

A Life Lived for God *Hosea 1*

The more I have looked at the ministry of Hosea, the more I am in awe. When I read about a person of great faith, I always wonder what it took and how they did it.

So as we look at the beginning of Hosea's call and ministry I want to focus on 3 of the attributes that Hosea displayed in walking with such amazing faith.

Hosea starts as many of the prophetic books start:

Hos 1:1 The Word of the LORD which came to Hosea the son of Beeri,

- The Word of the Lord came” - This is the way God directed His prophets - what goes on in this book and what is spoken in this book is from God.

Hosea seems to respond immediately to do and speak exactly as God said.

- You might think - “Well, there you go. If God would just speak out loud to me, it would be no problem to do exactly what He says.” Don't be too sure.

Is that all that God said to Hosea? Did He say more?

- Ex. Paul You can read about the account of Paul's conversion in Acts 9 and see what God said to him. However, if you turn to the end of Acts, chap 26, when Paul is talking about the events, he recounts the words that God said to him and you find out that there was more said than given in Acts 9.
- So maybe God said a lot more things to assure and comfort Hosea.

Did Hosea struggle with his assignment? Did prophets ever struggle with God when the Word of the LORD came to them? Did prophets ever argue with God? Yes. Several did.

- Abraham - faithful follower of God. (Gen. 18 - When God said he was going to destroy Sodom, Abraham argued with God. Tried to talk Him out of it. Suggested that if there were at least a few righteous people, it would go against God's character to destroy the city. Pleaded ***“May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak***
- Moses - How did Moses react when he was called? Ex 3 & 4 - one protest after another. Even after God answered every protest and gave him miraculous assurances, he still argued: ***“O Lord, please send someone else to do it.” NIV***
- Jonah ran away
- Elijah ran away from God immediately after an amazing victory that God had given him. (1 Kings 19:3-4) He had stood against all the false priests of the

land who worshipped Baal. They had a show down. God miraculously put the priests to shame - but one threatening word from Jezebel (king Ahab's wife) and how did Elijah react?

- *“Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. ... went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 1 Kings 19:3,4 NIV*

We have no record of Hosea arguing. But maybe Hosea and the Lord had long talks. Maybe Hosea had misgivings. Maybe God gave him all kinds of comfort and reassurances. I don't know. How did Hosea respond?

1st point I want to make:

❖ *God's call was difficult but Hosea followed in spite of many obstacles and uncertainties.*

I thought: How many times have I hesitated in following God because the path wasn't clear? And all I could see were uncertainties and obstacles that might present themselves.

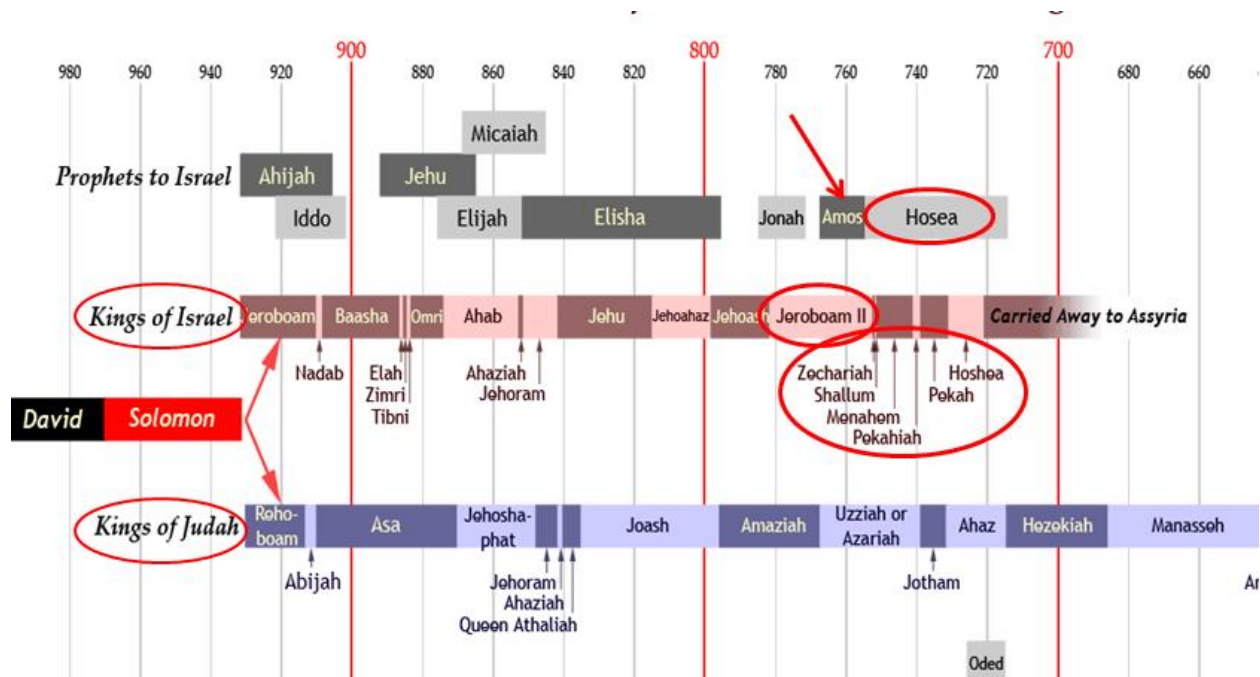
- Very seldom is the path clear (God doesn't give us a view of the entire trip. We can't see where the road goes except maybe for the first few steps.) and problems are there from the get-go.

