

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Restoring the Relationship
Hosea 1:10—2:5, 14-23; 3:1-5

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Have a white board or large sheet of paper for use in listing concepts during the study.

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

My Heart is Filled with Thankfulness, *The Worship Hymnal*, # 575; CCLI# 4108704

O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus, *The Worship Hymnal*, # 171, CCLI # 4414137

Oh, How He Loves You and Me, *The Worship Hymnal*, #170, CCLI # 15850

The Love of God, *The Worship Hymnal*, # 111; CCLI #18448 Public Domain

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Restoring the Relationship

Focal Text

Hosea 1:10—2:5, 14-23; 3:1-5

Background Text

Hosea 1:10—3:5

Main Idea

God takes action to restore people who have gone away from him.

Question to Explore

How does God respond to us when we have sinned?

Teaching Aim

To help the church draw implications for how God wishes to relate to us—from what the passage teaches about the relationship God desired with Israel.

Gathering together:

Sing **Oh, How He Loves You and Me**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #170, CCLI # 15850

First thoughts:

Hosea's language is influenced by the confusion about him in the nation and in his own home. "He hints in broken sentences the ideas rending his breast. 'Sin everywhere! Adultery everywhere!' Over it all a God faithful to His covenant, merciful, and ready to forgive.

Hosea is the prophet of love, as Amos is the prophet of retributive righteousness. His theme is 'Jehovah's mighty, inextinguishable love for Israel which will not be satisfied until it has brought all Israel into harmony with itself.'" Sampey, J.R. *Syllabus for Old Testament Study*. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922, page 170).

We continue today this difficult study. We will continue to examine Israel's unfaithfulness illustrated by the prophet's bitter experience with a faithless wife. We may feel as Hosea did – there is sin everywhere; adultery everywhere; war around the world; selfishness abounding. What we must also remember is that God is faithful, merciful and ready to forgive.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Restoring the Relationship

Focal Text

Hosea 1:10—2:5, 14-23; 3:1-5

Background Text

Hosea 1:10—3:5

Main Idea

God takes action to restore people who have gone away from him.

Question to Explore

How does God respond to us when we have sinned?

Teaching Aim

To help the church draw implications for how God wishes to relate to us—from what the passage teaches about the relationship God desired with Israel.

Introduction to your personal study:

Pray today for the members of your group. Hopefully, you have begun your preparation early so that God can impress upon your heart what teachings of this lesson will be particularly significant to your group and to individuals in the group. Remember that preparation for teaching includes much more than knowing the Biblical material. Prayerfully consider what message God has for you personally and for the group for which you have responsibility. That may not be immediately obvious in the study of this Old Testament story.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Hosea 1:10-2:5

Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘sons of the living God’. The people of Judah and the people of Israel will be reunited, and they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.

“Say of your brothers, ‘My people,’ and of your sisters, ‘My loved one.’

***Rebuke your mother, rebuke her,
for she is not my wife,
and I am not her husband.
Let her remove the adulterous look from her face
and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts.
Otherwise I will strip her naked
and make her as bare as on the day she was born;
I will make her like a desert,
turn her into a parched land,
and slay her with thirst.
I will not show my love to her children,
because they are the children of adultery.
Their mother has conceived them in disgrace.
She said, ‘I will go after my lovers,
who give me my food and my water.
my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.’”***

The final verses of Hosea, chapter 1, are pointing to the day when once again the people of Judah and the people of Israel will be reunited and be worthy of the name “sons of the living God”. This is the great day of Jezreel, when God sows (Jezreel means God sows).

Jezreel was the scene of failures to honour God; here God redeems the place and the people. The operative metaphor here is resurrection. See Ezekiel 36:9-11.

The phrase “sons of the living God’ is important for three reasons according to Duane Garrett (*The New American Commentary: Hosea, Joel*. Nashville, Tennessee, 1997).

First, it obviously asserts that they have regained their status and are now acknowledged by God as His own.

Second, the title "living God" often appears in a context of military conflict between Israel and the nations. "Living God" virtually means the "true God" who is able to give victory in contrast to dead idols (see Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26; 2 Kings 19:4; Jeremiah 10:10-11, Daniel 6:26).

