



# HOSEA GOD'S LOVE SONG

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The Good Book Guide to Hosea  
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## why study Hosea?

Welcome to a love song, with a difference.

Love songs are everywhere. On the radio as we drive our cars; on the soundtracks of the movies we watch; in the background as we shop and eat out. And, whether we like it or not, they're often stuck in our heads and hearts.

And yet the love they describe is often a weak or helpless love. Their lyrics are full of desire leading to disappointment, and hope followed by heartbreak. The love they tell us about is often as fleeting as the time they spend in the charts.

Love songs reflect our yearning for a love that is solid and sure: a love that we can be excited about today because we know it will still be here tomorrow. And yet those same songs expose our inability to find this love, however hard and long we search for it.

The book of Hosea is a love song. It talks of romance, of allure, of first loves; and it sings of heartbreak, of unfaithfulness, of divorce. But, crucially and uniquely, its lyrics are about a love which will never fade; which will never disappoint; and which will never say: "Enough". Hosea is about the love we all want, and the love we all need.

The singer throughout Hosea is God: and the love he talks about is his own love, lavished upon his people. It's a love song that is surprising, raw, emotional, at times uncomfortable, but always compelling.

These eight studies will thrill you with the wonder of God's love, even as they challenge you with the truth about his people. And, as you read through Hosea, you'll be provided with a soundtrack for your life which truly is worth singing along to.

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# Lesson 1: “UNFAITHFUL”

## Hosea 1:1-2:1

*The story so far*

God speaks to Hosea, and through Hosea, during a difficult time for God’s people. They have split into two kingdoms, following rival kings—“Israel” in the north, and “Judah” in the south. They enjoy neither the peace nor the prosperity that they did under their greatest kings, David and Solomon, 250 years before. Hosea lives in, and speaks mainly to, the larger northern kingdom of Israel, whose capital is Samaria.

### talkabout

1. If you stopped someone in the street and asked them what sin was, how might they respond? How might the response be different if you asked someone coming out of church on a Sunday?

### investigate

Read Hosea 1 v 1–3

DICTIONARY

**This land (v 2):** meaning everyone who lives in the land of Israel.

**Conceived (v 3):** became pregnant.

2. What is so surprising and shocking about what God asks Hosea to do?
3. Why does God tell Hosea to do this?
  - How might you expect Hosea to react? How does he respond?

4. What do these verses tell us about the state of God's people at this time?

### explore more

#### optional

This is not the only time God tells a prophet to “act out” his prophetic message.

**Read Jeremiah 13 v 1–11 and Ezekiel 12 v 1–6**

*What do they have to act out? What is God communicating through these actions?*

*Why do you think God acts in this way? Does it have any implications for how we teach the Bible today?*

### apply

5. How does what happens here illustrate the seriousness of Israel's sin?
- “There is no difference ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3 v 22–23). What does the start of Hosea show us about ourselves? How do you feel about this?

### getting personal

Think back to your answers to Question One. Do you view sin as breaking little rules, or breaking a loving relationship? Do you find your sin as shocking as Gomer's treatment of Hosea? What difference will this description of sin make to you this week?

### investigate

**Read verses 4–9**

The wording of the descriptions of Gomer's children strongly suggests that the second and third children weren't Hosea's—someone else was the father. And yet Hosea is told to raise them as his own—and to give them very significant names. His first, “Jezreel” (v 4), was the site of a famous massacre which had been caused by people turning away from God. Unsurprisingly, these three names aren't very popular nowadays!

6. Why does God ask Hosea to give the children these names, do you think?

**Read 1 v 10–2 v 1**

7. How are things turned around in these verses?

- How are God's promises here more than simply a reversal of fortunes for God's people?

8. In 1 v 10, God points his people to a "place". What will happen there?

9. **Read Mark 1 v 9–11.** Who is Jesus? How does God the Father feel about him?

- **Read Mark 15 v 33–37.** What happened to Jesus' relationship with his Father as he died on the cross?
- **Read 2 Corinthians 5 v 21 and Galatians 3 v 26–27.** What has Jesus' death achieved for his people?

