



3

God Loves Israel

Key Theme

- God reveals His character in the Bible.

Key Passages

- Hosea 1:1–2:1, 3:1–4:3, 11:1–11; Romans 5:6–8

Objective

Students will be able to:

- Describe God’s love for Israel despite their rebellion.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

page 4

Write on the board, “How does God show His love?”

Students will work on the Memory Verse Review Sheet.

- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



Studying God’s Word

page 4

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 their rebellion and turning to false gods, God loved them and was willing to forgive them. God’s love for His people will not end but He will not share His glory with another.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Read through Hosea.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Children of God

Students will explore the idea of all people being God’s children using various passages of Scripture.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



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 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.

► **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.





COME ON IN

- Write on the board, “How does God show His love?”
- Students are to work on Memory Verse Review Sheets.



Review

We have been looking at the northern kingdom of Israel. Last week we saw how the prophet Amos brought a message of repentance and judgment to the Israelites.

- ? Who can remember some of the attributes of God we discussed and how they related to our lesson? *God is holy, so He hates sin. God is just, so all sin must be punished. God is merciful and patient, so He withholds judgment for a time. God is loving, so He sent Jesus to die for sinners.*

We talked about how there is an incomplete understanding of God’s attribute of love in the minds of many people in our culture. Many people believe that God’s love will override His justice, and

that He will let everyone into heaven . . . except Hitler, maybe. But people who think that way are not looking to Scripture for truth, but they are looking to the ideas of people who twist God’s truth to make God a more comfortable pillow to rest on. We have the opportunity and responsibility to call those people to the truth that we have received in the Bible.

Today we are going to continue looking at the events that took place in Israel and more about God’s love for His children, in spite of their rebellion against Him.



- Write on the board, “How does God show His love?”



Studying God’s Word

READ THE WORD

Hosea 1:1–2:1, 3:1–4:3

Our text today has an interesting twist, so we will have to examine things carefully. Let’s read Hosea 1:1–2:1 and 3:1–4:3 together. *Have someone read the passages aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God’s Word by asking the right questions.

- ? What king of Israel was reigning as Hosea wrote? *Jeroboam II was reigning. We know this was Jeroboam II since he is the son of Joash (Jehoash) and from the concurrent kings of Judah.*

Based on the list of kings in verse 1, Hosea was receiving God's words for about 75 years.

- ? **What command does God give to Hosea in 1:2?** *God calls him to take a wife of harlotry; a prostitute.*
- ? **How did Hosea respond?** *He took Gomer as his wife.*
- ? **Was Gomer a prostitute when Hosea married her?** *The text does not say that she was. He may have married her and then she left him for the life of a prostitute. It is not until chapter 2 that she is referred to as adulterous.*
- ? **What was unique about the three children born to Hosea and Gomer?** *God gave them names that had significance to the nation of Israel.*
- ? **What did Jezreel signify?** *The name Jezreel means "God will scatter." God was going to scatter Israel in the future to avenge their wickedness.*
- ? **What did Lo-Ruhamah signify?** *The name Lo-Ruhamah means "not pitied." God would no longer have mercy on Israel, but Judah would receive His mercy for a time.*
- ? **What did Lo-Ammi signify?** *The name Lo-Ammi means "not my people." God would disown the people of Israel.*
- ? **What is the significance of the first word of verse 1:10?** *"Yet" is a word of God's mercy and it recalls His covenant with Abraham to make a people that could not be numbered.*
- ? **After talking about coming judgment, what happens to the tone of the message in verses 1:10–2:1?** *It shifts to a message of hope of a day when there will be restoration of Israel and Judah under one head.*
- ? **Who is the "one head" who will unite the divided nations?** *This is a reference to the future coming of King Jesus, most likely a look forward to the Second Coming.*
- ? **Looking to chapter 3 and following, how is Gomer like Israel?** *Gomer had committed adultery with other lovers just as Israel had committed adultery with false gods.*
- ? **How did Hosea respond to Gomer?** *He bought her back and was faithful to her. She may have wound up in a slave market, having been sold by one of her lovers (though the text is not distinct on how she came to such a position).*
- ? **What did this response signify?** *Verse 3:4 starts with a "for" statement to make the connection. Just as Hosea was willing to buy the adulterous Gomer back and take her into his household, God would buy back His people and bring them into His household and care for them.*
- ? **How can the people in the future—"the latter days"—be looking for David as their king?** *This is probably a reference looking forward to the Son of David coming to rule Israel as a united nation. Most would understand this to be a reference to the millennial reign of Christ. Some believe this may refer to a resurrected David who will rule over Israel in the millennium (see Jeremiah 30:9).*
- ? **What shift happens at the beginning of chapter 4?** *God delivers the charges against Israel for their lack of truth, lack of compassion, murder, adultery, and other things.*

