

SUNDAY HANDOUT FOR DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION - July 26

Relentless Love Part 2 (Hosea 4-14)

We've all read the headlines that cause our stomachs to drop. When you read the ancient prophet Hosea, it can feel like one of those headlines - a story of heartbreak, betrayal, and self-destruction. But it's there, in the midst of humanity's deepest brokenness and rejection, that the God of the Bible responds with relentless mercy and love. Just when you think all hope is lost, God's unwillingness to give up stares you in the face. Just when you think there's no possible way forward, his love breaks through with a heart-stopping invitation: "Come back to me."

1. God's charge | "They forgot me." (Hosea 4:1-12; 13:4-8)

Hosea 13:4-6 What happened to Israel could happen to us.

God fed them, they became satisfied, they became proud (self-focused), then they FORGOT God (made a decision to move away from; stop paying attention to God).

2. God's compassion | "How can I give you up?" (Hosea 11:1-9)

3. God's invitation and promise | "Come back to me!" (Hosea 14)

This isn't a message to leave in the past. It's a message for us today.

QUESTIONS (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Read Hosea 4:1-12; 13:4-6. Can you summarize God's "charge" or accusation against Israel? What had they forgotten about God? How does this expose the ways we can drift from him?
2. Define idolatry. Why does Hosea describe idolatry as spiritual adultery? What "word pictures" does Hosea use to describe Israel's unfaithfulness? What are some modern examples of good things that can become idols when they take God's place in our lives?
3. Read Hosea 11. Why do you think Hosea 11 is often considered the "heart" of the book? What stands out to you? What do we learn about God's heart and love for his people? How does this help us better understand the love God has shown us through Jesus?
4. According to Hosea 13:6, what was "the pathway" that led Israel to forget God? How can prosperity, comfort, or self-sufficiency slowly pull our hearts away from him? What are some ways we can actively guard against forgetting God?
5. Read Hosea 14 out loud. What does God invite Israel to do, and what does God promise to do? What does this reveal about the restorative mercy and relentless love of God?
6. Hosea points beyond Israel to a greater Son, a greater Husband, and a greater redemption. In what way are the promises of Hosea bigger than the nation of Israel? How does Jesus fulfill these promises? Consider 1 Peter 1:18-19 and 1 Peter 2:9-10.
7. Have you ever felt like you were too far gone to return to God? How does Hosea speak to those who feel there is no way back? How does the gospel remind us that our sin is not greater than God's grace? Why is it important that we carry this message of hope to others?
8. What happens when we forget the power of God's love displayed through Jesus and the far reach of his grace? What are some practical ways we can keep the gospel of God's love before us?

Ask God to reveal anything competing for first place in your heart. Confess areas of compromise, disobedience, or indifference, and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into wholehearted devotion to Jesus. Thank God for his relentless love - for the redemption, grace, and forgiveness we find in Jesus.