

HOSEA

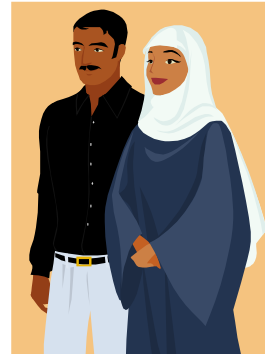


A five session course
by Roger Dowley

HOSEA'S WIFE LEFT HIM - BUT GOD DIDN'T

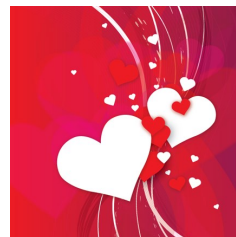
Roger Dowley's "Hosea" shows the modern relevance of an ancient Scripture.

Session 1: What God wants from us
Session 2: Constant love
Session 3: Hosea's marriage
Session 4: Hosea's children
Session 5: Hosea's heart



- "Knowing God" or just "knowing about God".
- Pictures of the "constant love" of God -from Hosea, elsewhere in the Bible and in our own experience.
- God's "wedding presents".
- What do names matter?
- God the loving parent - "I held him to my cheek. I bent down and fed him."

LEADER'S GUIDE
& appendix of handouts for you to photocopy



Unlock, 15 Station Rd, Rotherham, S60 1HN

'HOSEA' - NOTES FOR THE LEADER

1. This course is designed to relate an ancient scripture to your group's own lives and experiences. It does not take the group verse by verse through the book, but concentrates on Hosea's life and the things that he learnt through the various things that happened to him. Your group will learn from this course two central themes of the Biblical understanding of God:-



- **Constant Love.**
- **The tension between God's perfect justice and righteousness and his love and mercy.**

2. The course is equally suitable whether your group is familiar with the Bible or not, but you will need to alter your style to suit your group's knowledge. All of the Bible material has been extracted on to eleven handouts and you could run the course without opening the book if you wanted to. The use of the handouts is especially useful where Bible verses are fathered from several locations.
3. However, in all cases we advise you to have Bibles available in the room. As your group gets into the story, its members will want to read more, and some will want to read the whole text of Hosea at home. The version used is the 'Good News Bible'.
4. You will need a "flip-board" with "wall-sheets". This will be a board about 3 feet by 2 feet with lining-paper torn into lengths and held with bulldog clips. You will need a few sheets for each session. In some sessions you are asked to draw charts beforehand, but a wall-sheet is useful at many points in the course to write comments and trigger words. You will also need felt pens in two colours.
5. Sometimes you are asked to display your wall-sheets at the next session. They can be stuck up with blu-tac although if you are in a house, don't damage the furnishings.
6. The group for this course should be between 5 and 10 people if possible. This is very flexible but if your group is 12 or more people you should consider dividing it into two.
7. **Timing:** The sessions are divided into lettered sections and the times estimated for these are given. The whole session lasts about 2 hours. In each session you could omit one or more of these sections if you were running short of time. Try to get the group to assemble and start promptly.
8. **Breaks:** It is best in our experience to have refreshments at the end. If you prefer to break in the middle, keep it fairly short, only 15-20 minutes.





**'HOSEA' SESSION ONE
WHAT GOD WANTS FROM US**



PREPARATION

- (a) Photocopy Handouts 1 - 3 for each member of the group (pages 23-26). It is best to separate 2 from 3, and to staple together the two sheets of Handout 2 with a staple in the top left corner.
- (b) Prepare a sheet for your board with these columns:-

| | GOD WANTS..... | RATHER THAN |
|----|----------------|-------------|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |
| 5. | | |
| 6. | | |
| 7. | | |
| 8. | | |

General introduction to the course.

(10 minutes)

The book of Hosea was written more than 700 years before the birth of Christ. During his time the Jews were divided into two kingdoms. In the south was Judah, centred on Jerusalem, and in the north was Israel, centred on Samaria

Hosea spoke to the Northern Kingdom, although he often refers to Judah. From the time of its King Jeroboam onwards, the Northern Kingdom had stopped worshipping God and had adopted the idol worship of the other

states and tribes. This included Temple prostitution and even child-sacrifice, and was deeply offensive to Hosea who warned the Jews that God could only punish such an appalling rejection of Him.

The Kings of Israel at this time were very violent and three of them obtained the throne by assassinating the existing rulers. The great power in the Middle East was Assyria which is roughly equivalent to today's Iraq. Israel and Judah paid large fines to a Assyria at various times during the preaching of Hosea, and finally in 722BC, Samaria was over-run by Assyria and the Israelites were taken there as slaves.

Hosea speaks against Israel's unfaithfulness to God from his own experience of marrying a woman who left him and became a prostitute. Israel is seen as a 'bride' who is unfaithful to the true God who rescued her from Egypt and mad her His people. She goes instead to her 'lovers' and adopts their gods, alters and rituals.

God must judge Israel and does through the savage armies of the Assyrians, but he also loves her with 'constant love', or 'heseth'.

During this course we are not going to read Hosea through nor will we study every word. I hope that you will do that on your own with more understanding because of these sessions. Our five sessions will look at the themes from Hosea's life and teaching which are given on your invitation letter.

A. WARM-UP (10 minutes)

It is good to begin this first session with a simple exercise in which everyone takes part. This begins 'group-building' and gives each person a chance to speak. After your introduction you might ask each person to say:-

- "What I would like to get out of this course."
 - Or
 - "Something nice that has happened to me this week."
 - Or
 - "What I like best about this group."
- (or anything else which you think will suit the needs of your group)

B. GROUP WORK (15 minutes)

Issue Handout 1 and ask those present to divide into groups A and B. Group A will read and study the left hand column, and Group B the right hand column. Both groups will be asked to base their discussion on the questions given below.

Why did Jesus refer his hearers to Hosea 6:6?
How would their attitudes and behaviour change if the 'Really knew' what Jesus meant?



C. DISCUSSION

(15 minutes)

Bring the two groups together again and discuss the way Jesus used this key verse from Hosea:-

- The teaching was effective because both Jesus and his hearers were familiar with the scripture.
- Jesus regarded the scriptures as having authority.
- Much of the teaching in the New Testament rests upon the Old Testament.
- The Old Testament cannot be ignored by Christians - which is one of the main reasons why we are studying Hosea now.

