

*A Sinful Marriage
And A Sinful Nation*

Hosea

MEMORY VERSE

HOSEA 4:1

“Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel, for the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: ‘there is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land.’”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Two pairs of adult shoes.

An “I Follow Jesus“ Tie template for each child, copied onto cardstock, markers or crayons, scissors, a hole punch and yarn.

ATTENTION GETTER!

The Wave

Have your entire class stand in a single-file line. Explain that the leader will make a movement, such as raising both hands over his or her head. The next person in line will follow, but the third person will keep his or her eyes on the second person and not perform the action until the second person has completed it. This process will continue down the line until every player has performed the action in turn. The result will be a pattern, like a “wave.”

Some other actions that the leader might do are bending down on one knee, leaning far to the left or right, raising and lowering a leg to the side, putting hands on hips, or jumping straight up. Optional: try adding music once the children have caught on.

Use this activity to introduce today’s lesson and to show how important it is to follow Jesus no matter what.

LESSON TIME!

Hosea, whose name means help, or salvation, served as a prophet during the same time as Isaiah and Amos. His book is the first of the Minor Prophets. Hosea prophesied primarily to the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, and the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. (Israel, at that time was divided: the northern kingdom, Israel; the southern kingdom, Judah).

Although there existed times of “outward” prosperity in the country, inwardly, Israel had become very corrupt. Forsaking the worship of God, the people began to embrace false idols and participate in pagan practices. Though Israel’s love for God had changed, God’s love for His people had not changed. The heart of God was broken. Hosea was sent by God to construct a picture designed to show Israel His perspective on this broken relationship. **Man’s rebellion breaks the heart of God.**

HOSEA 1:1-10:

The word of the LORD that came to Hosea the son of Beerī, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry And children of harlotry, For the land has committed great harlotry By departing from the LORD."

So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

Then the LORD said to him: "Call his name Jezreel, For in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, And bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.

It shall come to pass in that day That I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel."

And she conceived again and bore a daughter. Then God said to him: "Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, For I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, But I will utterly take them away.

Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, Will save them by the LORD their God, And will not save them by bow, Nor by sword or battle, By horses or horsemen."

Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son.

Then God said: "Call his name Lo-Ammi, For you are not My people, And I will not be your God.

"Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.'

At the beginning of Hosea's ministry, God commanded Hosea to marry an immoral woman, Gomer. Why would God ask Hosea, who loved and served God, to marry such a woman? God was creating a picture of His relationship with the unfaithful nation of Israel. Hosea's experiences were to depict God's experiences. Gomer's unfaithfulness hurt Hosea deeply; likewise, Israel's sin and rebellion broke the heart of God.

Hosea and Gomer had three children. Then, Gomer left Hosea for a life of sin; but, Hosea never stopped loving his wife--just like God never stopped loving Israel. Eventually, Gomer ended up as the slave to another man.

When we put anything above God in our hearts we become guilty of idol worship, and we break God's heart. God desires a deep and meaningful relationship with us. When our attention is divided, we easily become slaves to that which we are worshipping. We can find ourselves like Gomer, far away from the only one who loves us truly. **Man's rebellion breaks the heart of God.**

HOSEA 3:1-5:

Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans."

So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley.

And I said to her, "You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so, too, will I be toward you."

For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim.

Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.

The Lord told Hosea to buy back Gomer and restore her to the position of his wife. A beautiful picture of redemption is created. God has bought us back from the enemy of sin that held us captive. The Bible says, "...The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). We owed a debt we could not pay. Jesus, our Redeemer, paid our debt when He took our punishment on the cross. To redeem means to "buy back." No longer slaves, sentenced to death, we have been forgiven and restored to fellowship with God. We now enjoy a deep and meaningful relationship with God as His own dear children.

Walking in Someone Else's Shoes

Hosea's calling was not easy. When Hosea allowed his life and relationships to show a picture of God's relationship with the nation Israel, it was like Hosea was "walking in God's shoes."

Have the class split into two equal teams. Make two single file lines. Have all of the children take off their shoes. At the other end of the room, have two pairs of adult shoes. When you say, "go" the first child in line will run to the other end of the room and put on the adult shoes and lace them up. Next, they will walk back to their team and give the shoes to the next person who will take the shoes to the other end of the room and come back. The third person will then go to the end and put on the shoes, etc. Continue play in this pattern until there is a pattern. Keep playing until the children tire of the game.