They were certainly there for Hosea. Verse 1 gives you the setting and a ton of information about the obstacles and difficulties that Hosea was facing.

Hos 1:1 The Word of the LORD which came to Hosea, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (Southern kingdom), and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel (Northern kingdom). NASU



Review - Hosea was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom (*map*) Israel/Ephraim - Judah was the Southern Kingdom
This division took place when King Solomon's son came to power.



Hosea prophesied in the North but interestingly, which kings are made the focus of his time? 4 Kings of Judah (*circle*) Why?

- Maybe it is a divine commentary by God on which line of kings He recognized. Remember this was the line of David - the messianic line came through Judah, the southern kings. (*If you go to Matthew 1 and read the record of Christ's genealogy you will see every one of these kings named.*)
- In the north, there was not one good king. They were all idolators.
- Another reason could be that Hosea may have written this book after the collapse of Northern kingdom and so it was being read by the Southern Kingdom as a warning. (There are many verses directed to the Southern Kingdom in the book of Hosea, so this was a book written to them as well.)

These kings also give us the *state of the nation*. : (we looked at this last week - the depravity of the people.)

In your homework you saw that Jeroboam II (*circle*) was not a good king and did not follow God. And the kings after him (*circle*) are even worse - one assassination after another took place.

But Hosea started out during Jeroboam's reign, a time of economic prosperity.

- In fact the account of this king in 2 Kings 14 - 25 says: "*He restored the coast of Israel and saved many of the people.*"

- Not because he was a good king but God was still coming to the aid of the people: (2 Kings 14:26-27) *The LORD had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering; there was no one to help them. 27 And since the LORD had not said he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam*

Who else prophesized during Jeroboam's reign? Amos ([arrow](#)) (Amos 1:1 says that Amos was a prophet during his reign.)

So you can go to the prophecy of Amos and find out even more about the times when Hosea was called. (In fact, throughout the homework, you will see a lot of references to Amos)

- *Ex: Amos 5:11 You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. NIV*
- Amos also describes a time of prosperity but ungodliness.

What else made Hosea's call difficult?.....[How old he was?](#)

[This first verse](#) gives us the time frame:

- The northern king - Jeroboam 2's reign defines the minimum starting date of Hosea's ministry - it had to start before the end of Jeroboam's reign (~753bc) and Hosea continued being a prophet at least through the beginning of [Hezekiah's](#) reign (started ~728 or even later). That's 25 years minimum, but it is believed to have been a lot longer than that, *because Hosea seems to have lived after the invasion of the Assyrians in 722.*
- (Kay Arthur put his ministry at 755 -714 = 40 years. Some say even more.)
- Therefore most commentaries feel Hosea was very young when he was called because he had to live another 25-40 years or more (called at 18-20?)

There is no reason to believe that he had [amazing credentials](#). God called people to be his prophets from all walks of life. Ex. Amos was a shepherd and took care of fig trees.

