

Message #2**Hosea 1:2-11**

There is no question that when you study the Bible, sometimes God asks a prophet to do something very odd and very unusual.

It has been a long time since we went through the book of Isaiah, but we may remember that God asked Isaiah to do something that Tim Kelly praised God that He didn't ask me to do. He told Isaiah to take off his clothes and go naked and barefoot for three years (Is. 20:2-4). Now he did that to communicate an important point to Israel, namely, God will strip Israel bare for trusting in something other than Him. But you do have to admit if you are Isaiah that is one strange request.

God told Jeremiah that He wanted him to make himself bonds and a yoke and put it on himself and walk around as an illustration that this is what God was going to do to Israel, which was to permit her to be taken captive by the Babylonians (Jer. 27:2; 28:10).

God told Ezekiel that He wanted him to eat a scroll so Ezekiel opened his mouth and ate a scroll (Ezek. 3:1-2). God had him do this to illustrate the point that this prophet had taken in God's Word and was communicating it out of his mouth even when the message was coming judgment. It was sweet because it was God's truth. So Ezekiel literally ate something that had writing on it. This is a good thing for parents to remember. When the children are hungry after school and want a snack, have them eat a couple sheets of paper.

However, of all of the requests that God ever gave to any prophet, this one to Hosea is most definitely at the top of the odd list. This request is so odd that it has left many students of Scripture scratching their head and even saying it can't really mean what it says.

What God wanted Hosea to do was go and marry a professional hooker or a prostitute who gets money for sex. In fact, as we will see later in this book she got more than money for her trade. What God wanted Hosea to do was to enter into a covenantal marriage relationship with a harlot because He wanted to use this to illustrate a point to His own people. What we see here is this:

GOD DEMANDS HIS PROPHET MARRY AN IMMORAL HARLOT AND HAVE CHILDREN BY THE HARLOT TO ILLUSTRATE HOW CORRUPT AND IMMORAL HIS OWN FAMILY HAS BECOME IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO HIM; AND YET IN THE END GOD WILL BLESS HIS FAMILY BECAUSE HE LOVES HIS FAMILY.

We may remember that last week we established that Hosea is ministering to Israel in the north. We may establish that point by the multiple references to Ephraim and also by virtue of the fact that Hosea calls the king of Samaria "our king" (Hos. 7:5).

Hosea was a contemporary of Amos and both were ministering at a time when things were very prosperous.

At the beginning of this prophetic book of Hosea, in **verse 2** God commanded Hosea to marry a "wife of harlotry" and have "children of harlotry" because His own people Israel in the north were acting like a bunch of prostitutes in regard to him.

More than likely they were actually getting involved with prostitutes at their religious services so God wanted to use the prophet Hosea as an object lesson to His own people.

Now the text breaks down into three main parts:

PART #1 – God commands Hosea to marry a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry. **1:2**

Now this is one shocking request, which is exactly the point. God is trying to shock Israel to come to her senses and get back into a proper relationship with Him. She needed to and still does need to stop fooling around with things other than her God.

Now there are two commands God gives here:

Command #1 - God commands Hosea marry a woman of harlotry. **1:2a**

Now Hosea was a prophet of God and even though this is a strange request, **prophets were not under the same legal mandates as priests**. Priests were forbidden from marrying a prostitute (Lev. 21:14). In fact, a priest had to marry a virgin from Israel and could not marry a prostitute or a divorced woman and a high priest could not even marry a widow. In fact, if a priest had a daughter who was a prostitute, she was to be burned with fire (Lev. 21:9). However, Hosea was a prophet of God and these restrictions were not legally placed on prophets so God told him go marry a harlot.

Now some students of the Bible don't like this mandate so they try to twist it to mean other things:

- 1) Some say when Hosea first married her she wasn't a prostitute, but she became immoral after he married her. This solves the ethical issue of God commanding the prophet to do this.
- 2) Some say what this means is that she wasn't really a prostitute but she was a woman who was worshipping a false deity because this is what this is all designed to illustrate.
- 3) Some say this is just some allegorical, figurative story designed to teach a lesson. The problem is there are real people named here and even if you think it is an allegorical story, it is the story of a prophet who married a prostitute.
- 4) Some say it means just what it says—God commands Hosea to go marry a whore or as the Hebrew reads, “go take to yourself a wife of whoredom.”

