



3

God Loves Israel

Key Theme

- God reveals His character in the Bible.

Key Passages

- Hosea 4:1–3, 11:1, 11:7–11

Objective

Students will be able to:

- Describe God's love for the people of Israel despite their rebellion.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Students will practice the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet using the letter clues. If time allows, they will recite the verse to a partner or to the teacher using only the letter clues.



Activity 1: God Loves Israel Class Notes

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Students will fill out the God Loves Israel Class Notes as you study the lesson. Pass out the class notes before you begin to teach.



Studying God's Word

page 5

The book of Hosea is a unique account of the prophet Hosea, his wife Gomer, and her unfaithfulness. This love story of Gomer and Hosea is compared to God's faithful love for Israel. In spite of Israel's rebellion and turning to false gods, God loved His people and was willing to forgive them. God's love for His people will not end but He will not share His glory with another.



Activity 2: The Lord and Hosea Toss-About

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Students will play a tossing game that helps them link the similarities between Hosea's relationship with Gomer and the Lord's relationship with Israel.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



GOD LOVES ISRAEL CLASS NOTES

- Print one God Loves Israel Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- God Loves Israel Class Notes for each student
- God Loves Israel Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- Student Take Home Sheets



THE LORD AND HOSEA TOSS-ABOUT

- Print and cut out one Toss-About Statement Strips Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM. Save the game instructions for your use.

- Toss-About Statement Strips
- Toss-About Game Instructions
- Tape



Memory Verse

Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

Hosea described one of the most shocking portrayals of God's relationship with His children. God compared His relationship with His children to a marriage with a prostitute who would not remain faithful. These are strong and bitter words through the mouth and actions of a prophet. They must have rung sharply in the ears of the people of Israel. And as the people witnessed Hosea take Gomer as his wife, observed Gomer leave Hosea for other men, and then watched as Hosea tenderly took Gomer back in love and forgiveness, the message that God meant to convey to His people became even clearer. Just as Gomer had abandoned her husband for other lovers, so had Israel turned from the one true God to false gods and idols (Hosea 2:2–13). And just as Gomer's husband bought her back from slavery, so God brings His children back in mercy and love.

The mercy and love of God is put on display in the book of Hosea in a way that is glorious. It is easy to love the lovable or to offer gifts to those who will return the favor, but it can be oh so difficult to offer forgiveness to those who have stolen from you or violated your trust in the most intimate of ways. That is the very thing God called Hosea to do when he was told to buy Gomer back from the slave market where she had landed and to love her (Hosea 3:1–3). In this act, God portrayed His relationship with the adulterous Israelites. God was willing to show mercy; God was willing to take them back again.

Israel surely deserved God's wrath for their constant violations of His commands. God would have been just in wiping out the nation for their sins, but He had made promises to Abraham and David to bring the Messiah from the nation of Israel. His mercy was shown in withholding punishment—He didn't give them what they deserved (though later He would). In fact, His love was demonstrated as He restored them in spite of their sin and their rejection of His authority.

God spoke of Israel as a child He had raised (Hosea 11:1), lovingly guiding Israel from their bondage in Egypt into the Promised Land where He lavished His child with blessings and care. As a loving father, God would administer discipline to His child as Assyria brought destruction and captivity, but it grieved God to have to do it (Hosea 11:5–8). However, God would not utterly destroy Israel forever, and He promised His

people the hope of restoration in the future. If they would again walk after the Lord, the Lord would take them back and let them dwell again in their houses (Hosea 11:9–11).

God offered a call of repentance from seeking after idols and trusting in the gods and kings of other nations. However, Israel did not respond to His call. He promised to heal their backsliding and love them freely. He wanted them to turn from their gods and trust in the His mercy (Hosea 14:1–4). In the end, if His children would return, they would be revived and grow in the Lord (Hosea 14:8). The wise would recognize that He is a merciful God and the only God worthy of their worship. The future restoration of Israel (see section below) would demonstrate God's love for those who are truly His children.

The parallels between the book of Hosea and the lives of Christians today are not difficult to see. We are born in sin, and God is dishonored by our disobedience, rebellion, and idolatry. Yet God has purchased us with the price of His Son from the slave market of sin (Ephesians 2:1–10). We have been brought from pursuing our own selfish interests to pursuing the righteousness of Christ. And when we backslide, God uses discipline to bring us back to Himself (Hebrews 12:5–14). This book demonstrates God's unconditional mercy and love to His children as Hosea reunites with his wife and reconciliation occurs.