10. How is the cross the "place" God pointed his people to in Hosea 1 v 10?

### **apply**

11. Why do we need to appreciate what sin is if we are to grasp the true wonder of the cross?

### **getting personal**

Have you appreciated the fact that at the cross God forsook his Son so that he could call you "my child"—if you trust in him? How will you allow this truth to affect your feelings towards him, and about yourself, this week?

### **pray**

**Thank God** for his grace shown in the Lord Jesus, which has turned you from being "not my people" into "children of the living God"?

Spend some time **asking God** for his forgiveness for the times you have treated sin lightly and superficially. Share with the group those sins you are willing to; speak to God silently about the others.

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## Lesson 2: “IF YOU LEAVE ME NOW”

### Hosea 2:2-3:5

*The story so far*

God’s told Hosea, his prophet, to marry a prostitute who then left him. This was a visual way of showing Israel that sin is spiritual adultery.

#### talkabout

1. Can you think of a situation where someone corrected a mistake you had made? How did they do it, and how did it make you feel?

#### investigate

Read Hosea 2 v 2–13

DICTIONARY

**Rebuke (v 2):** firmly tell off.

**Lovers (v 5):** an image used for the false gods Israel was worshipping.

**Acknowledged (v 8):** realised.

**Lewdness (v 10):** in this context, nudity.

**Sabbath days (v 11):** the one day in each week when Israel enjoyed a day of rest, and remembered they needed to trust God to help them with their work.

**Baals (v 13):** false gods worshipped by nations around Israel.

2. What have God’s people done (v 2)? Why do they deserve a “rebuke”?
3. How have God’s people done this to God (v 5, 8, 12–13)?
  - **Read Exodus 17 v 1–7.** What has Israel forgotten about? Why does this make their actions in Hosea’s time even more inexcusable and stupid?
4. How will God discipline his people? What is this discipline intended to achieve?

## explore more

### optional

#### Read Ezekiel 16 v 1–19

*What does this passage tell us about the relationship between God and his people?  
What has God done, and what have the people done?*

5. **Read Luke 15 v 11–24.** What do this parable of Jesus, and Hosea 2 v 2–13, tell us about a life lived without God?

- How should we react when we realize we've turned away from God?

### apply

6. Why is it good news that God disciplines his people?

- When God disciplines us through the circumstances we face, how should we respond?

### getting personal

Are there good things in your life that you have never thanked God for? Or that you use for yourself, but not to serve him?

Are you experiencing God's correction and discipline in your life today? If you are, what might God be teaching you?

Remember that while God *disciplines* his children, he does not *punish* them. All our punishment has already been taken by Jesus at the cross.

### investigate

#### Read Hosea 2 v 14–3 v 5

#### DICTIONARY

**Allure (2 v 14):** seduce, woo.

**Invoked (2 v 17):** appealed to for help.

**Covenant (2 v 18):** binding agreement.

**Betroth (2 v 19–20):** get engaged to.

**Ephod (3 v 4):** something worn by priests.

7. How is verse 14 a turning point?

- In what ways are Israel's problems turned around in these verses?

8. What would being led "into the wilderness" (v 14) have reminded Israel of? (Exodus 19 v 1–8 may help you.)

Verses 19 and 20 use the language of a dowry or "bride price". This was the money that a groom's family would need to pay to the bride's family in order for a marriage to go ahead.

9. What ingredients are needed in v 19 and 20 to restore this marriage? Who can provide these things?

10. What is shocking about 3 v 1?

- What is shocking about verse 2?!
- Look at what Hosea is to *do for* Gomer and *say to* Gomer. How is this a picture of God and his people?

11. **Read 1 Peter 1 v 18–19** ("redeemed" means "bought back"). How do Hosea's actions point us towards Jesus' death?

### **apply**

12. How was Gomer to show that she appreciated what Hosea had done for her, and had returned to live with him as his wife? What does this tell us about our relationship with God as his redeemed people?

### **getting personal**

What value do you put upon yourself? How might that change if you thought of yourself as God's chosen bride, bought with a price? How will this change of attitude also change your actions and desires?

## pray

- Spend some time **thanking God** for purchasing us as his bride through the cross.
- **Ask God** to show you where you are (or could be) thanking and loving things that are not him. Ask him to help you be faithful to him.

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## Lesson 3: “D.I.V.O.R.C.E.”