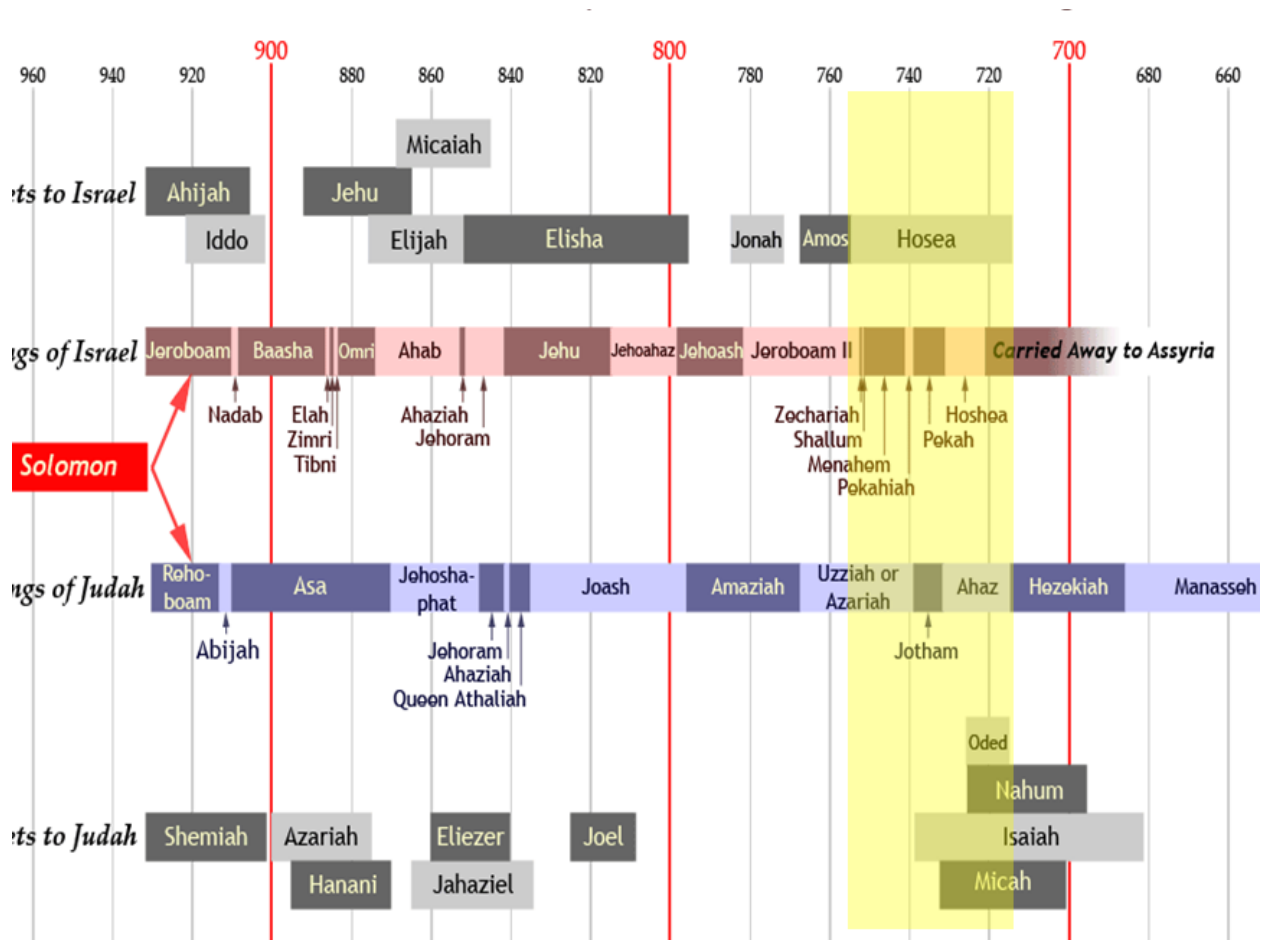
- Hosea grew up in a culture of idolatry, had probably seen all kinds of horrendous things. We don't know about his family, his upbringing. His name is not mentioned anywhere else in scripture.

Something else that may have made his ministry hard: How many other prophets served with Hosea in the north? ([Chart](#)) None! When Amos ended, Hosea started. (I wonder if he and Amos ever met, if Hosea had heard him preach.)

- But imagine if you were the only person in Troy called to preach to the people with nobody else to help you. (It's probably closer to being the only

person in the state of Michigan with nobody to help you.) Not even your own family. Hosea's family in fact proves to be an embarrassment to him.

- Personally, without my family supporting me, without the wonderful, Godly women that God has called to participate in Insights with me - there is not way I could or would even want to do my part. Not alone.



