



The Faithful Love of the Father Hosea 11

On Thursday, I had the privilege of preaching a wedding for a young couple in our church. It was a beautiful celebration—not just of two people who love each other, but of the gospel itself. As they continue to grow in their faith and love for one another, I believe their marriage will continually point people to Jesus and display His love to the world.

One of the things that stood out to me was the joy and excitement on their faces. You could see the delight they had in one another. You could see the evidence of God’s kindness in bringing them together and the hope they have for the future He is building with them.

That is the beauty of marriage when it reflects God’s design. In Ephesians 5, Paul reminds us that Christian marriage is not ultimately about us—it is meant to display something greater. Every marriage is a picture meant to point us to the love of Christ for His bride, the church. It is a picture of commitment, sacrifice, faithfulness, and a love that never gives up.

But today, I want to introduce you to a very different marriage story. It is a marriage that was also designed by God, but it is filled with heartbreak, betrayal, and unfaithfulness. And yet, through this broken marriage, God reveals one of the most beautiful pictures of His own faithful love.

That story is found in the book of Hosea.

Just out of curiosity, how many of you are familiar with the book of Hosea and its message? Some of you may know this story well, but many of you may not—and that is not surprising. Hosea is a small 14-chapter book tucked away in the Old Testament as the first of what we call the Minor Prophets. They are called “minor” not because their message is less important, but simply because their books are shorter.

And yet, this small book carries a powerful message: what does the faithful love of God look like when His people are unfaithful?

The story begins in a way that may surprise us. God does not simply give Hosea a message to preach—He gives Hosea a life to live. God uses Hosea’s own marriage as a living picture of His relationship with Israel. So let’s turn to Hosea chapter 1 and see what God wants us to understand about His faithful love.”

SLIDE

Hosea 1:2-3 NIV

2 When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, “Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.” 3 So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

SLIDE

Hosea 1:6-7 NIV

6 Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, “Call her Lo-Ruhamah (which means “not loved”), for I will no longer show love to Israel, that I should at all forgive them. 7 Yet I will show love to Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but I, the Lord their God, will save them.”

SLIDE

Hosea 1:8-9 NIV

8 After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. 9 Then the Lord said, “Call him Lo-Ammi (which means “not my people”), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.

Lo-Ammi - not mine...probably not Hosea's son because Gomer went back to other lovers.

Israel has broken their covenant relationship with God by loving other gods and chasing after idolatrous worship while also continuing to "worship" Yahweh at the same time. They wanted the "blessing" of both God and Baal.

Hosea 2 reveals the faithful love of God toward His unfaithful people, showing that even when Israel chased after other loves, God continued to pursue, discipline, and restore them. Like a loving husband who refuses to give up on his bride, God promises to draw His people back to Himself, remove their shame, and renew their relationship with Him. Look at this promise from the end of chapter 2.

SLIDE:

Hosea 2:23 NIV

I will plant her for myself in the land;

I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.'

I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people';
and they will say, 'You are my God.'"

SLIDE:

Hosea 3:1 NIV

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

SLIDE:

Hosea 3:2-3 NIV

2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. 3 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 behave the same way toward you."

At this point in the story, we might be tempted to stop. Hosea has pursued Gomer, paid the price to bring her back, and restored her to himself. It is a beautiful picture of redemption. But we need to remember that Hosea's marriage was never just about Hosea and Gomer. God was using their relationship as a picture of His relationship with His people.

Gomer's unfaithfulness represents Israel's unfaithfulness toward God. And before we can fully appreciate the depth of God's love, we need to understand the depth of Israel's rebellion.

Beginning in chapter 4, Hosea steps away from the story of Hosea and Gomer and begins exposing the spiritual condition of God's people. God's people were not simply making mistakes—they were turning away from the One who loved them, rescued them, and called them His own.

SLIDE:

The amazing thing is that even as God exposes their sin, He is not doing so because He has stopped loving them. He is revealing their condition because He desires to restore them. The discipline of God is not the absence of His love; it is an expression of His love.

So let's briefly look at the heart condition of Israel in chapters 4 through 14 as well as the condition of our own hearts, because it helps us understand the incredible compassion we see when we arrive at Hosea 11.

SLIDE:

1. They rejected knowing God (Hosea 4:1-6)

Israel's sin:

Israel abandoned the knowledge of God. They did not want to hear His truth, follow His ways, or be shaped by His Word. Their rejection of God produced brokenness in every area of life.

How we live this today:

We may not bow down to carved idols, but we can still live as though God is unnecessary. We can know about God without truly knowing God—neglecting His Word, ignoring His voice, and trying to build a life apart from Him.

Application:

A heart that stops seeking God will eventually start seeking something else to satisfy it.

SLIDE:

2. They pursued other loves instead of trusting God (Hosea 4:7-19; 5:3-7)

Israel's sin:

Israel committed spiritual adultery by chasing after idols and trusting false gods for what only God could provide. Like Gomer in chapters 1–3, they looked for fulfillment outside their covenant relationship with God.

How we live this today:

We often pursue the same things Israel pursued: approval, success, comfort, pleasure, control, relationships, possessions, or achievements. These things are not wrong in themselves, but they become idols when we look to them to give us identity, security, or satisfaction.