### Hosea 4–5

#### *The story so far*

God told Hosea, his prophet, to marry a prostitute who then left him. This was a visual way of showing Israel that sin is spiritual adultery.

God promised to woo his people back to relationship with him. He’d buy them back—at the cost of his Son’s life. He told Hosea to visualize this by buying his wife back so that she could live with him and enjoy his love again.

#### **talkabout**

1. Why does it matter who leads your church? What are the qualities you would most like to see in a church leader?

#### **investigate**

In verse 1 God brings a “charge” against His people, using language similar to divorce proceedings.

**Read Hosea 4 v 1–6a**

DICTIONARY

**Acknowledgement (v 1):** recognition, understanding of who someone is.

2. What has broken the relationship between God and his people? What is the root cause (v 1, 6a)?
3. What effect do the actions of God’s people have on God’s land?
4. **Read Romans 1 v 18–20 and 28–32.** What effect does our sin have on our world today?

#### **apply**

5. What reasons do people give for the world being messed up? What kind of solutions does that lead them to?

- What do Hosea 4 and Romans 1 tell us is the problem? What do they suggest is the solution?
- Why does this tend to be an unpopular answer, do you think?

## getting personal

Are there areas of your life where you have never really thought about how God wants you to live? Think about your work life, bank balance, relationships with family and friends, purchasing decisions, where you live ... the list is endless!

Are there parts of your life in which you know what God wants, but are choosing to ignore that knowledge?

## investigate

**Read verses 6b–13**

DICTIONARY

**Idol (v 12):** part of God's creation which people love, worship and trust instead of God.

6. Who is God singling out here?
7. What were these men supposed to be doing for God's people?
  - What have they done instead?
8. How will God punish the priests? How does God's judgment of them fit their crimes?

## explore more

optional

**Read Hosea 5 v 8–15**

*How else have God's people and their leaders acted unfaithfully? What more do we learn about God's coming judgment on Israel?*

## apply

Hosea says: "Like people, like priests" (4 v 9). God's priests lead and direct God's people.

9. What does this mean for God's people today?

**10. Read Hebrews 7 v 23–27.** Who is God’s high (ie: chief) priest today? Why is he a wonderful priest to have?

**11.** We need church leaders today who are the opposite of the priests in Hosea’s day. Read through the passage again, and work out what a good church leader would look like.

- What would the mistake the priests were making in Hosea’s day look like in your culture?

### **getting personal**

Are you too eager to put your trust in an earthly leader, rather than Jesus as your High Priest?

Are you ever too slow to follow a church leader who is leading the church to be more like Jesus?

How can you encourage, support and show loyalty to good, godly leaders this week?

### **pray**

**Thank God** that we have a perfect High Priest who meets our need in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Ask God** that you would be people who continue to acknowledge God and choose to follow leaders who will help you do this wisely and boldly.

**Confess** any ways in which you have seen yourself in the sinfulness of the people in Hosea’s day. Thank God that in Jesus he came to bring you back into loving relationship with him.



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## Lesson 4: “SORRY SEEMS TO BE THE HARDEST WORD”

### Hosea 6–7

#### *The story so far*

God told Hosea, his prophet, to marry a prostitute who then left him. This was a visual way of showing Israel that sin is spiritual adultery.

God promised to woo his people back to relationship with him. He’d buy them back—at the cost of his Son’s life. He told Hosea to visualize this by buying his wife back so that she could live with him and enjoy his love again.

Israel had broken relationship with God. And the priests, who were supposed to lead them in obeying God, had led them in idolatry and immorality.

#### **talkabout**

1. Why *does* sorry seem to be the hardest word?

#### **investigate**

**Read Hosea 6 v 1–3**

2. What does Israel decide to do? What is good about what they say?

**Read verses 4–10**

#### DICTIONARY

**Ephraim, Judah (v 4, 10):** here, these are ways of saying “Israel”.

**Marauders (v 9):** bandits, invaders.

**Defiled (v 10):** made dirty and impure.

3. Israel has just decided to return to God. What is shocking about verse 4? What is God saying about Israel’s “return”?
4. Can you spot what is missing from Israel’s “return” in verses 1–4?
5. Look at the description of Israel in v 7–10. Given their words in v 1–3, what is so horrible about it?

