

## 12. Hosea and Gomer: Forgiving the Unfaithful

**Biblical material:** Hosea 1-3.

### Quotes

- It is better to be unfaithful than to be faithful without wanting to be. *Brigitte Bardot*
- No lover, if he be of good faith, and sincere, will deny he would prefer to see his mistress dead than unfaithful. *Marquis de Sade*
- Those who are not in love with the Lord are foolish and false—they are faithless cynics. They suffer the most extreme agonies of birth and death; they die over and over again, and they rot away in manure. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*
- Faithless is he that says farewell when the road darkens. *J. R. R. Tolkien*

### Questions

How could God even instruct a prophet to marry a prostitute? What does this tell us about God and his relationship to us? Does this mean we are supposed to tolerate all kinds of immoral behavior? What are the spiritual lessons we are supposed to take away from this married couple's story? How does this experience speak of God in the setting of the great controversy?

### Discussion

The instruction by God to marry a prostitute was for a very specific reason. This Old Testament couple are certainly not being presented as a model, but as an acted parable of Israel's unfaithfulness to God. That point must remain uppermost in our consideration of this example of a married couple. This is a far cry from God's original intent for Adam and Eve!

That this should even be considered as something for our study reflects the desire of God to recognize who we are and what we're doing. The dramatic acted parable reveals that God will use all kinds of means to gain our attention, to break through our self-satisfied apathy and recognize how far we are away from him. Just as a prostitute-wife continually betrays her husband, so do we act towards the God we claim to love—that is the message of Hosea.

But this is not to just criticize and condemn. Hosea paints a picture of God the cuckold, who despite the blatant and flagrant unfaithfulness of his people, still wishes for their return, because of his unfailing love. Hosea 11 is a masterpiece that describes the anguished desire of God who wants us back, home with him once more. Who can remain unmoved at God's agonized cry: "How can I give you up? How can I let you go?" As a father weeping over his wayward children, as a husband tormented by the actions of a faithless wife, God pleads with us to come back to him—not for his sake, but because of his concern for us. He wants to heal us, and he is the only one who can.

### Comment from A. Graham Maxwell

God is always willing to take us back... But Israel did not come back. And yet, through it all there were individuals who knew God very well. Hosea must have known God well to be willing to go through with this thing.... I'm sure he learned a great deal from this as well. But surely it was primarily for the people.

Do you notice, though, what it is that all the prophets seem to say is the cause of the trouble? They're still religious, they're still sacrificing. But you notice in Hosea 4:6, why are they perishing? "My people are dying for lack of knowledge, and because you have rejected knowledge, I have rejected you from being priests to Me." Now, what knowledge? Well, the next line does say,

“because you have forgotten the law of your God.” So that’s in there. That is all the teachings; it’s not just the Decalogue. All the teachings of God, “you have forgotten them.” Notice up above, in verse 1. “Now, hear what the Lord says, you people of Israel, for the Lord has a quarrel with the inhabitants of the land. There is no honesty, nor compassion, nor knowledge *of God*.” You notice, how often that’s mentioned.

The people are perishing because they don’t know God. And of course if you don’t know God, you don’t understand His instruction. In fact, if you don’t know God, His laws may be misunderstood, even, and become a curse rather than a help. Now, that it is the knowledge of God is mentioned so many times.

Look at Hosea 5:4. “It is their deeds which block their pathway back to God, for their spirit is steeped in unfaithfulness.” See, untrustworthiness. It is always mentioned, all through Scripture. And the other thing is, they know nothing of the Lord. Now, they’re worshipping. Do you remember in Jeremiah, the prophets who were prophesying in the name of the Lord, but they were lying? They really didn’t know God. They knew nothing of the Lord, even though they were still apparently worshipping God. *A Graham Maxwell, “THE PICTURE OF GOD IN ALL 66,” Tape #24.*

### **Ellen White Comments**

If men would do their duty as faithful stewards of their Lord’s goods, there would be no cry for bread, none suffering in destitution, none naked and in want. It is the unfaithfulness of men that brings about the state of suffering in which humanity is plunged. If those whom God has made stewards would but appropriate their Lord’s goods to the object for which He gave to them, this state of suffering would not exist. The Lord tests men by giving them an abundance of good things, just as He tested the rich man of the parable. If we prove ourselves unfaithful in the righteous mammon, who shall entrust us the true riches? It will be those who have stood the test on the earth, who have been found faithful, who have obeyed the words of the Lord in being merciful, in using their means for the advancement of His kingdom, that will hear from the lips of the Master, “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.”--Review and Herald, June 26, 1894. {RC 227}

If you are abiding in Christ, learning in His school, you will not be rude, dishonest, or unfaithful. The cross of Christ cuts to the root of all unholy passions and practices. Whatever the nature of your work, you will carry the principles of Christ into your labor and identify yourself with the task given into your hands. Your interest will be one with that of your employer. If you are paid for your time, you will realize that the time for work is not your own, but belongs to the one who pays you for it. If you are careless and extravagant, wasting material, squandering time, failing to be painstaking and diligent, you are registered in the books of heaven as an unfaithful servant. . . . Faithfulness, economy, caretaking, thoroughness, should characterize all our work... “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much” (Luke 16:10). {TMK 93}

The greatest detriment to our churches, that which brings them into weakness and disfavor with God, is unhappy jealousies and differences. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Then let every soul examine himself, and see if he is approaching the committal of any such sins. {RH, June 28, 1887}