D. LOOKING AT HOSEA 6. VERSE 6

(20 minutes)

Let us look more closely at Hosea 6, verse 6. It says that God wants ‘constant love’ and ‘knowledge of Himself’ rather than sacrifices and offerings. This teaching is much more common in the Old Testament than most Christians realise. I am now giving you another sheet of Bible extracts and want us together to fill in this table. (Issue Handout 2).



| | God Wants..... | Rather than..... |
|----|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | Obedience | Sacrifice |
| 2. | Us to do his will | Sacrifices, Offerings. |
| 3. | Humble Spirit, repentant heart | Sacrifices, Offerings. |
| 4. | What is right and fair | Sacrifices. |
| 5. | Justice, helping oppressed | Sacrifices, Festivals, prayers. |
| 6. | Constant love, knowledge Knowledge of Him | Sacrifices, Offerings. |
| 7. | Justice, righteousness | Festivals, Offerings, songs, harps. |
| 8. | Justice, constant love, Fellowship. | Offerings. |

REFLECTION

Use these questions to guide the group's reflections.

- Which item appears most under "God wants.....? (Justice and fairness).
- Does this emphasis surprise you?
- How much do we emphasise justice for the oppressed in our personal lives?
- How much does our Church emphasise justice for the oppressed?
- Who do we think are oppressed in our community?



E. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

(30 Minutes)

"We have seen then that God would rather have two things instead of formal ritual:-

Constant love.

Knowledge of Himself

We will be going on to look at 'constant love' in the next session, so let us think now about 'knowing God'.

"In Hosea's time the people knew about God but they didn't know God. In Chapter 4 the Lord says - 'The people do not acknowledge me as God, 'and that therefore He will not acknowledge their priests. The word 'acknowledge' in our Bible is the same word in Hebrew as 'know' in the verse we are studying tonight.

"Remember the 'homework' you were asked to do for tonight. Can we share stories about the differences between knowing about someone and really knowing them, you know those that start like, "I'd known about her for years and thought she was unfriendly and stuck-up, but since I've got to know her, I've found her....."

Draw from the group homely examples of how our knowledge of people in the deeper sense influences our conduct:-

- Child to parent - "I laid an extra place, because I knew you would bring someone back for a meal."
- Pupil or Apprentice to Instructor - "I wanted to do it the easy way, but I did it this way because I knew that was how you would want it to be done".
- "I told her in confidence, because I knew she never passes anything on".

Refer to your wall-sheet and leave the group with this conclusion:-

The same is true of 'knowing God' because we know Him to be wholly loving, constant, just and righteous, we want to obey Him,

to do his will, and bring Him offerings of constant love and justice. And Hosea and his fellow prophets make it clear that this is not just in our private inner lives, but in the wider community.”



F. DOES WORSHIP MATTER? (10 Minutes)

Give the group Handout 3 and discuss these encouragements to worship

Refer to the column of your wall-sheet headed 'Rather than.....

“How can this emphasis on worship be reconciled to the things listed in this column ?”

(God wants the worship of people who obey Him and show the good qualities listed in the column headed, 'God wants.....').

G. CONCLUSION (20 Minutes)

In small groups complete this statement:-

- “When Jesus told the Pharisees to learn what it meant by Hosea 6, verse 6 what he wanted them to understand was..... ?

The small groups report back to the whole group, which together agrees a 'final version' summarising the whole session.

(It is best to write the opening of the statement on your board for the groups to refer to. Complete the statement and display it at the next meeting to remind the group).

HOMEWORK

Think of a story of someone who was let down by a friend he or she trusted but repaid this by undeserved kindness.

This is best from life - unless it is too personal - but otherwise can be from history, or a story or novel, or from the Bible.

We shall be thinking about the stories next time to help understand the 'constant love' of God.





**'HOSEA' SESSION TWO
CONSTANT LOVE**



PREPARATION

Photocopy Handouts 4 and 5 (pages 27-28) for each member of the group. Prepare for your board and sheet like this:-

| | Hosea | Good News Bible | Shown (or not shown) by | Comment |
|---|-------|-----------------|-------------------------|---------|
| 1 | 2/19 | | | |
| 2 | 4/1 | | | |
| 3 | 6/6 | | | |
| 4 | 10/12 | | | |
| 5 | 12/6 | | | |

A. INTRODUCTION (10 Minutes)

“In the last session we studied Hosea 6/6 and saw that God wanted ‘constant love’ and ‘knowledge or Himself’ rather than sacrifices. We then looked more closely at what ‘knowing God’ involves. Using our own stories we saw the difference between ‘knowing about’ someone and ‘knowing’ Him. When we know God and obey Him then He accepts our worship.

“Now we are going to explore what ‘constant love’ is. This is a key to understanding God and his actions recorded in the Bible and it is expressed in the Old Testament by the Hebrew word ‘heseth’. This word has no equivalent in English and is translated by different words. In the old Bible it was called:

- Mercy.
- Kindness.
- Loving Kindness.
- Steadfast love.

“All these translations may give us some understanding of the warmth and beauty of this Biblical idea. It is about the God who loves us even when we ignore and disobey Him. In human terms it is continued in the teaching of Jesus that we should love our enemies. ‘Why should God reward you if you love only the people who love you?’

“We shall firstly think about our own stories. Then we shall look at ‘heseth’ in Hosea and elsewhere, and we shall finish up by looking at how David and Jonathan showed ‘heseth’ to each other”.

B. TELLING OUR STORIES

(20 Minutes)

“You were asked last time to think of a story of someone who was let down by a friend he or she trusted but repaid this by undeserved kindness. Let us now share these stories. Would anyone like to offer a story of how you let someone down and they showed undeserved kindness in return?”

Discussion

Help the group to analyse the stories and the feelings of the people with questions like these:-

- What would she have felt like when her friend behaved so badly to her?
- Do you think that you would be as kind as that if someone did that to you?
- How might the display of undeserved kindness help the two to relate better in the future?

C. ‘HESETH’ IN HOSEA

(30 Minutes)

“Hosea’s message to Israel compares its disloyalty to God with his own marriage experience. In the old Prayer Book service the couple used the words, ‘I plight thee my troth’, while in the modern Prayer Book it says, “This is my solemn vow”. What do you think that this promise means? What are your feelings when you hear the words at someone else’s wedding? What were your feelings when you said them yourself at your own wedding?”