Third, "living God" also means he is Lord of life and able to give life as in Psalm 42:2 and 84:2. As a giver of victory and life, Yahweh will cast out the usurper Baal and regain his family. (Hosea 2:5-8). (*The New American Commentary, Hosea and Joel*. pp. 71-72)

In Chapter 1 we have seen God's restoration in the following ways:

- Numerical growth 1:10a**
- Spiritual restoration 1:10b**
- National unification 1:11a**
- Administrative centralization 1:11b**
- Territorial occupation 1:11c**
- Divine blessing 2:1**

Chapter 2:1 is a transitional verse which looks backward and forward. ***"Say of your brothers, 'My people' and of your sisters, 'My loved one.'"***

God wants to reverse the horrible consequences caused when His people rebel. "Not loved" becomes "My loved one" and "Not my people" becomes "My people". God's final word to His people is acceptance and love. This is a call to love and be faithful to the loving, faithful God.

Verses 2-4 of Chapter 2 warn of judgment and calls upon the children to repudiate the mother's behaviour. The woman is called upon to turn her whole person away from lewd and faithless behaviour. She must abandon her old ways and everything that went along with them.

Apparently Gomer was unfaithful and at some time after the birth of Lo Ammi, she departed.

Verse 4 is a metaphor which presents the Israelite people as illegitimate claimants to the title of the people of God.

We see in these verses the following indications of sin:

Not recognizing God as the source of life 2: 5,8

Dryness 2: 3,14

Pride 2:2

Expecting God to bless 2:11,12

Anger blaming God. 2:7b

Garrett says that the tragedy is not that so many were desperately licentious, but that many had fallen so far from God and did not know it (page 98).

Hosea 2:14-23

***Therefore I am now going to allure her;
I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her.
There I will give her back her vineyards
and will make the Valley of Achor (trouble) a door of hope.
There she will sing as in the days of her youth,
as in the day she came up out of Egypt.***

***“In that day,” declares the Lord,
“you will called me ‘my husband’,
you will no longer call me ‘my master’.
I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips;
no longer will their names be invoked.
In that day I will make a covenant for them
with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air
and the creatures that move along the ground.
Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land,
so that all may lie down in safety.
I will betroth you to me forever;
I will betroth you in righteousness and justice,
in love and compassion.
I will betroth you in faithfulness
and you will acknowledge the Lord.***

***“In that day I will respond” declares the Lord.
“I will respond to the skies and they will respond to the earth;
and the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and oil
and they will respond to Jezreel.
I will plant her for myself in the land;
I will say to those called ‘Not my people’
‘You are my people’; and they will say, ‘You are my God’”.***

In verse 13 the woman “**decked herself with rings and jewelry and went after he lovers, but me she forgot**” declares the Lord. The woman pulling on jewelry and going after lovers functions on at least two levels of meaning. It is Israel going after her paramours, but it is also probably the women of Israel wearing sacred jewelry and going to the Baal shrines (Garrett, page 86).

Verses 14-23 are a prophecy of restoration. It is a reversal of the adultery. There is a tense co-existence of judgement and grace.

Verses 14-15 refers to a wandering in the wilderness.

Verses 16-17 demonstrates a return to a good relationship.

Verses 19-20 is a new marriage covenant.

Verses 21-23a again describes the blessings and Jezreel is no longer a place of failure, but lives up to its meaning of God sows or plants.

In verse 23 the names of the children are changed. “Not loved” becomes “Loved” and “Not my people” becomes “You are my people”

Verse 23 ends powerfully “**And they will say ‘You are my God’**”.

God offers hope for broken and rebellious people by establishing a new relationship which is possible through God’s grace. He takes the initiative to turn His people to a better way of life. He willingly waits to bring contrary people to a proper relationship with Himself.

Four new elements are contained in these verses: (1) God establishes a new love. God takes the initiative in helping unfaithful people turn to Him. The Hebrew term *Baal* means husband, master, or lord. Because of its use in the worship of pagan gods, God promised to give the people a new term to reflect the new faith which He promised to give. (2) God gives a new environment of people. (3) God establishes His new relationship on right living.

Righteousness means to meet the demands of a relationship. A person is righteous before God when the person meets the demands of the relationship with God. Justice means that righteousness is carried over into the legal sphere. Steadfast love, mercy, faithfulness and knowledge are all associated with the responsibilities of a relationship with God. God promised to give these qualities to His people and does so through Christ. (4) Nature will rejoice in the renewed and right relationship. When people return to God and God restores His people, then God’s ideal for His people will be realized – they will indeed be his people.” (*New International Version Disciple’s Study Bible*, Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Publishers, 1988, page 1066.)