But maybe, just maybe he didn't feel so alone. If you look at the time frame of Hosea's life (yellow shaded area), Hosea did have contemporaries in the south. Isaiah, Micah, Nahum (Did they ever meet?)

So we have difficult times (corrupt rulers, decadent culture) Hosea is young, no credentials, pretty much alone, and then what does God ask of Him?

Hos 1:2 When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry.

- (Here's where we need a picture of Hosea's face)
- Hosea said yes, but it's not getting easier!

There is a lot of controversy about whether Gomer was a harlot before and/or after

- Nobody seems to agree. I'm not sure it matters because Hosea was told upfront the nature of the woman that he was going to marry.

Which scenario is worse? Maybe it would have actually been easier to think she was a harlot to begin with, because then at least Hosea might have started out with the hope of reforming her.

- Whatever the case it was not an easy command to follow. A shocking command in fact.

How shocking would this have been? How shocking is it to us?

- I think we can assume it was pretty shocking to Hosea...but maybe he understood its implication better than we do.

The Jewish people would have understood the connection between God's love and marriage very well. The picture of marriage, as God's relationship with Israel, was consistently used throughout the Old Testament representing God entering into a covenant relationship with His people, betrothing Himself to them.

Other prophets used this language:

Isa 54:5 For your Maker is your husband--the LORD Almighty is his name...

Isa 62:5 as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you. NIV

Jer 3:14 "Return, faithless people," declares the LORD, "for I am your husband. NIV

Hos 2:19 I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. NIV

But this is not an ordinary marriage. Hosea is asked to marry a harlot because “*the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD*”

- This marriage is going to parallel God's marriage to Israel, because God's marriage, God's bride, had turned to harlotry too.
- Gomer's physical harlotry, her unfaithfulness to Hosea is going to parallel Israel's spiritual harlotry/*unfaithfulness to God* (“*abandoning God turning to the idols and myths of paganism*” - which often included acts of physical harlotry)
- “*No ordinary marriage - permeated with purposes of revelation.*” Hubbard

Calling Hosea to live out what God was going through gives profound power to the message. It reveal God's broken heart.

- *Wayne Barber: The voice in this book is not a detached ruler, but a sensitive hurting husband (sobbing father) who pleads for loyalty and longs for reunion.*
- *“Hosea is deeply affected by the situation in which he is placed... It is his heart that speaks; ...the sentences fall from him like the sobs of a broken heart.*
- In Hosea’s heart, we see God’s heart.
- Hosea was told to show Gomer love over and over in spite of everything. What does that illustrate? If Hosea could do it, can God?

Hosea may have understood the connection, but he may not have liked the command. However, what was his response?

- *Hos 1:3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. NASU*
- Immediate obedience!

The picture doesn’t get better. The commands don’t get easier.

Hosea was told to name his 3 children with names that prophesied bad things about the land.

The second attribute I see in Hosea

❖ *Following God’s call brought heartache, rejection and loneliness, but Hosea persevered* He kept on, he didn’t quit.

- Hosea may have hoped that he could reform this woman and they’d live happily ever after. But then the names he is told to give his children - I always feel “anything but my kids.”
- I think it broke Hosea’s heart to give his children these names.

It’s one thing to take on the initial challenge of something God has asked you to do, but it’s another thing to keep on - keeping on when the challenges pile up one on top of another.

- *Illus: How many of you have been in a ministry of some kind and you faced the initial challenges with great enthusiasm and patience and prayer. Worked through those initial things.*
- *Then all of a sudden, other problems, other irritations (sometimes just little things), started making the process difficult and irritating and some of the joy was stolen.*
- *How does that make you feel? Like a failure. Should you really be doing this. That’s the enemy speaking.*

Illus: I heard about a study. Good ministers on the average will have the encouragement and support of about 85% of their congregation. Usually there's about 10-15% of the people that are going to be critical and difficult to deal with. Guess why most ministers leave the ministry- because of that 15% that is critical and non-supportive.

Hosea had about a 100% critical and problematic congregation.

Hosea kept on. His preaching is recorded in Chapters 4-14 and it spanned decades - assume all his life.

But the children's names also -“*permeated with purposes of revelation.*”

- They are a picture of the judgment to come, but their names also became a picture of *hope*. (Maybe Hosea was able to tell them that right away - we'll see that turn to the positive in a few verses.)

