Hosea and The Epistles of John: *Hesed*, God's Covenant Love

Lesson 4: Covenant Rejected

Key Verse: "And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.'~Hosea 2.16

Unusual names are either easily remembered or easily forgotten. The same is likely true for more common American names, however, even as people may not remember the exact pronunciation of an unusual name, they will remember their story behind the name! The story of your name expresses a sentiment, or feeling, about your value to your family. As you tell the story of your name, you also share the story of your value! God understands the personal nature and value of a name, thus He foretells through Hosea that one day His people will be called, "children of the living God" (Hosea 1.10). His new name for His people expresses His value of and sentiment towards His people, who will express their understanding of God by referring to Him as **My Husband**. No longer will they choose to betray their intimate relationship with Him through their **idolatry**. Instead, their affection and understanding of their Husband will be so intimate that it will remove the pagan gods' names from hearts and minds (Hosea 2.17). Their lips – an intimate part of our bodies – will be used only to say, "You are my God." (Hosea 2.22)

Word of Life, We praise You as Our Husband. Thank You for using thorny hedges to discipline and steer us into walking in Your Light. Thank You for sending Jesus to secure the future marriage of all of God's people, Your Church, to eternal Presence with You in Heaven.

Hosea 2.1-23 Say to your brothers, "You are my people," and to your sisters, "You have received mercy."

2 "Plead with your mother, plead—for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband—that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts; 3 lest I strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and make her like a parched land, and kill her with thirst. 4 Upon her children also I will have no mercy, because they are children of whoredom. 5 For their mother has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'

6 Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths. 7 She shall pursue her lovers but not overtake them, and she shall seek them but shall not find them. Then she shall say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now. 8 And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.

9 Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season, and I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness. 10 Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall rescue her out of my hand. 11 And I will put an end to all her mirth, her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her appointed feasts.

12 And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, of which she said, 'These are my wages, which my lovers have given me.' I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall devour them. 13 And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers and forgot me, declares the LORD.

14 "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. 15 And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

16 "And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' 17 For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more.

18 And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. 19 And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. 20 I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

21 "And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, 22 and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, 23 and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'"

Diamonds:

1. John reminds us that the lifestyle of God's people must be congruent with the truth of God (1 John 1.5-7). List evidence that Gomer (who represents Israel) is living a lifestyle that is incongruent with the truth of God:

2. How does her lifestyle of darkness blind her to the evidence of God's truth ("light") in her life? (The contrast between verses 5 and 8 are a good example)

Whether Hosea had divorced Gomer is not completely settled by theologians[1]. What is settled is that her children are tasked with quarreling with their mother to stop destroying herself and their family (V 2-3). Unfortunately, verse 4 reveals that the fruit of her sin hasn't fallen far from the tree: her children are also engaged in their mother's trade or immersed in the lifestyle of a sex-worker.[2] God responds to Gomer's infidelity, breach of marital covenant, and misunderstanding of her provider by using His Sovereign reign over her circumstance to call her back to Him (V 6; Leviticus 26.14-33; Deuteronomy 11.1-2). Through Gomer's life we see that Divine hedging is both for protection from ourselves, our impulses, and our sinful desires (Psalm 118.18). Through Job, we see that it is also protection from Satan and his evil schemes (Job 1.9-10). God's desire for His people to return to Him is fully expressed in His willingness to create hardship and stress so they will cry out to Him (Deuteronomy 8.5; Psalm 6.1; Isaiah 26.16; Jeremiah 31.18; Revelation 3.19).

3. What is God's plan to get Gomer's attention and draw her back to Himself (V 7-13)?

4. Think of a time when God likewise used His Sovereign rule over your circumstances to get your attention and draw you back to Him. What did God teach you about Him?

5. Explain how the following verses help you understand God's purpose when He disciplines you: Proverbs 3.11; Isaiah 26.16; Hebrews 12.5-13; 1 Corinthians 11.32.

In Hosea 2.14-23, Hosea repeats God's reversal pattern first used in the children's names (Hosea 1). After Hosea's pronouncement of God's judgment, Hosea announces God's reversal of His judgments. This reminds God's people of His *hesed*, or covenant love, for them. Interestingly, this time Hosea expands the breadth and depth of his prophecy by including creation (in addition to His people) within God's covenant promise (V 18). The judgments and reversals (beginning in Hosea 1.2) are bookended by God's ultimate reversal in V 22: "And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people; and he shall say, 'You are my God'.

6. List God's "I will betroth you" statements in Hosea 2.19-20:

God's eagerness to betroth His people to Himself is as anticipatory as spending 24 days staring at a beautifully wrapped (small boxed!) present placed under a Christmas tree. God's wrapping paper for this stunning gift is His people's personal

[1] Dearman, pp. 109-110, 123; Phillips p. 24

[2] Dearman, p. 112; Kidner, p. 20; Phillips, pp. 25-26

and intimate knowledge of His character (V 20 “And they will know the LORD”). God is eager to give all His people an eternal relationship with Him by adorning them in His righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness.