Let me point out that the Hebrew uses a feminine noun which means the wife was to be a woman (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 84). This particular word clearly establishes that marriage is to be between a man and a woman. So Hosea is given a command to go marry a woman prostitute.

Frankly after carefully examining this issue in the Hebrew text and in the Greek Septuagint Greek text, I agree with Gary Smith, a professor of Hebrew, who has written a commentary on this book, who concludes **Hosea was commanded to go and marry a woman who was paid money for sexual favors both before Hosea married her and after he married her (Hos. 2:5) (*Hosea*, p. 46).** As he says, “the plain meaning of these words cannot be easily escaped.”

God’s command to Hosea is go find yourself a prostitute and enter into a covenantal relationship with her known has marriage. This was God’s will for his life.

Now this is good news for us. God is willing to save anyone who has committed any sin. God will actually enter into a covenantal relationship with any sinner who will believe on Jesus Christ. No matter what the sin, if a person will believe on Jesus Christ, God will put that person into His family.

Command #2 - God commands Hosea to have children through his harlot wife. **1:2b**

God wanted Hosea to specifically marry a prostitute and then have children plural. Now some have suggested that Hosea was to marry a prostitute who already had a few children.

But the fact is the emphasis from the text is that Hosea was to marry a prostitute and then start having children with her. We believe that when he married this prostitute she did not have any children before he married her. Hosea was to marry a prostitute and then start building a family and have some children.

This illustrates the point God wants to make vividly. His entire family was going to be an object lesson that His people had become very corrupt and unfaithful.

By the way, in this book of Hosea, God never accuses the children of sexual immorality. As Duane Garret observed, they always appear as just children (*Hosea*, p. 52).

I think that is something good for all of us to remember. Children can come from some bizarre homes and bizarre backgrounds and it isn’t their fault. Every child is special regardless of the background of the parents. In fact, **we need to realize that children who come from bizarre homes are ordained by God and we need to do our best to help them understand that point.**

Now the reason why God wants Hosea to marry this prostitute and have these children is clearly stated at the end of **verse 2: “because the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD.”**

The people of Israel were guilty of the vilest kinds of apostasy and sins in a land that should have been sacred. Israel was God’s family and the people who lived were in a Promised Land God had provided for His family. Instead of them thanking Him, worshipping Him and honoring Him, they were prostituting themselves in loving other things and other religions rather than God.

PART #2 – Hosea obeys God. 1:3-9

Hosea certainly was not unfaithful. In fact, even as bizarre as the assignment was, he obeyed:

Area of Obedience #1 - He married a harlot. 1:3a

Now **verse 3** opens with a Hebrew word that says, “so he went.” The Hebrew word means he went walking on a journey to where he would find a harlot (*Ibid.*, p. 224). Wherever he was when God told him to do this was not the place where you would find this woman. He would have to go to a place where harlots typically were. Perhaps he had to go to a brothel or perhaps, as some have suggested, he had to go to an idolatrous temple known for idolatry and immorality.

Now most parents dream about their son bringing home a nice girl that he wants to marry. Most parents like it if their son or daughter brings home someone respectable so they can meet the child’s future mate. They want their child to do that. Of course, in these days parents are just happy if their child brings home someone to marry who is of the opposite sex. Times have changed but even with this most parents still do not expect their son to bring home a stripper or harlot and say this is the one God wants me to marry. But this is the case with Hosea.

Verse 3 informs us her name was “Gomer,” and she was the “daughter of Diblaim.” We don’t know much about either one. Here is an interesting and somewhat humorous Hebrew grammatical point. The actual word “Diblaim” comes from the word “Diblah” which means the joining together of “fruit cakes” (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 185). Gomer probably came from a home in which her father was a fruitcake and so was she. This was probably a family of fruitcakes that lacked any sense of morality or decency. But Hosea obeyed and married this prostitute.

Area of Obedience #2 - He had and named children exactly what God wanted them named. 1:3b-9

Now we have three birth announcements in these verses. Each announcement contains a birth notice; a word of instruction about naming the child and an explanation of the meaning of the name. **All of the names of these children illustrated the fact that a sacred relationship between God and Israel had been broken.** There are three specific children named here:

(Child #1) - The son named Jezreel. 1:3-5

Now Jezreel is a very important geographical place in Israel (I Kings 18:45-46). This city served as a winter capital for Israel’s kings. But it is clear from these verses that God had one moment in mind in Jezreel’s history which he refers to as “the bloodshed of Jezreel.”

