



BIBLE IN A YEAR 2020



HOSEA



LOVE IS FOR SAVING

The central graphic is a square box with a thin black border. At the top, there is a horizontal rainbow bar. Below it, the word "HOSEA" is written in large, bold, black capital letters. In the center is a circular icon with a blue-to-white gradient. The icon contains a white diamond shape at the top and a white lightning bolt shape at the bottom. Below the icon, the words "LOVE IS FOR SAVING" are written in bold, black capital letters.

Friday 11 December: Hosea 1-3

Fiery love Liz Nixon writes:

What did I like about today's reading?

This is one of my most favourite books of the Bible. It's a book about perfect love and deep passion, scandalous betrayal, and wounding unfaithfulness.

Hosea is called to be a sign to the people – he is to be the message before he can give the message to the people. He is told to marry an unfaithful woman, reflecting God's covenantal relationship to an unfaithful people, Israel.

There are moments of passionate anger at the continual and repeated unfaithfulness, as well as beautifully passionate moments of reminiscing by God over their "courting" days and early "marriage". Like most of the prophets, Hosea is called into a difficult way of life to show the people in a more human, real way that they have cheated on their God.

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

We tend to think of being a child of God as something that is a New Testament idea, brought in by Jesus 'the son of God, who became man to make men sons of God'. But we see this in verse 10 "they will be called 'sons of the living God' ". To see this written years before Jesus is an exciting reminder that God always wanted to make us into His children. That's His plan and His good news!

Chapter 2 contains passionate verses showing how Israel had forgotten God and "chased after her lovers", lovers that Israel believed had provided for her. But God in His deep, gracious love says He will lead Israel back into the wilderness, the place that they first met and made promises to each other (Exodus). He will give back to her what she has lost, and she will once more respond to God, "as in the day she came up out of Egypt".

The exodus out of Egypt is considered a highlight of Jewish history, but it seems God also treasures that same time. And understandably so, He saved them from their enemy, brought them into freedom and He taught them to rely on Him.

God talks about "betrothing you (Israel) to me for ever, . . . betrothing in justice, righteousness, love, compassion and faithfulness". And Israel will once more intimately know "yada" (see tomorrow for more on this word) God as her husband. There's a poignancy to these verses – God remembering back to how things were in the beginning. But this is more than sentimentality over a teenage romance – God's love for Israel is deeper, wider, and higher, and started long before Israel started to love Him back.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

I remember the early days of coming back to God in my twenties and I want to dwell on that: asking God for His view on that time and what He treasures about it.

Who am I going to share this with?

My husband Greg, as we had chapter 2 v 14 – 23 at our wedding.

Monday 14 December: Hosea 4-7

Press on to know the Lord Liz Nixon writes:

What did I like about today's reading?

The charge against Israel is that they do not **know** God. The Hebrew word is “daath”, which comes from the root “yada”, meaning to know intimately and is used several times in these chapters. It’s a lived-out knowledge, experiential knowing of someone which comes from knowing who someone really is.

The people do not know who God is. Romans 1 says that people “did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God” and this is what caused them to be given over to their wicked desires. It’s the same lack of experiential, knowing of God. It’s not knowing about someone, a knowing facts type of knowledge, but being in relationship with them, experiencing who they are.

Hosea’s call to the people in Hosea 6 1-3 is inspiring and contains my favourite verse – “Let us know the Lord, let us press on to know Him” (see my [Bible bite!](#)). He is basically saying “Come on, let’s do this together, let’s keep getting to know God better and better – He’s worth our time and energy!”.

There’s a prayer/song which has become my motto and passion for life:

*Dear Lord, three things I pray:
to see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, follow thee more nearly.*

I am convinced that when we see God more clearly and know who He truly is, then we are more and more amazed, and love Him more as a result.

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

Israel’s love for God is fleeting, like the morning mist, which is why He sent the prophets to them. Despite Israel’s unfaithfulness and God’s frustration and anger, He is full of love towards them. He is clear that He wants His people to know Him, to be in relationship with Him, rather than religious rituals and sacrifices on altars.

There seems to be mixed emotions for God in verse 4 when He says “What can I do with you, Ephraim? What can I do with you, Judah?”. Israel has strayed from Him (verse 13), turned to enemies for help (verse 11), but His heart is “**I long to redeem them**”.

God’s love for Israel, for us, for me, is not dependent on how we behave. His love for me is dependent on Him, and His character. God’s love is fiery and passionate, unending, and steadfast.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

Remember that God’s heart is **always** longing for the redemption of His people.

