

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Return to the Lord
Hosea 14

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: An outline of the study is given at the end of the worship time materials. You may make copies for students to use for taking notes or you make use the outline on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper to help direct your teaching.

Youth study leader: Have paper available for illustrating Hosea 14:5-7. You may want to have a large piece of paper or cardboard to use in working together on a mural.

Worship Time Leader:

If the youth have prepared drawings or a mural to share, allow them to do so as appropriate.

Music Sources:

Change my Heart, O God, *The Worship Hymnal* # 529; CCLI #1565

The Love of God, *The Worship Hymnal* #393, CCLI # 18448 Public Domain

Refiner's Fire, *The Worship Hymnal* #592; CCLI #426298

What a Mighty God We Serve, *The Worship Hymnal* #64, CCLI #4397553

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Return to the Lord

Focal Text

Hosea 14

Background Text

Hosea 11:12—14:9

Main Idea

God offers restoration and abundant new life to people who return to him.

Question to Explore

What hope is there when the verdict is “guilty as charged”?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to decide how they will respond to God’s invitation to return to him.

Gathering together:

Sing: **Change my Heart, O God**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 529; CCLI #1565
The Love of God, *The Worship Hymnal* #393, CCLI # 18448 Public Domain

First thoughts:

The main idea of our study today is “God offers restoration and abundant new life to people who return to him.” We are reminded of the words of John 10:10 ***I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly.*** In the text we will examine.

Today God tells his people ***I will heal, I will love freely and I will be as the dew.*** These are pictures of God’s abundance- his healing, his love, his gifts of beauty, strength and renewal. We complete the study of Hosea which has not always been easy for us to understand with the beautiful chapter 14 in which God offers these good things to the people of Israel. He offers them to us today as well.

Closing the Gathering Time:

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Return to the Lord – 18-45-05-en

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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

Return to the Lord

Focal Text

Hosea 14

Background Text

Hosea 11:12—14:9

Main Idea

God offers restoration and abundant new life to people who return to him.

Question to Explore

What hope is there when the verdict is “guilty as charged”?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to decide how they will respond to God’s invitation to return to him.

Introduction to your personal study:

This is the final study in the book of Hosea. It is not an easy book to understand for the concept of God telling Hosea to marry a prostitute is strange to our minds. We have further difficulty in understanding how Hosea was to continue loving Gomer when she returned to prostitution. But we are able to understand the picture which the story of Hosea gives of love that forgives again and again.

We can see how the story of Hosea and Gomer is a picture of the relationship of Yahweh to Israel. For many, many years Israel had chosen to live out from under the protective care of God. They depended on their worship of Baal mixed with some remembrance of the worship taught to them by Moses and other Israeli leaders. They were concerned about military strength and tried to gain favour with whichever country had the most power.

In this final chapter of Hosea, there is no talk of punishment. Punishment is a certain thing. Now Yahweh talks of the return of the people to Him. It is a chapter which tells of God's forever redeeming love. It is not a difficult passage to read or to interpret. Ask God to bless you as you study and ask him to be a blessing to others through you as you lead the study.

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.

Chapter 14 is closely related to Chapter 11 in the common emphasis on the love of God. In verses 1-3 of Chapter 14 the reference to the Lord is in the third person while in verses 4-8 there is divine speech in the first person.

The outline of the chapter is as follows:

- 1. The wanderer and the call to return (14:1) – an appeal to return**
- 2. The way back for wayward believers (14:2-3) – a model for the penitent's confession**
- 3. The divine witness (14:4-8) – the Lord's answer to the repentance of his people**
- 4. The wisdom (14:9) – a summary exhortation**

God gladly turns away from His anger for a people who ask forgiveness because love is His basic characteristic. At this point, condemnation of Israel is finished and encouragement to repent and receive grace begins.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Hosea 14:1-2 "Israel's suffering and ruin was caused by her sins – not by political misfortunes. She wilfully turned her back on God and worshiped Baal. Her only hope was to repent of her sins by turning to God and forsaking idolatry. Instead of taking animal sacrifices to God, she was to take penitent words of confession. Heartfelt confession and prayer accompany repentance.