(The story of Hosea centres round a failed marriage and you may well have people in your group who have experienced this. The course may trigger painful memories , or even lead someone to become confessional. You need to be aware and see that the person has access to pastoral help if it is needed).

Give out Handout 4 and ask the group to fill in the column marked “Good News Bible” from the verses in Hosea which are given.

Then study the verses from Psalm 136 and the way ‘heseth’ is described in 2 Timothy 2/13.

By this time the group should have a good idea of ‘heseth’. Encourage them to connect their own experiences which they have already shared with the constant love shown by God.

Because of this new understanding of God can I cope better with being let down?



- Will I forgive people more who let me down?
- How have we let God down as a Church?
- How have I let God down?



“Now let us return to the verses from Hosea given in the handout and fill in the rest of this chart. Who is showing ‘heseth’ to whom (or in some cases not showing it)?”

Linger over each reference as long as the group is getting something from it and add their additional comments in column 4. (Do not linger over the marriage motif in 2 : 19, but indicate that this is the subject of Session 3).

Your completed chart might look like this:-

| ‘HESETH’ IN HOSEA | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Hosea | Good News Bible | Shown (or not | Comment |
| (1) 2/19 | Constant Love | God to Israel | Uses picture of marriage |
| (2) 4/1 | Love | Israel to God and to the Community | ‘Heseth’ with knowledge of God’ as in 6/6 |
| (3) 6/6 | Constant Love | Israel to God | Contrasted with sacrifice |
| (4) 10/12 | Devotion | Mutual | Israel ‘heseth’ and God’s re- sponse in ‘heseth’ |
| (5) 12/6 | Loyalty | Israel to God and to the community | ‘Heseth’ with Justice |

D. ‘DAVID AND JONATHAN’ - AN EXAMPLE OF ‘HESETH’

(20 Minutes)

Give out handout 5 and ask three members of your group to read the extracts given. They can discuss each extract to see that they have got the meaning clear. Then discuss the whole story:-

- Would we have done the same?
- Did Mephibosheth deserve such generosity?

- What loyalty do we owe our fathers?
And so on.

E. CONCLUSION

(20 Minutes)

Remind the group members of their own stories: the 'troth' in the wedding service: the notes on the wall-sheet and the story of David and Jonathan. By now they should have got some idea of the scope of God's 'heseth'.

Conclude the session with discussion on:-

- How does 'heseth' work for us as individuals? (*Refer back to 2 Timothy 2/13, on Handout 4*).
- How might 'heseth' work between countries ?

On an international scale, it might be said by way of illustration:-

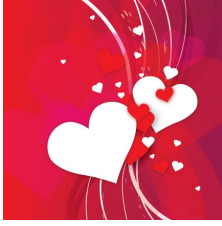
- a) that the two World Wars began with the allied nations "keeping 'heseth' " with Belgium and Poland, but that -
- b) the 1939 War might have been avoided if the League of Nations had not "broken 'heseth' "with Ethiopia when Mussolini invaded and with Czechoslovakia when Hitler invaded, and that -
- c) both Wars might have been avoided if the great nations had preserved 'heseth' with each other at all times.
- d) many of these examples are very dated now; can you think of more recent examples within your group?

The idea of 'heseth' may be quite new to some group members and the Workshop Leader should use this concluding part to try to ensure that any uncertainties are cleared up.

HOMEWORK

"Next session deals with Hosea's marriage and how he saw in this the 'marriage' between God and Israel. Find in the Bible as many places as you can where the relationship between God and his people is described in terms of Bridegroom and Bride, or of marriage.





**'HOSEA' SESSION THREE
HOSEA'S MARRIAGE**



PREPARATION

- (a) Photocopy Handouts 6 - 8 (pages 29-32) for the group members. Handout 6 is in two sheets and these should be stapled together.
- (b) Wrap attractively four boxes representing wedding presents. Inside each box place a card numbered thus:-

| | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|--|--------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| RIGHTEOUSNESS | JUSTICE | STEADFAST LOVE (HESETH) | MERCY |

Number the 'wedding presents' 1 to 4 on the outside so that they can be opened in that order.

- [c] Have your wall-sheets from the previous sessions on display, especially that from Session One showing what God wants from His people.

A. HOMEWORK (20 Minutes)

Ask the group members whether they were able to find the references to marriage as a picture of our relationship to God, and then give out Handout 6.

Work in small groups.

“Discuss the effect these Bible passages have on you in terms of:-

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Wooing | Frankness |
| Responding | Permanence |
| Getting-to-know | Mutual support |
| Total commitment | etc. |

Bring the group together and write up the main points on your board.

B. HOSEA'S MARRIAGE (20 Minutes)

“The Bible equally uses unfaithfulness and adultery as a picture of the disobedience of God’s people when they turned from him to adopt foreign gods and idols, or allied themselves to foreign powers and unjust oppressors”.

(Give out Handout 7 and ask someone to read the verses from Jeremiah 3 at the bottom of the right column).

“But it is in the first three chapters of Hosea that this idea is presented most movingly and vividly - for the very good reason that Hosea actually suffered the harrowing experience of marriage to an unfaithful woman. Scholars are agreed that Hosea did do this, though there is uncertainty as to where the real-life narrative ends and the ‘spiritual application’ begins”.

DISCUSSION

(Ask four members to read the extracts in the left column of Handout 7).

Guide the discussion with such questions as:-

- What would Hosea’s feeling have been in his up-and-down marriage with Gomer?
- He showed unshakeable love for her. How did this help him to understand more the tenderness of God’s love for him and for the nation of Israel.

(In making as frank and direct use of Hosea’s story as possible, great care must be taken that no one present is hurt because of the closeness of the similarity to their own recent marriage experience).

C. WINNING BACK THE UNFAITHFUL PARTNER (30 Minutes)

“I want us to now to share stories about the place where we did our courting, got engaged, or spent our honeymoons”.

Start light-heartedly, enjoying amusing stories of minor misunderstandings and embarrassments but move to a more serious emphasis:-

- What places and incidents do you associate with important steps forward in your relationship?
- Have you been back together since?
- Does revisiting the old favourite spots seem to renew the old commitment?

And so on.

Studying Hosea 2 / 14-17

Ask someone to read these from Handout 7.