Hosea 3:1-5

The Lord said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.”

So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. Then I told her, “you are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you.”

For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days.

Hosea is instructed to redeem his wife even though she is living with another man – perhaps as a slave or as a temple prostitute. That necessitated the need to buy her for about six ounces of silver and 10 bushels of barley which would be a significant amount. Verse 3 may be translated “Many days you shall remain with me and you shall neither prostitute yourself nor be with any man and then I shall be yours.” (Garrett, p. 103).

The comparison here is very clear. Gomer sinned by prostituting her body. Israel sinned by prostituting their worship. Neither could return to an intimate relationship with the loved one without a period of denial of those things so important to them.

God’s love is constant, unchanging and faithful. This is the heart of Hosea’s message. God may have to chastise in love, but His love never fails even when His people seek other gods. Human love, though not constant like the love of God, may also endure in spite of an unfaithful spouse. True love leads one to struggle to regain the love of the unfaithful one, paying whatever price may be necessary. This is **agape** love- a divine, self-giving love which can only be possible with God’s help. Divine love is evoked without any merit in the loved object. This differentiates **agape** love from **eros** or the love based on natural affection or human love.

Hosea anticipates a time when his love for his wife will bring them together. Verse 1 of chapter 3 may be understood to mean “Go again, in spite of all that has happened, love your wife, though she is a woman who is loved of a paramour and adulterous. You know that your love for her is undiminished; only your love can help her now and save her. Go again and love her”. (*The Interpreter’s Bible, Hosea*. Volume VI, New York: Abingdon Press, 1956, page 595). Hosea’s wife was not worthy of his love, but no more was Israel worthy of God’s love. Israel went after other gods, as did Gomer after other men. In taking back his wife, Hosea was manifesting the love of God toward the children of Israel. “This is what gives a truly evangelical note to Hosea’s prophecy. He was the first to discover that the divine love goes out to us not because we are worthy of it, but because God is love, so that when we say that God loves man, we are not told what man is like but what God is like. And this is the message that Christ, who died on the Cross for sinful men, proclaims.” (*The Interpreter’s Bible*, page 595).

Cakes of raisins, mentioned here as being used in the service of the Baals, were characteristic of the autumn vintage festival, being made of pressed grapes and fine meal.

Like Gomer, who must live chastely, the Israelites must live without a ruler and without the symbols of their false worship. The ephod was the sacred garment of the priests. The sacred stones of Gilgal can no longer serve as a place of worship. Doing without the treasured symbols of her civic and religious life should heighten Israel's appreciation of them.

Then the Israelites will come to God in awe, bowing reverently before his majesty and holiness. They will be united with other Israelites now in the country of Judah as they were in the time of David the king.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Help your class to understand the picture God gives of forgiveness by examining Hosea's relationship to his wife, Gomer. Gomer did not ask for forgiveness and did nothing to deserve it. God's forgiveness is not based on our worthiness, but on his love.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Restoring the Relationship

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Hosea 1:10—2:5, 14-23; 3:1-5

Background Text

Hosea 1:10—3:5

Main Idea

God takes action to restore people who have gone away from him.

Question to Explore

How does God respond to us when we have sinned?

Teaching Aim

To help the church draw implications for how God wishes to relate to us—from what the passage teaches about the relationship God desired with Israel.

Connect with Life:

Ask the group if anyone is named for someone special – a grandmother or grandfather or other family member – or for a well-known person. Some may have Biblical names.

Ask members to share why names are important to us.

Guide the Study:

Have someone read Hosea 1: 10-2:5.

Say: Remember that verses 4-9 of Hosea 1 described the three children born to Gomer and Hosea. The first, Jezreel, recalled the sinfulness of Jereboam 1 and the succeeding kings of Judah who chose to worship Baal along with their worship of Jehovah God. Jezreel actually means God sows or God plants, but the place and the meaning of the word have been corrupted by the sinful worship of the people of Judah.

The second child, a daughter, was name Lo-Ruhamah or “not loved” while the third child was named LoAmmi or “not my people”.

The children and their names were to be a constant reminder to the Israelite people that they were sinning against God.

Ask: What then, does verse 10 indicated. (As desperate as Hosea’s words seem, there is yet hope for the people. The people of Judah and the people of Israel will be reunited and be worthy of the name “sons of the living God”.)