Note: Throughout Hosea, there is this pattern of judgment but then always followed by hope.

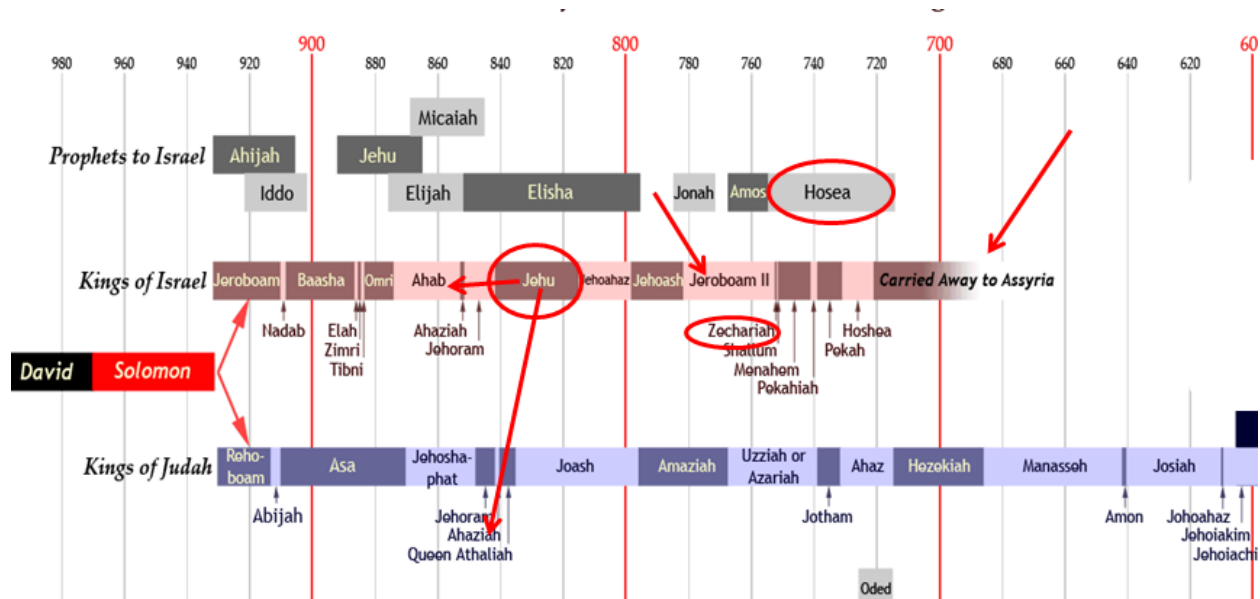
We will see it immediately here with the children's names.

Then chapter 2 continues on with judgment but again it is immediately followed by chapter 3 - a promise of hope, an amazing picture of God's unconditional love and forgiveness.

Let's look at the children's names: First the judgment then the hope.

An interesting thing about that first child named *Jezreel* = scattered or sowed: A prophet was proved genuine by having a part of his prophecy coming true.

- God often gave prophets a two part prophecy - one dealt with the near future and one -the distant future.
- And if the near one came true, that would be evidence that this was a true prophet and you would be assured that God would fulfill the far distant prophecy as well.



When naming this child (vs. 4) God said that He would punish the house of Jehu (King Jeroboam II (**chart**) who was reigning during Hosea's day) was the great grandson of Jehu (**circle**)

- Who is going to be upset by that? (King Jeroboam!)

God said that He would put an end not only to the house of Jehu but to the kingdom of Israel as well. Break the bow (the power) of Israel, Israel's ability to defend itself.

- Who was going to be upset by that? The people! Hosea is not making himself the most popular man on campus.

History: Why is the house of King Jehu being judged?

- The history of the story of Jehu is complicated. He was used by God to destroy the descendants of Ahab (**arrow - a very evil king**) (Ahab's palace was situated in the city of Jezreel.)
- Jehu's "zeal for bloodshed exceeded all bounds". He killed Ahab's wife, Ahab's 70 sons, and then all his advisors and close acquaintances. It was a "massacre."
- Then Jehu continued on and attacked relatives of Ahaziah, King of Judah too. **arrow** (2 Kings 10) This excessive violence led Hosea to denounce him.

So through the naming of this first child, Hosea was making a prophecy about the fate of the current King and the Northern kingdom. Did Hosea's prophecies come true?

