

RECAP

As you consider last week's message and practice were you able find moments to remember God, even if it was difficult? Describe your experience as a group?

IDEA 1

The Israelites, stuck in a cycle of going back to the same place of sin and rebellion over and over again. Hosea is the account of a prophet in the nation of Israel that remarkably illustrates God's relentless pursuit of His people, His vulnerability and His great love.... Today we will see that God, in his love and relentless pursuit, provided a way out of the cycle. Jennifer challenged us to identify the places in our lives where we keep failing to see how God has cared for us and that he is trustworthy with our future.

Why do you think we find it easy to turn from God and look to other things for care and safety?

How is our relationship with God affected by our cycle of turning to other things?

Share about a time in your life where you saw yourself trusting in something other than God?

IDEA 2

Jennifer encouraged us that even when we fail to trust God, he invites us to repent. Repentance is the process of turning around. It means that you were going one way, but now you are going another.

How would you define repentance? Why do we find it so hard to change our behavior?

How does knowing that it is God who heals us from our sin enable you to truly repent?

What might the restoration of God look like in your life?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Take some time to meditate on Hosea 14. Either have one person read it aloud, or have everyone read it softly to themselves under their breath. Go slowly and read the passage two or three times through.. The objective is not to get through the passage; the objective is to chew on it, to let your imagination linger on the poetic imagery. Focus especially on the things God says about himself in verses 4-5 and 8. Finish your time of meditation by praying to God, asking him to help you turn from the idols and destructive ways of sin and turn back to him. Thank God that he has made a way for us to turn back to him through his son Jesus.

4 The Lord says,

**“Then I will heal you of your faithlessness;
my love will know no bounds,
for my anger will be gone forever.**

5 I will be to Israel

like a refreshing dew from heaven.

Israel will blossom like the lily;

**it will send roots deep into the soil
like the cedars in Lebanon.**

8 “O Israel, stay away from idols!

I am the one who answers your prayers and cares for you.

I am like a tree that is always green;

all your fruit comes from me.”

APPLICATION

In Hosea, God used the story of his relationship with his people to call them back to himself. We can practice telling ourselves the story of how God has rescued us in our own lives as a way to turn back to God as well. Sometime in the next week, take a few minutes to write down a story or two about how God has been at work in your life through Jesus' life, death and resurrection. If you need help finding a place to start, consider the following questions:

Were there situations, thoughts, or behaviors that you used to participate in that were destructive to yourself or others?

Was there a moment where God began to rescue you from those destructive situations, thoughts, or behaviors?

Describe how you continue to allow God to break cycles of situations, thoughts or behaviors that are destructive?

Be prepared to share one of your stories with your group the next time you meet.