King Jeroboam represented the last strong king and good king in a dynasty started by Jehu (841-814 B.C.). In the valley of Jezreel, Jehu, King of Israel (841-814 B.C.), was ordered by God to destroy the house of Ahab (II Kings 9:7). Jehu won a great victory totally destroying Israel’s idolatrous enemies.

Jehu ordered Queen Jezebel's servants to kill her by throwing her out the window. Then Jehu had Ahab's 30 sons killed and their heads brought to him in Jezreel (II Kings 9-10). This was all good.

But Jehu killed King Ahaziah of Judah and 42 of his relatives, which was evil (II Kings 9:27-28; 10:12-14). By doing this, Jehu demonstrated a great disloyalty to God by shedding that innocent blood.

Now God warned his people by naming this son Jezreel that the same kind of thing would happen to them. They were disloyal to God and they were pursuing the same kinds of things of immoral idolatry like Ahab and Jezebel.

God says to His own family because you have so turned away from me, I will actually punish you in the very place I once blessed you and gave you victory.

The name Jezreel means God plants and God scatters. It is interesting that scholars have agreed that there is no specific historical event that we may point to which says this was literally fulfilled. God did use the Assyrians to break the military power of Israel "break the bow" in this area, but the complete fulfillment is yet futuristic.

During the Tribulation, this very geographical location will become a hot spot of bloodshed as a judgment of God against His own people because they have prostituted themselves against Him. The valley of Jezreel is closely linked to Megiddo and Armageddon. Israel has prostituted herself and she will pay.

(Child #2) - The daughter named Lo-ruhamah. 1:6-7

After some time Gomer had another child, who was given the name Lo-ruhamah. This poor girl was given a name that means to have "no compassion" or "not loved." The reason why he wanted this girl given this name is because God is threatening that He will no longer love and have compassion and grant forgiveness to His family, Israel, and He would not rescue her from destruction.

We may observe from **verse 7** that God says He will have compassion on Judah in the south and he will deliver her, but not by any military means. We know that in 701 B.C. God literally killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night while they slept surrounding Jerusalem (Is. 37; II Kings 19:32-36). At the time God said this, Judah had not become as corrupt as Israel. One child was behaving a little better than the other.

It is interesting that in this book of Hosea there are several very emotional outbursts from God. **On the one hand God says I will not forgive them and on the other hand He says I will fully restore them. On the one hand He warns of absolute rejection and destruction and on the other hand He promises complete restoration and salvation.**

When all is said and done, God always loves His family even when He is ticked off at His family.

(Child #3) - The son named Lo-ammi. **1:8-9**

Hebrew mothers normally nurse their babies until they are 2-3 years-old which tells us that Hosea hung in there being married to this immoral woman. About two or three years later they had another child and God said name him “Lo-ammi” which means “not my child” or “not my people.”

God was angry with the idolatry and immorality and He was going to sever His relationship with His own family. This did not mean God would not fulfill His promises; it meant He would not bless them like He had blessed them. He would remove His blessings, His protection and treat them like they were not His family or people.

PART #3 – God promises to bless and prosper His family in spite of their evil. **1:10-11**

Now right after God has given this gloomy assessment against His family, He predicts a glorious future for His family. It is very clear from these verses that God will always bless Israel even though she is His messed up family:

Blessing #1 - God will bless His family numerically. **1:10a**

God made this promise to Abraham that His family would be innumerable (Gen. 22:17; 32:12)

Blessing #2 - God will bless His family reputationally. **1:10b**

People from all over the world will one day testify that Israel is the nation of the “living God.”

Blessing #3 - God will bless His family in a unified nationality. **1:11a**

What a day when God has His entire family together, both north and south.

Blessing #4 - God will bless His family with one leader politically. **1:11b**

Both Israel and Judah will have one king, no more divided kingdom.

Blessing #5 - God will bless His family in land geographically. **1:11c**

All of the Promised Land will one day belong to Israel, including the very place known as Armageddon (Rev. 16:13-16).

Now the big question is why would God eventually do so much for a people who have totally turned their backs on Him? Why would God do such wonderful things for Israel when she has been idolatrous and immoral? The answer is because of His love. As sinful as His family is, He still loves His family.

Listen; no matter how much you have messed up, you can have a covenant relationship with God. No matter what your sin or background, believe on the Lord and you will be loved forever.