And the account reminds us of the unconditional love of God offered to us through Jesus Christ. We have rebelled and deserve only His wrath and justice because of that rebellion. But God is faithful and merciful to forgive, through Jesus Christ, those who humbly repent and turn from their sins. What a glorious God we serve, what an amazing message we have to share, and what a responsibility and privilege God has given us to convey this message to the next generation.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos, Nahum, and Micah. He prophesied in the Northern Kingdom of Israel through the reigns of four kings of Judah (Hosea 1:1). Though he prophesied for more than 60 years, Hosea is still considered one of the minor prophets for his relatively short book. In his writing, Hosea refers to Israel as Ephraim and Jacob interchangeably. Ephraim was one of the tribes that had settled in the north after the conquest. When the

Northern tribes had wholly abandoned the worship of the true God, they fell under the control of the Assyrians. This was what God warned His people of through Hosea (Hosea 11:5). And it was only about 75 years after Hosea began prophesying that Samaria (the capital of Israel) fell to the Assyrian king and God's chastening began for the Northern Kingdom.

Within Hosea's prophecies are clear references to the future restoration of Israel. Exactly when that restoration will occur is a point of debate among sincere believers. Some see the promises made to Israel as unfulfilled and pointing to a period when the nation will be restored to the Promised Land. Particularly, this is often connected to the millennial reign depicted in Revelation as a period of peace (Hosea 2:16–20). In general, those who hold a premillennial view of Christ's Second Coming would understand these passages as looking to the future restoration of Israel as a nation. Those who take an amillennial view typically see these passages as prophetic imagery and not as actual events that will take place. Amillennialists believe the events will be fulfilled as Christ returns to initiate the eternal state, but not in a distinct 1000-year period. While these are important ideas to seek answers to, we must be charitable to those who come to different conclusions than ours, providing those conclusions are based on Scripture alone. Regardless of our view on

this particular subject, we know that God is faithful to His promises, and we can trust that the warnings present in Hosea's writings are still relevant today. We are to worship God alone, trust in Him alone, and put our faith in Christ alone.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord of heaven and earth, honestly, I cringe when I think of Gomer's occupation. How can I be compared to her? Yet it's true. I have betrayed you at times. My heart is prone to wander. So I find your love for me almost impossible to grasp. How honored we are that you have given us the book of Hosea to help us understand your remarkable ability to love us—even when we've been unfaithful. Maybe there is one in my class who feels unlovable. Help me to reach out with the message in this lesson to show him or her the depth and breadth of your love. Draw each one to you with your beautiful redeeming love and mercy.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



God Loves Israel Class Notes

MATERIALS

- God Loves Israel Class Notes
- God Loves Israel Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible passages. Do not work ahead. I'll let you know when to fill in something.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

After completing the class notes, we'll see how the Lord used Hosea to show His love and mercy to Israel in a very unusual way.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to History of Israel Poster and Lesson 2 Lesson Theme Poster. We talked about the prophet Amos. He was a shepherd—a simple man. God used him to warn the nation of Israel that God would judge the people because of their sin. This week, we will learn about another prophet. His name is Hosea. He wrote the book in the Bible that bears his name—Hosea.

God sent Hosea to Israel after Amos. And, like Amos, Hosea's message was to call Israel back to God. God wanted Israel to stop sinning against Him

- Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

and to worship Him alone. The people were worshipping false gods, idols, and carved images. They were not obedient to God. Hosea wasn't exactly like Amos in his message. In fact, this is a love story about a man and his wife AND about God and His people! You see, God used Hosea's marriage to his wife, Gomer, as a symbol of God's love for Israel. *Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster drawing of Hosea and Gomer. Display the poster during the lesson.*

➤ After completing the class notes, have the students re-read the statement(s) together or call on individual students to read it.

? Look at #1 on your class notes. Based on what I just said and this Lesson Theme Poster, how will you complete the statement? *Love, people.*

Now look up here. Let me explain. God commanded His prophet Hosea to marry the woman, Gomer. Hosea and Gomer had three children. But then Gomer left Hosea. She didn't love him anymore and thought she would be happier with other men. This was terrible for Hosea. His heart was broken. His wife had left him. She had treated him so badly. She had sinned against him. He was her husband!