“Hosea seems to have been thinking on similar lines to us in winning back his wife, Gomer. The picture he uses to describe



God's wooing back of Israel to Himself is of taking Israel back to the desert - the place where they got 'engaged' “.

Draw from the whole group what Hosea is saying to Israel in these verses:-

- Your 'marriage' to me began when I liberated you from Egypt.
- We made a covenant together in the wilderness of Sinai.
- You deserted me and went off with Baal.
- Let us make a new start at the place where it all began.
- Give up Baal and return to me, your true Husband.

Work in small groups

“Discuss the things which help you back to God when you feel that you are drifting away from him”.

The groups report back and discuss the ways God uses to bring people back to Himself. These might include:

- A Bible passage.
- A place of Worship.
- A Service.
- A Christian friend.
- Etc.

Break

(If the group is entering imaginatively into the spirit of this Healing of the Broken Marriage, it may help to have a Tea Break at this point presented as a party to celebrate the re-engagement, with the four betrothal presents as the centre piece of the table).

D. THE MOMENT OF RE-UNION

(40 Minutes)

Read from the Revised Standard Version, Hosea 2 / 19, 20. You can refer to Handout 8 but do not distribute it yet.

Then ask the group members to open the wedding presents and draw the four cards for them - righteousness, justice, steadfast love and mercy.

“These are four key words in the Old Testament and we are receiving them as gracious gifts from God to help us to live in His kingdom. I am now going to give you Handout 8. Where God's 'bridal gifts' are spelt out in more detail”.

DISCUSSION

The group reads the definitions and discuss the words. See that they are clear about their meanings.



Now ask the group to set the first two presents - Righteousness and Justice - on one side: and the second two - Heseth and Mercy – on the other.

“If God is always concerned with righteousness and justice which are the unshakeable basis of his rule, how can he keep a relationship with human beings who keep letting him down”.

It is through His steadfast love and mercy that he forgives us and ‘woos’ us back to himself.

“This tension between God’s standards of righteousness and justice on the one hand and his gracious ‘heseth’ and mercy on the other is the main theme of Hosea’s book. Let us finish this session by relating it to -

- Hosea’s marriage to Gomer.
- God’s dealings with Israel when it adopted Baal worship.
- Ourselves today.

HOMEWORK

“Think about names. What does your name mean? Why do people change their name? Why did you give your children the names that you did? Why do people name their children after well known personalities?





**'HOSEA' SESSION FOUR
HOSEA'S CHILDREN**



PREPARATION

(a) Prepare a wall-sheet with three columns:-

| | Name | Meaning |
|---------|------|---------|
| 1. Boy | | |
| 2. Girl | | |
| 3. Boy | | |

(b) Prepare a wall-sheet like this:-

| | |
|----|----|
| 1a | |
| | 1b |
| 2a | |
| | 2b |
| 3a | |
| | 3b |
| 4a | |
| | 4b |
| 5a | |
| | 5b |

[c] Photocopy Handout 9 (pages 33-34) for the members of your group.

(d) You will need felt-pens of two colours.

A. DISCUSSING OUR HOMEWORK (15 Minutes)

The group talks about its members' Christian names:-

- Their meaning (if any).
- Their source: a relative: a pop star: a national figure or event, etc.
- Our attachment to them (or dislike of them).
- Their 'power' in giving us identity.

B. HOSEA NAMES HIS CHILDREN (30 Minutes)

Give out Handout 9 and read the first column and the 2 Kings verses together. Have your first wall-sheet display.

“Hosea and Gomer had three children and the names God told Hosea to give them, all had a powerful message for the people of Israel. Let us fill in our sheet together”.

Complete your columns:-

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Meaning</u> |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| Jezreel | I will destroy |
| Unloved | I will no longer show love |
| Not-My-People | I am not their God |

Now ask someone to read Hosea 2/23 (at the foot of page 1 of the Handout).

“After the reading of the broken marriage which we studied in the last session (you could read 2/14-17) again to remind them. Hosea could not leave his three children with ugly names”.

On the wall-sheet make the following alterations boldly in a contrasting colour:-

- [a] In line 1, delete 'Jezreel' and substitute 'prosperity' in name column and 'establish' (from v.23) in meaning column.
- [b] In line 2, delete 'Un-' from 'Unloved' and delete 'no longer'.
- [c] In line 3, delete 'not' in both places.

Draw out from the group their responses to this simple exercise in name-changing. Emphasise how (as in the case of Hosea's marriage in Session 3) Hosea is torn apart by the tension between the righteous judgement in 1: 4-9 and the 'constant love' ('heseth') in 2: 23. This tension recurs even more movingly in the next exercise.

C. GOD AS THE CARING FATHER OF ISRAEL (30 Minutes)

Have your second wall-sheet ready to complete in your two contrasting colours.

“We have seen that Hosea was an exceptionally caring husband. Now let us look at the first six verses of Chapter 11, on page 2 of your Handout. He must equally have been a very caring father and describes God as the caring father of the nation of Israel. I will now read the passage slowly. Will you call out the ways in which God's care for his people is shown as the acts of a parent bringing up a toddler”.

Complete 1a to 5a

- 1a I loved him well enough to rescue him (from Egypt)
- 2a I taught him to walk
- 3a I took him up in my arms
- 4a I held him to my cheek
- 5a I bent down and fed him

DISCUSSION

Share stories of small children you have cared for and talk around the imaginative use Hosea has made of this as a picture of God's care for his people.

Read Mark 10/14-16 given on page 2 of Handout 9 and discuss how Jesus continued this idea.

(Note - if a group member happens to have a child of the right age, about 18 months, who can be walked into the group at this point, held up to the parent's cheek and fed with a biscuit, such a 'Visual aid' adds considerably to the impact of this part of Hosea's message).

D. ISRAEL REJECTS GOD

(20 Minutes)

"But Hosea has interwoven into this moving passage references to the people's rejection of God's love for them. Let us now pick out those references and I will fill in the rest of my table".

Complete 1b to 5b in a contrasting colour:

- 1b But he goes back to bondage (returns to Egypt)
- 2b But he turned away from me
- 3b But he did not acknowledge my care
- 4b But he refused to return to me
- 5b But he will be destroyed by the enemy

DISCUSSION

Discuss this, emphasising again the starkness of the tension between the Father's tender love and the rejection of it by His children. Group members may have stories they can tell of wayward children who have turned away from loving parents (but to avoid hurting anyone names should not be given and those involved should be remote enough from the group for the telling of the stories not to get back to them).

