

1. The first three chapters of Hosea introduce the characters and develops the setting for the message from God.
2. The remainder of the book (chapters 4–14) analyzes the situation in depth, exploring the relationship between God and Israel.
3. The message of the first three chapters (and of the entire book) moves back and forth between judgment and salvation. (1:1-3)
4. Hosea's marital experiences, which included the heartbreak caused by his wife's unfaithfulness and the joy of their renewed relationship - provide the framework for this message.
5. Chapters 1-3 sets forth the major themes of the entire prophecy: Israel's unfaithfulness, the certainty of judgment, and the ultimate restoration of the nation.
6. All of this is introduced within the context of God's command to Hosea to marry and have children.
7. At the start of Hosea's ministry God instructed him to marry an adulterous woman. This relationship, characterized by infidelity on the wife's part, was to portray Israel's unfaithfulness to its covenant with God. (2:2-23)
8. In response to God's command Hosea married Gomer.
9. This is another one of the highly debated passages of Scripture. The debate has centered on the circumstances of Hosea's marriage.
10. Some have held that the marriage was only visionary or allegorical, not literal. This interpretation was motivated by a desire to sidestep the supposed moral difficulty of God commanding Hosea to marry a woman of this character.
11. However, the account is presented as a straightforward narrative, not a report of a vision or a purely symbolic act. (chapter 3)
12. God sometimes required His prophets to carry out commands that many would consider over and above the call. (Isaiah 20:1-4; Ezekiel 4:1-5:4)
13. Those who hold to a literal marriage disagree over Gomer's status at the beginning of her relationship with Hosea. Some argue that Gomer was a harlot/prostitute at the time she was married.
14. A modification of this is the view that she was a typical young Israelite woman who had participated in a Canaanite rite of sexual initiation in preparation for marriage.
15. Others contend that Gomer was pure at the time of marriage and later became an adulteress. The Book of Hosea does not provide information concerning Gomer's premarital sexual experience.

16. The expression “adulterous wife” (lit., “wife of adultery”) does not describe her condition at the time of marriage, but anticipates what she proved to be, a wife characterized by unfaithfulness.
17. The emphasis in the following context (1:2b; 2:2–3:5) is on the unfaithfulness that characterized both God’s and Hosea’s relationships, not on premarital experiences.
18. God also told Hosea to take ... children of unfaithfulness. This does not refer to children born from another father before Gomer’s marriage to Hosea.
19. The children are those mentioned in 1:3–9. “Unfaithfulness” does not imply they were the products of Gomer’s illicit relationships.
20. The first child was named Jezreel. At this point the significance of his name was not in its meaning, but in its association with past and future events at the place Jezreel.
21. Jezreel was the site of Jehu’s massacre of the house of Ahab (2 Kings 9–10). In the future it would be the scene of Israel’s military demise. (Hosea 1:5)
22. The reason for God’s coming punishment on the house of Jehu was the massacre at Jezreel. Jehu’s slaughter of Jezebel and Ahab’s descendants had been prophesied by Elijah (1 Kings 21:21–24), commanded by Elisha (2 Kings 9:6–10), and commended by the Lord Himself (2 Kings 10:30).
23. But also keep in mind - Jehu killed Joram (2 Kings 9:24), Ahaziah, king of Judah (2 Kings 9:27–28), 42 of Ahaziah’s relatives (2 Kings 10:12–14), and several servants of the Baal cult (2 Kings 10:18–28).
24. Though the execution of Baal’s servants was certainly in accord with the God’s will (1 Kings 18:40), Jehu’s attack on the house of David went too far.
25. The fulfillment of this prophecy came in 752 B.C. when Shallum assassinated Zechariah, the fourth of Jehu’s descendants to rule the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 15:10), thereby cutting off Jehu’s dynasty forever.
26. God told Hosea that the end of Jehu’s dynasty was to be accompanied by the downfall of the Northern Kingdom. This would occur in the valley of Jezreel. (1:5)
27. The general fulfillment of this prophecy came in 734-722 B.C. when the Assyrians overran Israel and reduced it to a province within their empire (2 Kings 15:29; 17:3–5).
28. The valley of Jezreel had been the scene of a great military victory under Gideon (Jud. 6:33; 7), and again became a symbol of national disgrace and defeat, just as it had been after Saul’s death.