

## Our Faithful God

Hosea 1-3 on February 20, 2022

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*Please read Hosea 1:1-9 before going further in this transcript.*

Last week Matt Graf brought us a wonderful message on reconciliation from the book of Philemon. If you missed that sermon, you'll want to check it out in our sermon archives on the church website. After Matt's message, a friend of mine was giving me a hard time about it. He said something about how it took me 48 weeks to get through the book of Acts and it only took Matt... 1 sermon(!) to get through the entire book of Philemon! Well, today we're beginning a series on the Old Testament book of Hosea. And we're hoping to cover it in just 2 weeks! So, not quite as good as Matt, but we're getting closer. Now, since we're covering these 14 chapters in just 2 weeks, that means we won't be able to cover every verse.<sup>1</sup> Instead, we're going to consider 2 key themes that we find in Hosea:

The 1<sup>st</sup> theme is God's faithfulness (chapters 1-3).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> theme is restoration after repentance (chapters 4-14).

We'll focus on God's faithfulness today, and on restoration next week. By the way, be advised, Hosea is a little more on the "PG-13" side of things, dealing with some fairly adult material.

As we move back to the Old Testament, it means that we have to reset our timeline a bit. From the New Testament, we're going back in time over 700 years. BEFORE the church, before the gospel exploded over the known world, before Jesus was even born. This may cause us to ask the question: Why even bother learning from the Old Testament? Shouldn't we just focus on the New Testament? Well, there are many good reasons to spend time in the Old Testament, here are just 2 of them:

**#1) The Old Testament is part of God's Word.** Hosea 1:1 begins, "The word of the LORD that came to Hosea..." So, these aren't just the words of some guy named Hosea. This is the word of the LORD that came to Hosea. That alone should cause us to respect and revere these words, and to give them our careful consideration.<sup>2</sup> I like how one author puts it: "That word is not the product of human speculation or wisdom; it 'came'...as an event of revelation to a particular man...had a setting in the history of Israel...and...is relevant to all who live in the ongoing stream of that history."<sup>3</sup> (*That's us, we live in the "ongoing stream" of Hosea's history.*) Another good reason to spend time in the Old Testament is that...

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<sup>1</sup> Find a helpful overview of Hosea from the Gospel Project:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kE6SZ1ogOVU>

<sup>2</sup> I was incredibly surprised to learn this week that "The New Testament cites or alludes to Hosea 40 times!" I had NO idea! In fact, I wish I'd taken more time to dig into places like Romans 9:25-26 where Paul quotes Hosea 1:10-2:1. Also, compare Hosea 11:1 with Matthew 2:15 (*The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1722).

<sup>3</sup> James Luther Mays, *Hosea*, Westminster, Philadelphia, PA, 1969, p. 20.

**#2) The Old Testament was written to give us hope.** Romans 15:4 says, “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.” In other words, the entire Old Testament, including Hosea, is incredibly relevant for Christ-followers today.<sup>4 5 6</sup>

Hosea 1:1 begins, “The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of “Bee EE rye”<sup>7</sup> during the reigns of Uzziah, JOtham<sup>8</sup>, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash<sup>9</sup> king of Israel:” “Judging from the kings mentioned in 1:1, Hosea must have prophesied for at least 38 years.”<sup>10</sup> So Hosea covers a considerable span of history, leading up to Assyria’s attack from the east, and Israel’s eventual captivity and exile. Hosea lived during the time of the divided kingdom. The “kings of Judah” were in the south, while the “kings of Israel” were in the north. If you look at the **MAP** on the back page, Israel is up north, including its capital city of Samaria. Judah is down south, which included the capital city of Jerusalem. In other words, north was divided against south. After the death of David’s son, King Solomon, “the formerly unified nation of Israel is divided into two parts...each with separate kings and [separate] worship centers.”<sup>11</sup> This time in history can be a little confusing, since the north is referred to as “Israel.” We’d normally think of the entire nation as Israel; after all, collectively they were called “the Israelites.”<sup>12</sup> However, during this time of division, Israel usually refers specifically to the northern tribes.<sup>13</sup>

One author notes that “Hosea began preaching...when both the northern kingdom (Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah) enjoyed prosperity. Unfortunately, this prosperity was accompanied by widespread idolatry and social injustice as well as general disobedience to God’s covenant law.”<sup>14 15</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “What God caused to be written in the Old Testament has ultimate relevance to Christians, who experience the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises.” *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2319 footnote on Romans 15:4.