## explore more

### optional

#### Read Hosea 7 v 3–12

*What are some of the vivid pictures God uses to describe Israel? How do they show us the true state of the people's hearts?*

The same sinful attitudes look different depending on the era and the culture.

*What would the sins you see in these verses look like in your time and place?*

*Which are particularly challenging to you as a group?*

6. What does God desire people to display? How does this help us understand the kind of religion he is pleased by?

### apply

7. How can we, as church members today, be like Israel was in Hosea's day?

### getting personal

God is being blunt with his people here—so this box is blunt, too! Do you ever ask God for his blessings, and tell him you want him as your God, without being truly sorry for your sins or really being willing to change?

How does God's desire for a real religious attitude of heartfelt mercy, rather than a hypocritical one of outward performance, encourage you?

How does it challenge you?

### investigate

During his life on earth, halfway through discussion, Jesus quoted Hosea's words here.

#### Read Matthew 9 v 9–13

8. Why don't the Pharisees like what Jesus is doing?
  - What are the attitudes of the different people around Jesus?
9. Why do the Pharisees need to learn the lesson of Hosea 6 v 6?
  - How does Matthew show us what a right response to Jesus is?

## **apply**

10. What can we learn from Hosea 6 v 1–6 and Matthew 9 v 9–13 about truly turning back to God?
11. Why, as a follower of Jesus, will we show mercy to others?
12. How can we encourage true, heart-felt repentance among our Christian friends?
  - What things might we sometimes say that actually obstruct this repentance?

## **getting personal**

When, and why, do you find it difficult to say sorry to God? When, and why, do you find it hard to show mercy to others?

Time spent confessing your sins will prompt you to say a real sorry. And it will remind you that you are a sinner in need of mercy, and so motivate you to show mercy to others.

Would it help you to decide a time each day when you will reflect on your life, and truly repent of your sins?

## **pray**

Ask for God's forgiveness for the ways you can be religious on the outside but not repentant in your hearts.

Pray that God would work in you by his Spirit to enable you truly to say sorry to him.

Thank God for the mercy he has shown you through Jesus. Thank God for calling you to follow his Son and find true forgiveness in him.

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# Lesson 5: “REAP THE WILD WIND”

## Hosea 8–10

### *The story so far*

Though Israel had committed spiritual adultery, God promised to woo his people back to relationship with him. He’d buy them back—at the cost of his Son’s life. Hosea’s marriage to a reformed prostitute was a picture of this.

Israel had broken relationship with God. And the priests, who were supposed to lead them in obeying God, had led them in idolatry and immorality.

God rejected Israel’s fake return to him, because he knew they were not truly sorry, and did not intend to change.

### **talkabout**

1. What’s the most urgent warning you’ve received? How did you respond?

### **investigate**

#### **Read Hosea 8 v 1–14**

This chapter begins with a trumpet blast—a warning siren to God’s people about judgment.

#### DICTIONARY

**Sow (v 7):** plant. Here, it means what people trust in to give them what they need.

**Assyria (v 9):** a superpower to the north of Israel.

**Oppression (v 10):** domination.

**Altars for sin offerings (v 11):** places you could sacrifice an animal in order to have your sins forgiven.

2. Why do Israel think that they are safe from God’s judgment (v 2, 11–13)?
3. What reasons does God give to show that his judgment is fair and just (v 1–3, 11–14)?

## explore more

### optional

#### Read Hosea 9 v 1–9

*How will God’s judgment put an end to Israel’s superficial religion? How do these verses expose Israel’s attitude to God and his word?*

God tells Israel they are acting as they did “in the days of Gibeah” (v 9). He’s referring to a notorious moment in Israel’s history, from the time of the judges around five centuries before ...

#### Read Judges 19 v 11–30

*What is God saying about Israel in Hosea’s day? How do you think you’d react if God said this about you, or your church?*

In Hosea 8 v 7, God accuses Israel of sowing the wind—pursuing things which are empty and worthless.

4. What worthless things has Israel gone after (v 4–6, 8–10)?
  - How does God describe his judgment of these things (v 7a)?  
What does this tell us about the nature of his judgment?

