

ABOUT HOSEA

Author: Hosea, son of Beeri

Date: 715 BC (Hosea's ministry was from approximately 753 BC–715 BC)

Audience: Primarily the people of Israel (Northern Kingdom, sometimes called Ephraim).¹ Ultimately, all the people of God.²

Contemporary prophets:

Amos: 760–750 BC

Micah: 742–687 BC

Isaiah: 740–681 BC

Historical Context:

The Israelites were God's chosen people. God formed a covenant with Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel, saying, *"I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."* (**Genesis 12:2–3**).³ The covenant He made with Abraham and his descendants promised blessing and relationship with God as well as the Promised Land where they could dwell. He became their God and they became His people. All the people needed to do was remain faithful and obedient to God. As time went on, the people had seasons where they did remain faithful and obedient to God but often they were rebellious and disobedient. Eventually, the Israelites became slaves in Egypt for 400 years until God raised up a deliverer, Moses, to rescue them out of Egypt. God reassured the Israelites that He would give them the Land that He had promised to Abraham.⁴ While the Israelites were waiting to enter the Land, the Lord renewed His covenant with His people. He gave them many instructions and laws to obey so that

¹ "Since Israel [Northern Kingdom] was Hosea's primary audience, it seems strange that four Judean [Southern Kingdom] kings, but only one Israelite king, are mentioned in **1:1**. The reason for the omission of the six Israelite kings who followed Jeroboam II is uncertain. Perhaps it suggests the legitimacy of the Davidic dynasty [of Judah] in contrast with the instability and disintegration of the kingship of the North." Walvoord, John F., and Roy B. Zuck. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Expository of the Scriptures*. Vol. 1, Victor Books, 1985. 1377

² Because of the references to the people of Judah (Southern Kingdom) throughout the book it is clear that the message is for the whole of God's people, not just the Northern Kingdom. Though the fulfillment of many of the events in Hosea do happen to the people of Israel (Northern Kingdom). Walvoord, John F., and Roy B. Zuck. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Expository of the Scriptures*. Vol. 1, Victor Books, 1985. 1377

³ There were multiple covenants made between God and His people in the Old Testament, which itself is often referred to as the Old Covenant. The first is called the Noahic covenant in which God promised Noah that He would never again destroy the world with a flood and the sign of the covenant was a rainbow (**Genesis 9:9–17**). The Abrahamic covenant was the covenant God made with Abraham where, "God promised to bless his descendants and to make them His special people. Abraham, in return, was to remain faithful to God and serve as a channel through which God's blessings could flow to the rest of the world (**Genesis 12:1–3**)." The sign of the Abrahamic covenant was circumcision (**Genesis 17:11**). The Mosaic covenant was God's covenant with the people of Israel. "Its establishment (**Exodus 19:3–25**), stipulations (**Exodus 20:1–17**), exposition (**Exodus 20:22–23:33**), and confirmation (**Exodus 24:1–12**) constituted the formal basis of the relationship between the Lord and his chosen people until it was superseded by the new covenant (**Hebrews 8:3–13**)." The sign for the Mosaic covenant was the Sabbath (**Exodus 31:13, 16–17**). God also made a covenant with David—the Davidic covenant. He established David and his descendants as the royal heirs to the throne, culminating with the Messiah (**2 Samuel 7:12; 22:51**). Youngblood, Ronald F. *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. HarperCollins Christian Pub, 2014. 275

⁴ **Exodus 1–14**

they would be set apart for God.⁵ These instructions included the sacrificial system which made them right and clean before the Lord.⁶ He laid out great blessings for His people's obedience, but warned of curses for their disobedience.⁷ However, the Israelites disobeyed out of fear and ended up wandering 40 years in the desert.⁸