Application:

Anything we love, trust, or pursue more than God becomes a rival for our hearts.

SLIDE:

3. They trusted human solutions instead of their Father (Hosea 5:8-15; 7:8-16)

Israel's sin:

Instead of running to God for help, Israel ran to foreign nations for protection. They looked to alliances, strategies, and human strength rather than trusting the God who had delivered them.

How we live this today:

We often do the same thing. When life becomes uncertain, we can place our confidence in our plans, our finances, our abilities, our connections, or our control rather than depending on God.

Application:

The question is not whether we will trust something; the question is whether we will trust the Father or something else.

SLIDE:

4. They became hardened in rebellion (Hosea 6:4-7; 8:1-14)

Israel's sin:

Israel's repentance was shallow. They offered religious words and sacrifices, but their hearts remained far from God. They wanted the benefits of a relationship with God without surrendering their lives to Him.

How we live this today:

It is possible to participate in worship, attend church, serve, and know Christian language while our hearts slowly drift from God. We can become more concerned with looking faithful than actually walking faithfully.

Application:

God is not looking for religious activity that hides a distant heart; He desires a relationship marked by love and surrender.

SLIDE:

5. They forgot who they were and what God had done (Hosea 9:10; 10:1-15; 11:1-7)

Israel's sin:

Israel forgot their story. They forgot the God who rescued them from Egypt, formed them as His people, provided for them, and loved them. Their blessings caused them to forget the Blessor.

How we live this today:

Our greatest danger is often not hardship but comfort. When life goes well, we can begin to believe we are self-made and self-sufficient. We forget that every good gift comes from our Father.

Application:

Forgetting God's faithfulness in the past makes it easier to wander from Him in the present.

When we reach Hosea 11, we have to remember everything God has endured from His people. This is not a story of a Father whose child simply made a mistake. This is a story of a Father whose child repeatedly ran away, rejected His love, and chased after other things. And yet, when we expect God to finally walk away, Hosea shows us the heart of God.

SLIDE:

Hosea 11:1-3 NIV

- 1 When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
- 2 But the more they were called,
the more they went away from me.

They sacrificed to the Baals
and they burned incense to images.
3 It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
taking them by the arms;
but they did not realize
it was I who healed them.

SLIDE

Hosea 11:4 NIV

4 I led them with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love.
To them I was like one who lifts
a little child to the cheek,
and I bent down to feed them.

SLIDE

Hosea 11:5-7 NIV

5“Will they not return to Egypt
and will not Assyria rule over them
because they refuse to repent?
6 A sword will flash in their cities;
it will devour their false prophets
and put an end to their plans.
7 My people are determined to turn from me.
Even though they call me God Most High,
I will by no means exalt them.

SLIDE

Hosea 11:8 NIV

“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 Zeboyim?
My heart is changed within me;
all my compassion is aroused.

SLIDE

Hosea 11:9 NIV

9 I will not carry out my fierce anger,
nor will I devastate Ephraim again.

For I am God, and not a man—
the Holy One among you.
I will not come against their cities.

If we are honest, Hosea is not just a story about Israel. It is a story about us.

We may not have built altars to Baal, but we all know what it is like to chase after things that promise what only God can give. We know what it is like to seek comfort, security, approval, control, or satisfaction apart from Him. We know what it is like to receive the goodness of God's blessings and sometimes forget the goodness of the God who gave them.

SLIDE:

The story of Hosea reminds us that our greatest problem is not simply that we make mistakes. Our greatest problem is that our hearts are prone to wander from the God who loves us.

The beauty of Hosea is that God's love is not dependent on our ability to stay faithful. His love is rooted in His own character.

SLIDE:

Israel was unfaithful, but God remained faithful.
Israel wandered, but God pursued.
Israel forgot Him, but He remembered them.

And that is the heart we see in Hosea 11. This is not a Father who ignores sin. God does not pretend rebellion does not matter. His discipline is real because His love is real. But even in the face of our rebellion, His heart is moved with compassion.

'How can I give you up, Ephraim?'
That is the heart of God toward His people."

And this is ultimately where Hosea points us—to Jesus. Because the faithful love of God is not just an idea; it is a person. Jesus came as the faithful Son who perfectly loved and obeyed the Father, and He went to the cross to bring wandering sons and daughters home.

At the cross, we see both the seriousness of our sin and the greatness of God's love. God did not ignore our rebellion; He paid the price to redeem us.

The same God who said, 'You are not my people,' promised, 'You are my people.' The same God who said, 'Not loved,' promised, 'I will show my love.' And through Jesus Christ, those promises become ours.

So the question Hosea leaves us with is not, 'Have you ever wandered?' Because every one of us has.

SLIDE:

The question is, 'Will you respond to the faithful love of God?'
Will you continue chasing the things that can never satisfy you?
Will you keep running after other loves?
Or will you return to the Father who has been pursuing you all along?

Maybe today you need to come home. Maybe you have been trying to live with one foot in the world and one foot in your relationship with God. Maybe you have forgotten the Father who taught you to walk.

Hear the invitation of Hosea: The God who loves you is calling you back.
Return to Him.
Trust Him.
Receive His faithful love.

Because the love of God is not a love that gives up on His children. It is a love that pursues, restores, and brings us home.

Prayer:

Good Good Father