

LOVE STORY
WEEK 1 DISCUSSION GUIDE
"AN EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER"

READ

This week we started a new series called "Love Story". Throughout this series we will be looking at the life of Hosea, a prophet, whose love story was a metaphor for the relationship of Israel with God. In ancient Israel a prophet was a spokesperson, chosen by God to deliver a message. Usually this was accomplished through words but in Hosea's case it was through actions.

The story of Hosea takes place in the mid 700's, during the reign of Jeroboam, who was considered a great leader politically. Israel started as one kingdom but split in two. Israel in the north and Judah in the south. In the north where this story takes place Israel's territory was expanding as they defeated their enemies and there was great wealth. All looked good on the outside but internally it was a mess. The powerful upper-class exploited the poor. Jeroboam set up idols and many worshiped the fertility god Baal. In 722 Assyria would conquer Israel, the end was near yet no one could see it.

Hosea 1:2

When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord."

Hosea's story is a metaphor for what was happening between God and Israel. The people of Israel had entered a covenant relationship with God but they had been continually unfaithful. They had broken the covenant time and time again pursuing and worshiping other gods, that is what Hosea's marriage to a promiscuous woman was meant to symbolize.

Hosea 1:3-6

So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the house of Jehu for the massacre at Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of Israel... Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means "not loved"), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them.

Hosea obeys God's command and marries Gomer, a promiscuous woman. The children's names are symbolic, Israel is coming to an end. With the birth of the second child God announces that the loving feeling between them is gone, he will no longer have compassion on Israel.

Hosea 1:8-9

...Gomer had another son. Then the Lord said, "Call him Lo-Ammi (which means "not my people"), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.

The covenant with Israel has ended. What God is expressing here is hurt. He has done everything for Israel, and every step of the way they responded by worshiping other Gods and breaking the commitment they made. This had been going on for centuries, God had been patient, but they failed to change their ways.

Jesus teaches us about surrender and to say to God, your will be done. The opposite was happening here, God said to Israel, your will be done. You have been professing loyalty to other gods so now you are free of me. But being free of God meant they lost his protection and Assyria would wipe them out. NT Wright has been quoted as saying that hell is the moment when God says to someone...your will be done. You didn't want anything to do with me, ok here you go. That is what Israel was experiencing for the first time, life apart from God, but the story doesn't end there.

Hosea 1:10-11

"Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'children of the living God.' The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together; they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel."

With God love is always the first and last word. Even though Israel has gone down this path, which resulted in the end of the covenant, this is not the end. He quotes from the book of Genesis, and reverses the children's names. Loved, my people, and Jezreel is now good. Judah and Israel will come back together under God. Restoration will happen. This is a message for us as well. The story starts with God's love for us, even though we don't deserve it. There is a mess in the middle, but the end of the story is that God still loves us.

DISCUSS

Just for fun share the story behind your name, any meaning you know of and why this name was chosen.

Think about a time when a relationship you had was broken because of betrayal. Share about this with your group.

Did restoration happen, if so what did this look like?

Reflect on the "mess in the middle" in your life, how have you seen God's love and restoration from hurt, pain and sin.

With God love is always the first and last word. How have you seen this in your life?

PRAY FOR YOUR GROUP

Pray that even when we are in "the mess in the middle" that we would continue to seek God and experience restoration.

PRAY FOR FCC

Pray that we would fully surrender to God, seeking his will, not ours.

PRAY FOR OUR GLOBAL PARTNERS

Please pray for our global trips this year and for those who will step out in faith to learn more about God, grow their faith and come alongside our ministry partners as they reach out to others in the name of Jesus.