

TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY



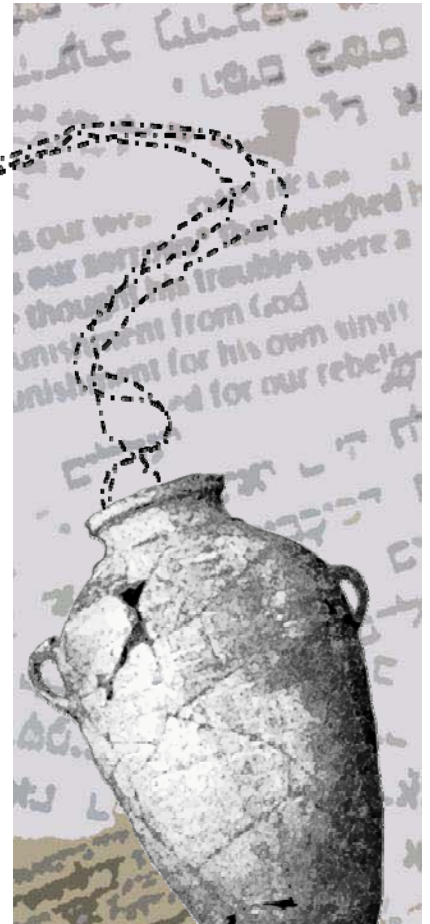
Hosea

Through real life metaphors of matrimony, Hosea delivers a powerful message about the unfaithfulness of the Israelites to their God. We get a glimpse of the unfathomable heart of God, and the depth of His personal grief over the idolatry of His people, by His description of it to us in terms of the agony of an unfaithful marriage. Through God's instruction, Hosea plays the part of the faithful and forbearing groom, while Gomer fills the role of the adulterous two-timing wife, always chasing after the wind for the love that she had already been given. Forsaking true love for an infatuation with the inferior is an adulterous idolatry.

But the front side of this story, what it says about marriage, has probably been the most significant aspect of Hosea's account in my own life. Marriage is absolutely sacred if for no other reason than that God created it as a very tangible image of our relationship with Him. Just as we are created in God's image, so marriage is created as a relational image of our spiritual well being. Marriage can, if we will but learn, teach us much about our relationship

with God. If we are involved in adultery, in thought or deed, then we are also surely involved in idolatry. Both idolatry, and adultery, are covenant breaking at the most basic of relational levels. If we find ourselves on Hosea's end of the stick, then all the more opportunity for godly character to develop, and for us to follow our heavenly bridegroom's example.

The necessities of commitment, loyalty, love, forgiveness, desire and delight are essential in both a healthy marriage, and in our relationship with God.



"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."

2 Corinthians 4:7

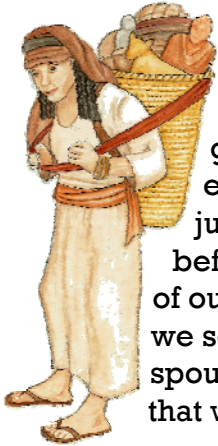
READ:

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CHRONOLOGY:

- 745-725 B.C.
- Roughly contemporary with Amos, Micah and Isaiah

Do you have an idolatrous marriage? Hosea 1-3



Every major religion has carried restrictions against, and consequences for, married women committing adultery. It is even illegal in many places, or at least considered legal grounds for divorce. But we can play the harlot in marriage even without actually acting out in an adulterous relationship, just as we can practice idolatry without kneeling or bowing before a statue of stone or wood. What things do we put ahead of our relationship with our spouse? What do we lust after? Do we seek out our own safety, security, and selfish desires over our spouse and the marriage covenant? Do we chase after the things that will make us FEEL good, or the things that ARE good?

What were some of the threats to Hosea's marriage? _____

I'm not going to suggest that your marriage compares to Hosea's, but the best of marriages are going to draw attack from the enemy. If you are married, what do you see as some of the possible threats to your own marriage? _____

How do those relate to the threats to your relationship with God? _____

Hosea didn't get a lot of positive strokes from his wife Gomer, but he still stood by her in loyal commitment, and LOVED her just as God loves His wayward bride, first the Israelites, and now His church. But it is not a blind love. It is a love that sees the sins, and pays the wages that will bring restoration of relationship. It is a love that forgives, yet firmly sets some standards for future behavior. It is a love that allows the other the autonomy to make their own heart warming, and heart wrenching decisions.