God's grace forgives our sin in answer to the prayer of repentance. Those who turn to Him in penitent confession will in no wise be cast out. The prophet provided words to use in confession. The people needed to use them in heartfelt sorrow for sin to experience God's grace." (*New International Version Disciples' Study Bible*, Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, page 1077)

Verse 1 is essentially a requesting word, an exhortation to return to the Lord. It does not constitute a warning of impending judgment, for judgment is a reality which is behind the people of God. "The point is clear: Yahweh, God of Israel, will make a new beginning. The wanderer who has stumbled along the way need only to return in penitence and faith to experience a renewal of life. Return (shub) is the word characteristically used in biblical Hebrew to describe that turning which is the accompaniment of true repentance. There must come a turning in the life of the wayward, wandering people of God before renewal and re-creation of life can emerge. The prophetic call is perennially appropriate: without repentance there can be no salvation." (*The Broadman Bible Commentary, Hosea-Malachi*. Volume 7. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1972, page 58)

To stumble is used in Hosea (4:5; 5:5; 14:9) to signify the negative aspect of men who miss the way. The term describes falling into disgrace and defeat as a result of immoral or foolish behaviour.

Hosea 14:2-3 Words of confession, petition and commitment are necessary for the return to the Lord.

"Say to him: Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously that we may offer the fruit of our lips." We confess our sins; we petition that you will receive us and we commit ourselves to living out what we are promising.

"Pray to him, 'Take away our sin, accept our confession. Receive as restitution our repentant prayers.'" (Peterson, E. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 2002. page 1629.)

The fruit of our lips is a prayer that God will accept their words as worthy praise and sacrifice. This is "a prayer that God would pardon their transgressions and accept their prayers and praise as acceptable and good rather than reject them as tarnished by sin" (Garrett, D. *The New American Commentary: Hosea, Joel*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Homan Publishers, 1997, page 271).

Hosea 14:3 Here is the acknowledgement of three great sins of which Hosea had warned. Trust in foreign allies instead of God is acknowledged in the words **"Assyria cannot save us."** **"We will not mount war-horses"** is an understanding of the futility of military power. God had protected His people in the Exodus from Egypt and in the entering of the Promised Land. But that was forgotten by the Israelites who constantly sought to ally themselves with stronger nations and to increase their military strength.

A great sin mentioned is that of idolatry. The promise must be that they will no longer worship man-made objects.

The prophet Hosea has provided words to use in confession. The people needed to use them in heartfelt sorrow to experience God's grace.

“For the Christian reader this test is a call to abandon faith in political power and alliances, to forsake the strength that is of the ‘flesh,’ and to reject worldviews that contradict the biblical faith. Obviously this text does not address every issue, and a strident or sectarian theology untouched by grace and disobedient to the demands for love can be highly destructive in its own way. But there can be no compromise on the issue of loyalty to our covenant God” (Garrett, D. Page 271).

The last line of verse 3 states **“for in you the fatherless find compassion.”** God is compassionate to orphans and the orphan seeks and finds compassion in God. “The point of Hosea’s prayer is that the people of Israel have become orphans. When the nation, along with its shrines, priests, kings, and military forces, is destroyed, then the general populace will be left as orphans. They will be Lo-Ammi, not my people. Their adulterous mother, the institutions of Israel, will be dead; their father, Baal, will have given them no help. But this fatherless people will turn back to their one true father, the refuge of orphans and find shelter in him. The dispirited Diaspora of Israel must accept its position of orphan and return to Yahweh in that role and not come back as the people who proudly wear the title of ‘the elect of God’. When that happens, Not-my-people will become the sons and daughters of the living God” (Garrett, D. page 272).

Hosea 14:4-7 “I will heal...I will love...I will be as the dew” are words for the sinful Israelites, but they speak to our needy hearts today. Heal our estrangement from you, Father; Love us in spite of our sins; Refresh our dry spirits. This prayer is one we might pray this very day and the promise made to the Israelites is a promise to us.

Separation and alienation from God is the worst kind of sickness. In fact, it is often related to physical sickness and certainly related to emotional distress. “Our determined opposition to the will of God is an illness, an illness of the most serious vein” (The Broadman Bible Commentary, page 60).

“Yahweh promises to ‘heal’ their apostasy. This metaphor implies that apostasy is more than an act of the will, but is also a kind of mental derangement (or spiritual blindness) that God himself must cure. Here, too, is the paradox of Hosea. The book repeatedly calls upon the people to choose to turn back to Yahweh, but at the same time implies that they cannot turn back without a saving act from Yahweh” (Garrett, D. page 273).