<sup>5</sup> See also 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

<sup>6</sup> One author puts it this way: “The past is another country – they do things differently there.’ At times, indeed, the Old Testament resembles another very different country.” J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea: NICOT*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2010, back cover (Robert L. Hubbard Jr., General Editor).

<sup>7</sup> I know it looks like “BEER e,” but it’s pronounced “Bee EE rye.” Based on Severance, W. M., & Eddinger, T. (1997). In *That’s easy for you to say: your quick guide to pronouncing Bible names* (p. 38). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>8</sup> “JOH thuhm” Severance, W. M., & Eddinger, T. (1997). In *That’s easy for you to say: your quick guide to pronouncing Bible names* (p. 97). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>9</sup> “jih HOH ash” Severance, W. M., & Eddinger, T. (1997). In *That’s easy for you to say: your quick guide to pronouncing Bible names* (p. 92). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>10</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1441.

<sup>11</sup> *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1718.

<sup>12</sup> See Genesis 35:9-12.

<sup>13</sup> It can also be confusing because sometimes Israel, the northern kingdom, is referred to as Ephraim. “EE fra ihm” Severance, W. M., & Eddinger, T. (1997). In [\*That’s easy for you to say: your quick guide to pronouncing Bible names\*](#) (p. 65). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>14</sup> *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1717.

<sup>16</sup> Hosea writes to warn Israel of coming discipline: “God intends to enforce his covenant.”<sup>17</sup> So in order to understand Hosea, we need to understand God’s covenant relationship with Israel.<sup>18</sup> There are several covenants that God made with humans throughout history, including covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and then, finally, the new covenant. Without getting into all the details, each of these covenants reassures us, that God is fulfilling His ongoing plan, to rescue mankind from sin and to establish His kingdom reign through Jesus.<sup>19</sup> A Covenant speaks directly to RELATIONSHIP, specifically God’s relationship with His people. Staying within the covenant boundaries leads to blessing, transgressing those boundaries, leads to discipline.<sup>20</sup> Throughout its history, Israel is in a continues cycle of obedience and disobedience. Whenever they break their covenant with God, we see both God’s justice, holding them accountable, but also God’s grace, treating them better than their sins deserve.<sup>21</sup>

God’s consistent desire was that His people would be holy, that they would be holy as He is holy.<sup>22</sup> then, “by reflecting God’s holiness, Israel would [be able to showcase the goodness and greatness of His reign], and thus serve as God’s witnesses to a watching world.”<sup>23</sup> FAITHFULNESS was a major requirement in order for this whole covenant relationship to work itself out. And while God’s people failed to remain faithful to Him, time and again, God never failed to remain faithful to them. The fact is, were it not for “Our Faithful God,” who continues to keep His promises, humankind would have been utterly doomed to destruction. It’s worth noting that throughout Hosea we find the word “LORD” in all CAPS. Anytime you see LORD in all caps, it’s indicating that this is the Hebrew word, “Yahweh.” This is God’s special covenant name. Yahweh “is the personal name of God, emphasizing his role as Israel’s Redeemer and covenant Lord.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> “Hosea lived in the tragic final days of the northern kingdom, during which six [different] kings reigned within 25 years. Four were murdered by their successors while in office, and one was captured in battle; only one was succeeded on the throne by his son.” *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1441.

<sup>16</sup> “Political instability prevailed. Hosea prophesied during the reigns of Israel’s last seven kings... the nation’s fortunes waned progressively. ...The complacency of the early days gives way to desperation in foreign and domestic affairs.” *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1719.

<sup>17</sup> “...(including the punishments of subjugation to and exile by foreigners) but also [to] redeem his people, after punishment, to a better relationship with him than ever before.” *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1720.

<sup>18</sup> Read the excellent 3-page article by Paul R. Williamson, “Covenant,” on pp. 2246-2248 in the back of *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Paul R. Williamson, “Covenant” article in *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2646.

<sup>20</sup> See Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-32.

<sup>21</sup> For example, see Exodus 34:6-7.

