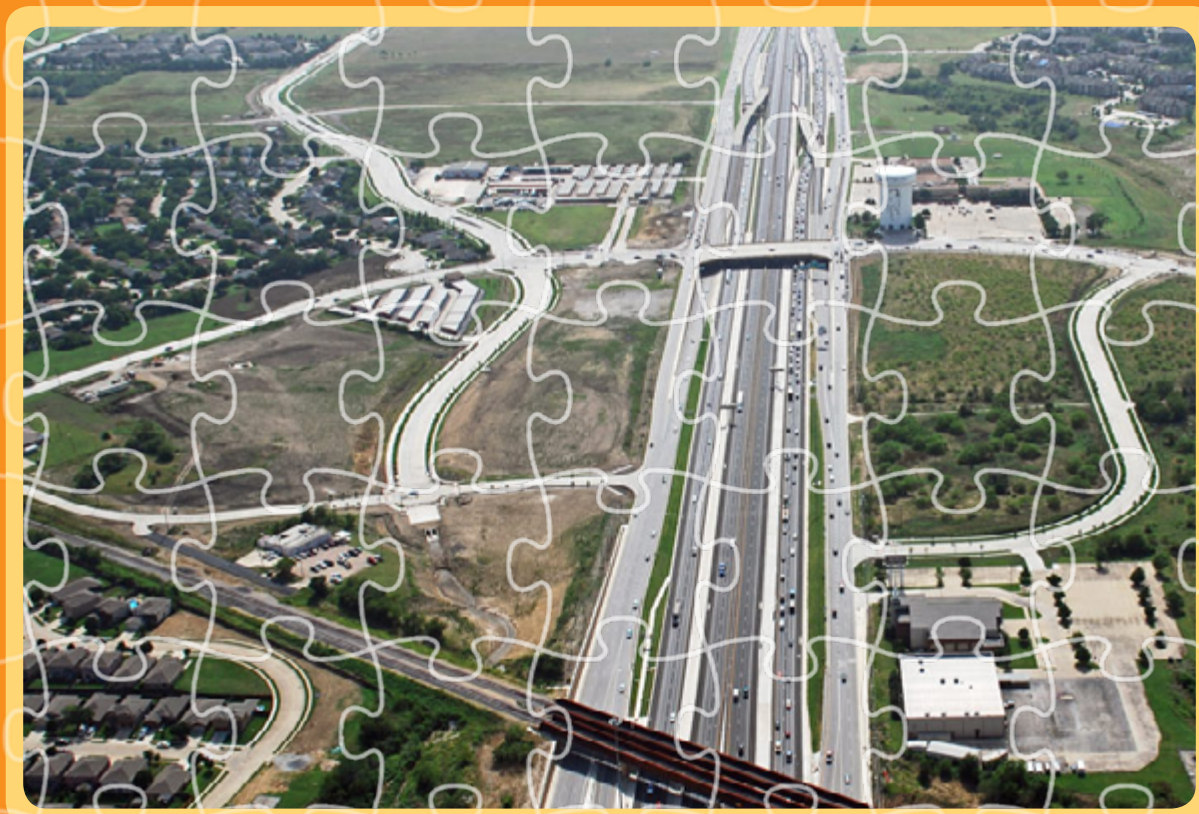


DONALD J. WILLS
SENIOR PASTOR

AUGUST
2019

COMMUNITY

IT'S TIME



ADULT CONNECT
CLASS CURRICULUM



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

Have you ever been to an event where the speaker steps to the podium and says, “Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your undivided attention?” In the life of a believer, the Lord asks for our undivided attention; however, we often are lured away by distractions that grab our attention and time. Sometimes we think that these distractions are perhaps a better way and that there is no harm in putting our relationship with the Lord on the back burner while engaged in these activities that have engulfed our lives. We look up, and before we realize it, we have been completely drawn away from what truly matters—our relationship with Christ. This is what we see in the life of the Israelites as Hosea describes the depletion of the righteous, but he also offers the solution for a more fertile and productive life through a return to God and righteousness.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

This world has many things to offer that can capture our attention and time from who and what matters most. First, we can lose focus in our faith—that is our relationship with the Lord. Second, we can lose focus on our family and no longer model a healthy and flourishing relationship with the Lord before our spouse and children. Third, we can lose focus on our fellowship, which is our involvement with the church for the purpose of spiritual growth, sharing the gospel, and standing in the gap with and for others. Ladies and gentlemen, may we give the Lord our “undivided attention.”

Blessings,
Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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Rely upon the Lord Alone

[Hosea 8:1-14](#)

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Rejoice in the Lord, Not Sin

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August 18, 2019

Return to the Lord

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August 25, 2019

Reside in Righteousness

[Hosea 10:1-15](#)

August 4, 2019



*Rely upon the
Lord Alone*
Hosea 8:1-14

Focal Verse:

“They set up kings, but not by Me; they made princes, but I did not acknowledge them. From their silver and gold, they made idols for themselves—that they might be cut off.”

Hosea 8:4

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Introduce

Surrounded by gleaming modern skyscrapers in downtown San Antonio stands the remains of a former mission turned fort that testifies to the spirit of Texas independence. From February 23 to March 6, 1836, a small, but tenacious band of soldiers led by the likes of James Bowie and William Travis fought valiantly against Mexican forces led by General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. Although greatly outnumbered and ill-equipped, less than 300 soldiers barricaded themselves behind the walls of the Alamo, vowing to fight to the death to defend their position. On the other side, General Santa Anna declared that he would leave no man alive. For thirteen days, these men, including rugged frontiersmen like Davy Crockett, held off the Mexican army which numbered more than 1,800 by some accounts.

On March 6, the Mexican army finally broke through the Alamo's defenses and scaled the walls to engage the remaining soldiers in hand-to-hand combat. In the end, every soldier who had fought to defend the Alamo perished. Most died in battle while a few were captured and promptly executed. The Mexican army, however, did spare a few women and children



who had taken refuge in the fort, but they sent them to Gonzales as a warning to other Texans about the fate of those who dared rise against the Mexican government. Rather than frightening the Texans into submission, this act emboldened them and gave Texas revolutionaries the resolve to stand firm on their convictions.

On April 21, 1836 under the leadership of General Sam Houston, the Texan army assembled in the present-day Houston area to launch a surprise attack on the Mexican army which became known as the Battle of San Jacinto. As the soldiers began the campaign, they ran into battle crying, "Remember the Alamo!" The battle ended in only a matter of minutes with the Mexican army fleeing. The next day Texan forces captured General Santa Anna and forced his troops to withdraw from what then became the Republic of Texas. Upon his capture, Santa Anna reportedly declared, "That man may consider himself born to no common destiny who conquered the Napoleon of the

Introduce

West. It now remains for him to be generous to the vanquished."To which General Houston responded, "You should have remembered that at the Alamo."*

In [Hosea 8:14](#), the Lord declares, "For Israel has forgotten his Maker." Sin and degradation had enslaved the people and captured their attention, diverting their focus from the Lord to their own selfish gain. Sometimes people act like General Santa Anna and want mercy only after their sin has been discovered. They never truly express remorse nor do they ever repent by returning to the Lord. In the end, however, they expect God to be a gracious host to the vanquished. Yet, God will figuratively respond, "You should have remembered *that* when I called you to repentance repeatedly and you rejected it!" God is gracious, loving, and forgiving; we need to learn to rely upon Him alone rather than rejecting righteousness, relying on religion, or relying on other resources.

Key
Question

In what ways has Christ transformed you when you have relied upon Him?

In Reference



Alfred Mason Williams, Sam Houston and the War of Independence in Texas (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1893), p. 206.

THE DANGER OF REJECTING RIGHTEOUSNESS:

Chapter eight opens with an ominous warning which calls for a blast on **the trumpet** to alert the people to an imminent attack by a foreign military power (v. 1). The attack came upon the nation both swiftly and suddenly like a soaring **eagle** swooping from high in the sky to snatch its prey in its talons. In the same way, Assyria encroached upon Israel's territory and attacked **the house of the Lord** with tremendous speed and devastating results. Because danger can come upon us suddenly without much advanced warning, we must prepare ourselves to face any situation with wisdom and anticipate how we ought to respond in the Lord. In Scripture, we have advanced warning about participating in sin and its consequences. We have no excuse for not knowing the outcome! Yet, many people choose to ignore the warnings and are ultimately surprised when its destruction falls upon them and their evil deeds just as it did Israel.

In what ways does God warn us about the destructiveness of sin?

Question
1

Several years ago, I sat in my second-floor apartment not paying much attention to the weather other than to notice that it had become cloudy and fairly dark. Suddenly, the tornado sirens sounded, but this storm wasn't like many in North Texas that gave us at least some advanced warning to prepare. No sooner than I got to the door, the storm hit with violent force. I was essentially trapped on the second floor of my apartment building. Within thirty seconds, a large tree had already been uprooted and fallen; water had begun pouring



down the vents into the bathroom as the whole building swayed violently to and fro in the wind, so I dove into the bathtub to ride out the storm. I had no time to prepare and

Instruct

little time to respond and make informed decisions. I had been lulled to sleep by the false confidence of always having time to respond to adverse weather conditions! Just as one can get caught unaware and unprepared in a sudden storm, the destructiveness of sin can quickly overtake its participants with even more devastating effects. Sin often lulls us to sleep, giving us false confidence that everything will be alright and work out in the end. We have plenty of examples where people's lives have been completely destroyed by their sinful choices—so many that we don't even need to list them here because at least one has probably already come to mind! These people may seem to have everything; they may be successful, have wealth, have good jobs, or even be in positions of authority. However, their sin finds them out and everything for which they have worked crumbles suddenly into a worthless heap! It's all gone! This happened to Israel because they **transgressed** their **covenant** with the Lord and **rebelled against** His **law**. Israel willfully rejected righteousness and practiced treachery and wickedness against the Lord. As a result, they lost everything: everyone lost his land, many became captives enslaved to the victors, and some even lost their lives.