Once the Israelites entered the Land, they disobeyed God by not killing all of the other nations, which led them to be heavily influenced by those nations against God.⁹ For years, the Israelites were governed by the judges God put in place. Whenever the Israelites had a period of prosperity they would fall into a pattern of sin and rebellion,¹⁰ then God would allow others to oppress them until they cried out in repentance. So God would raise up another judge who would help rescue them from oppression and the cycle would repeat.¹¹ Eventually, the people cried out for a king to rule them like the other nations, even though God was supposed to be their king.¹² God raised up a man named Saul to be the king. Saul struggled with trust and obedience and ultimately the kingship was taken away from him.¹³ Then David, a man after God's own heart, was given the throne.¹⁴ After David's reign, his son Solomon ruled.¹⁵ After Solomon's reign, the nation was divided into two nations:¹⁶ The Kingdom of Israel (The Northern Kingdom) and The Kingdom of Judah (The Southern Kingdom). Each kingdom had a series of kings, some kings followed and obeyed God and some kings were evil and did not follow God. Regardless of their leadership, the people continued to be heavily influenced by other nations and other gods.¹⁷

When Hosea became a prophet, it was to the people of Israel who were experiencing a period of prosperity.¹⁸ This meant that they were more prone to disobedience. Hosea was warning the people that an exile was sure to come for their disobedience. He implored them to return to God. Yet the cycle from their history repeated and the Northern Kingdom was taken captive by the Assyrians¹⁹ in 722 BC.²⁰

⁵ Exodus 19–34

⁶ Leviticus 1–7

⁷ Deuteronomy 28

⁸ Numbers 14

⁹ Judges 1:1–2:15

¹⁰ Judges 17:6

¹¹ Judges 2:16–23

¹² 1 Samuel 8

¹³ 1 Samuel 9–31

¹⁴ 1 Samuel 16; 2 Samuel 1–1 Kings 2

¹⁵ 1 Kings 2–11

¹⁶ 1 Kings 12

¹⁷ 1 Kings 12–2 Kings 25

¹⁸ Longman, Tremper, et al. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Zondervan, 2007. 355

¹⁹ 2 Kings 14–17

²⁰ Although Hosea speaks heavily to the Northern Kingdom, he was addressing both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. The Northern and Southern Kingdoms did both go into exile, though at different times: the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC and the Southern Kingdom between 597–581 BC

TIMELINE

Israel's Kings

793 BC – Jeroboam II became king of Israel. He reigned for 40 years.

753 BC – Zechariah became king of Israel. He reigned for 6 months and did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam. He was killed by Shallum.

752 BC – Shallum became king of Israel. He reigned for 1 month then was killed by Menahem.

752 BC – Menahem became king of Israel. He reigned for 10 years and did evil in the Lord's sight.

742 BC – Pekahiah became king of Israel. He reigned for 2 years and did evil in the Lord's sight. He was assassinated by Pekah.

740 BC – Pekah became king of Israel. He reigned for 20 years and did evil in the Lord's sight.

732 BC – Hoshea became king of Israel. He reigned for 9 years and did what was evil in the Lord's sight, but not to the same extent as the kings of Israel who ruled before him.

722 BC – Assyrian exile began.

Judah's Kings

792 BC – Uzziah became king of Judah. He reigned for 52 years and sought God but then became powerful and prideful. He sinned against the Lord and was struck with leprosy.

750 BC – Jotham became king of Judah. He reigned for 16 years and did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight (though the people kept on sinning).

735 BC – Ahaz became king of Judah. He reigned for 16 years and he did not do what was pleasing in the Lord's sight. He was attacked by other nations including Israel, the Northern Kingdom. He worshiped other gods and closed the Temple.

715 BC – Hezekiah became king of Judah. He reigned for 29 years and did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight. He also rededicated the Temple.

Hosea

753 BC – Hosea became a prophet

715 BC – Hosea's ministry ended

BIBLICAL LITERATURE

God chose to share His Word with us first through oral tradition and then through written word. Literature and storytelling is something that all of humanity shares. As we read the Word of God and explore the unique structures, language, and phrases used by the authors through the empowerment of Holy Spirit, we continue to learn about the character of God and the grand story He is writing.

