboam (931 B.C.), Israel split into two kingdoms. The result was kind of like what you would imagine if the US Civil War ended differently, instead of the "United" States of America, there would be the Northern States of America and a Southern States of Dixie—two different, and not very friendly, nations crammed together as neighbors.

In Hosea's day, the Southern Kingdom was called Judah and its capitol was Jerusalem. The Northern Kingdom was called Israel and its capitol was Samaria, which was located in the tribe of Ephraim. So, when you read references to Israel or Ephraim or Samaria in Hosea, they're all referring to the Northern Kingdom. These 10 tribes were eventually conquered by Assyria and destroyed in 722 B.C.

After the Northern and Southern Kingdoms split up, Jeroboam I became Israel's first king (926-909 B.C.). He set up shrines for the people to worship calves at Bethel and Dan (see 1 Kings 12:25-30) as a way to sever the religious ties with Jerusalem. As a result, the Israelites descended into idol worship—this became known as the "sin of Jeroboam" (see 1 Kings 16:25-31).

1. Charles Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999), 1.

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The King Jeroboam in Hosea 1:1 was King Jeroboam II (793-753 B.C., no relation to the earlier calf-making king). He ruled over Israel when the nation was prosperous. But, once KJ2 died, it became the worst of times. The kings who followed KJ2 were each assassinated or had short reigns until, eventually, Israel was conquered in 722 B.C. So Hosea's ministry spanned both the best of times and the worst of times.

Hosea's stern preaching was warning Israel that judgment was coming.

While Hosea preached in Israel, Isaiah and Amos were preaching in Judah. Hosea's ministry came before, and possibly overlapped, Micah's ministry to Israel. Those four prophets—Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, and Micah—are known as the great eighth century prophets.

KJ2 ruled over Israel for 40 years and the nation was outwardly doing great. In the ancient world, a long-ruling king meant stability and security. KJ2 had ended the wars his father began so Israel was at peace. He took back territory that had been lost, so Israel was prosperous. KJ2 had also increased commerce and wealth for Israel so they took a lot of pride in their affluence.

See why it was the best of times? But, that's not all. It was also the worst of times. Spiritually and morally, they were a wreck. The worship of God had descended into idolatry and empty ritualism. The country's leaders were corrupt, and crime had soared. Most serious of all, God's judgment was about to fall. See why it was the worst of times?

Look at it for yourself. How did the Bible describe the people of Israel in Hosea 4:1?

Well, that sums it up. They were unfaithful, showed no love, and didn't even acknowledge Yahweh. They may have been financially prosperous, but they were spiritually bankrupt. God loved Israel and wanted them to understand how grave their spiritual choices were, how painful and serious. So, he told the prophet Hosea to do something radical.

Look at Hosea 1:2, what did God tell Hosea to do?

- shave his head and march through the city preaching repentance
- marry a prostitute
- fast for 40 days and pray for the people
- burn down the high places to show God’s displeasure with His people

Whoa! God told a man of God to marry a woman of many men, a woman of harlotry? Welcome to your first shock in the Book of Hosea. Some smart people who study this kind of stuff think this woman could have actually been a prostitute before Hosea married her. Some think she was simply a promiscuous woman. Some think she could have become promiscuous, committed adultery, and, then, become a prostitute after she married. I only mention those minor details because to some, those possibilities are important distinctions. To me, she was a sinner before, during, and after her marriage—and that’s enough for me to really relate to her.

Her name was Gomer. I know, I know. Poor girl.

Look at the first phrase in Hosea 1:3 and jot down her father’s name.

His name was Diblaim and it meant “double portion of raisin cakes” which were like an aphrodisiac—extra strength Viagra®. That should give you a hint of what Gomer’s life must have been like. And, it also won’t surprise you that the meaning of Gomer’s name was “completion,” as in the filling up of the measure of idolatry or fully ripened wickedness. Let’s just say Gomer probably wasn’t every mama’s dream for her little boy! But God chose her for Hosea.