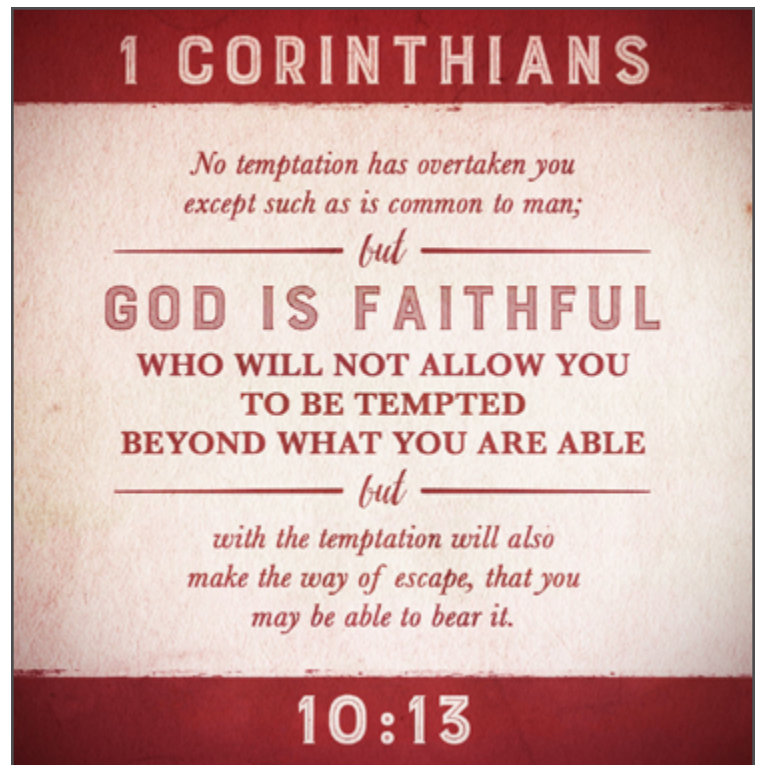
Israel had this false confidence because they participated in religious ritual and thought they knew the Lord personally. Thus, they **cry to** Him saying, "**My God, we know you**" (v. 2). In reality, however, they did not have a relationship with the Lord because they **rejected the good** (v. 3). They participated in religious activities to earn favor with the Lord, but they weren't truly transformed by having a personal relationship with Him! They were hypocrites! They went to "church" and prayed at the prescribed times, but they acted wickedly the rest of the week! Jesus pronounced a similar warning to the phony religious people of His day when He asserted: "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matt 7:22-23). Our confidence should never be in what we can do, but rather what God has done and is doing through us.

What gives people false confidence today that they can effectively order their own lives?

Question
2

Nonetheless, **the enemy** relentlessly pursues them; in the same way, sin relentlessly attempts to allure us with all kinds of enticement. For this very reason, King Solomon

warns, "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent" (Prov 1:10). Yet, so many people cannot resist and find themselves caught up in sin. On our own, we will never have the strength and will-power to resist temptation and participate in righteousness. From time to time, we may seem to have some success, but in the end apart from Christ we fall back into our old, sinful pattern. In order to conquer sin and live in righteousness, we need a relationship with the Lord. In that relationship, we must allow Him to conform our desires to His. We must trust Him implicitly by surrendering our lives into His complete control.



Why do we struggle with sin and fall back into our old, sinful lifestyles?

Question
3

When we have a relationship with Christ, it still requires a conscious effort on our part to overcome temptation and sin. As a follower of Christ, we have been set free from sin and its penalty, but our struggle with temptation hasn't automatically been removed. As His child, God will convict us and lead us to restoration; therefore, we must follow His guidance so that we don't find ourselves habitually participating in the same sin. We can learn two principles that will help us battle temptation more effectively when we submit to the Lord. First, we must rid ourselves of anything that may cause us to stumble and sin ([Matt 5:29](#)). This may mean that we must stop hanging out with "friends" who tempt us; it may mean that we need to stop going certain places, listening, watching, or reading certain things, or participating in certain hobbies or activities; it may even mean that we need to give up certain possessions. For this reason, the Lord declares, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" ([Heb 12:1](#)). Second, we should confess our sin and share our temptation with trusted members in the community who will hold us accountable, pray for us, and counsel us with godly wisdom ([Jas 5:16](#)). We need not share every detail with the entire community which can

Instruct

foster gossip and suspicion, but only to those who will offer true encouragement and support.

In what other ways can we guard against succumbing to temptation and participating in the destructiveness of sin?

Question
4

Hosea 8:4-6

THE DANGER OF RELYING UPON RELIGION:

Instead of relying upon the Lord, Israel trusted in two man-made institutions: human government and religion. God laments that **they** have **set up kings** and **made princes** without consulting Him (v. 4). Israel never sought the Lord and foolishly acted upon their own instincts to select their leaders which led them down a godless, unrighteous path. We live in a highly-charged and politically volatile time today. Without getting into specific political issues and personalities, we as believers are obligated to do two things. First, we should prayerfully seek the candidate which most upholds biblical



values—which is sometimes hard to do. Spend time even now praying for the candidates for whom the Lord would have you to vote. Second, regardless of who is elected, we must pray for them (1 Tim 2:1-4). We should pray for their salvation, for wisdom, for integrity, and for the gospel to remain unhindered in their administration. We can't afford to fall into Israel's

predicament by ignoring the Lord and refusing to **acknowledge** Him in the selection of our leaders.

Not only did they omit God in the selection of their human leadership, but they also trusted in religion which bound them to perform certain duties rather than engage in a relationship which would transform them completely. A relationship with Christ still requires obedience, sacrifice, and commitment—not from a sense of duty because of what we can earn or receive, but out of a sense of responsibility because we love

our Savior and want to honor Him. Consequently, Hosea highlights the scope of the people's idolatry by showing how they use their wealth to engage in it. **From their silver and gold**, they fashioned **idols** for themselves in direct violation of the second commandment ([Exod 20:4-5](#)). As a result of violating their covenant with the Lord, they will **be cut off**; they will lose their inheritance. At their own peril and destruction, Israel continued to pollute themselves with idolatrous worship, so God **cut them off** from the land He had given them, the wealth He had provided for them, and the blessings He had bestowed upon them.

In what way can wealth cause people to commit idolatry (see also [Matt 6:24](#); [1 Tim 6:10](#))?

Question
5

Although we may have never heard it expressed quite this way, most religion is actually an attempt to manipulate and influence God to attain favor through what we can do. For instance, many people do good works in public in hopes that they might persuade God to grant them life and, perhaps, even put them in better standing than others in the next life. God, however, isn't swayed by our good works done before others; He's concerned with the state of our heart which can only be cleansed and restored through Christ. Every "religion" and cult, therefore, focuses on how we can perform certain rituals, do certain things, act certain ways, or train ourselves to think certain ways so that we can control our own destiny. With the Lord, however, it's not about what we can do on our own, but about what He has done for us through Christ! We can never earn salvation, life, or favor by performing religious rituals, by acting a certain way, or by developing a certain mindset. We need a relationship! We need transformation which can only be found in Christ.

In what ways do people try to manipulate or influence God through religious ritual?

Question
6

Moreover, Hosea explains that God's **anger** burned against **Samaria** because the people had crafted a forbidden (i.e. **rejected**) idol in the form of a **calf** (v. 5). This idolatry spread into **Israel** whose **workman made** similar idols for the people to worship, but Hosea emphatically reminds them that these idols are **not God** (v. 6)! One day, they will **be broken into pieces** and proven worthless; the people who worshiped them will be left without hope and in complete despair. They will have nowhere to turn unless they repent now and find hope in the Lord. They had trusted in their religion

Instruct

rather than in a relationship with the One true and living God! At this time, Israel simply worshiped the Lord for what they could get. They thought if they continued to perform the prescribed rituals and sacrifices that God would still continue to bless them and give them great wealth.

Unfortunately, today many people have the wrong motivation for worshipping through giving; it has become a ritual where people give, even meagerly and miserly, in order to receive a blessing, particularly in the form of material wealth. God does indeed instruct us to give at least a tithe (i.e. ten percent of our gross income) to Him ([Gen 14:20; 28:22; Lev 27:30; Num 18:25-28; Mark 12:17](#)) and He does promise to bless us when we give cheerfully and faithfully ([Mal 3:10](#)). God also wants us to serve Him and give generously and abundantly over and above our tithes through offerings which help spread the gospel ([2 Cor 8:1-4](#)). Many people teach and many practice giving



as a means of getting from the Lord. This is the wrong motivation! We ought to give our tithes and offerings because we love the Lord, we want to follow the plan He outlined for us obediently, and we want to honor Him faithfully by returning a portion of that which He has so generously given. Any other motivation than this attempts to manipulate God and exploit His

generosity toward us according to our own selfish desires—which is just what Israel did here in Hosea.