E. THE LOST SON

(25 Minutes)

Ask a member of members of the group to read the first part of Jesus' story of the Lost Son - Luke 15/11-24, down to the arrival home of the younger son. It is on page 100 in the New Testament section of the Good News Bible.



Work in small groups. (threes or fours)

(a) What are the points of similarity between this story and Hosea 11/1-5 (right hand column of Handout 9)?

(b) Did Jesus have Hosea 11 in mind when he told this story?

Whole Group

Share conclusions.

HOMEWORK

In preparation for Final Session - prepare an outline of any Act of worship to conclude the Workshop, using prayers, hymns and readings which incorporate some of the ideas learnt from Hosea. (A group decision should be made whether this worship time will include Breaking of Bread).





'HOSEA' SESSION FIVE HOSEA'S HEART



PREPARATION

- (a) Photocopy Handout 10 (page 35) for the course members.
- (b) Have the wall-sheets from the previous session (the name of Hosea's children: the couplets from Hosea 11/1-6) displayed where the group can see them.

A. LOOKING AT OUR HOMEWORK (20 Minutes)

EITHER: Collect the suggestions for worship beforehand and make a wall-sheet summary of them for the group to discuss and select from. Some things will be readily agreed. Others may be more varied and original and will take longer to agree on.

OR: The whole group shares the suggestions for concluding worship as prepared for Homework and as quickly as possible agree from these a Form of Worship with which to conclude the Series of Sessions.

B. HOSEA'S HEART (30 Minutes)

The group reads from Handout 10, Hosea 11/8-9:-

- the whole group is asked to read the lightly written lines, (8) lines 1,2,5,6, and (9) 4,5.
- you read the boldly written lines.

DISCUSSION

Discuss the six lines by the group as a moving summary of what they have learned from Hosea's story about God's 'heseth' - about his patient response to the persistent disobedience and unfaithfulness of humankind.

WRITING A SONG

Either individually, or in twos or threes, as the group members may prefer, reshape these lines into a song which can be sung to a tune known to the group.

The whole group shares the results and adopts one of the songs (perhaps combines the best ideas of more than one) as the Group's Song. Spend a little time 'polishing' the Song to make it both easy to sing and true to Hosea's message.

(As insurance against failure, you may like to prepare a Song beforehand, but the group's own Song would be adopted if at all possible).

C. WHAT KIND OF A MAN WAS HOSEA?

(15 Minutes)

WORK IN SMALL GROUPS

“Christians unfamiliar with the Old Testament often assume that the prophets were hard men concerned only with condemnation, to be contrasted with a New Testament message of tender forgiveness. Our study of Hosea shows that this assumption must be questioned and challenged. In small groups discuss these questions:-

- * What kind of man was Hosea?
- * Are there any similarities between his message and that of the New Testament?

(It is a good idea to write the questions on your board to remind the group)

REPORTING BACK

Write the small groups, conclusions on your board. Try to keep this balance:-

He was completely loyal to God.
He hated Israel's idolatry.

He wanted Justice and the
Keeping of Israel's agree-
ment with God.

He was sensitive and patient.
He was a caring husband
and father.
He was forgiving.
He was a shrewd observer
Of human nature.

D. THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE COURSE

(25 Minutes)

(Display the two wall-sheets from the previous course).

“There is a constant tension - or ‘tug-of-war’ - between God's unswerving standards of justice and holiness and his constant love for his people. This is an important theme not only of Hosea but of the whole Bible”.

DISCUSSION

Discuss this theme from the previous studies of Hosea. If your group knows the Bible well draw in other examples:-

- * The murmuring of the Israelites in the Wilderness.
- * The anguish of Jeremiah (given in Handout 10).
- * Abslom's rebellion (caused because David allowed his affection to prevail over his righteousness).
- * Jonah's difficulty in accepting God's forgiveness of Ninevah.
- * Psalm 103.
- * Jesus story of the lost son.
- * Zacheus.
- * The prayers of the Pharisee and the tax-collector.

“Jesus is presented as the complete solution to this tension between God's standards of justice and holiness and his mercy towards our disobedience and disloyalty. Let us read the Verses given on our handout to see some of the ways that this is described”.



The group discusses how this affects them practically. Use questions like these to guide the discussion:-

- How do you experience this work of Jesus in your everyday life?
- How has this study of Hosea altered the way you think about God?
- Will Hosea's example of 'heseth' - undeserved love - help you to alter any of your relationships?

E. WORSHIP

(30 Minutes)

From this discussion lead into the Act of Worship already planned, using (perhaps concluding with) the Group's Song, if preparation of this is sufficiently advanced to be used without awkwardness which would distract from the Worship.



HOSEA

Session 1 – Handout 1

(page 1 of 1)

Hosea 6:5-6

What I want from you is plain and clear:- I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me.

Group A Matthew 9:10-13

While Jesus was having a meal in Matthew's house many tax collectors and other outcasts came and joined Jesus and his disciples at the table.

Some Pharisees saw this and asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such people?" Jesus heard them and answered, "People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. Go and find out what is meant by the scripture that says: '**It is kindness that I want, not animal sacrifices.**' I have come not to call respectable people, but outcasts."

Group B Matthew 12:1-2, 7-9

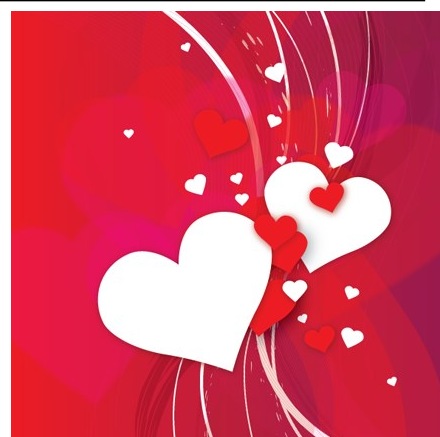
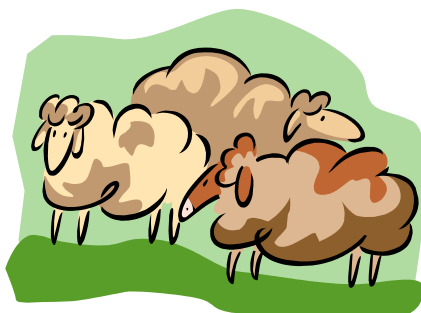
Not long afterwards Jesus was walking through some cornfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, so they began to pick ears of corn and eat the grain.