Why did God tell Hosea to marry a woman like her? Read Hosea 1:2.

Their marriage was to serve as a picture of God’s relationship with Israel. So, let’s leave Gomer for a minute and deal with Israel’s back story so we can better understand Gomer’s. The nation was called Israel and they were God’s chosen people. This is how the book of Deuteronomy describes Israel:

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For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

DEUTERONOMY 7:6-8 (NASB)

Wow. What an identity, huh? God chose and loved Israel—just because. He set His love upon them not because of what they did or how great they were, but just because God chose to. Now, back to Gomer.

If Hosea's marriage to Gomer is a picture of God's relationship with Israel, what does that say about Hosea's marriage to Gomer?

Hosea didn't set his love upon her because of what she did or how great she was or was not, he just chose to love her. Keep this in mind because in Hosea, Gomer is a picture of Israel, and Gomer is a picture of you and me too. We too are chosen and loved—that is our identity. But Israel and Gomer didn't always live like they were the chosen and loved. Israel was not behaving according to its identity. They were giving themselves to idols and had forsaken the Lord.

Why do you think Israel went for false gods when they were loved by the true God?

Why do you think Gomer went for other lovers even after she had the love of Hosea and identity as his bride?

Look at Hosea 13:6. What is God saying about His people that may help you answer those questions?

God provided for Israel and, when they were satisfied, they became proud and forgot God. What about you? Is it easier to forget God when He has blessed you with a life that is good and easy?

OK, here’s another thing to consider. Read Hosea 11:7 to see how this verse may also influence your answers to those questions. What does it say the reason for Israel’s and Gomer’s unfaithfulness was?

“My people are bent on turning from Me.”

They, we, are prone to wander—prone to leave the God we love.

You may not identify yourself as a harlot or adulterer, but do you consider yourself “prone to wander”? You may have had a better upbringing than Gomer or made better choices than Israel made. But what about your tendency toward tilting from God—wandering away from Him?

On the scale below, mark how prone, or bent, you are to wander and turn away from God:

NOT AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 EXTREMELY

Well, if you marked anything below 5, let me clue you into something you may not really understand about yourself and your Gomer tendencies. The prophet Isaiah (who, by the way, served the Southern Kingdom of Judah at the same time Hosea served the Northern Kingdom of Israel) will tell you for me.

In Isaiah 53:6, to what does he compare us?

He compared us to sheep who have each gone our own way. We all have the tendency to get satisfied, get proud, and forget God. We all can wander and turn away. Really, we could all mark the 10 on that scale above.

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Wandering from God does not have to happen on the grand Gomer scale and include words like “adultery” to be real and dangerous.

We can stray slightly by looking to another for our approval. We can find something, or someone, who satisfies our need for acceptance or identity; an object or activity that gives us a happy buzz. That is what Israel did when they wandered away from their identity and their God and turned to idols instead.

Israel’s identity was a chosen and loved people of God. Your identity is a chosen and loved woman of God. Those of us who belong to God are God’s people. We are chosen and loved by Him—that is our true identity.

But, when we wander from God, we will wonder who we are. And, when we wonder who we are, we will wander further from God to find out. We will wander off to other places and people to find our identity.

We are Gomer. We are the ones God chose and loves, but who are bent on turning from Him, chasing after other gods.

That’s the story of us, isn’t it? God entered the slave market where all of us were putting ourselves up for auction, prostituting ourselves and our humanity to a lesser life. On the cross Jesus paid the full price for our freedom. He bought us back. This is the scandal of God’s love—His loving desire to make us His people and the full persons He intended us to be so that we would know our God, know our identity, know His love, and live the beautiful end of our story.

