

SUFFERING

Lesson 2: Hosea

This includes:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide
3. Student worksheet

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW

An essential element of Christianity that students need to understand is forgiveness, both giving and accepting it. This study looks at Hosea and Gomer's relationship and compares it to our relationship with God. The way Hosea's wife, a prostitute, treated him helps to symbolize how we often treat God—and Hosea's willingness to forgive helps us appreciate God's forgiving heart, too.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. WHAT: We all have times when we need forgiveness from God and from other people—and we all have times when we must choose to forgive others.
2. WHY: When we realize how deeply God loves us and wants to forgive us, we can more clearly realize what it means to lead a life that honors him.
3. HOW: Your students will be challenged to look at the times they've had to offer or accept forgiveness, and they'll talk about the role of forgiveness in their relationship with God.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Hosea 6:1-3

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

Isaiah 53:6; Hosea 1-3; Romans 5:8

TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you'll definitely want to refer to it as you lead.

Read Hosea 1-3 and 6:1-3.

The book of Hosea is a warning to Israel about what would happen if the nation continued down the path away from God. But the opening chapters can feel like an awkward afternoon talk show, and much of the content may not be appropriate for you to read word-for-word to your students. We recommend that you paraphrase the opening chapter, and that is why we have selected a passage from Hosea 6 as the Primary Scripture for inclusion on the student handouts.

God told Hosea to marry a woman with a bad reputation in town—she was a known prostitute. She was unfaithful to her husband, yet Hosea was able to forgive her and love her again. And this relationship between Hosea and Gomer reflects our relationship with God, just as it reflected the relationship between Israel and God.

Throughout the first three chapters it is easy to develop a sense of anger toward Gomer: an anger for how she could treat the innocent Hosea the way she does; how she turns from him and betrays his trust, but then he pays the fee to rescue her. She didn't deserve to be rescued, but Hosea paid the price. It is when we realize that we are a "Gomer" in our relationship with God that we understand our need for a Savior.

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2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [optional]

You'll need a music player and a copy of the David Crowder Band album *Church Music*. You also may want to have paper and pens for students to take notes or creatively express themselves during the song.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, have students find a place to sit and reflect, distribute paper and pens (optional), and then play "How He Loves Me" from the *Church Music* album. Then ASK:

- *What's your overall reaction to this song?*
- *What words or phrases caught your attention? Why?*
- *One line of the song says, "If his grace is an ocean, we're all sinking"—what does that statement mean to you?*
- *What are some creative ways for describing God's love?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *This song is a creative way of pausing and thinking about God's love. God's love is greater than anything we can understand or explain. Think of the person or thing you love most in this world, and God's love is so much greater than that! God's love opens the door to our forgiveness, and his love helps us forgive others, too.*

TEACHING POINTS

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen are (1) We have all made mistakes, (2) God loves us despite our past, and (3) God paid the price for our sins.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Hosea 6:1-3 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so everyone has a chance to read.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let's look at the relationship between Hosea and Gomer to see what we can learn about forgiving other people and seeking forgiveness from God and others.*

1. We have all made mistakes

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *The relationship between Hosea and Gomer was a difficult, complicated one. God told Hosea—that's the man—to marry Gomer—that's the woman—even though Gomer had a bad reputation around town. She was living a lifestyle that didn't please God, but God wanted Hosea to demonstrate life-changing love and forgiveness.*

ASK:

- *What's the longest period of time you've gone without sinning or making a mistake?*
- *When have you needed to forgive someone?*

- *When have you needed to ask for forgiveness?*
- *Which is harder: choosing to forgive someone or asking someone to forgive you? Why?*
- *How do sins and mistakes affect your relationship with God?*
- *What are some ways that young people might stray away from a life that honors God?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *We have all probably been on both sides of this story before. We're familiar with the pain of deciding if we will forgive someone who has hurt us deeply. And we've all been humbled when we've had to ask for forgiveness for hurting another person. But nothing hurts us more than when we realize we often treat God like Gomer treated Hosea. She was his wife, but she was unfaithful to him. But Hosea forgave her, just as God is ready to forgive us, too.*

2. God loves us despite our past

ASK:

- *How is it possible for our parents to love us even when we make big mistakes?*
- *Is any sin so big that God won't forgive you if you ask him? Tell me what you think.*
- *If someone returned to us after betraying us deeply, many of us would want to get even or give that person the cold shoulder. How does God respond differently?*
- *Is it difficult to believe that God loves you, despite past sins and mistakes? Why or why not?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Nothing is hidden from God—he knows our mistakes, our sins, our past. But he loves us anyway. God doesn't have to offer us the chance at forgiveness, but he does. God doesn't have to give us another chance, but he does. Gomer was unfaithful to her husband, Hosea, yet he loved her anyway—just as God powerfully loves us, too.*

3. God paid the price for our sins

ASK:

- *Would you go to detention in place of another student? Why or why not?*
- *If your brother or sister got in trouble, would you agree to be grounded in their place? Why or why not?*
- *Read Isaiah 53:6 and Romans 5:8. How are those two situations I just described similar to what Jesus did for us when he was crucified?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *The relationship between Gomer and Hosea shows us how we treat God, but it shows us so much more. It shows us that he paid the price for our mistakes, our sins. God is perfect, but he sent Jesus to die on a cross and be resurrected—he paid the price for our sins and offers us the gift of forgiveness and eternal life if we choose to follow Jesus. God wraps his arms around us and promises to love and to cherish us.*

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [optional]

ASK:

- *How does the account of Hosea and Gomer shape your understanding of God's love?*
- *How could you share the message of God's forgiveness with people at your school?*

- *If you've chosen to forgive someone but you still feel angry because of how that person hurt you, what might be a good response?*

APPLICATION

Ask students to form groups of two or three for these questions.

ASK:

- *You don't have to name them, but what people do you need to forgive? What would it take to offer them forgiveness this week?*
- *You don't have to give all the details, but do you need forgiveness from God? Do you need to confess any sins to him and ask him for forgiveness?*
- *If a friend offered to keep you accountable and pray for you, how might that help you grow in your relationship with God?*

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

SUMMARY

End your lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

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HOSEA 6:1-3 (NLT)

¹ "Come, let us return to the LORD.
He has torn us to pieces;
now he will heal us.
He has injured us;
now he will bandage our wounds.
² In just a short time he will restore us,
so that we may live in his presence.
³ Oh, that we might know the LORD!
Let us press on to know him.
He will respond to us as surely as the
arrival of dawn
or the coming of rains in early spring."

HOSEA

1. We have all made mistakes

2. God loves us despite our past

3. God paid the price for our sins

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