What should our motivation for worshipping and giving to the Lord be?

Question
7

Hosea 8:7-10

THE DANGER OF RELYING UPON RESOURCES:

As we learned in the previous verses, Israel worshiped the Lord only to seek prosperity and gain. In verse 7, we see the folly in their plan because the harvest on which they

so greatly depended for their wealth and happiness doesn't **produce** anything. They have nothing to show for their work and they have no return on their investment. They attempt to **sow in the wind**, but it just scatters the seed and produces nothing substantial. They attempt to **reap** a harvest of what little is produced, but it is destroyed by **a whirlwind**. Because they failed to trust God and worship Him alone, their harvest **never** produces **meal** and what is produced is eaten by foreigners. For a long time, Israel had enjoyed prosperity and wealth, but now they are bankrupt; they have lost everything and have nowhere to turn.

Even with this reversal of fortune, Israel still did not turn to the Lord and seek reconciliation with Him. Rather, they turned to other nations who **swallowed** them **up** and took advantage of them, further draining them of their money and resources (v. 8). The **Gentiles** charged exorbitant taxes and tributes (fees for protection), but when Israel ran out of money they tossed them aside like an empty **vessel** which had no use. Israel went from nation to nation with the same results. They sought help from **Assyria**, but **Assyria** abandoned them **like a wild donkey** in the wilderness left to fend for itself (v. 9). They **hired** other nations as **lovers** (literally paid for prostitutes), but they soon discovered that they truly didn't love them; they only exploited them for their money! Israel's **kings** and **princes** led them down the wrong path by aligning with these other nations (v. 10). They squandered Israel's wealth and gave it away foolishly to these nations because they thought it would earn them respect and honor. On the contrary, it caused them **sorrow** and now God seeks to **gather them** for judgment!

In what way(s) do people seek fulfillment and satisfaction from other people today?

Question
8

Today, people search the world over for relationships which satisfy and fulfill a particular need in their lives. Based on this self-centered perspective, many try to impress others with the resources and possessions they have. In a sense, they try to buy happiness by influencing others in a materialistic way. They follow the crowd and experiment as they do—always longing for more; this usually causes them to make



Instruct

poor choices for the sake of maintaining unhealthy relationships! As long as they have money and can create an air of excitement about them, people tend to flock to them. Yet, if allowed, these people will act like locusts and consume all the resources until they're gone. When the resources run out and the excitement fades, then all their so-called "friends" disappear and that person finds himself all alone just like the prodigal son ([Luke 11:15-32](#)). Israel found herself in this very same predicament! As a community, our self-worth is not found in others, the resources we have, or the things we do; it's found only in Christ who never abandons us and always sees us through the tough times. Let us turn to Him and find satisfaction only in Him; all our other relationships will then fall into place with the perspective that He gives!

As a community, how should we gauge the health of our relationships?

Question
9

Hosea 8:11-14

THE NEED TO REMEMBER:

In summary fashion, Hosea rehearses the charges against Israel again. First, Israel has relied upon religion rather than the Lord; they have **made many altars for sin** and because they built these **altars** to false gods they have sinned themselves (v. 11). Second, they have rejected righteousness; God had given them boundaries (i.e. **great things**) in the **law** to follow for a successful life, but the people disregarded them. They didn't even know the **law** and **considered** it a **strange thing**; in other words, they treated it like a foreign language which they couldn't understand (v. 12). Consequently, because they have rejected righteousness and relied upon religion and their resources, God **will not accept** their **sacrifices** and **offerings** (v. 13). Instead, **He will remember their iniquity** and hold it against them to **punish their sin**. They will be conquered and taken captive just like in the days of **Egypt**.

Tragically, **Israel** had **forgotten his Maker** (v. 14)! They had **forgotten** everything God had done for them and **built temples** and **fortified cities**, but God **will send fire upon** them and **devour** their **palaces**. As a community, let us never forget the Lord and what He has done for us. Everything we have comes from Him; everything we've accomplished is attributed to His strength and power; everything we've become is based on the mercy and grace He has shown us through His Son! Just as we recall and

celebrate significant events and achievements in our lives, we should never forget to celebrate the Lord! Let us give Him the praise, honor, and glory for what He has done. Let us proclaim of His goodness and greatness to the world and testify about what He has done in and through us!

In what ways do you celebrate the Lord?
What has He done for you specifically for which
you can give Him praise?

Question
10

As Texans at the Battle of San Jacinto cried, “Remember the Alamo,” we as believers must declare “remember the Lord.” Remembering the Lord isn’t a ritualistic religious activity, but it’s a relationship whereby we express our love and devotion to Him by the way we live righteously. To live righteously, we must know the content of His Word which tells us that we need to have an exclusive relationship with Him. We can’t mix our worship with other interests, other ideas, and other passions. We must serve the Lord alone!

Here at First Baptist Fort Worth we have a long, colorful history of how God has worked through various individuals and personalities to accomplish miraculous works over our 152 years of existence! We have so much at which we can look back upon and for which we can offer thanksgiving and gratitude. Just as God has worked, He continues to work through us today. We can’t forget that! We can’t simply look back and reminisce about the days of old, but we must look forward to the future with hopeful expectation! We must come expecting God to move in our midst in a mighty way each and every day. The same God who oversaw 3000 people added to the church on Pentecost is the same God whom we serve today. He can still do such tremendous work if only we would allow Him to use us and submit fully to Him—not in a legalistic or ritualistic way, but through a personal relationship in which we allow Him to guide us. Therefore, let us be a community that waits upon Him, surrenders to Him, and relies upon Him for what He can do in and through us. To God be the glory!

Incorporate

Why is it important to maintain righteousness as a community? How can we as a community work together to maintain purity?

How can we as a community avoid falling into the trap of valuing religious activities over a relationship?

Over the years at FBCFW, how have you seen the Lord work? How can we give Him praise as a community?

August 11, 2019



*Rejoice in the Lord,
Not Sin*
Hosea 9:1-9

Focal Verse:

“Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like other peoples, for you have played the harlot against your God. You have made love for hire on every threshing floor.”

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Hosea 9:1-9

Introduce

The evening began like any other with the sun setting on a gorgeous night with temperatures finally cool enough for people to gather in large crowds outside. All over the city fans tuned in to the big game in restaurants and public squares where thousands had gathered because they couldn't get tickets. Although a few celebrated responsibly, many did not as they cheered every strike and applauded every out. As the game entered the final innings, the crowd began to buzz with anticipation because the home team had a one-run lead and the bullpen was pitching lights out. They began to count the outs that remained until finally the visiting team was down to their last strike. A swing and a miss for strike three sent the crowd into a raucous frenzy. Soon the celebration spilled into the streets all over the city. Downtown in the square the fans hurled objects into store and office windows and began to loot and ransack these businesses. On another street, they began to pull office furniture out and set it on fire. These huge bonfires glowed brightly in the sky and were only dimmed by the large explosion a few blocks over. A police car had been turned over and set ablaze, causing it to explode. Garbage littered the streets and drunken fools engaged in violence against their fellow fans because they couldn't even see straight. The celebration had turned into a riot that engulfed the city.



Unfortunately, this is not an all-too-uncommon scene, but one which repeats itself every year in championships for both college and professional sports. Rather than rejoicing in their teams *responsibly*, fans lose self-control and lack wisdom. The victory has become marred by violence, destruction, and all forms of debauchery. People have misplaced their devotion and they rejoice in the wrong way and in the wrong things. In the first part of Hosea chapter 9, we see what happens when devotion and rejoicing go wrong. It leads to total chaos and destruction. Rather than rejoicing in the Lord alone, Israel rejoiced in wickedness, false worship, wealth, and human wisdom. When we worship the Lord alone, we take no delight in wickedness and we seek to

Introduce

honor Him through holiness. We realize that God graciously gives our possessions and governs our relationships. To have any kind of success in life we must rely totally upon Him alone! Let us be a community who rejoices in the Lord and relies upon Him for His strength, wisdom, and provision. When we do, He will work through us mightily and we will see growth and maturation.

Key
Question

For what reasons can you personally rejoice in the Lord alone?

Instruct

Hosea 9:1-3

REJOICE NOT IN WICKEDNESS:

Having ended the last chapter with a solemn declaration that Israel had “forgotten his Maker” (8:14), Hosea commands the people **not to rejoice with the other** nations (v. 1).

In reality, they have no reason to **rejoice** and celebrate because they have been unfaithful and **played the harlot against** the Lord. For years, Israel had **rejoiced** in their prosperity and wealth, but they did not credit God as the source of their blessings! They found joy in their possessions and **rejoiced** wickedly over their materialism.



When Hosea states that they

have made love for hire on every threshing floor, he means that they valued their possessions and wealth more than the Lord. Until this point, the people always had a bountiful harvest which enriched them, but it also pushed them to align more closely with the nations around them and their false worship. Because of their wealth and prosperity, the people wrongly believed that they had the freedom and independence to act any way that they so desired. Therefore, they thought they didn't need the Lord because they had achieved this success on their own!