Day 3

THE BAD NEWS

So he went and married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she
conceived and bore him a son. Then the LORD said to him:
Name him Jezreel, for in a little while
I will bring the bloodshed of Jezreel
on the house of Jehu
and put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.
HOSEA 1:3-4

Well, you've got the basics of Hosea's story so far: Spiritual guy pursued scandalous girl. Sincere guy dated skeptical girl. God-centered guy married self-centered girl. Devalued daughter became highly valued bride. Aimless woman became a chosen wife.

And, now, I have an announcement ... Hosea and Gomer are going to be parents!

Before we break the passage down, grant me a mushy Hallmark card moment. I know I am about to romanticize it, but it will help us get inside this story.

Think about it ... Gomer had probably never experienced such stability. Because Hosea valued her, she began to feel her own value. She was no longer known as "Gomer the prostitute." She was known as "Gomer, the chosen and loved bride." Her identity had changed; her life was changing. And it should be no surprise, because Hosea's name means "salvation." Gomer must have known better than anyone that the meaning of his name fit him, for Hosea saved her—saved her from her past, from her insecurity, from fear for the future. He was her salvation.

So it should have been a happy and hopeful experience to become a mother, right? Well, you be the judge of that.

Now, imagine with me that you live in ancient Israel in 700 B.C. and Hosea is your pastor. You and all your girlfriends from church have been waiting for the last 9 months for this baby to come. It took a while for everyone at church to get used to the fact that Hosea actually chose Gomer, but finally, the church seemed to settle into the idea that if Hosea chose her, they would accept her.

Hosea, the new dad, gets up behind the pulpit and says, "Well, we have a new little guy here at church today." The grandmas in the congregation exhale, you sigh, and you

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can hear the women around you coo. People are smiling until Hosea announces the name of their son.

What does Hosea 1:3-4 say Hosea named him?

Jezeel. Because you know the history and customs of ancient Israel in 700 B.C., you know this is not happy news! You know the child's name means God's about to "punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezeel." And, you look over at your girlfriend because, uh, this Jehu and Jezeel stuff applies to you ... your people. If you want to know Jezeel's significance, read below.

Think of it this way. What if your pastor told you God was so tired of your unfaithfulness that He was going to cut off your blessings and protection? How would you feel?

TTTTT T TTTTTT

The significance of Jezeel began in Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 9). King Ahab and his wife, Queen Jezebel, were unbelievably wicked and they wanted Naboth's land—a vineyard in Jezeel. So, the pair trumped up charges, had Naboth executed, and stole his land. In judgment of their wicked ways, God sent a man named Jehu to kill both King Ahab and Queen Jezebel.

Jehu then became the new king of Israel. King Jehu killed all the descendants of Ahab (2 Kings 10:11) and this was known as the "blood of Jezeel."

You may have heard of Jezeel by another name. The area was also where Israel fought many great battles. Maybe you've heard of Megiddo?

I would feel completely terrified. I think of the Psalm: "Whom have I in heaven but you?" (Ps. 73:25, NASB). I have nothing without Him. I can't imagine hearing that message from God.

Well, if that isn't awful enough, what exactly does God say He will do in verse 5?

HOSEA

For me, I would feel valueless, isolated, and vulnerable. Can it get any worse than God declaring He will have no compassion on you? Apparently it can.

What does verse 7 say?

While God will have no compassion on Israel, He will have compassion for their rivals in Judah. God will deliver Judah. Now that was just adding insult to injury. Oh girl, this is where God can seem so harsh if we don't view this book and His character correctly. So hold on. Believe the best about Him and you will see the best of Him.

Back to Hosea and Gomer. The family was growing. Gomer was a mother and Hosea was a father—they were human—just like you and me. They loved their children and God loved them too. Though we take this story literally, do not apply the literal meaning of the kid's names to the children as if God is rejecting them, or removing His compassion from them personally and individually. Their names were just part of the word picture God was communicating through Hosea and their family. The kids were like little walking reminders of the message Hosea was preaching to the nation of Israel.