“God did not neglect beauty when he created the world, and he did not neglect it when he superintended the composition of the Bible. The literary parts of the Bible are replete with artistry, and to pay attention to it and unfold it through analysis is an important part of a literary approach to the Bible. Doing so can add a whole new dimension and level of enjoyment to our reading and study of the Bible.”²¹

PROPHETIC LITERATURE

When you approach prophetic literature it’s important to remember the role of the prophet, why they were needed, and why their message was recorded and preserved. “The prophets were covenant enforcement mediators. . . . Israel’s law constituted a covenant between God and his people . . . containing both stipulations and sanctions. God’s covenant with Israel, therefore, contains not only regulations and statues for them to keep but describes the sorts of sanctions that accompanied the Law. [In other words, the sorts of blessings his people would experience if they kept the Law and the sorts of punishment they would receive if they do not.] Thus God does not merely give Israel his law, but he enforces it. This is where the prophets come in. God announced the enforcement (positive or negative) of his law through them, so that the events of blessing or cursing would be clearly understood by his people. . . . They are God’s mediators, or spokespersons, for the covenant. Through them God reminds people in the generations after Moses that if his law is kept, blessing will result, but if not, punishment will ensue.”²²

“What we read in the prophetic books, then, is not merely God’s Word as the prophet saw it but God’s Word as God wished the prophet to present it. The prophet does not act or speak independently of God.”²³

THE LITERATURE OF HOSEA²⁴

Hosea is often recognized as a favorite among the minor²⁵ prophets due to its poetic imagery, diversity in literary devices, and dynamic composition. “The book accomplishes its timeless purposes by joining literary imagination with its theological message in an exceptional way.”²⁶ Trying to discern the structure and form of Hosea has proven difficult among Old Testament scholars. Many scholars recognize the artistic contribution Hosea makes to the canon of Scripture, not only because of its loose structure but also the author’s ability to move between genres, literary devices, and communication

²¹ Ryken, Leland. “10 Things You Should Know about the Bible as Literature.” *Crossway*, 10 Feb. 2017, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-the-bible-as-literature/>.

²² Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas K. Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Zondervan, 2014. 184

²³ Ibid. 184. See **2 Peter 1:21**.

²⁴ For more interesting literary devices used in Hosea, see the Appendix on page 22.

²⁵ The term “minor” prophets refers to length rather than importance.

²⁶ David A. Hubbard, *Hosea: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 24, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. InterVarsity Press, 1989. 38

techniques. And while the book is appreciated for these things, in the same vein it can be difficult to study for those seeking to find order and structure. In this section we will highlight some literary techniques presented in the book of Hosea.

Structure/Outline:

As stated above, the literary structure and outline of this book has proven to be difficult. Therefore, one must make an interpretative decision as to what would be the best way to outline this book. Outlining the structure of Hosea can either be governed by grammatical and syntactical markers²⁷ or via its themes.

Thematic Outline

- **Hosea 1:1–3:5**—The loving prophet and divine love
- **Hosea 4:1–5:15**—Unfaithful people and divine discipline
- **Hosea 6:1–7:16**—Fleeting loyalty and divine policy
- **Hosea 8:1–10:15**—Disloyal people and the divine harvest
- **Hosea 11:1–13:16**—Fleeting loyalty and the divine parent
- **Hosea 14:1–9**—Human repentance and the righteous God

For the purposes of our study, the book is broken into three major sections:

- **Hosea 1–3**—Hosea’s story
- **Hosea 4–11**—Accusations and Warnings for Israel
- **Hosea 12–14**—Accusations and Future Hope

Literary Background:

As is stated before, Hosea’s historical background is set during 753–715 BC in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The literary background of Hosea has three key features which are important for understanding the book.

1. Hosea is written in the Hebrew dialect of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, which supports a northern origin.
2. The book mentions the reign of four kings from Judah,²⁸ which implies an editorial compilation in Judah after the fall of Samaria in 722 BC.
3. The covenant theology of Hosea closely resembles that of Deuteronomy.

²⁷ If you are interested in the grammatical outline please email lifegroups@salemalliance.org.

²⁸ **Hosea 1:1**

HOSEA FOR TODAY

How can we read and apply the Old Testament to our lives today? Specifically, how do we read and understand the books of the Prophets, like Hosea? First, we remember that a prophet's primary function was to speak for God to their own contemporaries.²⁹ Prophets announced the blessings and curses related to the covenant that God had with Israel.³⁰ When Israel was following God's laws, they were corporately blessed, but when they were disobedient, they received corporate punishment.³¹

We, as believers today, are no longer under the old covenant but the new covenant. In the new covenant, Christ's death and resurrection paid our sin price once and for all time.³² Yet, while we are no longer bound to the sacrificial system as the Israelites once were, Hosea's message remains applicable to our lives.