7. It’s time to unwrap God’s betrothal gifts! Describe how Jesus gifted His people with God’s betrothal gifts:
    a. An eternal relationship – Romans 6.23:

    b. Righteousness – Romans 3.21-23:

    c. Justice (or justification) – Romans 3.23-26:

    d. Steadfast Love – John 3.16-18:

    e. Mercy – Hebrews 4.14-16:

    f. Faithfulness – Hebrews 10.19-23:

The phrase “in that day” indicates a future time (V.16, 21). John explains in 1 John 1.1-10 that Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection has fulfilled some of Hosea’s prophecies (V 14-20). However, verses 21-23 reveal a prophecy that remains unfilled[3]: Jesus’ return for the redemption of His Creation and God’s People (Romans 8.18-23; Hebrews 9.28; 1 John 3.2; Revelation 22.20). Scholars warn that limiting “in that day” to the restoration to God of only Jewish people unintentionally eliminates explanations that define *all* of God’s people as inclusive of Gentiles (Romans 11.11-32).[4] Revelation 7.9 describes the expansive reality of God’s kingdom to come as “a great multitude that no one could number from all tribes, and peoples and languages…”. *Hallelujah!*

Deity: Our (“My”) Husband~ (Hosea 2.16) God has a bit of literary fun in Hosea 2.16 using the word “baal”. The general definition of “baal” is master, lord, or owner. As such, God was also called a “baal” in a culture in which God is one of many gods (syncretism). Jesus likely understood the problem of syncretism when he prayed to God, “And this is eternal life, that they know You, the *only true* God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17.3, italics added)

“Baal” was also used to describe the role of a “husband” in Hosea’s time because a husband was “the owner and master of his household”.[5] Technically “baal” isn’t a proper name though it’s often used as a proper name. In its feminine form, it describes a woman who is “possessed” or owned by her husband (through marriage).[6] Thus, God inspired literary creativity within Hosea to announce that God would no longer be one of many gods, nor confused with another god (YHWH would no longer be considered just another “baal”). Instead, YHWH would be known for His sign of “covenant intimacy” with His people calling Him “My Husband”.[7] The idea is that generic “baal” is replaced eternally with single-hearted fidelity to “My Husband” (Hosea 2.23).

The idea of God as Our Husband transcends specific gender identification because in Hosea’s time, he is the husband of the nation of Israel. Today, the Church is the collection of all of God’s people in Christ. God’s Church is His Bride (Revelation 19.6-9) and Jesus is referred to as the “Bridegroom” (Luke 5.34-35). Our modern understanding of The Church as God’s Bride further illuminates Hosea’s prophecy of God’s people as “betroth[ed]” to God by God (V 19-20). God’s betrothal is clear covenant language pointing to His *hesed*, or covenant Love for His people. It is surprising that this attribute of God points us to the unity of God’s people rather than a personalized promise to His individual people. As such, this deity is one of the greatest comforts to God’s Church has in Christ today. *Hallelujah!* Consider Hosea 2.21-23 your personal invitation to join God’s people at God’s lavish wedding feast! God’s request for your RSVP is found in Revelation 19.6-9!

8. What is your answer to God’s RSVP for His wedding feast? Use the following scriptures to journey alongside God as He displayed His covenant Love through the unfurling of His plan to secure your RSVP as “Yes!”: Jeremiah 31.31-34; Hosea 2.16-23; Luke 2.8-21; Matthew 9.35-36; John 19.30; John 20.27-28; 1 John 1.1-2.6.

[3] Dearman, pg.131; Kidner, pg.29; Phillips, pgs.42-44

[4] Phillips, pgs.34-35

[5] Dearman, p. 124

[6] Dearman, p. 124

[7] Dearman, p. 124

Doctrine: Idolatry[8]~ (Hosea 2.13) "Sin is not only a physical act of rebellion against God, such as lying or stealing, but it is also a matter of the heart. The physical displays of sin are the fruit of what has been birthing in the heart of a person (Matthew 15.10-20). In scripture, idolatry usually refers to bowing down to a statue made of wood or gold, worshipping created things instead of the Creator. But idolatry can take more subtle forms: a seeking of approval, security, power, pleasure, etc. We can diagnose the idolatry of our heart by examining the areas where the desires of our heart have turned into idolatrous demands (James 4.1-2)."

Hosea 2.16-17 alludes to God's people repenting from their sinful idolatry[9]. This is further reinforced by God's people having the ability to "know the LORD" (V 20).

9. There is a spectacular collision in Jeremiah 31.31-34 whereby God unites His role as Our Husband with our inability to remove sin and its idolatry from our hearts and minds. What is God teaching you about Himself in this spectacular collision?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:

Lecture Outline:

Aim: God disciplines His people to restore their right relationship with Him.

I. Hedged Up With Thorns (Hosea 2.1-13) **T1:** God disciplines His people by placing thorns in their lives.
   a. What idol or sin has so enchanted your heart that it has drawn you away from an intimate relationship with God?
   b. Which trials or troubles might God be using to hedge you up with thorns?

II. Hemmed In With Tenderness (Hosea 2.14-23) **T2:** God disciplines His people to fully restore His love relationship with them.
   a. How well do you KNOW God? As intimately and as deeply as you are known by Him?
   b. In what ways have you experienced Him as your Divine Husband?
   c. What brokenness are you expectantly waiting for God to restore?
   d. How does God's promised hope encourage you as you wait for His full restoration?

Dearman, J. Andrew, *The Book of Hosea* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 2010) pp. 106-131
Kidner, Derek, *The Message of Hosea: The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2024 revised) pp. 19-29
Phillips, Richard D., *Hosea: Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2021) pp. 23-44

[8] The Gospel Project, *The 99 Essential Doctrines: #40 Sin as Idolatry,* Lifeway Christian Resources (2018)

[9] Dearman, p. 125, Phillips, pp. 36-37