- Yes. After the death of Jeroboam II his son Zechariah (**circle**) reigned only six months before being assassinated and that was the end of the house of Jehu (great-great-grandson died, the line died).

- 2nd part of prophecy: Not only would the house of Jehu fall, but the kingdom of Israel would too. Before Hosea's ministry was finished, Israel was defeated, destroyed, and taken captive (*arrow*) by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:20-23).
- The people saw both prophecies come true during Hosea's lifetime.

Hosea was proven to be a true prophet.

- Because the people saw the near term prophecies come true they could count on the far term prophecies coming true too.
- You'll see these prophecies later in this book. (He talks about the return of people to the Lord and to the land; the setting up of a wonderful restored kingdom.)

All the names given the children at first carry the idea of judgment.

- *Jezeel* can mean scattered. That is exactly what happens, the people are scattered when the Assyrians invade - the nation is conquered and the people deported to many different lands.

The daughter's name Lo-ruhamah (*lo-raw-kham*) means not pitied - pointing again to the near distant future when God's compassion and forgiveness is going to be withdrawn.

- Why? Let me give you a glimpse of what Hosea says.

“they have deserted the LORD to give themselves to prostitution...they do not acknowledge the LORD. (4:10-11)

“they have strayed from me!...they have rebelled against me! (7:13)

“They do not turn to the Most High; (7:16)

Israel has forgotten his Maker “ (8:14)

“My people are determined to turn from me. (11:7)

The people were no longer even seeking God's compassion. The nation was turning their backs on God, straying, rebelling, deserting Him. They weren't seeking God or anything from Him. They didn't even acknowledge Him. They didn't want to be pastured, taken care of.

Summation given of the condition 2 Chronicles. (This is talking about the Southern Kingdom at the end (under the last king but it is exactly what happened to the Northern Kingdom as well.) Listen to the condition of the people's hearts.

2 Chron 36:12-16[Zedekiah] did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD... He became stiff-necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the LORD, the God of Israel. 14 Furthermore, *all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.*

15 The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.” NIV

- What does that do to the relationship? They don't even want a relationship. (*Note:* Always keep this in mind when you read about the judgment in Hosea. This judgment follows hundreds of years of God pleading with this nation, sending multitudes of prophets, warning them to turn from horrendous acts of idolatry and wickedness.

The only thing from that point forward that would turn this nation around, was losing it all, being conquered and taken captive. God would remove his compassion, his protection, his hand - in order to save some.

- *Note: Even in captivity, you'll read verses about how God wanted them to prosper while they are captives; He just couldn't stop caring. Interestingly, after the captivity when the people returned -- there is no record of Israel ever serving idols again. It didn't cure all their problems but captivity did cure them of that.*

The last child is the saddest - *Lo-ammi* - not mine. Probably not Hosea's child, just as Israel had become totally unfaithful and were no longer able to be identified as God's people.

They wanted nothing to do with God and so God lets go: "Not mine"

One translation: *I am not "I am" to you anymore.*

But immediately following the judgment is hope. (This is a pattern you will see throughout Hosea. Announcements of Judgment followed by promises of hope.)

"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.' Hos 1:10 NIV

Does that sound like a promise given to someone else?

Gen 13:14-17 The LORD said to Abram..."Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. 15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. 16 I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted." NIV

- (Note: The promises God made to Abraham were unconditional, based on nothing but God's promises, God's faithfulness . There was nothing Abram had to do to receive it and there was nothing he could do to annul it.)

So after the judgment God reaffirms this unconditional promise given to Israel.

- Although they are going to be carried away by the coming judgment, there is still hope. God will keep his word to the patriarchs and restore Israel's population to a size beyond numbering - like the sand of the sea.
- God will bestow an even greater blessing on this nation than He has ever done before. That had to sound pretty amazing.

What is God talking about? Vs. 11 tells you

Hos 1:11 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. NIV

- What did God just do to that first child's name: Jezreel? It has been turned into the meaning of sowing/planting instead of scattering
- Vs. 1:11 - God transforms this child's name into a picture of unity, one nation, one leader, a great day. A great sowing in the land.
- This was partly fulfilled when the people came back from captivity, but this is very Messianic language.

