

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



**FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH**

Produced Weekly

*God's Yearning Heart*  
Hosea 11:1-11

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 pieces of paper available for the youth experience.

**Worship Time Leader:**

**Music Sources:**

**How Deep the Father's Love For Us**, *The Worship Hymnal* #101; CCLI #1558110

**Grace Alone**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 112, CCLI # 2335524

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

**Softly and Tenderly**, *The Worship Hymnal* #414, CCLI #28380 Public Domain

# 1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

## ***God's Yearning Heart***

### **Focal Text**

Hosea 11:1-11

### **Background Text**

Hosea 9:1—11:11

### **Main Idea**

In spite of their sins against him, God does not give up on people but yearns to show mercy to them.

### **Question to Explore**

When we have sinned, does God want us back?

### **Teaching Aim**

To lead the church to identify implications for ourselves of God's not giving up on Israel in spite of their sins against him.

### **Gathering together:**

Sing **How Deep the Father's Love For Us**, *The Worship Hymnal*, #101; CCLI #1558110

### **First thoughts:**

We have studied the life experience of Hosea who was forced to drink deeply of sorrow in his relationship to his wife, Gomer. "This experience enables him to understand something of God's immeasurable love for his people. It enabled him also to plead with his people effectively to return to their God who loved them. The entire experience came to be a sort of living analogy of God's relation to Israel. Just as Hosea had loved Gomer with the deepest devotion, and she, despite this, had deserted him and must be brought back with redeeming love, so God loved Israel who had forsaken him for other gods. Thus the message of Hosea is one of the most tender and most appealing of all the prophets. For pathos and beauty it is unsurpassed. Amos preached to the conscience; Hosea was a prophet of real repentance.

The heart of the message may be found in a number of selected statements from his book. ***‘How can I give thee up, Ephraim?’ ‘How can I let thee go, Israel?’ ‘My heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together’***” are all statements which indicate God’s yearning heart for his people. Today’s study will help us understand how deep was God’s love for Israel (Hester, H.I. *The Heart of Hebrew History*. 10<sup>th</sup> Printing, Liberty, Missouri: The William Jewell Press. 1958. page 272).

### **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

### *God's Yearning Heart*

#### **Focal Text**

Hosea 11:1-11

#### **Background Text**

Hosea 9:1—11:11

#### **Main Idea**

In spite of their sins against him, God does not give up on people but yearns to show mercy to them.

#### **Question to Explore**

When we have sinned, does God want us back?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead the church to identify implications for ourselves of God's not giving up on Israel in spite of their sins against him.

#### **Introduction to your personal study:**

One author speaks of God's divine vulnerability. (Copan, P. *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of The Old Testament God*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2011, page 37). It is important for us to remember that God's discipline came from a heart of love and its purpose was always to bring people back to Himself. Other passages in Hosea have emphasized the sin of the people. Today's passage beautifully shows the pain which God felt over the rebellion of his people – it is the pain of a parent for a wayward child.

#### **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.

“Evil behaviour deserves God’s punishment, but God’s basic relationship to His people is love. His heart fills with compassion when time for punishment comes. Sometimes His great love leads to even greater patience and protection for His people. Still the time of punishment cannot be put off forever, as the Northern Kingdom found out in 721 B.C.

God’s love and Israel’s commitment to the practices of their neighbours marked Israel’s history. Justice called for an unrepentant people to face judgment. Love could not give up on the beloved, so the final word is hope beyond judgment.

When Israel was young, God loved her. She grew old with ingratitude and infidelity. God would have preserved Israel in the vigour of youth, but Israel rejected the election love of God. God’s unconditional love melted with compassion. In His faithfulness, He could not totally give up His people.” (*New International Version Disciple’s Study Bible*. Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, page 1074.)

### **Focusing on the Meaning:**

**Hosea 11:1** “*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.*”

Hosea has used the husband and wife metaphor throughout the book. Now he uses the father and child metaphor. God chose Israel as the object of his peculiar concern, the vehicle of his providence, the agent of his purpose and will. This demonstrates the nature of His divine love. Other countries had more to offer – Egypt was filled with art and architecture; Assyria was powerful and Phoenicia was wealthy. Yet all of these things might have stood in the way of their realization of God’s purposes. God’s divine love chose the Hebrew people “***The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, but because the Lord loved you***” (Deuteronomy 7:7-8a). One commentary stated “He loved you because He loved you. Is not that a strange explanation? Yes, but in it lies the true nature of God’s love. He loves not from any utilitarian motive, but because He is love.” (*The Interpreter’s Bible*, Volume VI. New York: Abingdon Press, 1956, page 682).