<sup>22</sup> See Exodus 19:5-6 and Leviticus 19:2.

<sup>23</sup> Paul R. Williamson, “Covenant” article in *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 2647.

<sup>24</sup> *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 13 footnote on Genesis 2:4. Some pronounce it “Jehovah,” but Yahweh is more accurate. It means “He is,” but when God speaks about Himself he says, “I am.” (*NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 101 footnote on Genesis 3:15.)

In the opening 3 chapters of Hosea, Hosea's family becomes a word picture for his message.<sup>25</sup> And boy oh boy does Hosea's family paint a fascinating picture! Hosea 1:2 says, "When the LORD (*Yahweh*) 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." Wow, what an incredible way for the Lord to get his point across. God warns Israel with a graphic illustration of just how He feels about their covenant unfaithfulness. The *NIV* uses the terms 'promiscuous,' 'adulterous,' and 'guilty of unfaithfulness.' These are "all renderings of a single Hebrew word that throughout the Old Testament refers strictly to prostitution, i.e. the selling of sex."<sup>26</sup> The *ESV* translates Hosea 1:2 a bit more bluntly: "When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD." This "whoredom" is a stark symbol of just how awful and terrible it was for Israel to forsake their covenant relationship with the LORD. It's symbolic of Israel prostituting themselves by worshipping idols, selling themselves for sex if you will.<sup>27 28 29</sup>

Now, we aren't given much detail about Gomer. We're not told how long she'd been promiscuous, how she became this way, whether she was one of the shrine prostitutes of Baal, or anything else. The main point of Hosea, is that Gomer's prostitution symbolized Israel's willful rebellion and unfaithfulness to her covenant commitment. Hosea's family life was a living illustration of God's faithfulness to a people who were out selling

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<sup>25</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1442.

<sup>26</sup> זָנוּוֹת = "fornication...religious." Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977). [\*Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon\*](#) (p. 276). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>27</sup> Recently the movie, "Redeeming Love," came out in theaters. "Redeeming Love" is a beautiful title that was actually inspired by the book of Hosea. But if you haven't seen the movie yet, I don't recommend it, for a couple of reasons. One reason is that the movie displays some pretty graphic sex scenes. Another reason is that, ultimately, the movie missed its opportunity to clearly highlight God's redeeming love for sinful mankind. The original story was written by author, Francine Rivers and "its central theme is the redeeming love of God towards sinners." Wikipedia says this, "Redeeming Love is a historical romance novel by Francine Rivers set in the 1850s Gold Rush in California. The story is inspired by the Book of Hosea from the Bible, and its central theme is the redeeming love of God towards sinners."

<sup>28</sup> I've heard that the book is actually much better than the movie, but I haven't read it myself. The book by Francine Rivers is titled "Redeeming Love." According to my Google search, "Redeeming Love is a 2022 American Christian Western romance film directed by D. J. Caruso, who co-wrote the screenplay with Francine Rivers. The film is based on Rivers' 1991 novel of the same name and is set in the American Old West during the California Gold Rush."

<sup>29</sup> It's important that we keep in mind that both the movie and the book are fictional accounts. They are inspired by the book of Hosea, but they take a lot of artistic license, and they don't strictly follow the biblical text. We need to be careful that we don't allow these kinds of fictional accounts to skew our understanding of the biblical metaphor. What I'm driving at, especially for those who haven't read the book or watched the movie, is that sometimes women are forced into prostitution, or even men for that matter. They are illegally brought into the sex trade, which is a terrible problem in today's society. However, while these fictional accounts give the story this particular spin, this is not the focus that the book of Hosea is addressing.

themselves to other gods.<sup>30</sup> By the way, just to be clear, Hosea is NOT some kind of misogynistic attack on women. The metaphor for prostitution represents ALL of Israel, both men and women alike. Case in point, take a look at Hosea 4:10-13, “[The Israelites] will eat but not have enough; they will engage in prostitution but not flourish, because they have deserted the LORD to give themselves to prostitution; old wine and new wine take away their understanding. My people (all of them, men and women) consult a wooden idol, and a diviner’s rod speaks to them. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God. They sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar and terebinth, where the shade is pleasant. Therefore your daughters turn to prostitution and your daughters-in-law to adultery. [You see, “Israel had turned to Baal worship and had sacrificed at the pagan high places, which included associating with the sacred prostitutes at the sanctuaries.”<sup>31</sup>] Hosea 4:14 continues, “I will not punish your daughters when they turn to prostitution, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery, because the men themselves consort with harlots and sacrifice with shrine prostitutes—a people without understanding will come to ruin!” Therefore Hosea’s message of warning is for ALL Israel, for both men and women alike. Both men and women had been unfaithful to their God, and they’d prostituted themselves to other gods. So Hosea represents God as a faithful husband and Gomer represents all of Israel as an unfaithful wife.