Explain the meaning of “sons of the living God” and its importance: It asserts that they have regained their status and are now acknowledged by God as His own. “Living God” virtually means the “true God” who is able to give victory in contrast to dead idols. (see Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26; 2 Kings 19:4; Jeremiah 10:10-11, Daniel 6:26.

Add this: “Living God” also means he is Lord of life and able to give life as in Psalm 42:2 and 84:2. As a giver of victory and life, Yahweh will cast out the usurper Baal and regain his family. (Hosea 2:5-8).

Write on a white board or large piece of paper the following ways in which God’s restoration is seen.

- Numerical growth 1:10a
- Spiritual restoration 1:10b
- National unification 1:11a
- Administrative centralization 1:11b
- Territorial occupation 1:11c

Comment: The transitional verse in Chapter 2:1 looks forward and backward and indicates divine blessing.

Ask someone to reread Chapter 2: 2-4.

Explain: These verses warn of judgment and call upon the children to repudiate their mother’s behaviour. The woman is called upon to turn her whole person away from

lewd and faithless behaviour. She must abandon her old ways and everything that went along with them.

Continue: Apparently Gomer was unfaithful and at some time after the birth of Lo Ammi, she departed from Hosea. He will later be instructed to buy her back from prostitution or slavery. This may have been temple prostitution.

Emphasize that verse 4 is a metaphor which presents the Israelite people as illegitimate claimants to the title of the people of God.

Request a definition of a “metaphor” from anyone in the group.

Ask someone to read Chapter 2: 5-13.

Ask for participants to look for the following sins in the verses in Chapter 2: 1-13

You may want to write these on the white board or large piece of paper already used.

Say: Not recognizing God as the source of life 2: 5,8. Here are the results or consequences: (write them on the paper or board).

Dryness 2: 3,14

Pride 2:2

Expecting God to bless 2:11,12

Anger blaming God. 2:7b

Comment that not only were the people sinful, but they had lost the capacity to see and understand how sinful they were.

Have someone read Hosea 2: 13.

Ask How were the women described in this verse? (she decked herself with rings and jewelry and went after her lovers).

State: The woman pulling on jewellery and going after lovers functions on at least two levels of meaning. It is Israel going after her paramours, but it is also probably the women of Israel wearing sacred jewellery and going to the Baal shrines.

Now have someone read Hosea 2: 14-23.

Continue the discussion by saying: These verses are a prophecy of restoration. It is a reversal of the adultery. There is a tense co-existence of judgement and grace.

Present the following list for discussion:

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Verses 14-15 refers to a wandering in the wilderness.

Verses 16-17 demonstrates a return to a good relationship.

Verses 19-20 is a new marriage covenant.

Verses 21-23a again describes the blessings and Jezreel is no longer a place of failure, but lives up to its meaning of God sows or plants.

In verse 23 the names of the children are changed. "Not loved" becomes "Loved" and "Not my people" becomes "You are my people"

Ask someone to read verses 23 with meaning and power.

Seek out an opinion: Why is it such a significant verse?

Ask someone to read Hosea 3: 1-5.

Question the participants about the requirement place on Hosea (show your love to your wife, buy her back from slavery, restore her to a marital relationship).

Call for a comment on the requirements placed on Gomer.

Compare Gomer's requirements to that of the Israelite people (verse 4).

Ask: What will be the end result according to verse 5?

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Seek opinions about how this story demonstrates God's redemptive love.

Seek an answer: Is this love at work in the world today?

Ask: What events happened this week in the world which indicate the sinful nature of man?

And again: What events happened which indicate God at work?

Have someone close in prayer.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Restoring the Relationship

Hosea 1:10—2:5, 14-23; 3:1-5

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

The Case Against Adultery

Why is adultery such a bad thing? Many in our culture would indicate that it is just a part of life. Some will say: "How can anyone expect to be faithful to any one person for a long period of time. It makes life more interesting to have more than one sexual partner."

What a lie that is!!! Adultery is wrong because it makes the most intimate of human relationships hurtful rather than a blessing. It is that breaking of relationship that makes adultery so wrong. Relationships are always built on trust. And marriage relationships are particularly built on trust. No other relationship demands that we give so much of ourselves to another person. How can we do that if we can not expect the other person to be true to that trust relationship?

The story of Hosea showcases the pain which adultery caused Hosea and the pain which the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel caused God. Yes, God asked Hosea to forgive just as He forgave.

But how much better to avoid giving pain to someone we have promised to love, honour and support throughout life.

You are young enough to make decisions about moral purity. Make the right ones early on!