In what does the world rejoice or celebrate today? How does this often conflict with Scripture?

Question
1

Despite all the jubilant exuberance and trust they placed in these successful harvests, it has all come to an abrupt end. Their harvest will no longer be enough to sustain them. As a result, Hosea points out that **the threshing floor and winepress shall no longer feed them** (v. 2). Even the bountiful and profitable harvest from the vineyards will also **fail in her**. Even more horrifying, they would lose all their property and no longer **dwell in the Lord's land** (v. 3). The statement **they shall not dwell in the Lord's land** is

Instruct

quite telling about the people's perspective. God had graciously given this **land** to their ancestors; they didn't earn or even deserve it, but God gave it to them anyway as an act of love. Therefore, they should have never called it *their land*; it was always God's! He had placed them there to be good stewards who would represent Him and point the rest of the world into a relationship with Him. Yet, Israel had forgotten! They saw the **land**, the prosperity associated with it, and the blessings as their own possessions with which they could do anything they so desired and they omitted the Lord.

In essence, Israel acted like a two-year-old child. Parents, particularly today, provide their children with many luxuries. The children didn't pay for them, they didn't earn them, nor did they even truly deserve them. On the contrary, parents give these things freely because they love their children and want them to have a good and comfortable life. The Lord treats Israel and us in the same way by the provisions He makes for us! Yet, one of the first words that a child learns is "mine." Whether a sibling, a playmate, or even a parent grabs something in the child's possession, he'll selfishly scream, "Mine!" The parent who paid for the toy or object has every right to it, but the child can't conceive of this notion. We, like Israel, many times fail to grasp that everything that we have, how we have been blessed, and who we have become belongs to the Lord.

In what ways does the self-centered perspective of the world omit the Lord? How can we as His community avoid falling into this same perspective?

Question
2

Unfortunately, many people act like a two-year-old child and treat the Lord in this same



selfish and arrogant manner. Some will assert, "This is *my* life; I can do as I please." They practice sin freely and mock the boundaries God has set because they simply want to follow their own desires. In addition, others will proclaim, "This is *my* time; I can spend it how I choose." They engage in all kinds of hobbies and activities, but they

have no time to worship the Lord, no time to serve and evangelize, no time to mentor and make disciples, and they have no time to devote to a daily, intentional relationship with the Lord. Still, others will contend, "These are *my* possessions; I can do with them as I want." We need to use everything we have to the glory of the Lord. Use the car God has given you to bring others to church; use the food God has provided to invite friends and family or take them out to dinner in order to share the gospel. Be creative and innovative as led by the Spirit, but always remember everything we have and who we are comes from God!

In what ways can we innovatively use the time, talents, possessions, and everything that God has given us to serve Him through the local church?

Question
3

Because they have forgotten the Lord, Israel will be taken captive by **Assyria** just like they had once lived in **Egypt** before the exodus and conquest in the Promised Land. Israel had forfeited her inheritance to the **land** because they had defiled themselves by following and participating in the sinfulness of other nations. Thus, Hosea interjects that **they shall eat unclean things in Assyria** (v. 3). Unlike Daniel and his friends who rejected the king's food literally and followed the path the Lord had established ([Dan 1:8-20](#)), the people at this time gorged themselves on the sinfulness of the secular culture. They couldn't get enough of it! In the end, their sin and celebration of it caused them to lose everything. In fact, God had warned them about this through Moses many centuries earlier in the wilderness. If the people didn't follow the Lord and serve Him alone, their seeds would produce no harvest, their crops would be consumed by locusts, and their sons and daughters would be made captives in a foreign country ([Deut 28:38-42](#)). Now, all this had come to pass in Hosea's day because the people had celebrated wickedness and defiled themselves by following the degenerate culture around them.

Today, much of our society parades their wickedness publicly and celebrates it openly in the name of diversity and progress. People openly publicize their hate and animosity toward others in vicious online posts and through other public fits of rage rather than seeking to work out their differences and build each other up toward maturity in Christ. Just because we as Americans have the right to free speech doesn't mean that we must or should say something. We need to use discretion in what we say and how we say it, so we can build each other up in love through the truth of Scripture.

Instruct

Moreover, sexual perversion and immorality has become normalized and continues to erode and degrade our society by weakening the family. People simply don't ignore deviant activity, but they celebrate it and even at times wrongly try to suggest that God condones it! We could continue to list the evil which our society has come to embrace in the form of drugs to attain a high, the foul and indecent language used in public, lawlessness, and the lack of respect for authority, but truly all human beings in general. All this is a result of people turning from the Lord and defiling themselves with secular culture because they believe that it will bring them the satisfaction and contentment for which they seek.

Hosea 9:4-5

REJOICE NOT IN FALSE WORSHIP:

As we have seen throughout Hosea, the people persistently participated in false worship so that they could cover all the bases and find one god who would bless them and make them prosperous. By polluting their worship of the Lord with other gods, they alienated themselves from Him because He found their rituals odious. With the approaching drought and famine, Israel would no longer have the resources to render their **offerings** and **sacrifices to the Lord**; hence, they will no **longer offer wine offerings to the Lord** (v. 4). Even if they had the means to make these **sacrifices**, it would not **be pleasing to Him** because they lived in sin, having impure hearts and motives. Their **offerings** and **sacrifices** would be akin to us wearing fresh clothes without taking a shower. The outside may seem clean and without blemish, but underneath the stench is still there!

Furthermore, Hosea compares their ritualistic **offerings** to **the bread of mourners**.



According to Scripture, anyone coming into contact with a corpse becomes unclean; this not only applies to direct contact, but also anyone who enters the tent of the deceased and anything in open containers therein—including food ([Deut 26:14](#); [Lev 19:11](#); [Num 19:11, 14-15](#)). The **bread of mourners** to

which Hosea refers has become **defiled** by the people who have been in the presence of the deceased; therefore, **all who** partake of it become **defiled** as well! By virtue of their spiritual condition in which they are dead in their sins and trespasses, the people pollute everything they touch and nothing is fit for an offering to the Lord; none of their polluted **sacrifices** should **come into the house of the Lord**. In any case, they don't have enough wheat to make **bread** and offer the Lord because of the famine. They barely have enough **bread** to eat to sustain their physical lives (i.e. **their bread shall be for their own life**).

In what ways do some people offer the Lord polluted and defiled sacrifices today?

Question
4

Hosea asks a two-fold question here which centers around an unspecified festival and **feast** (v. 5). He inquires, "**What will you do in the appointed day and in the day of the feast of the Lord?**" In other words, with this question Hosea implies, "What good will these festivals and feasts do since you as a people continue to sin and refuse to repent?" Israel's problem is that they were oblivious to the ineffectiveness of their rituals; they thought they still served the Lord faithfully and expected Him to continue to bless them (see [Hosea 8:2](#)). Day after day, they continue unaware—straying further from the truth. Unlike Israel, we should not blindly follow religious rituals as if they were a magic potion which we could drink to transform our lives by simply following a few steps. We need to engage our minds and purify our hearts to understand our responsibilities in the Lord and the traditions we have as a community. Nothing is wrong with tradition unless we mindlessly follow it without filtering it through our relationship with Christ and allowing Him to guide us to apply it to our lives in the right way—a way which transforms us and helps us to mature through our relationship with Christ.

Why should we as a community keep our eyes focused on Christ rather than tradition?

Question
5

We live in a culture that largely despises authority and dismisses tradition as old-fashioned and irrelevant today. If we have the right perspective in Christ, however, we shouldn't decry tradition as useless, but learn to understand the significance behind it and appreciate the healthy habits that it helps us to develop to keep our focus on our relationship with Christ. We shouldn't simply participate in tradition because we've *always* done it *that way*, but neither should we simply throw everything away

Instruct

because we label tradition as “bad.” We shouldn’t be legalistic in keeping tradition, but we also must not become lackadaisical in pursuing a personal relationship with our Savior either! It requires a balance. To achieve that balance requires that we think and meditate on our relationship with the Lord and allow His Spirit to guide us daily. God has given us a mind to engage and use; therefore, let us use it to know Him! When we truly know Him, He will guard our hearts from polluted worship in which we commit idolatry or simply go through the motions.

How will God guard our hearts and keep us from engaging in false worship if we surrender to Him?

Question
6

Hosea 9:6

REJOICE NOT IN WEALTH:

Because of their false worship and refusal to repent, Israel will flee the **destruction** they have brought upon themselves (v. 6). The phrase translated **they are gone up because of destruction** more precisely means “they have come from **destruction**” and fled to **Egypt** for help. Like Jacob and his family who turned to **Egypt** for assistance during a time of severe famine through God’s divine plan for Joseph, **Egypt**, in this case Assyria, would once again welcome and **gather** the people in their land. This time, however, things will turn out much differently for the people. God made provision for



Jacob and his sons through Joseph which sustained them through the famine, but ultimately He fulfilled His promise to give them a land as their inheritance by freeing them from slavery in **Egypt**. Even though Jacob and Joseph had died in Egypt, they posthumously participated in the promise when the children of Israel carried their bones back to the Promised Land

([Gen 50:25](#); [Exod 13:19](#)). Israel, during Hosea’s time, would have no such part in that

same inheritance because they continually rejected the Lord. Hence, Hosea declares that **Memphis** (an ancient city in Egypt) **will bury them**. The people have forfeited their inheritance and their very lives because they refused to turn to the Lord and worship Him alone. They died in a foreign land and would not receive the promises of God.