When the Pharisees saw this, they said to Jesus, "Look, it is against the law for your disciples to do this on the Sabbath!"

"The scripture says, **It is kindness that I want, not animal sacrifices.**' If you really knew what this means, you would not condemn people who are not guilty; for the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Jesus left that place and went to a synagogue.

Questions for each group to discuss

- Why did Jesus refer his hearers to Hosea 6:6
- How would their attitudes and behaviour change if they 'really knew' what Hosea meant?



HOSEA

Session 1 – Handout 2

(page 1 of 2 pages)

Isaiah 1:11-17

God says

. . Do you think I want all these sacrifices you keep offering me? I have had more than enough of the sheep you burn as sacrifices and of the fat of your fine animals. I am tired of the blood of bulls and sheep and goats.

Who asked you to bring me all this when you come to worship me? Who asked you to do all this tramping about in my temple? It is useless to bring your offerings. I am disgusted with the smell of the incense you burn. I cannot stand your New Moon Festivals, your Sabbaths, and your religious gatherings; they are all corrupted by your sins. I hate your New Moon Festivals and holy days: they are a burden that I am tired of bearing. "When you lift your hands in prayer, I will not look at you. No matter how much you pray, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with blood. Wash yourselves clean. Stop all this evil that I see you doing. Yes, stop doing evil and learn to do right. See justice is done – help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights and defend widows."



Hosea 6:5-6

What I want from you is plain and clear:- I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me.



HOSEA

Session 1 – Handout 2

(page 2 of 2 pages)

Amos 5:21-24

The Lord says, "I hate your religious festivals; I cannot stand them!

When you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; I will not accept the animals you have fattened to bring me as offerings. Stop your noisy songs; I do not want to listen to your harps. Instead, let justice flow like a stream, and righteousness like a river that never goes dry."



Micah 6:6-7

What shall I bring to the Lord, the God of heaven, when I come to worship him? Shall I bring the best calves to burn as offerings to him?

Will the Lord be pleased if I bring him thousands of sheep or endless streams of olive oil? Shall I offer him my firstborn child to pay for my sins? No, the Lord has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.



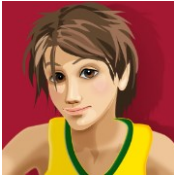
HOSEA

Session 1 – Handout 3

(page 1 of 1)

Psalm 22:3

But you are enthroned as the Holy One, the one whom Israel praises.



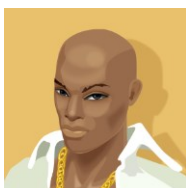
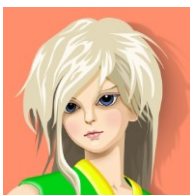
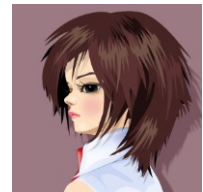
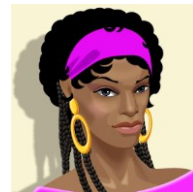
Acts 2:46-47

Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts.

. . . praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

Psalm 95:6

Come, let us bow down and worship him; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!



Hebrews 10:25

Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer.

Hosea 12:5-6

This was the Lord God Almighty – the Lord is the name by which he is to be worshipped.

So now, descendants of Jacob, trust in your God and return to him. Be loyal and just, and wait patiently for your God to act.



HOSEA

Session 2 – Handout 4

(page 1 of 1)



The Hebrew word "heseth" in the Bible. Some examples from Hosea and elsewhere.

In the examples. All the words in bold letters are translations of "heseth"



Psalm 136:10-17

He killed the first born sons of the Egyptians; his **love*** is eternal.

He drowned the king of Egypt and his army; his **love*** is eternal.

He killed famous kings; his **love*** is eternal.

*Doesn't the word **love** seem unsuitable here?

"Heseth" means "Covenant-faithfulness"

i.e. "God faithfully kept his agreement to lead Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land."

Hosea

2:19 Israel, I will make you my wife; I will be true and faithful; I will show you **constant love** and mercy and make you mine for ever.

4:1 There is no faithfulness or **love** in the land, and the people do not acknowledge me as God.

6:6 I want your **constant love**, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me.

10:12 Plough new ground for yourselves, plant righteousness, and reap the blessings that your **devotion** to me will produce. It is time for you to turn to me, your Lord, and I will come and pour out blessings upon you.

12:6 So now, descendants of Jacob, trust in your God and return to him. **Be loyal** and just, and wait patiently for your God to act.

2 Timothy 2:13

If we are not **faithful**, he remains **faithful** because he cannot be false to himself.

(If we do not keep "heseth", God still keeps "heseth" because he faithfully keeps his agreement which he made with his people in Jesus Christ.)





David and Jonathan

- an example of "heseth"



1 Samuel 18:1-4

After that Saul's son Jonathan was deeply attracted to David and came to love him as much as he loved himself. Saul kept David with him from that day on and did not let him go back home. Jonathan swore **eternal friendship*** with David because of his deep affection for him. He took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, together with his armour and also his sword, bow and belt.

1 Samuel 20:12-16

Saul now hates David and wants to kill him. This puts David's friendship with Jonathan under strain. Jonathan agrees to help David in the present; David agrees to help Jonathan in the near future. Their "heseth" commits them.

Jonathan said to David, "may the Lord God of Israel be our witness! At this time tomorrow and on the following day I will question my father. If his attitude towards you is good, I will send you word.

If he intends to harm you, may the Lord strike me dead if I don't let you know about it and get you safely away. May the Lord be with you as he was with my father! And if I remain alive, please keep your **sacred promise*** and be **loyal*** to me; but if I die, show the same kind of loyalty to my family for ever. And when the Lord has completely destroyed all your enemies, may our promise to each other still be unbroken. If it is broken, the Lord will punish you."

***heseth**

2 Samuel 9:1-7, 11

Years have passed. Saul has persecuted David. Saul and Jonathan die in battle leaving only Jonathan's son Mephibosheth. In spite of all that has happened David shows "heseth". He aids Mephibosheth and receives him at his table. Jonathan's son is none-too-loyal.