“That Yahweh’s love would be ‘freely’ given has two implications: (1) it is by grace and thus is unearned, and (2) Yahweh’s freedom to give love will no longer be hindered by their sin because he will have already removed every offense.” (Garrett, page 274)

I will love them freely summarizes the whole of Hosea, Chapter 11. “The salvation of God’s people has its ground in nothing else at all other than the Lord, and especially in His love” (*Broadman Bible Commentary*, page 60).

I will be as the dew is a description of the refreshing, life-giving power of the Lord. The morning dew is beautiful in all times and places. The hopeful early morning hours when the dew is present represents this new beginning for the Israelite people.

The dew will cause blossoming like a lily signifying beauty. The magnificent cedars of Lebanon with deep roots symbolize the strength of this renewed people. The fruit of the olive tree implies well-being. New growth communicates that the nation will thrive and increase. Shade indicates that the nation will be a shelter for others. Grain, the vine and the wine of the vine picture the abundance of the return of the people to faith.

Garrett feels that a better translation of the NIV reading **His fame will be like the wine from Lebanon** would be **Recollection of him is like the wine of Lebanon**. Garrett, in fact, finds the NIV to inadequately translate various parts of this passage. Alternate readings from other versions would be appropriate.

Garrett feels that this statement refers to “God’s memories of Israel, so often a basis of condemnation, now becoming the ground of their salvation. Yahweh will not forget his covenant with his people, and neither their prayer nor their historical pilgrimage has lost meaning for him. Because of his love, memory of them glows like a warm fire, or, in the language of the text, has the bouquet of a fine wine” (Garrett, page 277).

Garrett comments on the fact that Lebanon is mentioned three times in this chapter. Lebanon was to the north of Israel and it was from there that Jezebel brought into Israel a force of the priests of Baal and established shrines to him (1 Kings 16:31-33). Allusions to Lebanon in this text would indicate that all of the good things that Israel thought to get from Baal will, instead, come from Yahweh, the true and real God.

Hosea 14:8 God not longer wants to hear about the idols. Israel should be done with them. Garrett indicates that the sense of the statement translated in the NIV as **I will answer him and care for him** should be **I have answered (him) and I am watching him**.

The green pine tree refers now to Yahweh. The tree appears to be a coniferous tree with edible fruit, possibly the stone pine. In the ancient Near East, the tree was a common symbol of kingship, divinity and fertility. These were the very qualities that Israel attributed to Baal. The final appeal of the book is that all the good things that Israel has sought in the fertility gods can be found only in Yahweh. (Garrett, page 279).

Hosea 14:9 This is a summary for the entire book, not simply the closing chapter. The wise man is encouraged to understand the teachings of the book. The ways of the Lord are right and those who walk in those ways will do well whereas those who choose not to walk in those ways will stumble (earlier described as falling into disgrace and defeat as a result of immoral or foolish behaviour).

We are reminded of 1 Corinthians 1:18 **For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.**

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

“Returning to God” is in a sense an every day event in the life of the Christian. Members of your group may need to acknowledge to God ways in which they have depended on other things such as money, status, or friends to help them in times of trouble. Hosea teaches us that God will always sustain us and He welcomes us back to his loving care.

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)

Return to the Lord

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 14

Background Text

Hosea 11:12—14:9

Main Idea

God offers restoration and abundant new life to people who return to him.

Question to Explore

What hope is there when the verdict is “guilty as charged”?

Teaching Aim

To lead the church to decide how they will respond to God’s invitation to return to him.

Connect with Life:

Ask if any members of your group have served on a jury or participated in another way in a trial.

Add: Certainly many will have watched TV shows or movies which depicted court scenes. A dramatic moment occurs when the verdict is pronounced “Guilty as charged”. We have studied Hosea’s prophecy of punishment for the Israelites. We would agree that they were “Guilty as charged”. Today’s study will focus on God’s invitation to a renewed relationship with him. Guilty, yes. Without hope, no.

Guide the Study:

Use the outline of the chapter as a guide for your teaching. You may choose to make copies of the outline or to put a copy of it on a whiteboard or large piece of paper.

1. **The wanderer and the call to return (14:1) – an appeal to return**
2. **The way back for wayward believers (14:2-3) – a model for the penitent's confession**
3. **The divine witness (14:4-8) – the Lord's answer to the repentance of his people**
4. **The wisdom (14:9) – a summary exhortation**

Have someone read Hosea 14:1.