➤ God had his prophets perform various object lessons to demonstrate spiritual truths.

LOVE

Discover the Truth

God showed His love for Israel in sending them a warning.

God showed His love for Israel in giving them an object lesson in the marriage and household of Hosea and Gomer.

God showed His love for Israel by reminding them of how He had chosen them and cared for them despite their adulterous relationships with false gods.

God showed His love for Israel by offering them hope of a coming king and Messiah who would unite them together again.

In all of these things, Hosea's message from God was abundantly clear. God had lovingly chosen to call the children of Israel His own children, but they had rejected His love. He had given them everything, but they rejected His provision. God had not made these promises to other nations and peoples—He had given them to His children.

Ultimately, God's love was demonstrated in the illustration of Hosea buying back Gomer from her sin and its consequences. In this we see a clear picture of what the Father would do in sending the Son to earth to die on the Cross. The price to buy back fallen men and women was much more than fifteen shekels of silver and a pot of barley—it was the death of God the Son.

Our sin, and the sins of the Israelites, was so great that God had to die to buy His children back from their rebellion against Himself. We see this idea clearly connected to God's love in Romans 5:6–8: "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

But this precious and awesome passage is directed specifically to the "we" and the "us" mentioned. Our activity today is going to challenge another popular misconception in our culture—the idea that we are all God's children—and help us identify who the "us" is referring to.



Romans 5:6–8



Children of God

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Many people may believe that everyone is a child of God, but this is an unbiblical concept. There is a sense in which all people are created by God, and in the image of God, but all of mankind is separated from God because of their sin. God sees all people as enemies until they are adopted into the family of God in Christ through His work on the Cross.

We talked last week about how many people have a misconception about the nature of God’s love. There is another popular misconception that we need to understand from a biblical perspective. Many people believe that everyone is a child of God. I want you to examine that idea from a biblical perspective. In your Student Guide you will find the Children of God activity. Look at the questions there, examine the Scriptures, and we will discuss the ideas in a few minutes. *Help the students as they have questions.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Let’s quickly review what you found in God’s Word about being a child of God.

- ? **John 1:10–13—What makes someone a child of God?** *Those who have received Christ and believe in Him are children of God.*
- ? **Romans 8:16–17—Who is the “we” pointing to as being children of God?** *Looking back to verse 15, “we” refers to those who have been adopted by God through the Holy Spirit. Verse 14 points to those who are led by the Spirit, so those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit are in mind.*
- ? **Hebrews 12:5–8—What marks a legitimate child (son) of God?** *A legitimate son is one who is receiving chastisement from God—He is purifying us from our sinful habits.*

? Who is contrasted with the children of God in the following passages?

- **Philippians 2:14–15** *A crooked and perverse generation.*
- **1 John 3:1–3** *The world.*
- **1 John 3:8–10** *The children of the devil.*

In Colossians 1:13–14, Paul reminds the Colossian church that they were transferred “into the kingdom of the Son of [God’s] love,” from the kingdom of darkness. The Colossian believers were once members of the kingdom of darkness before they were adopted as children of God.

Listen to the language Paul uses in describing this idea to the Ephesian church. *Read Ephesians 1:3–6.* Paul praises God for choosing to adopt believers into His family through Jesus Christ.

Each of us who is now a child of God by Jesus Christ was once part of the kingdom of darkness. Anyone who has not trusted in Christ is not a child of God, but a child of the devil. This is a hard saying, but what other conclusion can we come to in light of Scripture? Our sin separates us from God. Until we are cleansed of our sin in Christ, we are not part of God’s family, but His enemies.

