

## 5. Hosea - A Strange Love Affair

In your thinking, what makes for a good love story?

Background to Hosea:

- 1:1 - 30-60 year ministry
- Political upheaval and instability, six kings within about 30 years
- Major focus is Ephraim (35x), the second son of Joseph
- Compromise with foreign kingdoms and pagan practices
- Idolatry and Sinful Behavior: Read 4:1-2. In the following verses in chapter 4, Hosea describes the cultic practice of Baal worship.
- *Hosea's major concern was the worship of Baal- an apostasy that he understood to be the reason for Israel's dilemma. Baal was the weather-god worshiped in Syria-Palestine, who had control over agriculture and fertility, rainfall and productivity. Since ancient Israel was always an agricultural society, Baal worship was of unrivaled importance. Baal was localized at different shrines identified by such names as Baal-peor (9:10) and Baal-gad (Josh, 11:17) and hence was sometimes referred to as the Baals (Judg. 2:11; 3:7; 8:33). While a full description of this religion is not possible here, one major aspect of Baalism touches on this prophet's message: the religion's appeal to human sexuality (cf. Isa. 57:3-10). Other aspects- such as drunkenness, bestiality, human sacrifice, mutilations, and incest--may be discerned in the book, but Hosea understands the strength of Baalism's appeal to the sex drive by way of ritual prostitution. (ESV Study Bible)*

### 1-3 Hosea's Prophetic Love Story

1:2-3 Do you remember learning this in Sunday School? What does a story like this tell you anything about the nature of the Bible?

Gomer had three children (1:4-9) - What were their names

V.4

V.6

V.9

2:2 What does the situation with Gomer indicate about the situation with Israel?

2:7-10 What problem does the "Gomer figure" run into? What is God's response?

2:16 What name were they substituting for the LORD?

There is coming a day when the Lord will “allure her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her.” What do you suppose this is anticipating for Israel? Why Wilderness?

2:19-20 What does the Lord plan to do?

2:21-23 What are the new names given to the three children?

3:1-3 What does the LORD tell Hosea to do now?

3:4-5 What will happen in the “latter days”?

What is “David their king” talking about since David is dead and gone?

Based on these verses, What would you say is the Main Theme of Hosea:

#### **4-15 Application to Israel’s True Love Story**

4:6 says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Can you see how lack of knowledge can destroy a people today as well? What knowledge is needed?

11:1-3 How is Israel described here?

11:8-9 How does God feel about this situation?

14:4-7 How is the hope pictured? What does this tell us about our own hope?

14:9 What can we learn from this “postscript” note?

Closing: Eugene Peterson says that the phrase “God is love” has been plastered over with “cultural graffiti,” obscuring and defaming the truth of the way the world is. What sorts of cultural graffiti obscure the way we think about what the word “love” means?

Peterson also says, “We require true stories of love if we are to live truly.” (The Invitation, Intro to Hosea) Overall, Hosea shows us the contrast between the character of human nature and the character of God’s nature. From a human perspective, would you say that Hosea acted the way you would normally expect a husband to act?

What does this teach you about God’s true love story?