Baal<sup>32</sup> worship was particularly popular at this time in Israel’s history. It was a fertility religion, focused on the fertility of crops, animals, and humans. It was all about trying to appease these idols to win favor from them...” and thus have bigger harvests, larger herds, and more children.<sup>33</sup> It was a type of prostitution, “cheating on God by seeking payment from other gods.”<sup>34</sup> To put it another way, Israel betrayed God for material gain because they “thought that religious intimacy with other gods could deliver more wealth and blessing, than a monogamous relationship with the [one] true God.”<sup>35</sup> All of this only served to provoke God, like a jealous husband. Hosea 2:8, “She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold—which they used for Baal.” Throughout Hosea we find “metaphors which interpret the

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<sup>30</sup> Therefore, an overemphasis on Gomer as someone who needs to be rescued from sex trafficking can throw off Hosea’s spiritual metaphor. He’s trying to illustrate God’s incredible faithfulness in the face of our human rebellion and sinful wandering. “Thus, the quality of Hosea’s family life and his personal attitudes, feelings, or success as a husband or father, and Gomer’s character, are not primarily in view.” *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1717.

<sup>31</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1443.

<sup>32</sup> “BAY uhl” Severance, W. M., & Eddinger, T. (1997). In *That’s easy for you to say: your quick guide to pronouncing Bible names* (p. 33). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>33</sup> James Luther Mays, *Hosea*, Westminster, Philadelphia, PA, 1969, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1717.

<sup>35</sup> *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1722.

disobedience as personal betrayal and estrangement.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, their disobedience was something much more deeply personal than simply disobeying God’s Law, they were breaking the relational covenant of mutual love and devotion to one another.

Hosea 1:3 goes on, “So he (Hosea) married Gomer daughter of Diblaim,<sup>37</sup> and she conceived and bore him a son.” Actually, Gomer gives birth to 3 children:<sup>38</sup>

Son, Jezreel: meaning “God scatters.” (*Which warns of the coming discipline, being scattered to Assyria.*<sup>39</sup>)

Daughter, Lo-Ruhamah<sup>40</sup>: meaning “not loved.”

Son, Lo-Ammi<sup>41</sup>: meaning “not my people.”

None of these are particularly flattering names, but they’re not supposed to be. They are part of the ongoing metaphor for the crumbling of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Hosea 2:2-7 tells Gomer’s children: “Rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband. Let her remove the adulterous look from her face and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts. Otherwise I will strip her naked and make her as bare as on the day she was born; I will make her like a desert, turn her into a parched land, and slay her with thirst. I will not show my love to her children, because they are the children of adultery. Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my olive oil and my drink.’ Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.’” You see, the whole point of this rebuke and hardship is to get Israel to turn back from her unfaithfulness to the covenant. Israel’s husband, Yahweh, wants his bride to come back home. One author puts it this way: “The children are told to drive the unfaithful mother out of the house, but it was her reform, not her riddance, that was sought.”<sup>42 43</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> James Luther Mays, *Hosea*, Westminster, Philadelphia, PA, 1969, pp. 12-13.

<sup>37</sup> “DIB lay im” Severance, W. M., & Eddinger, T. (1997). In *That’s easy for you to say: your quick guide to pronouncing Bible names* (p. 57). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>38</sup> It’s possible that only the first of these three children were Hosea’s, biologically speaking. See note in *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1444 footnote on Hosea 1:3.

<sup>39</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1444 footnote on Hosea 1:4.

<sup>40</sup> “roo HAY muh” Severance, W. M., & Eddinger, T. (1997). In *That’s easy for you to say: your quick guide to pronouncing Bible names* (p. 138). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>41</sup> “AM igh (eye)” Severance, W. M., & Eddinger, T. (1997). In *That’s easy for you to say: your quick guide to pronouncing Bible names* (p. 23). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>42</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1442.