Throughout the book, Hosea warned the people of the consequences that were coming as a result of their idolatry, ingratitude, and hypocrisy. Yet God always wanted His people to come back to Him. Hosea's marriage to Gomer, a woman who would not remain faithful to him, is a "vivid picture of what the people of Israel had done to their God by prostituting themselves to idols and committing 'spiritual adultery'. Since God's people today face the same temptations (aligning ourselves with things other than God), we need to heed what Hosea wrote for his people"³³

The great news is that the sins of Gomer, Israel, and even ourselves are not the end of the story. For Hosea is ultimately a story about God's great love for the Israelites and also reveals His love for us, His Church. Throughout Scripture, God's people are called the bride of Christ. God has sought us out and redeemed us.³⁴ He loves us deeply and we are beautiful and made clean.³⁵

Hosea gives us a picture of the messiness that God is willing to go through with His people Israel and with us. It departs from the picture of God being a stoic and removed judge. While God does tell us what to do, what not to do, and what the consequences are, He is also compassionate and willing to be vulnerable. He is willing to chase us down, pay our sin debt, and bring us home to be His people. Regardless of our past, He finds a way to continue in relationship with us. Christ's work on earth through His life, death, and resurrection is the perfect culmination of the rest of the story.

Think of the parallels between Gomer and Hosea and how Christ acts towards and loves the Church. God does not change. His love for His people is steadfast, sacrificial and just. He pursues us even when we stray far from Him. We have much to learn from the book of Hosea. May God open our eyes and hearts as we spend time in His Word.

²⁹ Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas K. Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Zondervan, 2014. 182

³⁰ Ibid. 184

³¹ Ibid. 185

³² **Hebrews 9:11–28**

³³ Wiersbe, Warren W.,. *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: The Complete Old Testament in One Volume*. David C Cook, 2007. 1394

³⁴ **Romans 5:8**

³⁵ **1 John 1:9**

WEEK ONE

HOSEA 1-3

Reading Plan

As you read the passages, notice what words or phrases Holy Spirit highlights for you. Spend time talking with Jesus about what you are reading.

Day 1: **Hosea 1:1-2:1**

Day 2: **Hosea 2:2-13**

Day 3: **Hosea 2:14-23**

Day 4: **Hosea 3**

Questions

1. From **Hosea 1:1-9**, what do you notice about God's call on Hosea?

a. How would you have responded to this shocking assignment?

b. Why do you think God had Hosea live out His message in this very unusual way?³⁶

2. What hope do you find in **Hosea 1:10–2:1**? What does it reveal to you about God?

3. In chapter 2 we get to see God’s heart for His people; He is broken-hearted at their unfaithfulness. Through his poetic prophecy, Hosea tells the people that God is going to punish them for their rebellion and unfaithfulness (**2:2–13**). Yet God loves them and longs for a restored relationship with them. There is hope and a promise that this relationship will be restored in the future.
- a. How is God going to woo His people back to Himself? (**2:14–23**)

³⁶ There are multiple theories about Gomer and her actions before and after her marriage to Hosea. Here are two of the most common theories:

1. “[Calling Gomer a prostitute] does not necessarily mean that she had already shown a tendency to sexual promiscuity when he was courting her or that she was already a woman of ill fame when he married her. It is clearly implied in **Hosea 1:3–4** that the prophet himself was the father of their firstborn child, Jezreel. We cannot be sure about the paternity of the next two children, Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi, though there is no clear indication that Hosea had not also begotten them as well. All that we can be sure of is that after their birth Hosea was given a message from God (**2:2–13**) in which the names are related to the religious harlotry of the northern kingdom of Israel. Since Hosea’s marriage relationship is intended to serve as a type of Yahweh’s relationship to Israel, it could legitimately be inferred that Gomer had become pregnant by some paramour rather than by her lawful husband. Chapter 3 strongly suggests that Gomer had deserted Hosea’s home and had run off with some lover, ultimately ending up as a slave (perhaps as a prostitute in a house of ill fame) who had to be purchased from the person to whom she had sold herself.” Archer, Gleason L. *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties: Based on the NIV and the NASB*. Zondervan, 1998. Bible Gateway Plus
2. “Regarding the possibility of her involvement in prostitution, we must rule out for lack of evidence any notion that Hosea’s wife was likely involved in what is normally meant by “sacred prostitution”—i.e., prostitution at a temple where the sex act was done imitatively to conjure up fertility among the gods. Second, the Hebrew syntax of the phrase in which “promiscuous” occurs *can* (and usually does) describe the *present* behavior of the woman, thereby favoring the notion that Gomer was promiscuous at the time Hosea married her. Thirdly, the Hebrew directive draws especial attention to the implications of the command for the person who receives the command, suggesting in this case that the Lord knew that he was asking Hosea to do something ominous, at personal cost.” Walton, John H., and Craig S. Keener. *NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture*. Zondervan, 2019. Bible Gateway Plus

b. What will this restored relationship be like?

c. What hope do these promises bring for you?

4. Hosea was called to live out God's message by going and buying his wife out of prostitution and restoring her (**Hosea 3:1–5**).³⁷ What do you imagine Hosea experienced in this process?

a. What does that tell you about God's experience with His people/us?

b. What would you like to say to God in response to His love for, and pursuit of, you?

³⁷ "In those days, the slaves were sold naked, stripped of clothing and robbed of every bit of human dignity. ... What Hosea did for Gomer, pictures what God has done for us through Christ to redeem us." Vines, Jerry. *Vines Expository Bible: New King James Version*. Thomas Nelson, 2018. Bible Gateway Plus

Spiritual Practice

Pause and think through your relationship with God:

Where have you seen Him be faithful to you even when you may struggle with unfaithfulness?³⁸

How has He kindly wooed you back to Himself?

Spend time in worshipful response. You could:

- Draw a picture/create a piece of art
- Take a walk
- Thank God for His kindness
- Share your thoughts with a friend
- Sing/listen to a song
- Etc.

On Mission

What could it look like for you to partner with God as He is wooing someone back to Himself?

³⁸ Unfaithfulness can be defined as depending on anything other than God or anything that gets in the way of your relationship with God. In our context and culture sometimes that means we depend on ourselves, figuring out how to solve problems without taking them to Jesus first. The process of confessing sin and repenting isn't oppressive, it's restoring the relationship to the way it is intended to be.

3. **Hosea 4–5** highlight the estrangement between the people and the land that occurred when sin entered God’s creation.

a. How do the sins of Israel affect God’s creation? (**Hosea 4:3**)

b. Why do you think God allowed that to happen?

c. Why do you believe Hosea made the connection between the people’s sin and the land?

d. How do you see sin influencing creation today?

4. Consider the relationship Israel had with the surrounding nations in **Hosea 5:8–15** and **7:8–16**. Where do you see the themes of syncretism (compromise)³⁹ and nominalism (insincerity or apathy)⁴⁰ in these passages?

³⁹ The merging of two different religions and cultic practices. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syncretism>

⁴⁰ Existing only in name and practice. Excluding devotion and genuine commitment. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nominalism>

Spiritual Practice

Our covenantal relationship with God is based on the work of Jesus' death and resurrection, which perfectly demonstrates God's willingness to pursue His people.

Much of our part in this covenantal relationship is responding to the invitation to come to God in confession, repentance, restoration, and deeper intimacy. Just as God longed for Israel to turn back to Him, He longs for us to come close to Him as well.

Take some time to allow Holy Spirit to bring to mind those things that distract you from deeper relationship with God.

Consider the practice of nurturing and growing this covenant relationship through the invitation to practice confession, repentance, and restoration.

Pray this prayer from **Psalms 139:23–24** and listen for what Holy Spirit brings to mind:

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*

Confess those things out loud and ask God to forgive you.