One day David asked, "Is there anyone left of Saul's family? If there is, I would like to show them **kindness*** for Jonathan's sake." There was a servant of Saul's family named Ziba, and he was told to go to David. "Are you Ziba?" the king asked. "At your service, sir" he answered. The king asked him, "Is there anyone left of Saul's family to whom I can show **loyalty*** and **kindness***, as I promised God I would?" Ziba answered, "There is still one of Jonathan's sons. He is crippled." "Where is he?" the King asked. "At the home of Machir son of Ammiel in Lodebar," Ziba answered. So king David sent for him. When Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan and grandson of Saul, arrived, he bowed down before David in respect. David said, "Mephibosheth," and he answered, "At your service, sir." "Don't be afraid," David replied. "I will be **kind*** to you for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will give you back all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always be welcome at my table." So Mephibosheth ate at the king's table, just like one of the king's sons.



HOSEA

Session 3 – Handout 6

(page 1 of 2 pages)

Matthew 25:1-13

At that time the Kingdom of heaven will be like this. Once there were ten young women who took their oil lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish, and the other five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any extra oil with them, while the wise ones took containers full of oil for their lamps. The bridegroom was late in coming, so the women began to nod and fall asleep. "It was already midnight when the cry rang out, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come and meet him!'" The ten women woke up and trimmed their lamps. Then the foolish ones said to the wise ones, "Let us have some of your oil, because our lamps are going out." "No indeed," the wise ones answered, "there is not enough for you and for us. Go to the shop and buy some for yourselves," so the foolish women went off to buy some oil; and while they were gone, the bridegroom arrived. The five who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was closed. Later the other women arrived. "Sir, sir! Let us in!" they cried out. "Certainly not! I don't know you" the bridegroom answered."

And Jesus concluded, "Be on your guard, then, because you do not know the day or the hour."



John 3:26-30

You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, "I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of him.

The bridegroom is the one to whom the bride belongs; but the bridegroom's friend, who stands by and listens, is glad when he hears the bridegroom's voice. This is how my own happiness is made complete. He must become more important while I become less important."

2 Corinthians 11:2,3

I am jealous for you, just as God is; you are like a pure virgin whom I have promised in marriage to the one man only, Christ himself.

I am afraid that your minds will be corrupted and that you will abandon your full and pure devotion to Christ – in the same way that Eve was deceived by the snake's clever lies.



HOSEA

Session 3 – Handout 6

(page 2 of 2 pages)

Ephesians 5:22-28, 31-33

Paul writes to the Christians in Ephesus

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

For a husband has authority over his wife just as Christ has authority over the church; and Christ is himself the Saviour of the church, his body. And so wives must submit completely to their husbands just as the church submits itself to Christ. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. He did this to dedicate the church to God by his word, after making it clean by washing it in water, in order to present the church to himself in all its beauty – pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection. Men ought to love their wives just as they love their own bodies. A man who loves his wife loves himself.

As the scripture says, "for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one." There is a deep secret truth revealed in this scripture, which I understand as applying to Christ and the church. But it also applies to you; every husband must love his wife as himself, and every wife must respect her husband.



Revelation 21:9

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came to me and said, "Come, and I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb,"



Isaiah 62:4-5

No longer will you be called "Forsaken", or your land be called "The Deserted Wife". Your new name will be "God is Pleased with Her". Your land will be called "Happily married". Because the Lord is pleased with you and you will be like a husband to your land.

Like a young man taking a virgin as his bride, He who formed you will marry you. As a groom is delighted with his bride, so your God will delight in you.



HOSEA

Session 3 – Handout 7

(page 1 of 1)

Hosea's experience of marriage

Hosea 1:2

When the Lord first spoke to Israel through Hosea, he said to Hosea, "Go and get married; your wife will be unfaithful, and your children will be just like her. In the same way, my people have left me and become unfaithful."

Hosea 2:2-3

My children, plead with your mother – though she is no longer a wife to me, and I am no longer her husband. Plead with her to stop her adultery and prostitution. If she does not, I will strip her naked as she was on the day she was born. I will make her like a dry barren land, and she will die of thirst.

Hosea 2:13

I will punish her for the times that she forgot me when she burnt incense to Baal and put on her jewellery to go chasing after her lovers. The Lord has spoken.

Hosea 1:1-2

The Lord said to me, "Go again and show your love for a woman who is committing adultery with a lover. You must love her just as I still love the people of Israel, even though they turn to other gods and like to take offerings of raisins to idols."
So I paid fifteen pieces of silver and 150 kilograms of barley to buy her.

Hosea 2:14-17

So I am going to take her into the desert again; there I will win her back with words of love.

I will give back to her the vineyards she has and make Trouble Valley a door of hope. She will respond to me there as she did when she was young, when she came from Egypt. Then once again she will call me her husband – she will no longer call me her Baal.* I will never let her speak the name of Baal* again.

(*Baal, the name of the Canaanite God; another meaning of the word is 'husband')

Elsewhere in the Bible, unfaithfulness and adultery are used as a picture of the disobedience of the people of God, as they adopt foreign gods and ally themselves to foreign powers and unjust oppression instead of trusting in their Covenant with God. Here is an example from -

Jeremiah 3:6, 8

When Josiah was king, the Lord said to me, "Have you seen what Israel, that unfaithful woman, has done? She has turned away from me, and on every high hill and under every green tree she has acted like a prostitute. Judah also saw that I divorced Israel and sent her away because she had turned from me and had become a prostitute. But Judah, Israel's unfaithful sister, was not afraid. She too became a prostitute and was not at all ashamed.





The Moment of re-union and recommitment

Hosea 2:19, 20



In the Good News Bible

Israel, I will make you my wife; I will be true and faithful; I will show you constant love and mercy and make you mine for ever.

I will keep my promise and make you mine, and you will acknowledge me as Lord.

In the Revised Standard Version

And I will betroth you to me for ever. I will betroth you to me in (i.e. with bridal gifts of) righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy.

I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord.

The Good News Bible masks the beautiful symbolism of the pictures in the Hebrew original and for this part of our study we shall refer to the Revised Standard Version



Righteousness

Not just 'being right with God', but keeping to God's standards in every part of life. In Leviticus 19:36 the word 'honest' is the same in Hebrew as 'righteous'. 'Use honest scales, honest weights, and honest measures. I am the Lord your God.'