Who am I going to share this with?

You! The Gold course is a brilliant way of seeing God more clearly as it allows Holy Spirit to reveal the lies we may have been believing about who God is and who we are. If you would like to see God more clearly, [sign up](#) for it!

Tuesday 15 December: Hosea 8-10

Restorative justice, not retributive justice Liz Nixon writes:

What did I like about today's reading?

These chapters mostly talk about the way Israel has been unfaithful to God, and the natural consequences that come from sin. The people take to sin so easily and naturally: they made idols and worshipped them, installed new kings without consulting God and used the altars meant for worship as a place to sin.

Hosea declares in chapter 9 that Israel has been unfaithful to God and God Himself says He has hated them because of their wickedness in Gilgal; they will be driven out of His house and He will no longer love them. They did not want God, and so they would learn what it is to live without God, through exile to Assyria and a dreaded return to Egypt.

The nation has been focussed on being strong, rather than being in relationship with God. And the punishment which will come their way is not about vengeance or justice being served. The discipline of God is about the restoration of those who have done wrong, hoping for repentance from them and a fresh start with Him.

God's justice is about restoration, not retribution.

Exile will be an opportunity for them to know God better and have a clearer understanding of who He is. They have been slow to learn whilst living in God's land, so a time away from His land and His temple could teach them to pursue Him outside of those things. Can they learn and change though?

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

I love seeing how God describes the early days of their relationship, almost with rose-tinted glasses, given that the people were complaining pretty much as soon as they arrived in the wilderness!

Yet we know God sees things more clearly than us, so maybe it is less about rose-tinted glasses, but "son – glasses". He sees Israel through the lens of Jesus, seeing who He had made them to be and perfectly loving them as they learn and change.

God says He will gather them together again after a period of exile as discipline, but they will not be as fruitful this time, unlike the beginning. This is exactly what God promised would happen for disobedience under the terms of the Old Covenant (see Deuteronomy).

Thankfully, when we live under the covenant of Jesus' blood, God remembers our sins no more and fruit can still abound in our lives. That is good news! We can come to God by faith in a new and better covenant, where He promises to remember our sins no more.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

It's important to see life through God's perspective rather than my own or through the people around me, so I'd like to get into a good habit of seeking His opinion on things first, before then turning to my husband, family and trusted friends.

Who am I going to share this with?

People on The Gold course.

Thursday 17 December: Hosea 11-14

Fleeting anger but a lifetime of love Liz Nixon writes:

What did I like about today's reading?

Hosea gives the people a history lesson, reminding them of their unfaithfulness throughout history by talking about the lies and treachery of Jacob, their rebellion in the wilderness and the appointment of a proud King Saul.

Hosea ends the book by once more encouraging the people to return to God because foreign superpowers will not save the people. But in God, Hosea says, the fatherless will find compassion. There are some notable, great verses:

- Hosea 13 v 14 - an amazing verse which sums up the whole of God's saving plan for humanity – that He will ransom us from the power of the grave and redeem us from death.
- Hosea 14 v 1 - O Israel, come back! Return to your God! You're down but you're not out.

The second verse is from The Message and perfectly demonstrates our situation – we may be down, but we are never out. The love of God means we are never counted out!

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

We see God once more reminiscing over Israel, this time comparing it to being His son. He talks of loving this son, calling him, taking him by the arms and lovingly teaching him to walk. He healed Israel, was kind to Israel, lifted the burdens from his shoulders and bent down to feed him.

God has been intimately involved with the raising of this son but has been poorly repaid. The son grew up and rejected the abundant generosity of His Father. Israel listened to other voices, not his Father's voice and wanted to go to Egypt, the place that historically held Israel captive, or to Assyria. It seemed that Israel wanted to go anywhere but back to his Father.

God is rightly angry with Israel for his continued unfaithfulness and we see the depths of passion and torment in God's heart – He has been treated badly by a beloved son, but I love His response, "How can I give you up?" My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused". It reminds me of Psalm 30 "For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime".

God leads with love and will not carry out His "fierce anger". God is love, and acts in love. Instead, He promises that when His children come back home to Him, He will settle them in their homes. He will "heal their waywardness and love them freely" and their repentance, redemption and restoration will see them be a blessing to the nations once more, as God always intended. The love of God is utterly amazing, breath-taking, and almost too good to be true!

What am I going to do differently as a result?

Consider the impact of my unfaithfulness on God's heart. And worship Him thankfully because His anger is fleeting, and His love for me is faithful, passionate, and eternal.

Who am I going to share this with?

My family.