Seek an answer: What caused Israel's downfall. (Your sins have been your downfall).

Tell the group: Three of those sins will be discussed in verse 3.

Invite opinions: What is expected of the people now?

Explain the Hebrew word return (shub). Say: "Return" (shub) is the word characteristically used in biblical Hebrew to describe that turning which is the accompaniment of true repentance.

Inquire: How this is applicable to us today?

Have someone read Hosea 4:5, 5:5 and 14:9.

Discuss the meaning of the word stumble. (The term describes falling into disgrace and defeat as a result of immoral or foolish behaviour.)

Comment: We may not think of the word stumble as having great significance. Yet in ordinary events, a stumble may result in a broken bone or a broken object of great value. In sports events it will likely be the difference between making a goal or failing to do so. Its use in Biblical examples is very serious.

Have someone read verse 2.

Consider the meaning of the words referred to in this verse. (Confession of sin)

Look for answers:

How difficult is it to confess sin to a person we have wronged?

How important is confession in our relationship to God?

Discuss the meaning of “the fruit of our lips”.

Explain: The fruit of our lips is a prayer that God will accept their words as worthy praise and sacrifice. This is “a prayer that God would pardon their transgressions and accept their prayers and praise as acceptable and good rather than reject them as tarnished by sin.

Have someone read Hosea 14: 3

Involve the group in discussing the three sins of Israel mentioned here:

trusting in help from other countries;

trusting in military power

worshipping false gods.

Give opportunity to discuss who the fatherless are in the last part of verse 3 (The people of Israel who after God’s punishment have no religious or political leaders and who live in a devastated country are orphans).

Have someone read Hosea 14: 4-7.

Call for an answer: What are the three great promises here? (I will heal, I will love them freely; I will be as the dew).

Using the “Teacher Preparation” materials, discuss each of these with the group.

Ask: What mental images are given in verses 5-7.

Have someone read Hosea 14:8-9.

Summarize the material about these verses given in the “Teacher Preparation” materials.

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 read 1 Corinthians 1:18.

Close the Bible Study by sharing this: “Returning to God” is in a sense an every day event in the life of the Christian. Members of your group may need to acknowledge to God ways in which they have depended on other things such as money, status, or friends to help them in times of trouble. Hosea teaches us that God will always sustain us and He welcomes us back to his loving care.

Have a person lead 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.

Return to the Lord Hosea 14

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.

Thoughts for Teens on Hosea 14:5-7

I will be as the dew is a description of the refreshing, life-giving power of the Lord. The morning dew is beautiful in all times and places. The hopeful early morning hours when the dew is present represents this new beginning for the Israelite people.

The dew will cause blossoming like a lily signifying beauty. The magnificent cedars of Lebanon with deep roots symbolize the strength of this renewed people. The fruit of the olive tree implies well-being. New growth communicates that the nation will thrive and increase. Shade indicates that the nation will be a shelter for others. Grain, the vine and the wine of the vine picture the abundance of the return of the people to faith.

You may individually illustrate these concepts or you may draw a large mural as a group depicting several of these ideas. Be prepared to share these in the Worship Time.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Return to the Lord***
Hosea 14**Beginning the Service:**

Sing:

Change my Heart, O God, *The Worship Hymnal* # 529; CCLI #1565
and/or
Refiner's Fire, *The Worship Hymnal* #592; CCLI #426298

If the youth have prepared drawings to depict concepts from Hosea 14, allow them to share the drawings now.

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

The Crimean Tatars of Ukraine settled on the Crimean Peninsula, Ukraine's southernmost land-mass in the Black Sea, in the 1230s. Tsarist policy from Russia and later Stalin's orders forced the people group to disperse throughout parts of Central Asia in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Pressure of conversion by the Russian Orthodox Church by burning mosques during the 17th and 19th centuries has tainted the Crimean Tatar's view of Christianity. Now, more than 250,000 Crimean Tatars with Muslim beliefs have returned to their homeland. Each of this people's three sub-ethnic groups has its own dialect, which can complicate the translation of Scripture. Pray that Scripture translation may be accomplished quickly and well. Pray, too, for Christian volunteers who will translate Home Church Online Bible study and worship materials from Russian into those Crimean dialects. Pray that home-based churches will begin and reproduce through the use of those Bibles and the Home Church materials.