We must carefully distinguish between losing one's inheritance and forfeiting it. To lose something means that our privilege has been rescinded or taken away, but to forfeit something means that we never met the qualifications to receive it in the first place. We cannot lose our salvation when we have an authentic relationship with Christ whereby we confess our sins, repent, and surrender fully to Him. However, we can forfeit the opportunity to have salvation when we refuse to accept the terms on which the Lord offers it through Jesus Christ. We forfeit salvation, therefore, when we reject Christ as our Savior and continue to live wickedly without repenting from our sins. In Hosea, the people who forfeited their inheritance never had a relationship with the Lord in the first place; they continually participated in false worship, rejected the warning of the true prophets, and refused to repent.

How can we know that we have a relationship with the Lord (see [1 John 5:11-13](#))?

Question
7

The verse ends by demonstrating how Israel had **lost all their wealth**. **Hosea prophesies** that **nettles** will consume **their valuables of silver** and **thorns shall be in their tents**. They'll be lucky to have the clothes on their back; in a moment's notice, everything in which they took pride and trusted had vanished. Today, many people find security in their wealth and possessions, but, like Israel, all our wealth can vanish in an instant. The stock market can crash and wipe out retirement accounts; the dollar could become devalued with a collapse of the US economy, and natural disasters or misfortunate accidents could destroy our possessions. Then, what do we have if we don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ? Let us not rejoice and place our security in something so fragile as wealth. Instead, let us rejoice and place our confidence in Christ who never fails!

In what ways should we find confidence and security in the Lord?

Question
8

Hosea 9:7-9

REJOICE NOT IN HUMAN WISDOM:

Finally, we must learn not to rejoice in human wisdom because it will always lead us astray and fail. Hosea announces that **the days of punishment and recompense have come** because Israel rejected the truth and accepted the folly of human wisdom (v. 7). Sarcastically, Hosea announces that Israel knows—or at least thinks that they know best! They regard God’s **prophet** as **a fool** and the man led by the Spirit as **insane** (v. 8). However, Hosea mocks them by asserting that **the greatness of their iniquity and enmity** has caused the prophets to become crazy! On the other hand, the **prophet** (or **watchman**) isn’t crazy, but he stands with the Lord. When he speaks the Word of the Lord, he becomes **like a fowler’s snare** designed to trap birds. Israel’s own actions and response to the truth is what actually ensnares them; they are not indicted and condemned by the **prophet**, but by their own actions! The **prophet** only speaks the truth on God’s behalf in order to show the error of their ways.

The world treats those who speak the truth of God’s Word in a similar fashion today. The world labels those who stand on the Lord’s side as ignorant and uneducated—despite the level of education and proficiency they may have attained—because God’s spokesmen do not affirm nor hold their particular views. They also call God’s



spokesmen narrow-minded and bigoted because they proclaim God’s disdain for their sinful ways. The world mocks believers who stand on the truth and live with integrity because their righteousness in the Lord makes the world look bad. They want to conceal their sin and justify their activities so that it placates their conscience and makes them feel

better about what they do. Above all, they attempt to attack the character of others, insult them unjustly, and point out their faults because they think they can shame them and bring honor to themselves. Israel did this with the prophets whom God sent to

warn them about their sinful ways and urge them to repent lest they face the wrath to come.

How should we as a community respond to such accusations and mockery from the world?

Question
9

Finally, God exposes the level of their corruption by comparing it to the atrocities that occurred **in the days of Gibeah** at the conclusion of the book of Judges (see [chapters 19-21](#)). In short summary, sexual depravity had become so rampant **in Gibeah** that a mistress (i.e. concubine) of a Levite priest was assaulted and left for dead. In retaliation for this heinous crime, the Levite cut her dead body into twelve pieces and sent one to each tribe; in the end, this caused a brutal civil war which almost wiped out the entire tribe of Benjamin. Just as the Lord punished **Gibeah in those days**, He will also **remember** Israel's current **iniquity** and **punish their sins** (v. 9). Through their finite and flawed human wisdom, Israel attempted to direct their own paths and influence their own destiny. However, this attempt failed miserably and ended with utter destruction. Like Israel and **Gibeah**, we can't effectively resolve our own problems and chart a successful course in life. We need the wisdom of the Lord!

In what ways does God give us wisdom to avoid sin, resolve problems, and live consistently in His righteousness?

Question
10

In the introduction, we saw how the joyous occasion of celebrating the victory of a championship turned into a celebration of debauchery, violence, and destruction. Often, what the world intends for good becomes seized by sin and devolves into a complete mess. Today, instead of celebrating the victory of life given through Christ, people champion sin and herald it as normal. Even more disturbing, many churches no longer warn against the danger of sin, but they even embrace it and celebrate it! We should never celebrate sin and wickedness; we should rejoice in Christ who has set us free from its penalty and enslavement.

As a community, we cannot forget our past from where the Lord has saved us and from which He has transformed us. When we forget our past, we tend to lose focus on Christ and allow the “old” sinful person to return because we begin to see ourselves as independent and successful on our own. At the same time, we cannot live in the past and go through life on automatic pilot, for this will have the same effect. Instead, we need to remind ourselves how truly dependent upon Christ we are. We must surrender completely to Him lest we find ourselves rejoicing in wickedness, false worship, wealth or human wisdom rather than in His righteousness and purity.

Incorporate

Why should the church purge any wickedness or sinfulness from among its members?
How can we do this in a biblical way?

As a community, how can we help others cultivate their relationship with Christ? In what way(s) do we as a church need to be mentored ourselves and mentor others?

As a community, how can we avoid falling into the trap of materialism and trusting in wealth? What does the Bible say about wealth and money?

August 18, 2019



Return to the Lord

Hosea 9:10-17

Focal Verse:

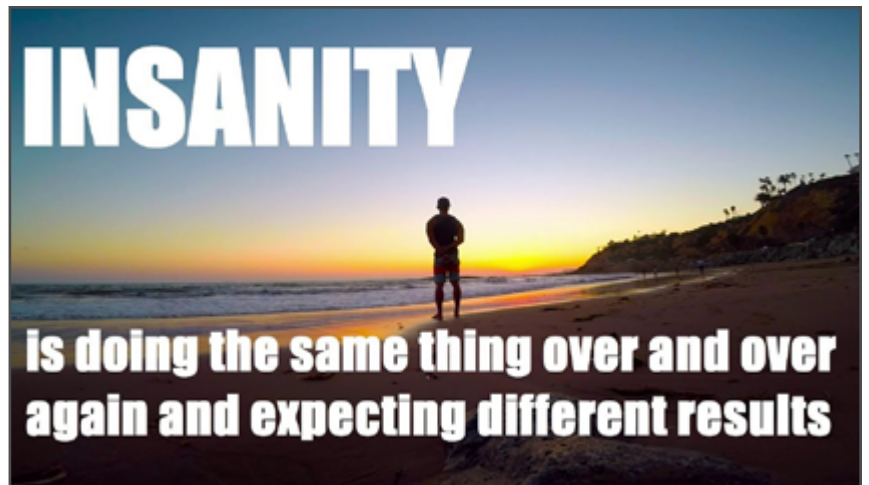
"I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. But they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves to that shame; they became an abomination like the thing they loved."

Hosea 9:10

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Introduce

At some point in our lives, every one of us has probably desired to lose weight or make healthier decisions about what we eat. Some of us may even make New Year's resolutions every year as our goal to become healthier in our choices. In fact, Daniel O'base, Jr. set these same goals every year, but he never seemed to shed a single pound. He had read every article that he could find, watched numerous programs on television about healthy lifestyles, and searched the Internet for hours on end. Nothing seemed to change as he stepped on the scales every morning. If one received an award for consistency, it would have been Daniel! One day, it dawned on him that he never had success because he never changed anything about his routine. He repeated the same things over and over again, expecting different results.



As a result, Daniel began to take stock of his life and the routine in which he engaged daily. While spending so much time researching healthy choices, he ran out of time to cook, so per his usual routine he stopped to get fast-food on the way home from work every night. With a cheeseburger, fries, and a soda in hand, he searched the Internet and found many beneficial exercise routines. Day after day, he watched other people exercise and was thoroughly impressed with their routines, but the only exercise that he received was to pull the lever on his recliner to lift his legs like a crunch, burning a few calories here and there and toning his left arm only slightly. Something had to change if he ever expected to see different results! As we have learned in the book of Hosea, Israel was like Daniel O'base, Jr.; they never changed their routine and they found themselves mired in the destructive lifestyle of sin!

Having studied more than half the book of Hosea, we've seen a pattern emerge. God sends Hosea to warn the people to stop sinning and return to Him; Hosea speaks on God's behalf and lists the people's specific sins. God offers forgiveness if only the people would repent and turn to Him. The people refuse to listen, reject the Lord's offer, and even turn elsewhere for the solution to their problems. This is repeated over and over again! Although we don't know the exact origin of the following quote, we've

Introduce

all heard it and it fits this situation perfectly: “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” By this definition, Israel was insane because they never trusted the Lord and never turned to Him—the only One who could actually resolve their problems.

