

Meet the Family

Hosea 1:1-2:1

Big Idea:

God pursues unloveable people, conquers them with his love, and makes them his beloved.

I. Unloved (1:1-7)

God used Hosea's life as an illustration of the spiritual state of the nation of Israel. First, God commands Hosea to go and take a wife from the Northern kingdom. Next, God tells Hosea the names his children will have, which are indicative of the relationship between God and his people. First, Hosea and Gomer have Jezreel, which means "scattered." Next, Gomer commits adultery and has one child named Lo-Ruhammah and another named Lo-Ammi, which means "no mercy" and "not my people" respectively. The names of these children describe what people forfeit when they refuse to yield their lives to the Sovereign Christ anticipated by Hosea. Remember, Jesus was essentially called "Hosea" or "Hosanna" when he entered Jerusalem. The name means "salvation." So rejecting Hosea's prophecy was no different from rejecting Christ—it was to forfeit salvation. And turning one's back on salvation brings terrible consequences.

II. Loved (1:8-2:1)

But this is not necessary! God warns so that you do not have to live this way. When you come to Christ, he ushers you into an experience of faithfulness, mercy and justice. Not only do you receive its benefits, but you become a joyful partner with God in showing the same to others. One reason Hosea is so difficult to interpret is that he often makes paradoxical statements without bridging them. For instance, the Hebrew of 1:6 reads, "I will no longer love the house of Judah; I will completely forgive them." Both the NIV and the ESV try to emend the reading to make it more "logical." Hosea 1:4 and 1:10-11 are similarly contradictory: "I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel. . . The Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore." To have a biblical mind requires the ability to believe two seemingly contradictory statements at the same time, trusting that God holds the reconciliation of the idea in his infinite mind. Hosea does not provide even the scant explanation of the relationship of the two statements that I am going to posit. He just states them both as stand-alone concepts. On the one hand, he means that if any person, even a professing Christian, persists in conscious rebellion against Christ's lordship to the end of his life, God will not love him. On the other hand, God will forgive anyone who repents, no matter what he has done.

Discussion Questions

1. How did Hosea's life and experience depict God's relationship with his people?
2. Think back through your own testimony. When were times in your life when you were running from God? When are times you can look back on now and see that God was faithfully pursuing you?
3. How does Jesus reconcile the apparent contraries described in the second main point?