## apply

5. How do people who are outwardly religious “sow the wind” today?

## getting personal

What makes you feel safe from God’s judgment? Are you trusting in your own deeds, religious activities or moral achievement? Or do you recognise your sin and simply come to God for undeserved mercy?

## investigate

#### Read Hosea 10 v 5–8 and 12–15

#### DICTIONARY

**Beth Aven (v 5):** “house of wickedness”: God’s name for the place Israel kept one of its idols.

**Tribute (v 6):** an offering.

**Samaria (v 7):** capital of Israel.

**High places (v 8):** idol-worshipping sites were often on mountaintops.

**Reap (v 12):** gather (a harvest).

**Bethel (v 15):** ie: Israel.

6. What is coming to Israel, and why?
7. What do the cries of the people (v 8) tell us about the judgment they face?
8. How should God's people have responded to this message of judgment (v 12–15)? What did they do instead?

And, just as God warned through Hosea, in 722 BC Assyria conquered and destroyed Israel.

9. **Read Luke 23 v 26–34.** It's AD 33(ish), and the people of Jerusalem—Israel—have decisively rejected Jesus. What future event does He warn the people about (v 30)?

And, just as God's Son warned, in AD 70 the Romans conquered and destroyed Jerusalem. God's judgment came.

- Look at Jesus' words in verse 34. Why did Jerusalem desperately need to hear, and hang on to, this?

10. **Read Revelation 6 v 12–17.** What is coming, in the future?

- How do Hosea 10 and Luke 23 warn us of the folly of ignoring this?

### **apply**

11. What effect will a correct view of God's judgment have on:

- how we see this world?
- how we speak to those who are rejecting Jesus?
- how we feel about the forgiveness we have through Jesus?

### **getting personal**

How much do you dwell on the stark reality of God's judgment in your Bible reading, prayers and conversations with other Christians? What would help you to "weep" over the fate of those who reject Jesus, and rejoice more about what God has saved you from?



## **pray**

**Thank God** that you no longer need fear his judgment because Jesus offers you forgiveness through the cross.

**Ask God** to help you to see sin as seriously as he does; to remember each day where this world is headed; and be motivated to sound a warning for others, pointing them to Jesus.

[illegible]

# Lesson 6: “NEVER GOING TO GIVE YOU UP”

## Hosea 11

### *The story so far*

Israel had broken relationship with God. And the priests, who were supposed to lead them in obeying God, had led them in idolatry and immorality.

God rejected Israel’s fake return to him, because he knew they were not truly sorry, and did not intend to change.

God’s judgment is real and dreadful. He warned of it through Hosea, and it came; and through Jesus, and it came; and He has warned us of a final day of judgment.

### talkabout

1. What makes a good father in today’s world?

### investigate

Read Hosea 11 v 1–4

DICTIONARY

**Baals (v 2):** fake gods.

**Ephraim (v 3):** another way of describing God’s people.

**Cords/yoke (v 4):** used to control an ox.

2. Who does God describe as his “son” here? What is wonderful about God’s fatherhood?
3. What is desperately sad about the way Israel responds to God’s fatherhood?

In the next few verses, Hosea anticipates Israel’s invasion by the nation of Assyria as judgment for their sin.

Read verses 5–7

4. What do these verses tell us about God?

## explore more

optional

**Read Deuteronomy 29 v 22–28**

Israel in Hosea's time should have known these words.

*What difference should they have made to the way they acted?*

5. **Read Matthew 2 v 13–15.** How does Matthew compare Jesus of Nazareth to Israel in Hosea's day? What is he saying about Jesus?
6. **Read 1 Peter 2 v 21–23 and Galatians 3 v 26–29.** What sort of Son was Jesus? Why is this great news for Christians?

## apply

7. How does this give us hope when we commit the sins of Hosea 11 v 2–4?
  - How does this motivate us to avoid living in these ways?

## getting personal

Does this describe the Father God you know and enjoy obeying? What aspects of human fatherhood that you've experienced or witnessed are helpful in understanding and appreciating that through faith in Jesus, God is your *Father*?  
Are there any aspects which might be unhelpful?