“Out of Egypt” refers of course to the deliverance of the Jewish people from enslavement in Egypt. But it refers to the spiritual condition of enslavement to sin as well. God led the people out of Egypt, but each individual chooses or fails to choose to leave the spiritual enslavement of sin.

**Hosea 11:2** “*But the more I called Israel, the further they went from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images.*” The Israelites began to be disobedient early in their journey of leaving Egypt. In Exodus 32:4 we read “**He**

*(Aaron) took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'*" They had completed the tabernacle, experienced God's providential care in many ways yet while Moses was away on the Mt. Sinai receiving instruction from God, the people began their rebellion. By the time of Hosea it was so deep a rebellion against God that there was no real hope of their return to him without discipline of the strongest nature. Yet God yearns for them to repent.

Hundreds of years of Israel's history are summarized in these two verses.

**Hosea 11:3-4** *"It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. 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."* These verses speak of God's tenderness in helping the Israelites all through their history. The picture of the parent teaching the child to walk is powerful. God held their arms so they would not fall. We may call this picture the harness of love for all of this was done with love. In the last part of the verse, He returns to the image of the escape from slavery. He took the yoke from their neck and fed them like he would have fed a small child. These are amazing pictures of the tender nature of God's love and especially beautiful as we have considered the necessity of the punishment to come. Most parents do not relish punishment; they prefer to guide their children with loving expectation. These verses are in stark contrast to the foolish behaviour of the Israelites summarized in verses 1-2.

**Hosea 11:5-7** *"Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent? Swords will flash in their cities, will destroy the bars of their gates and put an end to their plans. My people are determined to turn from me. Even if they call to the Most High, he will by no means exalt them."* We can feel the desperate sense of failure which is not uncommon to parents. Regardless of wise counsel, loving guidance and prayerful concern, children make poor decisions and must suffer the consequences. There comes a point when even if help is requested, there is no way to make things right again. The people have refused to repent.

**Hosea 11:8** *"How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is charged within me; all my compassion is aroused."* Admah and Zeboiim are two of the five cities of the plain (Genesis 14:2; Deuteronomy 29:23; Jeremiah 49:18). They are mentioned as having been overthrown. Deuteronomy 29:23 indicates that Admah and Zeboiim must have shared the same fate as Sodom and Gomorrah. God assures the people of Israel that they will not suffer the same complete destruction as did Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24-35).

**Hosea 11:9** *"I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God, and not man – the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath."* We have to be reminded again and again that God is God and not man. He



is the Holy One among us. Yet, “the danger of equating God with ourselves, of forgetting that we are man and not God, is one which as Christians we should not find hard to avoid. For the Christian believes that in Christ, God has taken our flesh to show at one and the same time his identification with man, **“in all things...made like unto his brethren”** (Hebrews 2:17); yet his otherness from man in One who is **‘the brightness of (God’s) glory, and the express image of his person’** (Hebrews 1:3), in whose nature and spirit **‘dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily’** (Colossians 2:9).

It is as we remember that the Eternal is God and not man that we can understand the amazing patience, forbearance, forgiveness and compassion that these verses reveal.” (*The Interpreter’s Bible*, Volume VI. New York: Abingdon Press, 1956, pages 689-690).