If honest, most of us have found ourselves in a similar situation to Israel at times in our lives. In our stubbornness, we’ve refused to change and made the same mistakes continually. Fortunately, however, we don’t have to live in such defeat because we have a Savior who can help us overcome if only we would return to Him. As a community, let us turn to the Lord and seek Him daily, so that He can equip us and empower us to move forward, having success in the tasks to which He has called us!

Key
Question

In what way(s) can Christ help us to change the pattern or routine of our lives?

Hosea 9:10

THE FOLLY OF ISRAEL:

The Lord begins with a history lesson in which He describes finding **Israel like grapes in the wilderness** and their forefathers whom He **saw as the firstfruits of a fig tree** when they first ripen in **season** (v. 10). God's point with this declaration is that **Israel** had at first brought Him much joy and pleasure. In a barren wasteland like a desert, **grapes** would have been a welcomed sight! Even greater than the sight of water at an oasis, **grapes** would have brought a smile to any traveler's lips. In the same way, the first harvest of figs were considered a delicacy in ancient times because they had such a rich and sweet flavor; they would give delight to those who were fortunate enough to partake in the first harvest. Likewise, the faithfulness of Israel's forefathers had brought the Lord much joy and Israel as a whole found favor with Him—not because they were perfect, but because they served and worshiped Him alone!

In what ways does the Lord find delight and joy in you?

Question
1

Yet, how quickly do things change? As the nation of Israel grew older, they moved further from the Lord rather than drawing closer. Even before they entered the Promised Land, Israel made a series of devastating choices at **Baal Peor**. Rather than honoring God, they **separated themselves to shame** and **became an abomination** like the immorality **they loved**. While residing in the **wilderness** near **Baal Peor**, the men of Israel began having relations with Moabite women which in turn led the people to begin sacrificing to their gods and worshipping them ([Num 25:1-9](#)). Instead of being pleased with His people, "the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel" (Num 25:3). Their idolatry became so bad that the



Depiction of Num 25:1-9 by Phillip Medhurst.

Instruct

people began sacrificing their own children to Baal ([Psalm 106:36-38](#)). Ironically, Baal, the Canaanite storm god, was thought to bring fertility to both the land and people, but in reality the god whom they thought had given them their children took them in death! This shows the folly of human logic when devoid of godly wisdom!

What are some things (either possessions, places, hobbies, or people) that draw your heart away from the Lord?

Question
2

Human folly tells us that we can intermingle with sinful people and dabble in sinful practices without compromising our integrity and becoming unfaithful to the Lord. The greatest lie of the enemy is that *a little* won't hurt anyone, but it never ends up being *just* a little! Faulty human logic would have us believe that we influence others more than they influence us. When we surround ourselves with people who do not have a relationship with Christ and intimately fellowship with them, it's more likely that their bad habits will rub off onto us. Although we cannot blame our sin on our environment because we still willfully make the choice to participate, many people act like chameleons who adapt the color of their body to the background and foliage around them. Humans have this same tendency to adapt their behavior, speech, attitude, and outlook based on the people collectively around them. As believers, however, we must be renewed through the power of Christ; our character should constantly reflect His!

In what ways do some people (even so-called Christians) change based upon the crowd with whom they run?

Question
3

Hosea 9:11-14

THE FATE OF ISRAEL:

God pronounces Israel's fate in stark terms; He will leave them alone because they have rejected Him. Thus, Hosea notes that Ephraim's **glory** will **fly away like a bird** (v. 11). Just like throwing a pebble into a flock of birds that causes them to scatter quickly, so God will depart as quickly from Israel. Here, Hosea equates **glory** with the Lord; previously, God has announced that He will leave Israel like a helpless newborn because they refuse to listen and change their ways ([Hosea 2:3](#)). He makes this clear

in verse 12 when He asserts, **“Yes, woe to them when I depart from them.”** God exercises great patience with us and repeatedly extends forgiveness if only we would return to Him. Suddenly, however, those chances will end one day and He will hold us accountable for the decisions that we have made!

Most of us have probably driven down the road not paying particular attention to our speed. We may not know the exact posted speed limit on the roadway, we may have not paid much attention to our speedometer, or we may have even intentionally and knowingly broken the speed limit. Regardless of the reason, if we have exceeded the posted speed limit, we’re guilty of breaking the law. We may get away with speeding or breaking other traffic laws for a while, but eventually justice will come swiftly when we’re least expecting it—like a panther springing upon its prey. Suddenly, flashing blue and red lights will reflect in our rearview mirror; we’re out of chances unless the officer extends mercy to us. At times, the officer may let us off with a warning and bid us to speed no more after giving us a lecture on safety and the rules of the road. However, we can only get so many warnings before the officer and judge finds us guilty because we didn’t heed their advice. At that point, the gavel bangs, the judge declares us guilty, and we must pay whatever fine that he determines.

Likewise, judgment from the Lord comes swiftly. He has shown Israel mercy and let them off with a warning multiple times, instructing them that they must repent. However, their warnings have now run out and they stand before the Judge in the heavenly courtroom who issues their sentence. Because they didn’t have a relationship with the Lord, they have a death sentence upon them! One day, we too will stand before the Lord and He will judge us justly based upon our decision that we have made here on earth: 1) did we accept Christ and receive His forgiveness through His sacrificial death on the cross by repenting of our sins or 2) did we reject Him? When the gavel bangs with the verdict in the heavenly courtroom, the sentence is final. Either we have life in Christ and are invited to spend eternity with Him or we don’t and must pay the penalty of dying a second death ([Rev 2:11; 21:8](#)).

How would you explain to someone the importance of making a decision about Christ today and not waiting until tomorrow? What Scripture highlights the importance of making that decision today?

Question
4

After the Lord departs from them, Israel will know that He alone was the source of their

Instruct

blessings and prosperity—not the false Canaanite god Baal whom they also worshiped. Israel and the secular nations wrongly believed that Baal brought fertility to their land and people by granting good harvests and increasing the population through childbirth besides being a god who supposedly controlled the weather. However, Israel would learn that the Lord gave their increase because without Him there would be **no birth, no pregnancy, and no conception** in the land. The Lord is the sole source of life! In fact, Scripture clearly reminds us that “children are a heritage from the Lord” ([Psalm 127:3](#)), but Israel had forgotten that!

Why is it important to remember that God / Christ is the source of life—both physical and spiritual?

Question
5

Israel must learn to depend upon the Lord alone lest they face great sorrow that will envelop the land. Tragically, because they have depended upon Baal, their children will experience destruction too. Although they may **bring up their children** into adulthood, God **will bereave them to the last man** because they have not raised



them in the way of the Lord (v. 12). The children will follow the footsteps of their parents, making godless and destructive choices. Instead of training “up a child in the way he should go,” parents provided bad examples and became poor role models ([Prov 22:6](#)). Thus, because both they and their children participate in evil, they will bring

a curse upon themselves. For this reason, God declared, “You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity” (Deut 28:41). Whether parents want to admit it or not, they are the primary role models for their children, especially during the formative early years of their lives. The principles that we portray through our actions and habits resonate with children more than lengthy lectures. We ought to speak the truth from Scripture in love, but we must also be consistent in our actions because our children are always watching. Even when we

may think that that they are not paying attention, they're watching and soaking in everything. Recently, I saw an interview on Fox Sports Southwest with Texas Rangers All-Star Hunter Pence who wanted to emulate his father by drinking coffee. Every day on the way to school, Hunter begged his dad for a sip of his coffee—not because he liked it, but because his dad was drinking it! At the time, he even thought that the coffee tasted terrible, but he drank it anyway because his father did. He continued to imitate his father until he even began to like the taste of coffee himself!

In what ways do our children imitate what they see us do?

Question
6

Whether good or bad, our children pick up our habits and often participate in them. They become a carbon copy of us! Imagine if a father, instead of doing something mundane like drinking a cup of coffee on the way to school, developed the terrible habit of cursing other drivers, gesturing to them, and complaining. Instead of desiring to drink coffee, the child would have seen this as a normal expression and an acceptable way to alleviate frustration! On the contrary, he would have picked up a bad habit. Israel had led their children down the wrong path. Their children faced imminent death and destruction because of their poor choices.

In what ways do we need to set a good example for our children to follow? How can we be consistent in the life that we live in front of them?

Question
7

God had given Israel everything in abundance. The land God had given them flowed with milk and honey; it was fertile and productive. Therefore, Hosea points out that God **planted Ephraim and Tyre in a pleasant place** (v. 13). They had it made! God graciously gave His best for those nations, but they squandered it by refusing to repent and turn to Him. Instead, Hosea asks, “**What will You give?**” Calamity and misfortune come upon them in the form of **a miscarrying womb** and **dry breasts** (v. 14). Although they live in a fertile land, it will no longer produce and be fruitful. Neither will they have a good harvest because the land will be fallow and barren nor will they have an increase in population because their wombs will be barren as a result of their sin. We must be careful not to generalize that every disease, death, or misfortune represents sin—just look at Job. Here, however, God is specifically declaring that their sin will have these effects.