Receive His forgiveness, knowing He loves you and sees you. Declare the way you will walk forward in that forgiveness using **Psalms 32:1–2**:

*Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sin is put out of sight!
Yes, what joy for those
whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt,
whose lives are lived in complete honesty!*

On Mission

Hosea clearly shows us that our relationship with God affects how we interact with the land, with those in leadership, and with the people around us. Therefore, our involvement in those areas can be a reflection of where our heart is with God. If we're apathetic, negligent, unaware, etc. it could be an indication that we're somewhat out of step with God. In the spiritual practice section we considered our vertical relationship (intimacy with God). In this section, consider your horizontal relationships (spheres of influence). Prayerfully consider how you might allow the blessings of relationship with the Father to move you towards loving your neighbor or community.

Consider these ways of impacting your community and prayerfully choose one to say yes to as the Lord leads:

- Community Involvement—have a conversation with a neighbor, even inviting them to share a meal
- Volunteer at church or at a local organization
- Fight for the marginalized
- Support a non-profit in your community
- Other ideas you or your group come up with ...

WEEK THREE

HOSEA 11:12–14:8

In this final section of Hosea, the prophet continued to convince his audience that God will deal with the problem of sin. Deceitfulness undermines their relationship with God and their only hope is to repent.⁴¹

Reading Plan

As you read the passages, notice what words or phrases Holy Spirit highlights for you. Spend time talking with Jesus about what you are reading.

Day 1: **Hosea 11:12–12:6**

Day 2: **Hosea 12:7–14**

Day 3: **Hosea 13:1–8**

Day 4: **Hosea 13:9–16**

Day 5: **Hosea 14:1–8**

Questions

1. Deceit is “the action or practice of deceiving someone by concealing or misrepresenting the truth.”⁴² As you read through **Hosea 12**, what deceitful actions do you see the people of Israel and Judah doing?

What consequences for their sins do you see in **Hosea 13**?

2. “In **chapters 12–13**, Hosea gives an Israelite history lesson to show just how they’ve been unfaithful from the very beginning. He alludes to the patriarch Jacob’s lying and treachery (**Genesis 27–28**), to Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness (**Numbers 12–20**), and to their appointment of the corrupt King Saul—who led them into disaster (**1 Samuel 12** and **15**). This is Hosea’s way of saying that some things never change.”⁴³

⁴¹ Smith, Gary V. *NIV Application Commentary: Hosea, Amos, Micah*. Zondervan, 2001. 171

⁴² “Deceit English Definition and Meaning.” *Lexico Dictionaries/English*, Lexico Dictionaries, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/deceit>.

⁴³ Mackie, Timothy P. *Read Scripture: Illustrated Summaries of Biblical Books*. The Bible Project, 2017. 58

What about that sentiment, “some things never change,” challenges or surprises you?

Do you agree or disagree with this sentiment? Why or why not?

3. The truth is, though we have been forgiven, our sin struggles don't go away completely. Yet, just like God continued to call the Israelites back to Himself, He pursues and calls us back as well. What did God ask the people to do in **Hosea 12:6**?
 - a. What did God ask the people to do in **Hosea 14:1–3**?
 - b. What did God promise in **Hosea 14:4–8**?
 - c. What word pictures about God's restoration of Israel in these verses stand out to you and why?

4. What do you learn about the character of God in **chapter 14**?

5. How might you respond to God?

Spiritual Practice

In **Hosea 12**, the Israelites claim credit for their riches and success. However, the truth is only God can take credit for those things. He is the one who delivered them from slavery.⁴⁴ They owe their very existence to God's work on their behalf.

Allow Holy Spirit to remind you of the things in your life that you tend to take credit for that are really God working on your behalf. Make a list of those things below. Then spend time offering praise and thanksgiving to God, who deserves all the glory.

