



# HOSEA

## BIBLE TEXT | HOSEA 10:11-15

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**11** Ephraim was a trained calf that loved to thresh, and I spared her fair neck; but I will put Ephraim to the yoke; Judah must plow; Jacob must harrow for himself. **12** Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you. **13** You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors, **14** therefore the tumult of war shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle; mothers were dashed in pieces with their children. **15** Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great evil. At dawn the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off.

## DEVOTIONAL FOR HOSEA 10:11-15

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Farming is a difficult and laborious occupation. Not only is it hard work, there are many variables out of a farmer's control. Will the ground be easy to cultivate? Will the soil be rich and fertile? Will planted seeds germinate? Will it rain? Will the crops be overrun with pestilence, and will the crops reap a bountiful harvest from the seeds that have been sown? All of these factors determine the outcome and production. Without cultivated ground, fertile soil, quality seeds, and plenty of rain, the farmer is doomed, regardless of how much he labors and toils over his work. (Matthew 13:1-21)

As I write these words, I must admit that I know very little about farming, but I do admire farmers in America. Though, I can't relate to the farmer completely, my small garden has given me a glimpse into the toiling, laboring, and prepping of garden beds to sow seeds. More often than not, I have been frustrated by the Texas heat, the lack of production, and the blight of pestilent aphids I can't see. I have been tempted to give up many times due to crafty



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and cunning tomato thieves. However, there is something about farming that keeps me returning to the garden. It is the joy of experiencing a fruitful harvest and the satisfaction and savory delight of a bountiful crop. When you reap a harvest from your difficult labor, it reminds you of God's goodness and His help in the variables that are out of our control.

As I think about the farmer, I can't help but think of Israel. They were to be a fertile, fruitful nation that bore the fruit of God's blessings and righteousness for the world to see. They were given the land of promise, the Law, God's covenant promises, the voice of prophets, and the Messiah of the world. They were a blessed people! Everything they needed to be like sweet grapes on a fertile vine could have been found in the God of Creation. However, Israel continually put their trust in their own wisdom and intellect, rather than their Creator (Proverbs 3:5-7).

Israel put their hope in princes and warriors. They plowed iniquity and it led them to wars they would not win. They were idolaters and fornicators. Ephraim's leaders were corrupt and sinful, and Israelite families followed suit. Their infidelity led them to put their hope in foreign women, sexual impropriety, and delusional thoughts of grandeur with other nations as their hope. Judah was tempted to harrow down the same destructive path. The nation's demise was found in these words: "You reap what you sow" (Galatians 6:7-8). Israel could have followed closely after the Lord and kept His law, precepts, and commands; yet they chose to learn by pain.

Friends, Israel could have sowed righteousness and reaped the loyal and steadfast love of God. They could have followed closely after the Lord and been a delight to the nations; yet instead they became wicked, detestable, unholy, rebellious, and barren. They were a nation that lacked fruit. May it not be so with us and may we walk closely in fellowship with our Lord (Micah 6:8; Ephesians 5:1).

## Questions:

1. Have you ever planted a garden? If not, why? What prevents you from doing so? If so, reflect on your highs and lows and take a few moments to thank God for the lessons He teaches us through farming.
2. Take a few moments to read the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-23. What did you find interesting? Which soil produced fruit? What areas of soil failed to produce fruit and what kept them from being fertile?
3. Hosea encouraged Israel to break up their fallow ground? What did he mean? Would you say that your heart has become hardened in some ways? If so, how? Take time to confess this to your Journey Group.