3

Copy this section for the Worship Time leader.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)

Restoring the Relationship

Hosea 1:10—2:5, 14-23; 3:1-5

Beginning the Service:

Choose to sing one or both of the following hymns or choose another hymn which reflects God's love.

My Heart is Filled with Thankfulness, *The Worship Hymnal*, # 575; CCLI# 4108704
O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus, *The Worship Hymnal*, # 171, CCLI # 4414137

Offering:

Praying for the World:

Earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand and in Japan have caused great suffering at the writing of this lesson. Focus today on the human suffering which has been recently caused by natural disasters. Pray that people will look to God for comfort and peace in such times.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

God's Ongoing Plan of Restoration

Today's study in Hosea emphasized God's desire to restore the sinful nation of Israel to its place in his plan. The poignant story of Hosea's ongoing redemptive love for his wife, Gomer, is almost more than we can comprehend. Even more difficult to comprehend is God's patience with the nation of Israel who had known God's protection, abundant blessing and guidance in the past. How could they have gone so far away from him and have been so ignorant of just how far they had gone.

David wrote in Psalm 66 of God's care. This was earlier than Hosea's writing of the Israelite nation. In fact, David wrote when Israel and Judah were one nation and he was their king. David was not a perfect person, but he was called "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14) even before he became king. Psalm 66 is only one of many examples of David's praise to God for his protection and his love.

**Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
Sing the glory of his name;
make his praise glorious!
Say to God "How awesome are your deeds!
So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you.
All the earth bows down to you;
they sing praise to you,
they sing praise to your name.**

**Come and see what the Lord has done,
how awesome are his works in man's behalf!
He turned the sea into dry land,
they passed through the waters on foot –
come, let us rejoice in him.
He rules forever by his power,
his eyes watch the nations –
let not the rebellious rise up against him.**

David begins this psalm with a triumphant praise song which includes the admonition that we say to God "**How awesome are your deeds!**"

The people of Israel to whom Hosea spoke had lost the capacity to acknowledge the awesome nature of God's deeds. They asked Baal for a blessing on their crops, for success against their enemies and for children to bless their homes. Any nation and any individual is in trouble when they have lost the capacity to say "How awesome, O God, are your deeds".

David then reminds the people of their history. He speaks of the Exodus from captivity in Egypt when the people passed through the Red Sea on dry ground. This was a story which every Israelite knew and was to teach to his children. It was a part of the weekly Sabbath worship and certainly of the Passover feast. But the Israelites to whom Hosea spoke had forgotten or ignored this important and formative story. Perhaps some had

never heard it. It takes only a generation or two for faith stories to be forgotten when parents abdicate their responsibility to pass those stories on to the next generation.

David reminds us that God's eyes watch the nations. This is a reminder we need as we see evil abound in the world and wonder if it can ever be stopped. God's eyes watch the nations – he is never not in control.

***Praise our God, O peoples,
let the sound of his praise be heard;
He has preserved our lives
and kept our feet from slipping.
For you, O God, test us;
you refined us like silver.
You brought us into prison
and laid burdens on our backs.
You let men ride over our heads
we went through fire and water,
but you brought us to a place of abundance.***

David speaks here of Israel's past and future. God has preserved his people and he will keep their feet from slipping. He has tested and he will refine. He will allow his people to be subjugated by others, but his ultimate purpose is one of redemption and restoration. He desires to bring his people to a place of abundance. This is the message of Hosea.

**Come and listen, all you who fear God;
let me tell you what he has done for me.
I cried to him with my mouth;
his praise was on my tongue.
If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord surely would not have listened
but God has surely listened
and heard my voice in prayer.
Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!**

David knew what it was to sin. What was radically different between David and the people to whom Hosea spoke was his ability to recognize and repent of his sin. **If I had cherished sin in my heart the Lord surely would not have listened.**

But God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. Restoration can only come with repentance. The Israelites to whom Hosea spoke had no desire to repent. In fact, they felt they worshipped God adequately; they expected his blessings to continue.

This lack of repentance and with it, true worship, would eventually lead to the destruction of the Israelite nation. Restoration would come, but only after much suffering.

Hosea's story of God's love was rejected. It would be years before the people would once again proclaim, "You are our God".

How much better was David's testimony

**Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!**

Call to Commitment:

Say together David's testimony

**Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!**

Concluding the Service:

The Love of God, *The Worship Hymnal*, # 111; CCLI #18448 Public Domain