HOSEA: 11:1-11:

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.

As they called them, So they went from them; They sacrificed to the Baals, And burned incense to carved images.

"I taught Ephraim to walk, Taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them.

I drew them with gentle cords, With bands of love, And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them.

"He shall not return to the land of Egypt; But the Assyrian shall be his king, Because they refused to repent.

And the sword shall slash in his cities, Devour his districts, And consume them, Because of their own counsels.

My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, None at all exalt Him.

"How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred.

I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst; And I will not come with terror.

"They shall walk after the LORD. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, Then His sons shall come trembling from the west;

They shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, Like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses," Says the LORD.

Despite the nation Israel's unfaithfulness to God, His love for them never stopped. In verse one, God declares his love for Israel, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." Israel was God's chosen people and called his son. God brought them out of Egypt, showing His love and giving them the land of Canaan as an inheritance for many generations.

When we read Matthew 2:15, "...Out of Egypt I called my Son," we can see that God also had in mind His own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, when Hosea spoke these words. C.I. Scofield comments on Hosea 11:1 as follows: "...the passage illustrates the principle that prophecies often have a deeper meaning than at first appears. Israel, as a nation, was a son (Exodus 4:22), but Christ was the greater Son." Jesus was called out of Egypt, and He was the One who greatly pleased the Father.

In tender love, God brought His children, Israel, out of the terrible bondage of Egypt. How sad that they turned their hearts far from Him. God's tender care for His children is so clearly pictured as God describes how He had taught Ephraim to take his earliest steps, as it were, holding his arms and directing his way. God drew them with gentle cords and with bands of love, delivering them from their yoke (bondage) and providing all their needs. Just like an ungrateful child, Israel forgot the One to whom they owed so much, and did not know that He had healed them.

Though Israel thought to return to Egypt, God would allow the Assyrians to rule over them. Israel had forgotten God and sown to wickedness; they had walked in “their own counsels” (verse 6), and would experience the consequences of their foolish choices. Though He continually called Israel to repentance, God said His people were “bent on backsliding” from Him (verse 7). How sad!

In verse 8, we witness the broken heart of God--“How can I give you up? ...My heart churns within Me, My sympathy is stirred.” **Man’s rebellion breaks the heart of God.** Yet, though His people refused to acknowledge Him, had turned their back on Him, and were worshipping idols, God *could not* let them go. It is comforting to understand God’s deep love for us and to realize He is *not* like a man. Even though we may break God’s heart, we do not alter His love or His Word and purposes. Though we may fail Him; He will not fail us. He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

Though Ephraim should have been destroyed for their sin, God preserved a remnant in grace, which shall yet “walk after the Lord.” In the day that “He will roar like a lion.” When Jesus Christ, the lion of the tribe of Judah comes again, He shall let out a roar like a lion—He will come in triumph, power, and great glory. In His love, He will place them “in their houses.”

Just as Gomer had been unfaithful; Israel had been unfaithful. They were ungrateful to God who had delivered them. They loved their idols. They did not know the God who healed them. They refused altogether to acknowledge God. They did not want to repent and change. All of this broke God’s heart. In Matthew 23:37, Jesus laments over Jerusalem: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”

Man's rebellion breaks the heart of God. Though God's heart was broken, we see God's faithful, deep, love to His wayward children. Israel would experience consequences for their sin, yet God pointed them to a future, brighter, day. How amazing is the love of God!

How good it is to know the heart of God for us—His deep and consistent love. We, like the nation Israel and like Gomer, are prone to failure and unfaithfulness to God. Yet, God's love is a redeeming love. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the debt we owed and restore us to Himself.

“I Follow Jesus” Tie

You will need a template for each child in your classroom, markers or crayons, scissors, a hole-punch and yarn. Follow the instructions included with the template.

Hosea had to make a decision to follow God no matter what. We also need to follow God.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for God's consistent love and a prayer of commitment to forsake anything in their lives that has become more important than God. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

Template - I Will Follow Jesus Tie

1. Copy ties onto white cardstock.
2. Color and decorate.
3. Cut out tie.
4. Punch holes at top.
5. Use yarn to tie around neck, but not too tight.