How did Hosea demonstrate this kind of love in Hosea 3? _____

How do you demonstrate that kind of love in your marriage? _____

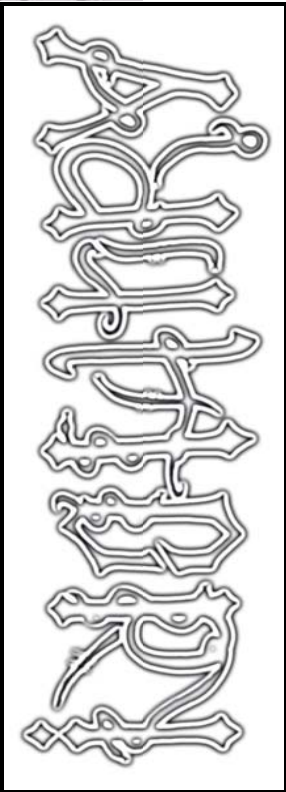
How can we demonstrate that kind of love in the church? _____

In what ways is this kind of love counter-cultural? _____

What would someone in Hosea's shoes be likely to do today? _____



Hosea 4-14



Turn the paper to the right to read what this word says. Then turn it to the left to see a different word.

What are the two words?

What difference does perspective make?

What sins are listed in Hosea 4:2? _____

Which of these violate the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20? _____

According to Hosea 6:6, what does God desire rather than sacrifice and burnt offerings? _____

The Hebrew word for this is *hesed*. It is also translated love, or loving as seen in Psalm 59:10, and 100:5. Who is described as *hesed* in these passages? _____

What part does *hesed* play in God's covenant with us as described in Deut. 7:9,12? _____

According to Psalm 107:1, 118:1-4, and Isaiah 54:8, what is a quality of God's *hesed*? _____

What problem did Israel have according to Hosea 7:10-11,14? _____

How are the prophet and inspired men considered in 9:7-8? _____

How are they considered today? _____

Why would the Israelites be rejected by God? (9:17) _____

What would happen to the Israelites as a result of depending on their own strength? (10:13,14) _____

In what ways has God led you through human kindness? (Hosea 11:4) _____

What will happen when God roars as a lion? (11:10-11) _____

What would be required of God's people according to 12:6? _____

Satisfaction can lead to pride, and what does 13:6 say that pride can lead to? _____

How is a repentant Israel described in Chapter 14? _____

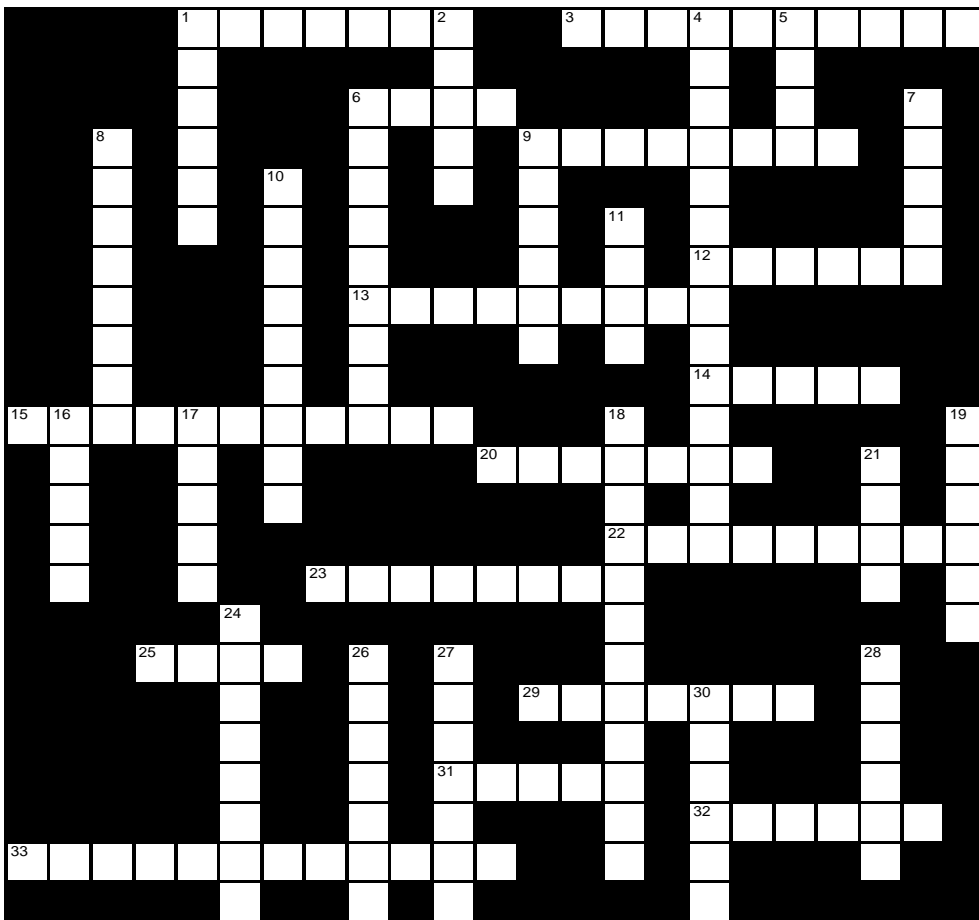


"I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them." Hosea 11:4

In what ways do chapters 4-14 parallel the real life experiences of Hosea? _____

What do you think became of Gomer? _____

PUZZLE PAGE



One of the things that the book of Hosea makes me ponder is, how much of my own life is lived as God's metaphor? What has He called me to live as a testimony and message of His truths?