Speaking of children, can you say, "Third time's a charm"? Gomer got pregnant again and their last son's name was not any better. Read what it was in Hosea 1:8-9.

The boy's name was to convey the idea that God's tolerance was about to run out and He would no longer call His people His own.

"Then the LORD said:
Name him Not My People,
for you are not My people,
and I will not be your God."

HOSEA 1:9

So now you're leaving the First Local Church of Hosea in Israel and you aren't feeling so hot. You've just heard the third of three really troubling sermons. Every time you see Hosea and Gomer's little ones toddling and crawling about, you can't help but remember what their names mean. You meet your friends at Yoshi's Grill for lunch and you discuss the sermon series with them. You take turns stating what Hosea has told you:

You say, "God will strip us of our security?"

Your friend adds, "And God will fight against us and make us powerless?"

HOSEA

Day 4 THE GOOD NEWS

But I will have compassion on the house of Judah,
and I will deliver them by the LORD their God.
I will not deliver them by bow, sword, or war,
or by horses and cavalry.

HOSEA 1:7

Finally, right? Man, Hosea can be hard and we're only halfway through chapter one. But today will make you smile. In fact, most of this amazing book will make you smile ... you'll see. Yesterday, we got a big serving of God's judgment and it sure didn't go down easy. God's people had betrayed Him, again and again. And through Hosea, Yahweh was warning His people that His patience was running out. He promised—and eventually sent—destruction.

Within only a few short years, Israel went from its highest pinnacle of success to complete destruction. The destruction that Hosea was warning against is detailed in 2 Kings 17:5-18 if you want to read more.

Hosea wasn't kidding around. But if you only get the judgment, you're missing the message of Hosea.

Turn in Hosea to chapter 1. We're going to unpack from Hosea 1:10 to Hosea 2:1. Some of the beauty of Hosea is in the breathtaking contrasts. But, though beautiful, they may give you whiplash. Remember, yesterday, with the names of his kids, Hosea just declared God had "no compassion" and "you're not [His] people." Watch how he follows the bitter with the sweet.

Yet the number of the Israelites
will be like the sand of the sea,
which cannot be measured or counted.
And in the place where they were told:
You are not My people,
they will be called: Sons of the living God.
And the Judeans and the Israelites

HOSEA

How can I give you up, _____ (Ephraim)?
How can I surrender you, _____ (Israel)?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboyim?
I have had a change of heart;
My compassion is stirred!
I will not vent the full fury of My anger;
I will not turn back to destroy _____ (Ephraim).
For I am God and not man—
the Holy One among you;
I will not come in rage.

HOSEA 11:8-9

God will not give you up because you are His.

God chose Israel, Hosea chose Gomer, and God chose you. He loves you because of who He is—“I am God and not man, the Holy One among you.”

God may discipline His people but He will not disown them.

The language God used in the first half of chapter 1 shows God is disciplining His people, not disowning them.

What does 2 Kings 17:13 specify that God was doing through the harsh words of Hosea and the other prophets?

All through Hosea, there's both judgment and hope, destruction and restoration. Hosea's preaching proclaims both sides of God, but the two faces of God we see in Hosea reflect one heart—God's faithful heart of love for His people warning them for their good.

And, that my friend, includes you.

You are loved and chosen and “not even death or life, angels or rulers, things present or things to come, hostile powers, height or depth, or any other created thing will have the power to separate us from the love of God” (Rom. 8:38-39).

Day 5

THE TRUE YOU

Call your brothers: My People
 and your sisters: Compassion.
HOSEA 2:1

Now that you’ve read through Hosea and studied chapter 1, I’m curious about something. Can you relate to Gomer and Israel? Can you see your behavior in Israel’s? Can you see Gomer’s tendencies in your own? Probably. We are usually quick to see our weaknesses; quick to notice what we do wrong.

Let me put it this way, sister: I can see the “me” in Gomer and the “I” in Israel!