On Mission

*Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. **2 Corinthians 4:4***

Scripture tells us that deceitfulness is a tactic of the enemy. We see in **2 Corinthians 4:4** that, "*Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe.*" Without the light of Jesus, it's impossible to see the need for repentance. As a response to this truth, when you find yourself in physical darkness this week (e.g. as you are going to bed, walking at night, closing your eyes to pray, etc), let the darkness be a reminder to pray against the deceitful work of the enemy in your spheres of influence, your neighborhood, or the nations. Pray that Jesus would open the eyes of those specific people with "*the glorious light of the Good News.*"

⁴⁴ Hosea 12:9

3. God's heart for people to know Him is evident in **John 3:16–17** and **Luke 19:10** but also throughout the rest of Scripture. Where do you see these same themes in your reading/knowledge of other parts of the Bible?

4. How has God revealed Himself to you through this study of Hosea?

Spiritual Practice

Take some time to write out your salvation story. What circumstances led you to accept Christ? Who was instrumental in your journey? How did God pursue you and draw you to Himself?

Spend time thanking Jesus for how He has saved you and the ways He has pursued you.

On Mission

One of the best ways to share Jesus with someone is to tell them how He has impacted your life. Think through your spheres of influence and pick someone who Holy Spirit is prompting you to share your story with. You don't have to expect an immediate response, just continue to share how God is working in your life.

APPENDIX

These literary devices are seen primarily in the original language and may not be reflected clearly in more modern translations. However, they are still helpful to know in understanding how the prophet was communicating God's message to His people.

Literary Devices used in Hosea⁴⁶

- **Judgment Speech:** Speeches which give an accusation of sin and an announcement of judgment. (See **Hosea 1:2, 4–9; 2:6, 9; 4:3**)
- **Salvation Speeches:** Speeches with restorative and redemptive language about the state of Israel and her relationship with God. (See **Hosea 1:10–2:1; 2:14–23; 3:5; 11:10–11; 14:4–7**)
- **Proverbs:** Conventional wisdom summed up in memorable statements to remind Israel of their sin and folly. (See **Hosea 4:9, 11, 15; 8:7; 10:12**)
- **Battle Warnings:** Warnings framed in imperatives and filled with trumpet blasts which serve to dramatize the terror, certainty, and suddenness of the judgement. (See **Hosea 5:8; 8:1**)
- **Exhortations to Repentance:** Encouragement designed to reinforce the constant emphasis on the return of Israel to her right relationship with God. (See **Hosea 6:1–3; 10:12; 12:6; 14:1–3**)
- **Prohibitions:** Warnings to stop a behavior or activity. (See **Hosea 4:15; 9:1**)
- **Love Song:** God's pledge of commitment, similar to the Song of Solomon. (See **Hosea 14:5–7**)
- **Woes:** Declarations of great sorrow and distress. (See **Hosea 7:13; 9:12b**)
- **Rhetorical Questions:** Questions asked in order to create a dramatic effect or make a point. (See **Hosea 4:16; 9:5; 10:3, 9; 11:8; 13:10, 14; 14:8**)
- **Divine Complaint:** Complaints which express the burden of the authors message. (See **Hosea 2:8; 4:16; 6:4; 6:11b–7:2; 7:13c–15; 8:5; 9:10; 10:11; 11:1–4, 8; 13:4–6; 14:8**)
- **Signs of open argument:** Public proclamations that use a call to attention which assumes the presence of an audience. (See **Hosea 4:4; 5:2–3; 9:7–8**)
- **Similes and Metaphors:** Figures of speech that are used as word pictures in order to symbolize a characteristic of either Israel or God. (See **Hosea 1:2; 2:4–5; 3:3; 4:10–15, 18; 5:3–4; 6:10; 7:4; 9:1** for examples of Israel; See **Hosea 2:14–23; 5:14; 11:10; 13:7–8; 14:8** for examples of God)
- **Puns:** Jokes exploiting the different possible meanings of a word or the fact that there are words which sound alike but have different meanings. (See **Hosea 1:4; 2:22–23; 8:9; 13:15; 14:8**)

Discourse Features

Discourse features are often hard to discern, especially when one is not familiar with the original languages. Discourse can be defined as: *any piece of extended language, written or spoken, that has unity and meaning and purpose.*⁴⁷ Thus, much of what will be highlighted in this section isn't intuitive unless one is familiar with the patterns and conventions of that particular language. The hope is to explain four specific features common in the book of Hosea in order to highlight both the authors artistry in written communication and devices used to portray the theological message:

1. **Shifting Grammatical Persons:** This feature refers to the author shifting rapidly from first-, second-, and third-person forms of address. These rapid shifts act as a warning and observation

⁴⁶ These literary devices can also be found in the other prophetic books of the Old Testament.