Instruct

What makes Israel's sin so heinous is that the people **bring** their **children to the**



One depiction of the god Baal.

murderer (v. 13). Later, during the time of Jeremiah, the people regularly participated in the sacrificing of their children to the god Molech ([Jer 32:35](#)). Although it's unclear whether the people performed child sacrifices here in Hosea, we do know from Psalm 106:37 that during their time in the wilderness "they even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons." Whether they did or not here in Hosea, one thing is clear: they led their families to complete destruction because of their unfaithfulness toward the Lord and their steadfast opposition to Him by their refusal to repent. Israel chose to suffer this horrendous fate; not because God didn't love them, but because they rejected His righteousness

and His offer to receive restoration through repentance.

Hosea 9:15-17

THE FAILURE OF ISRAEL:

Finally, we see the failure of Israel is bound up with their **wickedness** (v. 15). **Gilgal** represents all that's wrong with Israel; every kind (literally **all**) of **wickedness** can be found in **Gilgal**. We could even call it the original "Sin City" because the people built all kinds of idols there and it became a symbol for Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord (see [Hosea 12:11](#)). As a result of their incessant sin, they drew God's ire and wrath. God had given them numerous chances to repent, but now declares that because of their sin in **Gilgal** He **hated them**. He makes their fate clear when He asserts that He **will drive them from His house because of their evil deeds**. God also reveals that He **will love them no more** because **all their princes are rebellious**. The entire nation—the citizens, the religious leaders or priests, and the government officials and aristocracy—have given themselves over to every type of **wickedness**.

Scripture clearly establishes that God invokes His wrath against sin, but we incur His wrath upon us when we refuse to repent and continue to walk in sin. For instance, Solomon pens, "These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that

devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren” (Prov 6:16-19). As holy, just, and righteous, God detests any type of sin or **wickedness**. Although He must punish sin, He still loves us more than anything in creation; He demonstrates that love by providing a way that we can escape the wrath to come and have eternal life through His Son.



God’s statement that He **will love them no more** doesn’t reflect what we think as a typical human emotion where one falls in and out of love based on what others may or may not do. On the contrary, **love** represents a state of being, for “God is *love*” ([1 John 4:8, 16](#)). It’s His character; it’s who He is! Thus, to **love no more** means that the people have severed their relationship with God after all the chances He had given them; they have rejected His offer for a relationship based upon grace through faith. This phrase harkens back to the metaphor of the unfaithful wife which runs throughout the book of Hosea. God sought reconciliation with Israel, but they never reciprocated His **love**. After pleading with them and giving them many chances, God moved on—so to speak. He doesn’t force His **love upon** us even though His **love** is always readily available to us if we turn to Him and receive it.

How does God demonstrate His love to us? With God, why can we not treat love as a human emotion that’s so misunderstood today?

Question
8

Because they have rejected Him, **Ephraim** has become **stricken** with unfruitfulness. Their land has become barren and **stricken** with drought; the roots of the plants have **dried up** and **they bear no fruit**—which could also be an allusion to the barrenness of their wombs (v. 16). As we learned in [verses 11-13](#), even when they **were** able to **bear children**, they lead them down a path of debauchery to complete destruction. It sounds harsh to hear the Lord proclaim, “**I would kill the darlings of their womb,**” but He wants to arouse Israel from their slumber and show how far their nation has degraded into sin. He wants the people to understand that their carless and licentious living heaps curses and destruction upon future generations because they have failed

Instruct

to teach them the way of the Lord. Although the cycle can be broken, it's difficult to overcome godlessness when parents fail to teach their children to know the Lord! As a result, the Lord declares that He **will cast them away because they did not obey Him** (v. 17). To **cast away** means to send them into exile in Assyria to which Hosea alludes that they will become **wanderers among the nations**.

In what ways does a failure to teach future generations about a relationship with the Lord manifest itself in our society? How can we break the cycle even if one generation fails to teach another?

Question
9

Despite the bleak picture Hosea paints of Israel, we still have hope. We don't have to settle for defeat by following our own desires and cravings, but we can turn to the Lord who loves us! God loves us so much that He Himself paid the price for our sin by becoming flesh and dying on the cross on our behalf. Paul emphatically declares, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39). Nothing can separate us from God's love except our outright rejection of His Son—the only One through whom we can have life! As a community, we pray that you have accepted Christ's love by repenting of your sin and surrendering to Him. If not, today is the day to return to the Lord and have a relationship with Him; don't wait until tomorrow, for tomorrow may never come!

In the introduction, we learned the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. If honest, most of us have probably found ourselves stuck in a routine—particularly one that’s not too healthy. We try to make positive changes, but we eventually find ourselves right back where we started. We may blame our environment, our will power, or the lack of time and resources, but ultimately it comes down to our choice. We choose to continue down that path! We may unwisely place ourselves in places that have a negative influence or surround ourselves with people who pressure us, but we still make the choice! We need help to overcome our human nature! We need the Lord.

Although we need to make physically healthy choices, we need to make spiritually healthy choices all the more. This requires an intimate relationship with Christ to whom we can surrender all control. Only then can we make wise and healthy decisions. Christ will lead us to throw off everything that attempts to ensnare us and persuade us to sin. Moreover, He will transform our perspective, so that we can see the world through His eyes. This requires that we diligently seek Him! We can’t have a cavalier attitude about life in which we simply fly by the seat of our pants to see what may happen. If we do, we will often find ourselves derailed. Instead, we need to turn to the Lord daily as individuals and as a community. Let us return to the Lord, cultivate our relationship with Him, and seek to pattern our lives after the wisdom which He gives us.

Incorporate

How do we see the “insanity” of our society as compared to the people in the book of Hosea, especially in repeating some of the same mistakes?

In what ways does secular culture blindly destroy itself by rejecting the righteousness of God through Christ? Why should we be persistent in our warning and not grow weary?

As a community, how can we leave a legacy of faith and righteousness? How can we mentor others in the community effectively?

Journal: Document God's Work

August 25, 2019



Righteousness

*Reside in
Righteousness
Hosea 10:1-15*

Focal Verse:

“Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.”

Hosea 10:12

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Introduce

In bygone years well before the advent of online shopping and home delivery, traveling salesmen would go door to door peddling a multitude of items. Just as online browsing occurs today where consumers can scroll pages of similar items, the salesmen brought with them samples of their products and gave personal demonstrations to highlight all their functions and uses. One such traveling salesman

named Jonathan R. Shady came to Fort Worth back in the 1950s. Dressed in a respectable navy pinstripe suit with a crisp white shirt and slender black tie, he carried a name-brand vacuum cleaner in one hand and a suitcase filled with attachments, accessories, and bag replacements



in the other. Under the black fedora hat he wore, he had a pencil and order form complete with carbon paper to give receipts easily. He looked the part of a trustworthy salesman!

Knocking on the first door, he found an eager listener to whom he could sing the praises of his product and how much easier and more convenient it would make life. Johnathan R. Shady demonstrated the suction power of the vacuum and how spotless it could clean the rugs which sold the family on making this new purchase. Excitedly awaiting the day of its arrival, the family finally received the package, so they hurriedly unpacked all the items and saw the name of the vacuum which was written in big, bold letters on the front: HOOPER. It wasn't the name-brand vacuum that the salesman had with him at the time of the sale.

Thinking it might be a misprint, they decided to test it by cleaning the rug in the mud room where they had tracked grass and dirt from their garden. Upon plugging it in and turning on the power, it began to whirl, but also shake and sputter. The noise became so loud that it sounded like the grinding of a garbage disposal. It picked up some dirt and debris, but it spit out just as much dust from the bag which had a hole in it. This certainly didn't function like the vacuum the salesman had brought; it was the old bait and switch! Soon, the Hooper began to smoke as the belt broke and caused the motor

Introduce

to burst into flames. They called the company, but they were informed that all sales were final; they accepted no refunds or returns—which the salesman had promised. The verbal contract was worthless; they had broken their covenant with their clients. In Hosea, Israel treated their covenant or contract with the Lord as worthless by engaging in all forms of wickedness. When participating in wickedness, it leads to conflict, broken covenants, and corruption. God, therefore, sent Hosea to offer course correction to Israel, but they rejected it! Without God and a relationship with Christ, every nation will spiral toward destruction because wide-spread corruption will result. As a community, we should never participate in wickedness which always leads to corruption, but we should reside in righteousness.

Key
Question

In what ways do you see broken covenants or contracts in our world today? How can Christ help us fix them?

Instruct

Hosea 10:1-3

WICKEDNESS LEADS TO CONFLICT:

Hosea opens chapter 10 by using a farming metaphor to describe Israel as a destructive and invasive **vine** that chokes out everything in the field and only produces **fruit for** itself (v. 1). The phrase **Israel empties his vine** more aptly means that the nation “lays waste” to everything; unlike Midas who supposedly turned everything that he touched to gold, Israel destroys everything that they touch! For those who garden and care for their own lawns, this **vine** represents an invasive species or weed that consumes all the nutrients, water, and space for itself. Nothing else can live in its presence; it overtakes and overshadows everything else. Thus, Israel lives very selfishly and **brings forth fruit only for himself**. Even more dastardly, Israel uses its wealth to worship and honor other gods by constructing **altars** and **sacred pillars** to them. Therefore, the **fruit** that Israel bore was false worship; as they became more prosperous as a people, the more their unfaithfulness and false worship **increased!**

In what way(s) does participating in false religion lead to conflict and division?