**Hosea 11:10-11 “They will follow the Lord; he will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children will come trembling from the west.**

***They will come trembling like birds from Egypt, like doves from Assyria. I will settle them in their homes,” declares the Lord.***

There is a shift here in the emphasis of the passage. The tone of verses 10-11 are so different from verses 8-9 that some commentators feel that they must be an addition to the original text. But this is not Hosea’s first reference to God as a lion (remember that Amos also spoke of the God who roars). In chapter 5, verse 14 God says **“For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah.”** In chapter 13:7-8 we read **“So I will come upon them like a lion, like a leopard I will lurk by the path. Like a bear robbed of her cubs I will attack them and rip them open. Like a lion I will devour them; a wild animal will rip them apart.”**

However, in these passages the metaphor is a picture of destruction. In the passage in chapter 11 the roar is as a clarion call inviting the exiles home. At its sound his sons ***shall come trembling from the west.***

A different use too is made of the metaphor of the dove. In 7:11 Ephraim is a silly dove without brains. It is Ephraim’s stupidity that is stressed. But now the symbol is one of speed. ***Ephraim shall come eagerly*** (hurriedly) ***like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria.***

These verses speak of God’s gracious invitation to return. “Is Hosea suggesting that in the providence of God the very experiences in which we felt his judgment become the avenues of his mercy; that the tragic results of sin for which we paid in suffering, disillusionment, remorse, can become by God’s grace the open door through which the soul seeks its Saviour?” (*The Interpreter’s Bible*, page 692).

Punishment will come, but the hope of restoration is clearly expressed in verses 8-11.

These verses indicate the ongoing hope of God that his people will repent. Other verses in Hosea are strong indicators that this will not happen. But God's love constrains him to continue to invite to repentance. There is hope as well for a new relationship after punishment is exacted.

God cared for His people in the days of Hosea and he cares for His people today. He continually invites us and others to repentance and renewal. His love exceeds any human love.

### **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

As leader of this study you will want to enjoy the picture of God's love which is given and help participants to understand what that love means in their own lives. There is also the need to set aside judgmental attitudes which we have toward the world in which we live. Yes, it is a sinful world, but "**God so loved the world that He gave his only Son.**"

### **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)

### ***God's Yearning Heart***

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. Children who stay with their parents in the Youth/Adult study should have the material on worship as suggested in **The Children's Corner** at the beginning of this **Unit** of studies. (Ask your leader who downloads the studies for those suggestions).

**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 11:1-11

#### **Background Text**

Hosea 9:1—11:11

#### **Main Idea**

In spite of their sins against him, God does not give up on people but yearns to show mercy to them.

#### **Question to Explore**

When we have sinned, does God want us back?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead the church to identify implications for ourselves of God's not giving up on Israel in spite of their sins against him.

#### **Connect with Life:**

Begin with this example: Parents can easily relate to today's expression of God's love for his people. Parenting represents huge investments of time, energy and money. In many cases, perhaps in most cases, that investment pays returns in love given and received, enjoyment of children as adults, and fun times with grandchildren. Loving end-of-life care may be received as well. But for other parents the investment brings

pain, ongoing disappointment and grief. The drug overdose of a child, the wasted talents and intelligence in illegal or immoral activities, the failure to continue the spiritual teachings of childhood bring great pain. God understands that pain for He experiences it Himself. Today's lesson is a beautiful picture of God's love for his children.

## **Guide the Study:**

Have someone read Hosea 11:1.

Ask: What is the metaphor here? (father and child)

Use the "Teacher Preparation" material to comment on the love which God had for Israel.

Inquire: What is the reference to Egypt? (the deliverance of the Israeli slaves from Egypt – Exodus 14 contains the heart of the story, but it is the story of the Israelites from that time to the time of the writing by Hosea).

Add: Egypt also refers to spiritual bondage which was experienced by the people to whom Hosea prophesized and to people today.

Have someone read Hosea 11:2.

Discuss the reaction to God's calling of the people.

Say: Hundreds of years of Israel's history are summarized in these two verses.

Have someone read Hosea 11:3-4.

Remind the learners that Ephraim is another name for Israel.

Explain to the participants: Joseph's second son was named Ephraim. In Genesis 41:52 we read "***The second son he named Ephraim and said, 'It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.'***" Joseph's father blessed Ephraim with his right hand and Manasseh (the firstborn son of Joseph) with his left hand indicating that Ephraim would be the greater. The tribe of Ephraim did become a great tribe in the northern part of the Kingdom. It was, thus, natural that when the kingdom was divided that the northern part should be known as Ephraim.

Invite the group to describe the mental picture these verses invoke in their minds.

Have someone read Hosea 11:5-7.

Now ask: Does God expect the people to repent or does He fear that they will continue in their wicked ways?