Prophetic books give this picture numerous times:

Jeremiah 3:18 In those days (or "in that day") the house of Judah will join the house of Israel, and together they will come from a northern land to the land I gave your forefathers as an inheritance. NIV

Ezek 34:23 I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. NIV

Zech 10:6 "I will strengthen the house of Judah and save the house of Joseph. I will restore them because I have compassion on them. They will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them. NIV

In chapter 3 of Hosea, you are going to see this restoration referred to again:

Hos 3:5 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. NIV

Just as the nation had been scattered, conquered and captured, it will someday again be sown in the land. Jezreel's name was turned around, completely reversed!

Then with the same stroke of the pen, vs. 2:1 the names of the other two children are reversed.

- *Hos 2:1 Say to your brothers, "Ammi," and to your sisters, "Raw- kham."*
- The "Lo" (the "not") is taken away.
- Instead of *lo-ammi* (not my people) they become "*ammi*" (my people.)
- Instead of *Lo-ruhamah* - (not pitied) they become "*ruhamah*" ("pitied/loved/ shown compassion".)

What reason is given for that great reversal? None! All is of grace.

It was grace then, it is grace now.

- *Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. NASU*
- *Eph 2:1,4,5 you were dead in your transgressions and sins...4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-it is by grace you have been saved. NIV*

"God is the Lord of Reversals. He can turn around the darkest moment, reverse the bleakest fortunes, and upend the devil's most diabolical plan. When life falls apart, God reaches down with his mighty hand of grace to mend, to heal, to fix, to help, to win the day. Life is hard, "but God..." Bill Giovannetti

No one needed to hear those words of hope more than Hosea.

We know the Northern Kingdom never repented. So if we were to evaluate Hosea's ministry to the Northern Kingdom, what would you say? How successful was He? Apparently was an abysmal failure.

- But when Hosea heard those words, His children's name reversed, he could put His heart at rest that God would not forget His people- no matter what.
- Apparently he could share that hope with his children too.

That points to the last attribute that Hosea had to have had. It doesn't come from the book of Hosea. It comes from the new testament where God looks back and tell us what motived these men. Reading from Hebrews 11. A chapter about the great men of faith, including the prophets. Reading sections - note especially the underlined words.

Heb 11:8-16 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ...For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith Abraham, even though he was past age-and Sarah herself was barren-was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.

By faith Moses...He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. NIV

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth... Instead, they were longing for a better country-a heavenly one.

What a commendation there is in this chapter of the prophets. So what motivated these people? What were they keeping their focus on?

The third attribute I see in Hosea:

- ❖ *Serving God did not bring (apparent earthly) success, but Hosea kept His focus on the Lord and the heavenly rewards that would bring.*

Can you think of good things that have already come about through Hosea's faithful following of God?

- Hosea's life is one of the most beautiful pictures of God's love and redemption in the Bible. What an honor to have written it.
- Hosea's preaching may have helped guide and preserve the southern kingdom so that they lasted another 100 years.
- Hosea has blessed countless millions down through the ages who have read this book and heeded the warnings and seen the love *"that will not let us go."*

You know that a life lived for God is always worth it. We don't have to wait until heaven to see that that is true.

- When I look back on my life, what have I reaped from all the time that I didn't follow God, when I didn't say or do what I knew was His will - everytime it only yielded regret - guilt - shame - hurt - sorrow....
- But anything I have done for God, even if it cost me, (and remember that even at best our motives are mixed) it has yielded joy and purpose and no regret.

Jim Elliot: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." "

Personally, there is a part of me that will never be the same after reading about Hosea's life. I think that will happen to most of you after reading this book.

I'm so grateful to Hosea and I can't wait to tell him someday what his life meant to me. And thank him for his obedience and perseverance and keeping his eye on the Lord.

It's worth it. You never know what God will do with a life of obedience and perseverance and a focus that stays on Him.

Thank you Lord for your call on Hosea's life. For raising up so many that have gone before us to be an example (As you say in Romans) *"to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."*

Thank you Lord that you always offer hope, no matter how dark life may appear. Nothing is too hard for you. No matter how far we have strayed, you are always there ready to forgive, to heal, to restore, to welcome us back with open arms and and lead us with your strong and mighty hand. A hand that will not let us go, ever! A hand that will guide us in your perfect plan for our lives.

Help us to believe that Lord. The cares and concerns of this world scream at us, so many times drowning out your voice and your words of comfort and assurance. Remove all the barriers Lord so that we can hear you. You've been there all along but sometimes we just don't see it. Open our eyes to see you more and more and the love that is waiting for us.

In Christ Jesus' name we pray.