⁴⁷ Hwang, Jerry. *Hosea. Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament A Discourse Analysis of the Hebrew Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2021. 53

of the growing chasm between God and His people. These shifts also show us the increasing distress on the part of God because of the unbalance in His relationship with Israel.

- For example,⁴⁸ in the original language, Hosea 5 begins with the second-person “you” in **Hosea 5:1–2a** and follows it with first-person condemnation of Israel’s sins (**5:2b–3a**):
*¹ “Hear this, **YOU** priests! Pay attention, **YOU** Israelites! Listen, royal house! This judgment is against **YOU**: **YOU** have been a snare at Mizpah, a net spread out on Tabor. ² The rebels are knee-deep in slaughter. I will discipline all of them. ³ I know all about Ephraim ...*

Following those accusations, the covenantal intimacy represented by “I” and “you” language turns into the third-person (**3:b–4**). This highlights the separation in relationship between Israel and God: ... **ISRAEL** is not hidden from me. ... **ISRAEL** is corrupt. ⁴ **THEIR** deeds do not permit them to return to **THEIR GOD**. A spirit of prostitution is in **THEIR** heart; **THEY** do not acknowledge **THE LORD**.

2. **Broken Chiasm:** Chiasm is a literary structure where parallel elements appear in an inverted order (i.e., A-B-B'-A'). Often this literary structure is used to communicate order or completion. However, Hosea often delays or splits the elements of the chiasm, hence the term broken. He uses this feature in order to heighten suspense for the hearer/reader.
 - For example, in the original language of **Hosea 8:9–13** the expected pairing of Assyria and Egypt⁴⁹ as consequence of Israel’s sin is postponed by an interruption to the chiasm.
 - i. **8:9** “they went up [A] to Assyria [B]”
 - ii. **8:10–12** Broken Chiasm
 - iii. **8:13** “To Egypt [B'] they will return [A]”
 - **Verses 10–12** detail God’s judgment against the sins of Israel’s kings and priests. Thus the first half of the chiasm hangs in the balance while drawing the audience into the judgment speech, with the delayed arrival of the chiasm’s conclusion sealing the fate of Israel in exile.
3. **Pseudosorites:** Pseudosorites represents a paradox of poetic lines that undermine one another as they unfold in sequence. In laymen terms, the author is communicating an event/judgment and yet undermining it at the same time. Hosea uses this feature in order to magnify disorderliness in his depiction of the world. The unsettling result is the disintegration of God and Israel’s commitments to one another.
 - For example, **Hosea 9:10–12** shows how disobedience increases Israel’s estrangement from God: (1) their rejection/desertion of God (**9:10**) means that “*your children will not be born or grow in the womb or even be conceived.*” (**9:11**); (2) this declaration is immediately challenged by the statement, “*Even if you do have children that grow up*” (**9:12a**), which is followed by the statement, “*I will take them from you*” (**9:12b**).
4. **Wordplay:** Wordplay in a poetic book like Hosea is the repetition of words or sounds. Hosea's use of wordplay is helpful in tracing the constantly changing circumstances in the relationship between God and Israel. For example:

⁴⁸ For this example, the New International Version was used.

⁴⁹ See **Hosea 7:11; 9:3**

- “Jezreel,” has the same root as the Hebrew word, זרע (“to sow”), in order to depict both negative and positive dimensions of God’s dealings with Israel. *“What a day that will be—the day of Jezreel—when God will again plant [sow] his people in his land.” (1:11)*

The use of this root word continues to span the major themes of Hosea’s prophecy:

- Israel is commanded to *“plant [or sow] the good seeds of righteousness” (10:12)*
- Israel’s failure to sow will bring punishment *“they have planted [or sown] the wind and will harvest the whirlwind” (8:7)*
- But Israel will be saved from exile by God’s promise that *“I will plant [or sow] a crop of Israelites and raise them for myself.” (2:23)*