Have someone read Hosea 11:8.

Comment on Admah and Zeboiim from the “Teacher Preparation” material

Allow time for comments on how these anguished questions of God make one feel all these years later.

Read Hosea 11:9

Urge the group to consider what it means that God is God and not man.

Encourage a brief discussion on this: How do we understand the words ‘the Holy One among you?’

With the group, examine Hebrews 2:17 and 1:3 as well as Colossians 2:9 to understand “God among us” in New Testament expressions.

Have another person read Hosea 11:10-11.

Explain the metaphors of lion and dove in this passage. (the lion’s roar is a clarion call inviting the exiles home; the dove refers to the speed with which the people will return to God).

Ask: Do verses 10-11 indicate that the people will repent as God desires or do they refer to a time in the future?

Inform the group: We know that the Northern Kingdom (Israel) was destroyed by the Assyria in 721 B.C. The Babylonians defeated Assyria in 609 B.C. The Babylonians allowed the return from exile to begin in 538 B.C. The temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt and dedicated in 516 B.C. Israel and Judah did not exist as two separate nations after the exile. Verses 10-11 must refer to a future time when God will restore his people.

### **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.

Have someone reread Hosea 11, verse 1 and verses 3 and 4 and verse 8.

Emphasize God’s redeeming love and His pain at the rejection and rebellion of His people.

State: This is as true today as it was in the time of Hosea.

Close by asking a person to pray that each person present, our church, and our nation will come to be faithful to God in every way.

**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.

### *God's Yearning Heart* Hosea 11:1-11

**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.

#### **On Exhibiting Love**

Read Hosea 11:1, 3-4 and 8. God is pictured as a loving and then grieving parent. On a piece of paper write down an example of a way in which your parents have exhibited their love to you this past week. How did you respond?

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***God's Yearning Heart***  
Hosea 11:1-11**Beginning the Service:**

Sing one or both:

**Grace Alone**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 112, CCLI # 2335524

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

**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

At this writing Japan continues to be a focus of international concern as it recovers from the devastating tsunami of March, 2011 and the resulting crisis caused by damage to the nuclear reactor. The grief of the Japanese people will endure for many years. Do not forget to continue to pray for comfort and for God's saving grace in the lives of many people in Japan.

**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 Yearning Heart – Divine Vulnerability***

"Throughout the Old Testament, God is not only passionately concerned for Israel but also frequently in pain at her rebellion and longing for reconciliation. In Ezekiel 18:23, 31-32, God asks, ***'Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked?...Why will***



***you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies...Therefore, repent and live.*** This theme of divine vulnerability runs throughout the Old Testament, where God is presented as a wounded lover who is reluctant to bring judgment.” (Copan, P. *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of The Old Testament God*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2011, page 37).

The overall message of the Bible is heard in the words of Jesus in Matthew 11: 28-30 ***“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”***. God always calls to Himself.

Let us examine some of the Biblical passages which speak to us of God's call. We have the very words of Jesus himself to give us guidance.

Jesus speaks again in John 6:37-40 ***“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that every one who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day”***.

These are amazing words –***“For my Father's will is that every one who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”***

Another wonderful promises exists in these words of Jesus ***“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*** John 8:12 Darkness is frightening; in many countries the loss of electrical power for even a few hours is seen as a disaster. We associate crimes with darkened alleys and late nights. Spiritual darkness is more frightening and it is this darkness that Jesus promises we will never have to experience if we follow him.

A beautiful picture of God calling is found in Revelation 3:20 ***“I stand at the door and knock, If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in.”***

Another amazing word picture given by Jesus is ***“Whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again.”*** John 4:14

In our Bible study we examined the tender words of Hosea 11:8 ***“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboim? My heart is charged within me; all my compassion is aroused.”***

### **Call to Commitment:**

The New Testament verses we have examined remind us that the God of Compassion is seeking the lost ***“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*** Luke 19:10.

And people today, just as the people of Israel to whom Hosea prophesied must decide to follow him or choose not to follow him.

He is a loving God; he always wants his people to return to him.

### **Concluding the Service:**

Sing or read the words to the following hymn:

**Softly and Tenderly**, *The Worship Hymnal* #414, CCLI #28380 Public Domain