That is why we need to proclaim the gospel to everyone. Right now, most are outside of the family and enemies of God. We who are God’s children have the joyful opportunity to share the invitation with others. We who have received grace and mercy for our rebellion can call others to repent and trust in Christ so they, too, can become adopted sons and daughters of God.



READ THE WORD

As we look back to Hosea, very similar language is used as God talks about Israel. Let's read Hosea 11:1–11 and look for that language. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? What event in the past is called to mind in the first verses of this chapter? *The Exodus is in mind as God called them out of Egypt.*

? In verse 1, how are the Israelites referred to? *They are called God's child and son.*

While that is the clear meaning in this context, you may recognize the phrase "out of Egypt I called my son" from Matthew 2:15 and the return of Jesus with his parents after fleeing from Herod. This is another example of the scarlet thread of the redemption found in Jesus found throughout the Old Testament. Matthew identifies this as a prophetic passage that was fulfilled in Christ. The exodus from Egypt is presented as a type of Christ. The Son of God was present in the loins of one of the ancestors of David who was led out of Egypt, so there are several layers of truth in this passage.

? What figures of speech in verses 3 and 4 points to God being a father of the Israelites? *He taught them how to walk, and He stooped to feed them.*

? How did the Israelites respond to God's fatherly love? *They rebelled and served false gods.*

? What is God's judgment for the refusal to repent and worship God alone? *The Assyrians will come and take them captive (verses 5–7).*

? Who is Ephraim? *This is another name for the northern kingdom since the tribe of Ephraim, one of Joseph's sons, received a portion of land in the north, where the capital of Israel was before it moved to Samaria. Manasseh, Joseph's other son, also received a large portion of the northern part of the Promised Land.*

? In verse 8 there is a shift, and it almost seems to contradict what has just been said. What shift happens in the text? *This passage is looking to the future. God's love is displayed in not utterly destroying Israel again (verse 9). There is a clear future restoration in mind as the people return from other lands.*

Discover the Truth

God had adopted the people of Israel as His children and cared for them in many ways. But they rebelled. Just like any good father, God brought discipline to them for their rebellion, hoping to bring correction to them. They did not respond, so God gave them over to the Assyrians, but we will discuss that more next week.





Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

As we think about the idea of being adopted as children of God, we have great reason to praise God. He has revealed the nature of His love toward His children in the pages of Scripture, so we can know the truth about God's love. We are not left to guess and make up our own ideas about God's love, as so many try to do today. We can know the character of God and share that truth with others.

It is the goodness of God that leads to repentance (Romans 2:4) and God, in His love, was patient with the Israelites, offering them many opportunities to repent. In the hardness of their hearts, they continued to rebel. God was willing to take them in and love them knowing that they would commit adulterous idolatry with the Baals and other false gods, just as we see pictured in the marriage of Hosea and Gomer.

But even in our rebellion today, we see God's love in His willingness to buy us back from our slavery to sin, just as Hosea bought Gomer. That price for our freedom was paid for with Christ's blood, and we should fall at His feet with thankful hearts for buying us back even while we were in rebellion to Him.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? What imagery in this passage of Scripture has helped you to understand God's love in a fuller way or corrected a misconception you had? *Discuss various answers.*
- ? How could you use this concept of being a child of God to encourage a fellow believer who is suffering as a result of clear sin in their lives? *We know that God desires to discipline His children so that they will grow to become more like Christ. While sin can have temporal consequences for the believer, there is no fear of judgment because Christ has already paid the penalty for the sin on the Cross. Receiving discipline is a mark of a true child of God (Hebrews 12:5–8).*
- ? While there is a sense in which all people are “children” of God—He has created everyone—how has this idea become distorted in our culture, and how can we help to correct the misunderstanding? *By using the clear passages of Scripture that contrast the true children of God with those who have not been adopted, we can proclaim this truth and call people to accept it as truth from God. By the work of the Holy Spirit, their hearts can be changed, and this truth can become clear to them. It is the good news of the gospel that can call them to be a part of God's true family—adopted in Christ.*
- ? How can you use the truths you have heard today from Scripture to share the hope of Christ with someone? *Discuss various answers.*





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

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for His love in buying us out of our slavery to sin.
- Praise God for adopting us as children in Christ.
- Ask God for grateful hearts in knowing that we are adopted as His children.