

# Guided

# Bible

# Study

Salendine Nook Baptist Church

A modified Version of Scripture Union's  
LifeBuilder Bible Study Series originally written by  
Dale & Sandy Larsen



# About These Bible Studies

For the purposes of our Bible Studies we will be using Scripture Union's LifeBuilder Bible Study Series. We will be looking at the book of Hosea, that is found in the Old Testament. The studies were originally written by Dale & Sandy Larsen, but we will be modifying them in order that they become more usable for home study during this time of lockdown.

These studies give us the opportunity to study the Bible in a greater depth and to reflect on what it is saying to us – much like we would do in our normal Wednesday Morning Bible Study. To give a sense of group study, it is suggested that you do the study on a Wednesday morning, for an hour, starting at 10.30am. Get yourself a tea or coffee, a Bible, pen and paper (for any notes you want to make) and begin studying.

Hope that you enjoy it.

Pastor Ian

# Context

God never gives up on us. When we stray or make a mistake, God continues to pursue us with a relentless love. In Hosea's unfailing love for his wayward wife, he lived out the way God loves his people. His story is a reminder that God will never abandon us.

In choosing to study Hosea, we venture into a turbulent place of love and justice, promise and pain, close to the heart of God. The prophecy of Hosea does not progress logically from beginning to conclusion. Its writing is circular, going back and forth between judgment and mercy. We get a sense of God arguing with himself about Israel – not that God has trouble deciding what to do, but he feels the pain of conflict between what he wants for Israel and what he must do because of their sin.

Hosea shares God's conflict when at God's command he marries – and stays married to – the immoral woman Gomer. It is the conflict of anyone who cares deeply about a wayward person. God condemns Israel's sin and knows Israel deserves to be written off; yet he hangs on, unwilling to give up on them. God eventually let Israel be defeated in the Assyrian conquest, but he did not ultimately abandon his people whom he loved.

# Study 1 -

# A Share In God's Pain

It is so painful when relationships break down, especially in marriage and couples decide that their only course of action is to go through the process of divorce. Very often these relationships were once full of hope and promise. The question is: 'What has gone wrong?' Often the answers differ, but in nearly all circumstances they were full of pain, not only for the partners, but also for everyone who cared about them.

Pain among people who love each other – or once loved each other – is common to humanity.

**PERSONAL REFLECTION.** *Think of a time someone asked you to do something so difficult that you responded, 'Not me!' Did you later reconsider? What made you change your mind? If you didn't do that thing, do you now wish you had?*

Hosea proclaimed God's message to the Jewish people in the eighth century B.C. It was a time of prosperity and success mixed with spiritual corruption and idolatry. We do not know how Hosea became a prophet except that 'the word of the Lord' came to him (Hosea 1 v. 1). Hosea grieved over a people once pledged to God but now unfaithful. **Read Hosea 1 v. 1 – 2 v. 1**

### Questions to think about:

- What unusually difficult commands did God give Hosea, and how did he respond?
- If you had been Hosea, at what point would you have dropped out and told God you would not cooperate with his plans? Or would you have carried through to the end?
- The Lord explained that Hosea's marriage to Gomer would symbolise God's relationship with unfaithful Israel (**Hosea 1 v. 2**). How does marriage to an adulterous spouse illustrate God's relationship with sinful humanity?
- Christians often say that we are called to 'hate the sin but love the sinner'. What conflicts arise when a person intends to be both just and merciful?
- In this passage how does God proclaim to Israel both his justice and his mercy?

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### Now read Hosea 2 v. 2 – 13

- How would you describe the moods and emotions you detect in God's words about Israel?
- What were God's purposes in persistently punishing Israel? (**Hosea 2 v. 6 – 10**)
- What would Israel lose because they had rebelled? (**Hosea 2 v. 9 – 13**)
- Like Hosea, have you ever had a close relationship with a person who was rebelling against God? Describe and write down how this feels.
- What does this passage reveal to you about how your own sin affects the Lord?

Now

or

Later

Consider this question: Why is spiritual growth more likely to result from obeying God in hard things rather than easy things?

# Prayer

Thank God for his justice and his mercy. Pray in the quietness of your own space for one person that you might know who needs to face up to their sin and needs to come to know the forgiving love of God. Ask the Lord to love that person through you.



# To help you in your study

**The studies purpose is: To identify with the pain God feels for his people when we drift away from him into the world's sinful ways.**

Since we are shocked and offended by the idea of a prophet marrying an immoral woman at God's command, there have been several attempts to try and explain this. There are 3 typical theories:

- Hosea was told to marry a woman who was already a prostitute.
- Gomer was pure when Hosea married her, but later became immoral.
- The 'marriage' is only symbolic of God's relationship with Israel, and Hosea never literally married Gomer.

While having natural love and protectiveness for his children, Hosea must have wondered if they were truly his, especially in light of the names God gave them; names that illustrated unfaithfulness and rebellion.

Reflect on how sin violates God's exclusive claim on our love and reverence and how it contaminates our loving response to God.

It is interesting to note the use of the word **therefore** in this passage (Hosea 2 v. 6, 9 see also 2 v. 14). God's purpose was to persuade Israel, the people he loved, that they needed him. His methods seem harsh, but his purposes were for their ultimate good and for the sake of their relationship with him. He longed to bring Israel back to him.

When Israel was about to enter Canaan after their slavery in Egypt, God promised them that they would prosper if they obeyed him; he also warned that they would face disaster if they disobeyed him (Deuteronomy 28). The threats of Hosea 2 v. 9 – 13 are only a fulfilment of God's historic warnings.

Think through how when we love a rebellious person, we share a little of God's pain over that person.

One of the final questions might take us by surprise. It takes the study in an unexpected turn. The Bible not only shows us the condition of humanity in general; it shows us our own shortcomings. James 1 v. 22 – 25 likens the Word of God to a mirror that tells us the truth about ourselves.

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