And then God commanded Hosea to take his wife back. And he did! He forgave her for leaving him and going to other men. He loved her. He took her back and he took care of her again. When the people in Israel watched Hosea, God's prophet, take his wife back after she had been so mean to him, they began to see what God wanted them to see.

God wanted to teach His people a lesson using Hosea and Gomer. So, how are Hosea and Gomer similar to God and His chosen people, the nation of Israel? We'll read some verses and see if we can figure it out! Remember, God loved His people, Israel, like Hosea loved his wife, Gomer!

? Look at the chart on your class notes. We'll be comparing the prophet Hosea and his wife with the Lord and His people. Who can read #2 for us? How will you complete it? *Assign a reader. Loved, loved.*

Now let's turn to the book of Hosea and read a bit there. We'll start at Hosea 4:1–3. *Divide Hosea 4:1–3 for members of the class to read aloud.*

Hosea 4:1–3

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Look at Hosea 4:1 to start. Whose Word was this? *Hosea 4:1. The Word of the Lord.*
- ? Good. Who was this Word for? Who was to hear the message? *Hosea 4:1. The children of Israel.*
- ? What did the Lord have against the children of Israel? What charge did He bring against them? *Hosea 4:1. There is no truth, or mercy, or knowledge of God.*
- ? There was more to this charge than that. What else were the people doing against God? Look at Hosea 4:2. *Hosea 4:2. Swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery.*
- ? And what did God say would happen to them? *Hosea 4:3. The land will mourn. Everyone will waste away. Everything will be taken away.*

- ? Refer to the Roles of the Prophets Poster. Hosea was a prophet of God. Which roles was he fulfilling for God in what we just read? Allow discussion. Spoke for God, told of future events, spoke of judgment.

Discover the Truth

The people of Israel were sinning against God. Gomer had sinned against her husband, Hosea. The people of Israel were turning to other gods and not worshipping God alone. God compared the pain and sorrow Hosea felt when his wife left him to the pain and sorrow God felt when He saw His people turning to idols and carved images, worshipping false gods, and sinning against Him. Sin had separated Gomer from her husband. And sin had separated God's people from God. Hosea was now warning them that the land would mourn and the people would waste away because of God's judgment on their sin.

- ? Go back to your class notes. How will you complete #3? Someone read it for me. *Left, sinned. Left, sinned.* So you see how the two accounts are beginning to look the same?
- ? And someone read #4 for me. How would you answer that? Allow discussion. *Pain, sorrow. Pain, sorrow.* Again, God's prophet was going through the same thing with his wife as God was with the people of Israel!
- ? And what word will complete #5? Allow discussion. *Sin. Sin.*

These two accounts are very much alike, aren't they? Let's go on and see what else we can learn from God's Word and the lives of Hosea and Gomer.



READ THE WORD

Turn to Hosea 11:1. Will someone read that for me? Choose someone to read Hosea 11:1.

Hosea 11:1

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What did God call Israel in this verse? *Hosea 11:1. A child. My son.*

God loved Israel like a son. And He brought them safely out of Egypt and slavery to give them the Promised Land full of blessings. And how did Israel treat their loving heavenly Father? Let's read Hosea 11:7-11 to find out. Assign readers.

Hosea 11:7-11

- ? What does Hosea 11:7 say the people were doing? *Backsliding.*
- ? Who knows what backsliding means? Allow discussion.

A backslider is someone who turns away from God. The Israelites had turned to idolatry and disobedience. God called the people backsliders

because they were not loving and worshipping Him alone. God could have destroyed Israel right there and then. But He didn't. God loved His people like Hosea loved Gomer.

? Look in Hosea 11:8. Do you know who Ephraim is? *Allow discussion.*

Ephraim is another name for Israel. In this book, Hosea often calls Israel Ephraim. So, what did God say to Israel/Ephraim? *Hosea 11:8. How can I give you up? How can I hand you over?*

? The Lord said He didn't want to give up on Israel. How did God feel toward His people? What does this verse say about His heart? *Hosea 11:8. My heart churns within me. My sympathy is stirred.*

Yes. God's heart was churning; His sympathy was stirred. He looked at His people and He loved them. He wanted them to turn back to Him. He wanted to forgive them for their sins. He loved His people.