<sup>43</sup> Consider 1 Corinthians 5:5.



And although it's not going to happen immediately, Hosea holds out a future hope for Israel. In Hosea 2:14-20 God says, "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.<sup>44</sup> There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt.<sup>45</sup> "In that day," declares the LORD, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.' I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked. In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety. I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD." And then, it's at this point, that the children's names are repurposed to give us a glimpse into Israel's beautiful, future redemption.

Hosea 2:21-23 goes on, "In that day I will respond," declares the LORD—"I will respond to the skies, and they will respond to the earth;<sup>46</sup> and the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and the olive oil, and they will respond to Jezreel. 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.'"

Jezreel: becomes "God scatters SEED" i.e. "I will plant"

Lo-Ruhamah: "not loved" is now "I will show my love to"

Lo-Ammi: "not my people" is now "You are my people."

In other words, back in verse 15, it was predicted that Israel will one day RESPOND to Yahweh. And then, in verses 21-23, God will RESPOND to them. (*That word "respond" is repeated 5 times, the ESV translates it "answer."*) Israel's response to her faithful husband's pursuit, will set off a chain reaction of responses; responses in the sky and the earth that will bring the LORD's provision of grain, new wine, and olive oil. In other words, Yahweh will be Israel's provider, not the Baals! But more importantly, Yahweh will be their God, and Israel will be His people!

All of this will happen WAY in the future, after Israel returns from her time of discipline in Assyria.<sup>47 48</sup> In the meantime, during Hosea's time in history,

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<sup>44</sup> The Valley of Achor is a reference to Achan's sin back in Joshua 7, the point being to contrast the disobedience of the past with hope for obedience in the future. *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1727 footnote on Hosea 2:14-15.

<sup>45</sup> Referring to yet another time in Israel's history when God faithfully delivered them from slavery.

<sup>46</sup> See Zechariah 8:12.

<sup>47</sup> And eventually in Babylon with the southern kingdom of Judah some 150 years later. See note in *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1725 footnote on Hosea 1-7.

<sup>48</sup> Hosea 3:1-5 describes "a marriage relationship in which there was no intimacy to illustrate God's coming confinement of Israel via exile." *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1724 footnote on Hosea 1:2-2:1.

Israel is still behaving promiscuously, still acting like an adulterous wife. So God tells Hosea in 3:1, "...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."<sup>49</sup> This verse is one of many examples of God's grace showing up in the Old Testament. Before Israel had turned back to God, here we see "Our Faithful God" once again... being FAITHFUL. Once again treating us SO much better than our sin and unfaithfulness deserve.

So Hosea 1-3 teaches us that God was a faithful husband to His unfaithful wife Israel. Despite giving Him every reason to give up on her, and to give up on the relationship, He faithfully pursued her and took her back again and again. But the Old Testament is not the only place where we find this metaphor of God's people being His bride. Ephesians 5 reminds us that the church is the bride of Christ. Ephesians 5:25-27 urges husbands to love their wives, "...just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." And so, "Both the Old and New Testaments liken God's people to his bride..."<sup>50</sup> God is pursuing His people, continually buying them back.

Apparently, at one point in her life, Gomer was sold into slavery. Hosea 3:2 says that Hosea bought his wife back for fifteen shekels of silver and some barley, but Jesus bought us back with something much more precious. 1 Peter 1:18-19 reminds us, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." Brothers and Sisters in Christ, even when we struggle to be faithful to our God, He remains faithful to us. Through Jesus Christ, God continues to pursue His bride, to buy her back, and to make her holy. So today, let's respond to God's loving pursuit of us. ***And let's rejoice in "Our Faithful God"!***

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<sup>49</sup> As serious as this verse is, I can't help but chuckle a little bit at the phrase "sacred raisin cakes." "They were often eaten in pagan religious feast; their mention suggests Israel's willingness to sell out cheaply to other gods (via idolatry and polytheism)." *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1728 footnote on Hosea 3:1.

<sup>50</sup> "...beloved to him, special in his plans, and by reason of his gracious love, called into his eternal compassion and care." *The NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1724 footnote on Hosea 1:2-3:5.