## investigate

**Read Hosea 11 v 8–11**

8. How are things amazingly turned around for Israel here?
9. What causes this amazing turn of events?
  - In Hosea 11, we're given a privileged glimpse of the heart of God. What two priorities does he have? How do they seem to be in tension with each other?

**10. Read Romans 3 v 21–26.** How is it that God can be a just Judge *and* a forgiving Father to his people?

### **apply**

**11.** These verses direct us to have a correct view of God and his character. What difference does it make if we think of God as ...

- a loving Father, but not a just Judge?
- a just Judge, but not a loving Father?
- a loving Father *and* a just Judge?

**12.** Imagine someone reads Hosea 11 and asks you what it's about. How could you use this passage to explain what Jesus offers through his life and death?

### **getting personal**

Do you need to be more excited by, grateful for, and appreciative of what God did through the cross?  
How will you do this?  
God is both just and merciful. How will you make sure that justice and mercy dominate *your* perspective and actions this week?

### **pray**

**Thank God** that Jesus lived the perfectly obedient life that you could not. Thank him that by dying on the cross, Jesus took the justice you deserve. Thank him that he has made you his children.

**Ask God** to help you enjoy the assurance of knowing that your Creator and Judge is your loving Father. Talk to him about areas in which you struggle to live as his children, and ask him for his help.

[illegible]

## Lesson 7: “HISTORY REPEATING”

### Hosea 12–13

#### *The story so far*

God warned Israel they were facing judgment—and then rejected Israel’s fake return to him. He knew they were not truly sorry, and didn’t intend to change.

God’s judgment is real. He warned of it through Hosea, and it came; through Jesus, and it came; and he has warned us of a final day of judgment.

God warned Israel they faced his judgment—and *and* promised to be their loving Father. On the cross, Jesus took the punishment for his people’s disobedience, and gave them his perfect obedience, making them children of God.

#### **talkabout**

1. What lessons have you learned from your past?

#### **investigate**

Read Hosea 12 v 1–9 and 13 v 1–3

DICTIONARY

**Judah (12 v 2), Ephraim (12 v 8; 13 v 1):** names for God’s people.

**Defraud (v 7):** cheat, steal.

**Iniquity (v 8):** wrongdoing.

**Chaff (13 v 3):** leftover bits of grain that are very light.

2. Who does Hosea compare Israel to? What does 12:3–4a suggest he trusted in to get what he wanted?
3. What is Israel trusting in for safety and security (v 1b, 7–8; 13 v 2)?

#### **explore more**

optional

Read Genesis 27 v 1–35.

*How does this incident illustrate Jacob’s character?  
How are God’s people acting in the same way in  
Hosea’s time?*

4. What did Jacob end up doing (12 v 4b)?

- What will it look like for Israel to learn the lesson Jacob learned (12 v 6)

### apply

5. Where do people today look for safety and security instead of God? What makes these things attractive things to rely on?

### getting personal

What is the thing most likely to draw your trust and dependence away from God? What is it that most appeals to you about that source of trust?

God “has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Ephesians 1 v 3). Everything we need is already ours in Jesus Christ.

What do you look for in that idol? How is it deeply and lastingly already yours in Christ?

### investigate

**Read 13 v 4–16**

#### DICTIONARY

**Acknowledge (v 4):** recognize, accept.

**Wrath (v 11):** anger that is deserved.

**Deliver/ransom (v 14):** rescue, set free.

6. Which events from Israel’s past are highlighted here (v 4–5, 10)? What do they tell us about God and his people?

### explore more

optional

**Read 1 Samuel 8 v 1–8.**

*Why do the people ask for a king? What is wrong with their request and how does it show the state of their hearts?*

*How is the same attitude at work in Hosea’s day?*

7. How do verses 5–6 and 9–11 show us where Israel was looking for security: and why they were foolish to do so?



8. What powerful pictures are used to describe God's judgment?

9. Why does verse 14 seem out of place in this passage?

- What can God do that neither idols (v 1) nor kings (v 10) can?

10. Read 1 Corinthians 15 v 20–21 and 51–58. How does God achieve the promise of Hosea 13 v 14?

### **apply**

11. Why can Jesus give us true safety and security?

12. How should we respond to the defeat of death (1 Corinthians 15 v 58)?

- What will this look like in our everyday lives?