? In fact, in spite of their disobedience, God made them a promise. What did God tell them in Hosea 11:9? *He would not destroy Israel/Ephraim. He would not come with terror.*

God was angry at Israel's sin, but He loved His people. And He continued to send His prophets to warn them and to tell them to turn away from their sins and turn back to God. We know from the prophet Amos in last week's lesson that eventually God would send someone to take Israel. Amos said God would send an adversary or enemy to punish them. That adversary was Assyria, and Assyria would take the nation of Israel and scatter the people of God. But Hosea was telling the people they could have hope—that one day, because of God's love for them, they would return to their land. Take a look again at Hosea 11:11. *Read Hosea 11:11 aloud.*

? The people of God would one day come trembling back to their houses. Where would they come from? *Hosea 11:11. From Egypt and Assyria.*

God warned the people that an enemy would come. But at the same time God offered them hope that the enemy would not destroy Israel forever. He promised that His people would one day come back to their land.

Discover the Truth

What a God we serve! The lesson here in Hosea is easy to understand. Let me explain. Hosea loved his wife, Gomer. In spite of her sin against him, he took his wife back, forgave her, and promised to care for her. And the Lord loved His people. And in spite of Israel's sin against God over and over for many years, God still gave the people hope. God promised that one day the people of Israel would return to their land.

? Will someone read #6 on your class notes for me? How will you complete it? *Back, back.*

? We have talked a lot about God today. There are three attributes in particular I'd like to discuss. First, God is just. How was God just toward His people? Allow discussion. Refer to Attributes of God Poster. He sent an enemy, the Assyrians, to conquer the people as punishment for their sin.

God's justice demands that sin be punished. And that is what God finally did to Israel when He sent the Assyrian army to conquer the land. But God also showed His amazing love and mercy for His people by warning them for so long. And even after the Assyrians would come and conquer the land, God told the people that there would be a time when they would come back and He would forgive them.



JUST
LOVE
MERCIFUL

(Refer to Attributes Poster)



The Lord and Hosea Toss-About

MATERIALS

- Toss-About Statement Strips
- Toss-About Game Instructions
- One roll of toilet paper
- Tape

INSTRUCTIONS

Print and trim the Toss-About Statement Strips. See game instructions on the Toss-About Statement Strips Sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM. You will tape the five Lord statement strips to the wall and the Hosea statement strips on to five students.

NOTE: The idea of this activity is as the students match the statements and toss the toilet paper to each other, a web of toilet paper is created around the room. Again, see the Toss-About Statement Strips Sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for instructions.

Now we are going to compare the account of Hosea and Gomer to the account of God and His people, Israel. You are going to have to match each statement on the wall about the Lord with a similar statement taped to these students about Hosea and Gomer.

Give complete instructions from the Toss-About Statement Strips Sheet.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Great job! God used the life of His prophet Hosea to show Israel—and us— how great His love, mercy, and justice were to His people.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

God called the prophet Hosea to be a living picture of His relationship with Israel. He asked Hosea to marry Gomer to demonstrate His love for His chosen people. Then God described Israel as sinners, with no truth, no mercy, and no knowledge of God. They were swearing, lying, killing, and

stealing. Yet God's affection for them was like a father has for his children, or a husband for his wife. God loved them and had sympathy for them. He longed to protect and care for them. Like Hosea who took his wife back after she had sinned against him and left him, God would take His children, Israel, back if they would turn back to Him in repentance.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

God instructed Hosea to write this book so that we would see that God is loving, kind, forgiving, and loyal to His children. Israel sinned over and over against God over many, many years. God showed His mercy and His love by taking them back, forgiving them, and promising them they would one day have their land.

Hosea's love story is also about us! Just like Israel was separated from God because of sin, and Gomer was separated from Hosea because of sin—WE are separated from God because of our sin. But just like Hosea showed his wife love and forgiveness and God showed Israel love and forgiveness—God shows us love and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

We sin and deserve God's punishment because of our sin. But God is faithful and merciful to forgive, through Jesus Christ. Jesus died for us and took the punishment for sins on the Cross. God loved us so much that He sent Jesus so that whoever would believe in Him would have eternal life. If we humbly turn from our sins in trust and faith, God will lovingly forgive us and bring us back through Jesus Christ.

► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.

? This is a wonderful truth. Will someone read #7 on your class notes? How will you complete that? Let's get back to our class notes and complete them. How would you finish #7? *Allow discussion. God, Jesus.*



MEMORY VERSE

Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God for His mercy toward sinful people like us.
- Thank Jesus for loving us so much that He forgives us and paid a great price to redeem us.
- Ask God to help us to be more like Him by showing mercy and love to others, even when they don't deserve it.