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.

I will heal; I will love them freely; I will be as the dew

Although we have considered these concepts in our Bible study, they are so beautiful that it is well for us to consider them devotionally as well. These are thoughts which bring comfort with the very richness of the words.

I will heal is a Biblical teaching which is found over and over. When the Israelites left Egypt they went into the desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. They came upon water at a place called Marah but it was bitter. The people, understandingly, began to grumble and complain to Moses who called upon God. The Lord showed him a piece of wood which he threw into the water and it became drinkable.

The Lord used this as a testing and as a time of declaring his expectations for the people. **He said "If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians for I am the Lord who heals you."** Exodus 15: 26.

There are many things we do not understand about disease and healing. But we can understand that the commands of the Lord exist for our well-being. This was not the last time the Israelites would doubt God's providential care for them on the way to the Promised Land. Their disobedience and lack of faith led to their wandering in the wilderness for forty years.

So much of the emotional distress and at least some of the physical distress we experience comes from choosing life styles and false values and following selfish desires. Yet, God desires to be our healer.

The greatest healing comes when we place our faith in Christ as Saviour. It is expressed in the prophecy of Isaiah 53:5 speaking of the Messiah **But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed.**

1 Peter 2: 24-25 repeats that truth: **He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

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This, of course, is closely related to God's promise ***I will love you freely.*** When we see that promise in the final chapter of Hosea we ask ourselves, "How could God love these people who time and time again refused to repent and follow him?"

We may ask it about our world which is so filled with sin and disobedience and lack of love for one another and for God. Even within the Christian community dissension abounds. How can God keep on loving us? But he does. A sad reality is that even in Christian North America many do not know the familiar verses from John 3:16-17 ***For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*** I will love you freely was God's promise to the Israelites of Hosea's day; it is promise to those of us who live in the 21st century.

I will be as the dew is a wonderful picture of God's abundant care. The Israelites lived in desert country; the dew of the morning must have been one of the most agreeable times of the day.

In Alexander McCall's book *Blue Shoes and Happiness*, Madam Ramotswe, owner of Botswana's only ladies' detective agency, describes conditions in that dry country. "But looming greater than anything else there was the problem of drought. It was a familiar feeling in Botswana, this waiting for rain, which often simply did not come, or came too late to save the crops. And then the land, scarred and exhausted, would dry and crack under the relentless sun, and it would seem that nothing short of a miracle would ever bring it to life. But that miracle would eventually arrive, as it always had, and the landscape would turn from brown to green within hours under the kiss of the rain. And there were other colours that would follow the green: yellows, blues, reds would appear in patches across the veld as if great cakes of dye had been crumbled and scattered by an unseen hand. These were the colours of the wild flowers that had been lurking there, throughout the dry season, waiting for the first drops of moisture to awaken them (Vintage Canada, 2006, page 3-4).

It was this picture that would have been evoked by God's statement ***I will be as the dew.*** Life-giving moisture renews everything. God promised renewal and beauty and abundance. ***I will be as the dew*** is a description of the refreshing, life-giving power of the Lord. The morning dew is beautiful in all times and places. The hopeful early morning hours when the dew is present represents this new beginning for the Israelite people.

The dew will cause blossoming like a lily signifying beauty. The magnificent cedars of Lebanon with deep roots symbolize the strength of this renewed people. The fruit of the olive tree implies well-being. New growth communicates that the nation will thrive and increase. Shade indicates that the nation will be a shelter for others. Grain, the vine and the wine of the vine picture the abundance of the return of the people to faith.

This Old Testament passage speaks to us today. God will heal us; he will love us freely, he will be as the dew renewing, energizing, and causing beauty and abundance.

Call to Commitment:

Think of dry times in your spiritual experience. Did you need to be reminded of God's healing, his love, and his renewal? Do you need to be reminded today?

Pray that our eyes may have the vision that these promises give to us. May we gladly accept healing, love and renewal.

Concluding the Service:

What a Mighty God We Serve, *The Worship Hymnal* #64, CCLI #4397553

An outline of Hosea 14

1. The wanderer and the call to return (14:1) – an appeal to return
2. The way back for wayward believers (14:2-3) – a model for the penitent's confession
3. The divine witness (14:4-8) – the Lord's answer to the repentance of his people
4. The wisdom (14:9) – a summary exhortation