### **getting personal**

If someone looked at your life, what evidence would show them that your safety and security are found in Jesus alone?

### **pray**

**Thank God** that he has fully and finally defeated death through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank him that because of this, all that you do in his service has eternal significance and purpose.

**Ask God** to work through his Spirit to show you where you are relying, or are tempted to rely, on something other than him for your safety and security. Ask him to enable you to see more of who Jesus is and what he has given you, so that you will rely on him more and more fully.

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## Lesson 8: “RETURN TO ME”

### Hosea 14

#### *The story so far*

God’s judgment is real. He warned of it through Hosea, and it came; through Jesus, and it came; and he has warned us of a final day of judgment.

God warned Israel they faced his judgment—and promised to be their loving Father. On the cross, Jesus took the punishment for his people’s disobedience, and gave them his perfect obedience, making them children of God.

Israel had decided to trust in foreign powers and their own kings for safety and security. God’s judgment would show them that he alone can provide these.

#### **talkabout**

1. What would society say makes someone wise?
  - Would you personally add or change anything in that definition?

#### **investigate**

##### **Read Hosea 14 v 1–3**

2. What does God tell Israel to do, and why (v 1)?
  - Think back to what we have seen of Israel in Hosea’s day. Why is it amazing that they have the option of doing verse 1?
3. How are Israel to return (v 2–3)?
  - What does returning *to* the LORD mean turning *away* from?
  - **Read 6 v 1–4.** How is the return God calls for in chapter 14 different from the one He rejected in chapter 6?

## explore more

optional

Read Hebrews 13 v 15–16 and James 3 v 9–12

*What does it mean for Christians to “offer the fruit of our lips”?*

## apply

4. How can people return to, and stay in, a relationship with God?

## getting personal

The Christian life is a life of repenting—of returning to God and turning away from other things we realize we’re trusting in.

Write your own prayer from Hosea 14 by filling in the gaps:

*“Father, Forgive me all my sins, and receive me by your undeserved kindness, so that I can serve you. I recognize that ... cannot save me—I will stop trusting it. I will not treat ... like a god, because it is only part of your creation. Thank you that you are my compassionate Father, and you have given me all I need. Amen.”*

## investigate

Read verses 4–8

### DICTIONARY

**Cedar of Lebanon (v 5, 6):** a famously strong and good-smelling local tree.

**Flourish (v 7):** do well, thrive.

5. What is life like for people who turn back to God?
6. Where does Israel’s fruitfulness come from? How will they continue to be fruitful in the future?
7. How does the beginning of verse 8 interrupt the general tone of this chapter? Why does God say this here, do you think?

## apply

8. How could you use verses 1–8 to explain to a non-Christian what becoming a Christian, and being a Christian, is about?

- Imagine you have a friend who has been living as a Christian, but who has now turned their back on God. How could you use these verses to encourage and challenge them?

## investigate

Read verse 9

9. What does it mean to be wise? What is the other option given here?

## explore more

optional

Read 2 Kings 17 v 7–20

*How do you see the warnings from Hosea echoed in these verses? What option from Hosea 14 v 9 did Israel choose? With what result?*

## apply

10. Read John 15 v 5–8. How should we live as wise and fruitful Christians?

11. Think back over the book of Hosea as a whole.

- How would you summarize its message in a sentence?
- What have you learned, or been reminded of, about God?
- How has it excited you about the Christian life? How has it challenged you?

## getting personal

In what ways are you enjoying the blessing and fruitfulness of living in loving obedience to your Father? Are there any ways in which you're stumbling in disobedience? What needs to change?

## pray

Thank God ...

- that he has lavished his goodness and mercy on us, calling us to be his children through the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 3 v 1).

- that you are able to live a truly fruitful life. Spend some time in thanksgiving for specific blessings he's given you as you've lived his way.

**Ask God ...**

- to make you people who continually return to him. Tell him (out loud or silently) ways in which you need to do this.
- to help you notice when you are stumbling, and have the wisdom to change your lifestyle so that you are able to enjoy walking in his ways. Again, tell him ways in which you would like him to help you.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wells, D. (2012). [\*Hosea: God's Love Song\*](#) (pp. 1–53). The Good Book Company.

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