Clues

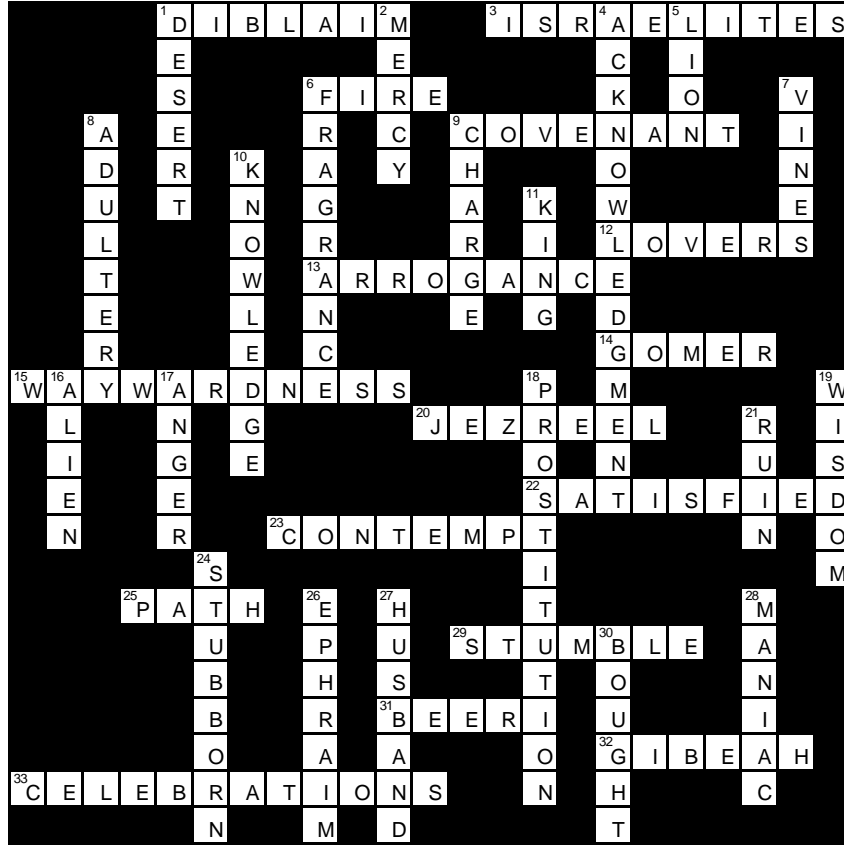
Across

- 1 Gomer's father (7)
- 3 like the sand on the seashore (10)
- 6 will consume the cities of Judah (4)
- 9 man has broken his with God (8)
- 12 chased but not caught (6)
- 13 Israel's testifies against him (9)
- 14 Hosea's wife (5)
- 15 will be healed (11)
- 20 site of a massacre and name of Hosea's son (7)
- 22 after they were _____ they became proud
- 23 Ephraim will be repaid for this (8)
- 25 will be blocked with thorn bushes (4)
- 29 what the rebellious do with the ways of the Lord (7)
- 31 Hosea's father (5)
- 32 war overtook the evildoers in this place (6)
- 33 will be stopped (12)

Down

- 1 God will make the adulterous nation like this
- 2 God desires this rather than sacrifice (5)
- 4 God desires this rather than burnt offerings
- 5 God will be like this (4)
- 6 like a cedar of Lebanon (9)
- 7 will be ruined (5)
- 8 what his wife, and his nation had in common
- 9 the Lord has one to bring against those who live in the land (6)
- 10 lack of this brings destruction (9)
- 11 given in anger, taken in wrath (4)
- 16 what God's laws were considered as (5)
- 17 God's burns against Samaria (5)
- 18 a spirit of this led the people astray (12)
- 19 Israel is like a child without this (6)
- 21 what those without understanding come to (4)
- 24 the Israelites are this (8)
- 26 easily deceived (7)
- 27 God will be called this instead of Master (7)
- 28 what the inspired man is considered to be (6)
- 30 Hosea _____ back the wife that was his (6)

Puzzle answers:



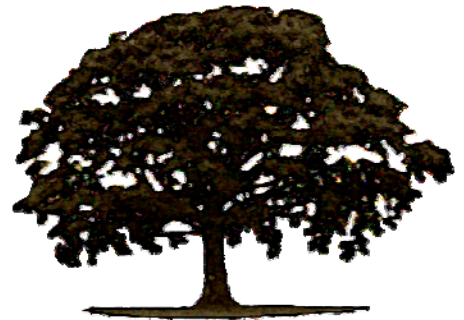
Sources and Suggested Reading:

For information on adultery and divorce rates and occurrence, I went to:

http://www.divorce-lawyer-source.com/html/law/adultery_divorce.html

For a great book on God’s purpose in our marriage:

Thomas, Gary. *Sacred Marriage*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000. Print.



Down Victory Road
www.downvictoryrd.com