Steadfast love (heseth)

We studied this thoroughly during the last session. It is our keeping to our part in our promises and agreements (as Hosea did in his marriage) although the other person fails to keep his or her part. It is often used in the Bible to denote God's abiding concern for his people in spite of their failures.

Justice

Recall what God wants from session 1. He wants justice says Isaiah, Amos and Micah. Justice is not judgement and doom to be dreaded but fairness throughout the community. It is to be welcomed especially by people who are poor and powerless.

Mercy

"God's tender concern for us, allowing for our human frailty"
Psalms 103:8,13. The Lord is merciful and loving, slow to become angry and full of constant love. As a father is kind to his children, so the Lord is kind to those who honour him.



Hosea's Children

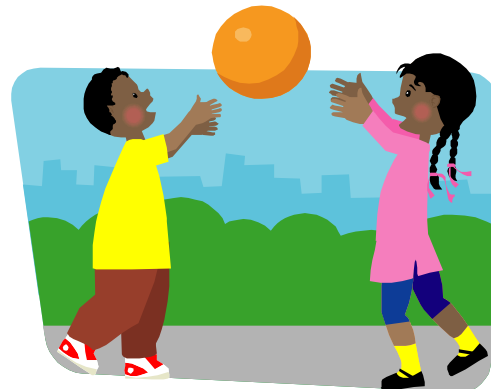


Hosea names his children Hosea 1:3-9

So Hosea married a woman named Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. After the birth of their first child, a son, the Lord said to Hosea, "Name him **'Jezreel'*** because it will not be long before I punish the king of Israel for the murders that his ancestor Jehu committed at Jezreel. I am going to put an end to Jehu's dynasty, and in the Valley of Jezreel **I will** at that time **destroy** Israel's military power." Gomer had a second child – this time it was a daughter. The Lord said to Hosea, "Name her **'Unloved'**, because **I will no longer show love** to the people of Israel or forgive them. But to the people of Judah I will show love. I the Lord their God, will save them, but I will not do it by war – with swords or bows and arrows or with horses and horsemen." After Gomer had weaned her daughter, she became pregnant again and had another son. The Lord said to Hosea, "Name him **'Not-my-people'**, because the people of Israel are not my people, and **I am not their God,**"

Jezreel* 2 Kings 10:7, 11

When Jehu's letter was received, the leaders of Samaria killed all 70 of Ahab's descendants, put their heads in baskets, and sent them to Jehu at Jezreel. Then Jehu put to death all the other relatives of Ahab living in Jezreel, and all his officers, close friends, and priests; not one of them was left alive.



Hosea changes his children's names Hosea 2:23

I will establish my people in the land and make them prosper. I will show love to those who were called 'Unloved', and to those who were called 'Not-my-people' I will say, 'You are my people' I will say 'You are my people,' and they will answer, 'You are our God.'



HOSEA

Session 4 – Handout 9

(page 2 of 2 pages)

God as the caring father of the nation of Israel

Hosea 11:1-6

The Lord says, "When Israel was a child, I loved him and called him out of Egypt as my son.

But the more I called him, the more he turned away from me. My people sacrificed to Baal; they burnt incense to idols. Yet I was the one who taught Israel to walk. I took my people up in my arms, but they did not acknowledge that I took care of them. I drew them to me with affection and love. I picked them up and held them to my cheek; I bent down to them and fed them. They refuse to return to me, and so they must return to Egypt, and Assyria will rule them. War will sweep through their cities and break the city gates. It will destroy my people because they do what they themselves think best.



A New Testament comparison Mark 10:14-16

When Jesus noticed this, he was angry and said to his disciples, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

I assure you that whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." Then he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on each of them, and blessed them.





Hosea's Heart

Hosea 11:8,9



(8)

1. How can I give you up Israel?
2. How can I abandon you?
3. **Could I ever destroy you as I did Admah,**
4. **Or treat you as I did Zeboim?**
5. My heart will not let me do it!
6. My love for you is too strong.

(9)

1. **I will not punish you in my anger;**
2. **I will not destroy Israel again.**
3. **For I am God and not a human being.**
4. I, the Holy One, am with you.
5. I will not come to you in anger.

Jeremiah's Anguish 23:9,10

My heart is crushed, and I am trembling. Because of the Lord, because of his holy words, I am like a man who is drunk, a man who has had too much wine. The land is full of people unfaithful to the Lord; they live wicked lives and misuse their power. Because of the Lord's curse the land mourns and the pastures are dry.

Jesus is the solution of the dilemma which tore Hosea apart

2 Corinthians 5:12

Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, "We are not trying again to recommend ourselves to you; rather, we are trying to give you a good reason to be proud of us, so that you will be able to answer those who boast about people's appearance and not about their character,"

Colossians 1:20

Paul wrote to the Christians at Colossae, "Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his Son's blood on the cross and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven."

1 Timothy 2:3,4

Paul wrote to Timothy, "This is good and it pleases God our Saviour, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth."

2 Peter 3:9

Peter wrote: "The Lord is not slow to do what he has promised, as some think. Instead, he is patient with you, because he does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins."



HOSEA



Dear

I am writing to invite you to our (Lent) course.

This will be run on the following dates:

- Week 1: What God wants from us**
- Week 2: Constant love**
- Week 3: Hosea's marriage**
- Week 4: Hosea's children**
- Week 5: Hosea's heart**

The place and the time:

The man we are going to look at lived 2,700 years ago!

For a start, he tells the story of his marriage. His wife walked out on him, leaving him with 3 kids. He still loved her, though, and waited for her to come back to him. It all has a familiar ring, doesn't it?

Hosea sees in these events an example of how God loves his people. The Israelites kept letting God down – disobeying Him and following the gods of the countries around them. God showed them, 'constant love' just as Hosea did to his wife. We're not much better, and God has 'constant love' for us too, so it's a message of hope for today's Christians.

During the course, everyone will be encouraged to say his or her piece!

Before you come to the first session, try to remember a story from your own experience, showing the difference between knowing about someone and really knowing them – a short story starting something like, "I'd known her for years, and thought she was unfriendly and stuck up, but since I've got to know her I've found . . . "

I look forward to seeing you at our (Lent) course. I'm sure you'll enjoy it.

With best wishes





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