



God's love song

HOSEA

by Dan Wells

God's love song
the good book guide to Hosea
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introduction: good book guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mums and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That’s why we’ve designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let’s take a look at what is included:

- 🔗 **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here’s the question that will do that. It’s designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- 📄 **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader’s Guide** contains **guidance on questions**, and sometimes 📄 additional “follow-up” questions.
- 🔗 **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that’s not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- 🔗 **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you’ll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. 📄 **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- 🔗 **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God’s word—in line with His concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader’s Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God’s word.



why study Hosea?

Welcome to a love song, with a difference.

Love songs are everywhere. On the radio as we drive our cars; on the soundtracks of the movies we watch; in the background as we shop and eat out. And, whether we like it or not, they're often stuck in our heads and hearts.

And yet the love they describe is often a weak or helpless love. Their lyrics are full of desire leading to disappointment, and hope followed by heartbreak. The love they tell us about is often as fleeting as the time they spend in the charts.

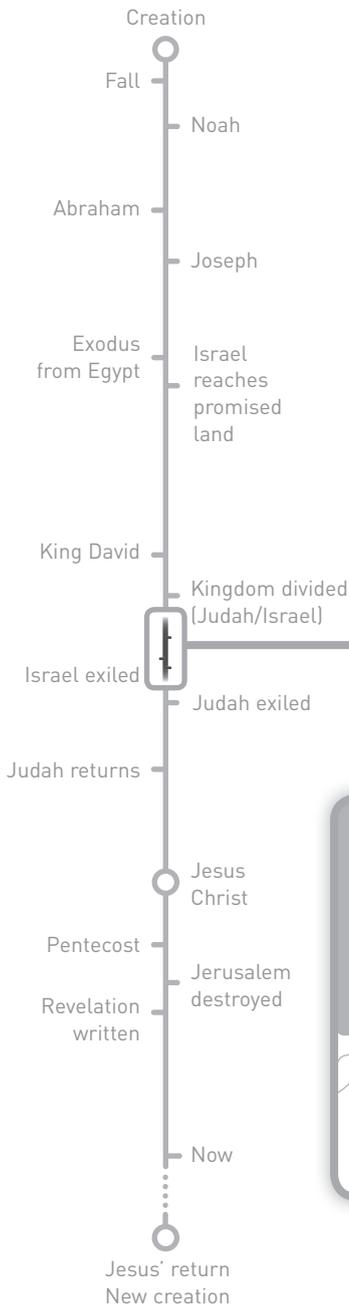
Love songs reflect our yearning for a love that is solid and sure: a love that we can be excited about today because we know it will still be here tomorrow. And yet those same songs expose our inability to find this love, however hard and long we search for it.

The book of Hosea is a love song. It talks of romance, of allure, of first loves; and it sings of heartbreak, of unfaithfulness, of divorce. But, crucially and uniquely, its lyrics are about a love which will never fade; which will never disappoint; and which will never say: "Enough". Hosea is about the love we all want, and the love we all need.

The singer throughout Hosea is God: and the love He talks about is His own love, lavished upon His people. It's a love song that is surprising, raw, emotional, at times uncomfortable, but always compelling.

These eight studies will thrill you with the wonder of God's love, even as they challenge you with the truth about His people. And, as you read through Hosea, you'll be provided with a soundtrack for your life which truly is worth singing along to.





BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the book of Hosea fit into the whole story of God's word?

HOSEA 793–722BC

- 793BC Jeroboam II becomes King of Israel
- c760-725 Hosea, Isaiah, Amos and Micah all speaking God's message
- 733BC Assyria invades Israel and occupies much of it
- 722BC Assyria captures Samaria, Israel's capital. The people are exiled



1

Hosea 1 v 1 – 2 v 1

“UNFAITHFUL”

The story so far

God speaks to Hosea, and through Hosea, during a difficult time for God’s people. They have split into two kingdoms, following rival kings—“Israel” in the north, and “Judah” in the south. They enjoy neither the peace nor the prosperity that they did under their greatest kings, David and Solomon, 250 years before. Hosea lives in, and speaks mainly to, the larger northern kingdom of Israel, whose capital is Samaria.

talkabout

1. If you stopped someone in the street and asked them what sin was, how might they respond? How might the response be different if you asked someone coming out of church on a Sunday?

investigate

Read Hosea 1 v 1-3

2. What is so surprising and shocking about what God asks Hosea to do?

DICTIONARY

The land (v 2):
meaning everyone who lives in the land of Israel.

Conceived (v 3):
became pregnant.

3. Why does God tell Hosea to do this?

- How might you expect Hosea to react? How does he respond?

4. What do these verses tell us about the state of God's people at this time?



explore more

optional

This is not the only time God tells a prophet to "act out" his prophetic message.

➤ **Read Jeremiah 13 v 1-11 and Ezekiel 12 v 1-6**

What do they have to act out? What is God communicating through these actions?

Why do you think God acts in this way? Does it have any implications for how we teach the Bible today?



apply

5. How does what happens here illustrate the seriousness of Israel's sin?



- “There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3 v 22-23). What does the start of Hosea show us about ourselves? How do you feel about this?



getting personal

Think back to your answers to Question One. Do you view sin as breaking little rules, or breaking a loving relationship? Do you find your sin as shocking as Gomer’s treatment of Hosea? What difference will this description of sin make to you this week?



investigate

▶ Read verses 4-9

The wording of the descriptions of Gomer’s children strongly suggest that the second and third children weren’t Hosea’s—someone else was the father. And yet Hosea is told to raise them as his own—and to give them very significant names. His first, “Jezreel” (v 4), was the site of a famous massacre which had been caused by people turning away from God. See the footnotes for the second and third children’s meanings. Unsurprisingly, these names aren’t very popular nowadays!

6. Why does God ask Hosea to give the children these names, do you think?

▶ Read 1 v 10 – 2 v 1

7. How are things turned around in these verses?

- How are God's promises here more than simply a reversal of fortunes for God's people?

8. In 1 v 10, God points His people to a "place". What will happen there?

9. **Read Mark 1 v 9-11.** Who is Jesus? How does God the Father feel about Him?

- **Read Mark 15 v 33-37.** What happened to Jesus' relationship with His Father as He died on the cross?

- **Read 2 Corinthians 5 v 21** and **Galatians 3 v 26-27.** What has Jesus' death achieved for His people?



10. How is the cross the “place” God pointed His people to in Hosea 1 v 10?

➔ **apply**

11. Why do we need to appreciate what sin is if we are to grasp the true wonder of the cross?



getting personal

Have you appreciated the fact that at the cross God forsook His Son so that He could call you “my child”—if you trust in Him? How will you allow this truth to affect your feelings towards Him, and about yourself, this week?

↑ **pray**

Thank God for His grace shown in the Lord Jesus, which has turned you from being “not my people” into “sons of the living God”?

Spend some time **asking God** for His forgiveness for the times you have treated sin lightly and superficially. Share with the group those sins you are willing to; speak to God silently about the others.