I’ve compared us to Gomer and Israel and called us chosen and loved several times this week so far, but—here is the big question—do you believe it? Do you believe you are chosen and loved by God? It’s easy to look into the mirror that is our life and see why we shouldn’t be chosen and loved—we’re selfish, we wander from God, we have mixed motives, we aren’t good enough ... oh, the reasons we come up with!

The mirror of God’s Word reflects the truth that we are chosen and loved. Before we can go on, you’ve gotta get this truth planted deep in your heart. Otherwise, you won’t embrace the message of Hosea as God’s message to you.

We’ll finish up this week with just two truths: how you know you are chosen and how you know you are loved. Okey, dokey? And, from one sister to another, if you get nothing else out of this week of study—if you don’t know who was king when Hosea was written, or which was the Northern and which was the Southern Kingdom—get these two truths. Stop right now and ask God to help you receive and believe these two truths about you.

T. TTT TTT TTTTT.

Israel’s story, Gomer’s story, and your story are the same story. And at the core, it is a love story. But I haven’t told you exactly why this is your story—why you, like Israel and Gomer, are chosen and loved.

You will love this!

HOSEA

Find Romans 9:24-26. Who is the “us” Paul is referring to?

The “us” is you and me, all of us who have received Christ as Savior.

Now, look at 1 Peter 2:10. What does Peter say about who we were and who we are now?

We were once not a people and now we are the people of God! Both Paul and Peter are talking about us, the church.

Paul referred to Hosea in that passage we read. Did you notice? He and Peter both pulled from a passage in Hosea that you are probably familiar with by now. It's Hosea 2:23.

Find it and mark the place because we will look at it last thing.

OK, stay with me. This will keep connecting you to Israel. Read Galatians 3:7-29. Focus on those last several verses, 26-29 because they pull this together. How does Paul describe you in those verses?

Fill in the blanks according to verse 29: If I belong to _____, I am one of _____ children and _____ according to the _____.

The reason you can read Hosea and see yourself in Israel is this: If you belong to Christ, you are Abraham's seed and you inherit all the promises he did!

Read what Jesus said about you in John 15:16. God chose you.
You are chosen!

HOSEA

God set His love upon you as He did upon Israel because He is love.

He doesn't love you because you are cleaned up, religious, or even because you are a Christian. He loves you because He is love. You didn't earn His love and you can't lose His love either. God didn't ring His hands, furrow His brow and analyze if you would qualify for His love. In many ways, He didn't make a decision to love you or not to love you—His essence is love, so for Him to know you is to love you. For Him to see you is to love you. He is love so He loves.

I know that is hard to grasp. But if you read 1 John 4:9-10, you see the ultimate proof of God's love for you.

God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

1 JOHN 4:9-10

Jesus was the proof of God's love.

When you consider your lovability in light of God's loving nature and His proof of that love in Christ, you realize that you are loved because God is love. It is that simple, that deep, and that profound. That scandalous! You are loved because He is love.

Just because. That is why He loves you.

God's love is something you humbly accept by faith. For you to reject His love is to reject Him. To say you are not worthy of His love is to say He is not worthy of being love. To say you are not "good enough" is to say He is not good enough.

To reject that God's love applies to you is to reject the sacrifice of Christ and dismiss part of the character of God.

That means if we go back to that First Local Church of Hosea, crash their wedding, and watch Gomer walk down the aisle and think she is just not worthy of Hosea's love—that she was not, is not, and will never be the object of his love—if we reject Gomer's acceptability, we reject our own. If we can't accept that Gomer is chosen and loved, we probably won't accept that we are either.

When we cop the pose of low spiritual self-esteem, we are not only reducing our own worth, we are diminishing God. I know you don't mean to do that if you take on the not-me, not-good-enough excuse. That isn't my intention either, for sure. But essentially, that is what we are doing.

Think about it. You are God's beloved. That is your identity.

