

Consider the price that Jesus Christ paid for your salvation (1 Peter 3:18). Make that the basis of a time of praise to God. Why not memorize this verse?

Weekend

1. Using '*The Message of Hosea*', by Derek Kidner (IVP), dip into the rest of the book for the evidences of God's forgiveness towards, and relationship with, his people Israel.
2. If you have not already done so, carry out the project suggested at the beginning of the week, looking for parallels as indicated.
3. Hosea is one of a number of Old Testament examples of biblical teaching being dramatically acted out. (You might look at the book of Jeremiah, which we studied in weeks 10 & 11. This is full of other examples, such as Jeremiah 19:10-13.) Think about how drama may be useful today. Some Christians, for instance, have experimented with street theatre, or by putting on Christian productions in local theatres. If you are interested, '*A Time to Act*', by Murray Watts and Paul Burbridge (Hodder) is worth reading.

Notes



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Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

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Week 49: Hosea and Gomer (A character study)

Intertwined are two marriages that went wrong — that of Hosea with the prostitute Gomer, and God with the wilful kingdom of Israel. Through the pain of his own situation Hosea learnt the extent of God's deep and tender love for his people. Both brides paid the price of adultery. Gomer became a slave. The northern kingdom of Israel fell in 721 BC to Assyria, its people deported, and the land occupied. The southern kingdom of Judah suffered a similar fate in 597 BC although, like the north, the Jews were allowed to return after their period of exile in Babylon.

Hosea's prophecy was addressed mainly to the northern kingdom, but there was a relevance for Judah too (see 11:12). By looking at the characters of Hosea and Gomer we shall see parallels of God's relationship with Israel, and Christ with his church.

In your notebook draw three columns headed, 'Hosea and Gomer', 'God and Israel' and 'Christ and his church'. During the week, or as an alternative weekend activity, jot down parallels which may be drawn between these themes.

It is the people you love who can hurt you most. One can almost trace the degree of potential pain along a scale - from the rebuff which you hardly notice from a stranger, to the rather upsetting clash you may have with a friend, right on to the stinging hurt of a jilting, the ache of a parent-child estrangement, or, most wounding of all, the betrayal of a marriage.

Nothing short of the last two of these could really have conveyed to Hosea or to us how deeply God cares about us. Even then, words alone might have failed to bring home the sharpness of it. It needed acting out, and in real life at that.

Derek Kidner, The message of Hosea (IVP).

Day 1. 'I name this child ...'

Hosea 1:1-8

God directed Hosea into a marriage with Gomer who was a prostitute at the time, or would soon become one. The first child was probably Hosea's, but the others may well have been conceived as a result of her profession. Hosea's family life became a living prophecy — a parable of pain — to his fellow northerners in Israel.

1. What do the names of the children tell us about the relationship that could have existed between the 'brides' and their respective 'husbands', Hosea and God himself?

Note: 1:4 Jezreel: Jehu caused a blood-bath at that city (2 Kings 9 and 10).

2. From these verses, what is God's attitude to sin? What do we also see of his love? Is God's attitude to sin different from that of man in general? How? Why?
3. Meditate on the importance of faithfulness in your relationship with Jesus. Romans 12:1 tells us that we can worship by giving our living bodies in service instead of offering a dead animal's body, as in Hosea's day.

Day 2. A light on the horizon

Hosea 1:10 - 2:1

Despite the apparently impossible situation reached in both relationships there is the possibility of reconciliation, if the parties are willing. God does not forget his promises.

1. List the evidences of hope in these verses. Upon what was this hope based?
2. Remembering yesterday's study what can you learn now of the depth of God's love for us as sinners and hence the hope that is ours?

Meditate on the glorious promises held in Revelation 21:1-4. Perhaps you would like to learn the latter part as a reminder of his love. These verses would help in adding to your three-column chart.

Day 3. Will he have me back?

Hosea 2:2-13

Frustration marks the life of Gomer and of Israel. Sexual freedom often ends up with disillusionment — times haven't changed, men and women are no different now than then! Here Gomer's plight merges into that of the people of Israel.

1. Jot down the actions of Gomer that are frustrated and suggest what

Hosea 's agonized responses might have been.

2. What does the passage show you concerning God's attitude to and provision for Israel? Punishment was a reality. How dependent was Israel upon God's goodness and mercy? How is this paralleled in Christ's dealings with his church?

Take stock of your daily needs and how they are met, and other indications of God's goodness towards you. You could take Psalm 67 and use it as a prayer of gratitude to God for his merciful provision.

Day 4. Can I win her back?

Hosea 2:14-23

God speaks of wooing back Israel and sets a pattern for Hosea to regain Gomer. What a beautiful love-poem and that's how God felt about Israel and now about you.

1. List the ways in which God intends to attract Israel. Have you ever felt him dealing with you in a similar way?
2. What do verses 19 and 20 show you about God's relationship between him and his people?
3. Go through the passage noticing the use of the pronouns, 'I', 'you', 'she', etc. What do you learn about God's love for Israel - and us?

Note: 'That day' (verses 16, 18, 21) in the Old Testament points us on to the great 'Day of the Lord'. That day began with Christ's first coming. It will further unfold with his second coming.

Meditate on the love of Jesus Christ for his bride — the church (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Day 5. On probation!

Hosea 3

Action! Hosea buys back Gomer and the marriage is saved. How deeply she must have been loved. Israel too was loved, but though her 'husband' was faithful, she was not.

1. From verse 3 and earlier studies, what suggests that Hosea was faithful to the marriage bond? What does that say about the need to keep on working at a relationship?
2. Note down the parallels between Hosea's treatment of Gomer and God's response to Israel, adding to the three-column chart.