Question
1

As a result, Israel produces poisonous **fruit** that drives them further from the Lord.

Hosea rightly contends that **their heart is divided** because they mix their worship of the Lord with other Canaanite deities (v. 2). Consequently, this brings them into direct conflict with the Lord because **they are held guilty** for breaking their covenant and compromising their relationship. As we have learned since the beginning of Hosea, unresolved conflict with the Lord based on unconfessed and unrepentant sin always leads to punishment. As part of their punishment, the Lord **will break down their altars and ruin their sacred pillars**. This will show His superiority over these false gods and alert the people to the fact that all their blessings came from Him alone!



Depiction of Gideon destroying altars in [Judges 6:28-40](#).

Instruct

Not only do they have conflict with the Lord, but they also have conflict within themselves. Having a **divided heart** shows how they wrestle with their own conscience. They experience this division because they try to please everyone and everything. Rather than rightly seeking to please the Lord alone, they try to please other gods, so that they might attain favor. They must jump through many ritualistic hoops which add stress to their lives! At the same time, however, they want to follow their own desires; they are caught in the middle. They find no satisfaction because they fill their lives with busyness and futile works. Today, many people attempt to go along with the crowd, which simply means that they want to please others. They may want to avoid ridicule, chastisement, or even becoming an outcast, so they do the things that they think others will accept. Yet, they still find no satisfaction because they constantly cater to a different crowd!

In what way(s) does succumbing to peer pressure and going along with the crowd create a divided heart within us?

Question
2

In addition, sin also causes conflict within people because they must constantly debate morality; they never have a peaceful conscience because they constantly worry about how others may perceive them or even that their sin may be found out! They struggle with their conscience to determine whether an action is right or wrong. However,



when a behavior is promoted by God as holy and morally right, we don't have such inner conflict. No debate exists because we know with confidence the action is right! If standing in a line at the grocery store and a man takes his wallet out to pay and drops a twenty-dollar bill, we know that we should

pick it up and return it; there's nothing to debate because it's not ours! On the other hand, debate exists when we begin to contemplate keeping it as our own because the man didn't realize that he had dropped it. We never struggle inwardly when we participate in righteous activities, but we always struggle mightily when we fail to do

what we know is right.

Because of this inner conflict, they rejected the Lord as their King. In fact, they even boldly assert that **they now have no king** (v. 3). Context tells us that this declaration doesn't refer to a human **king**. They indeed had a corrupt earthly **king** as this time, but **they have no king because they did not fear the Lord**. God always wanted to be the King who led Israel, but they constantly complained that they lacked a human leader, so God relented and gave them an earthly **king** in Saul—who lacked much! Even so, they blame the Lord for their troubles, and mock Him by asking, “**As for a king, what would he do for us?**” Israel engaged in the what-have-you-done-for-me-lately mentality. They didn't perceive all the great things that the Lord has done for them, but they blamed Him for the curses they heaped upon themselves because of their sin. People irreverently approach God much in this same way today. They make demands of Him, but become angry when He doesn't answer in the way that they want. Likewise, people often find themselves in trouble because of the poor decisions that they make themselves, but they blame God and become upset with Him unjustly.

In what ways do people treat God irreverently rather than making Him King in their lives?

Question
3

Hosea 10:4-8

WICKEDNESS LEADS TO BROKEN COVENANTS:

Not only do the people experience inner turmoil and conflict with the Lord, but they also break their covenants. Hosea points out that **they have spoken words**, but did not keep their **covenant** with the Lord (v. 4). In other words, they have lied and sworn **falsely**; they have taken false oaths in God's name and reneged on their promises. Thus, they regularly break their promises and fail to fulfill their commitments. Their lies, then, form a dangerous cocktail of poison just like a wild **hemlock** plant that grows in **the field**. Breaking their **covenant** with the Lord, therefore, only leads to **judgment** and



A Poisonous Hemlock Plant

ultimately death because they have continually gone back on their word.

Many people routinely attribute their own actions and choices to the Lord as a way to justify their sin and mistakes. Because God has given us Scripture by which to live, we have a perfect standard by which we can test our own words, actions, attitudes, and perspectives. If what we attribute to the Lord doesn't match His character and spoken word in Scripture, then it clearly did not originate with Him! For example, some people will argue that God *told* them to do a specific task or that they could live a certain way, but it doesn't square with Scripture at all. That action then becomes sin because they have spoken **falsely** about the Lord. We also see this concept prominently featured in the book of Job when God chastises Job's friends because they did not speak right of Him; in other words, they mischaracterized God in Job's particular situation without truly seeking His response ([Job 42:7](#)).

In the same vein, when we swear by the name of the Lord and don't fulfill our commitments to Him, then we have also lied! This could be as simple as bargaining with God like Steve Workman whom we met in July when he promised to attend church if God would give him a girlfriend; in the end, he never attended church and broke his promise. Unfortunately, many people treat God in this same manner when they say, "I'll do X if You will do Y for me." We shouldn't try to manipulate the Lord by misusing His name to swear false oaths only to break them! On the contrary, we must honor His name by keeping our commitments and speaking what is right about Him.

How do we misuse God's name when we don't keep our promises—even if we don't literally swear an oath to Him?

Question
4

The primary infraction of the covenant occurs with the false worship of a golden calf in the city of **Beth Aven**. Literally, **Beth Aven** means "house of wickedness" because it was the center for this cultic worship. Verse 5 states that **the inhabitants of Samaria fear because of the calf**. In this context, **fear** doesn't mean "afraid," but rather "reverence"; the people worship this **calf**! We see a similar use of the word **fear** when Scripture tells us to "fear the Lord"—that is to offer Him respect and reverence through worship. Because their worship is misdirected, however, it soon turns to sadness because **the idol will be carried to Assyria** as a trophy for the conquering **king** (v. 6). Therefore, **the people will mourn** and **the priests shriek** because its presence **has**

departed from them (v. 5).

They had placed all their hope and trust in this false **idol** and now that it was gone they had nowhere else to turn. We have a modern expression that bids us not to

put all our eggs into one basket with the implication that we will have nothing left if something bad happens. For us, we need to modify the phrase: Don't put all your eggs into one earthly basket, but instead put all your trust and hope in the Lord who never fails! When we put our hope in earthly or human things, we trust what we can do. This is where Israel



failed. Rather than rely solely upon the Lord, they turned to other manmade gods and images. Because they trusted these things implicitly, they had no hope when they ultimately failed. They had wrongly thought these false idols had provided for them and protected them, but they didn't realize that it was God all along.

In what do people place their hope today?
What happens when these things / people fail?

Question
5

Instead of **the idol** bringing the people happiness and prosperity, it will **bring** them **shame** (v. 6). Israel will **be ashamed** that they followed their own desires and participated in this ungodly worship. Rather than listening to the true prophets who spoke on God's behalf, they listened to their **own counsel** and what they desired to hear. They will **be ashamed** because they will realize that they were wrong and that they had erred by rejecting the Lord. They will now know the true source of their blessings came from the Lord and feel foolish about the choices they have made. Because they have broken their covenant with the Lord, they will face total destruction. First, God will allow their **king** to be **cut off** (v. 7). There's nothing he can do to prevent the loss of his reign and his kingdom. He is like a helpless **twig** floating down the river caught up in the current of the **water**. Second, God will destroy all their idolatrous places of worship. He will destroy their **high places of Aven** where they built **altars** (v. 9). The destruction will be so great that they will abandon their **altars** and **thorn and**

Instruct

thistle will grow on them. The people will become so devastated and distraught that they will clamor for death because everything they had ever known was upended and destroyed. They will cry for the **mountains** and **hills to fall on** them.

In what way(s) can we as a community offer hurting and desperate people hope?

Question
6

Hosea 10:9-12

WICKEDNESS NEEDS CORRECTION:

In addition to the utter despair that one's sinful choices bring, they also bring correction and judgment. Once again, Hosea compares the current citizens of Israel to **the days** when they **sinned** in **Gibeah** (v. 9, see also [Hosea 5:8 and 9:9](#)). The assault of a Levite's

Let love be without
HYPOCRISY.

ABHOR WHAT IS EVIL.

cling to what is
GOOD.

ROMANS 12:9

mistress who was left for dead spurred retaliation and a civil war that nearly annihilated the entire tribe of Benjamin toward the end of the book of Judges. The people participated in every form of immorality and violence; instead of waiting on the Lord, they took matters into their own hands because they had supreme confidence in their own judgment.

Therefore, Hosea implies that **they stood** alone. They would have destroyed themselves as a nation if it hadn't been for the gracious intervention of the Lord. To emphasize this point, Hosea asks, "**Did not the battle against the children of iniquity overtake them in Gibeah?**" Sin had almost destroyed their whole nation because they had become consumed with ungodly rage and revenge.

What is the difference between vengeance and discipline? What is the proper way to enact discipline in the church? Why should we allow the Lord to exact vengeance?

Question
7

Certainly, wickedness needs correction, but it must be done in the right way with the

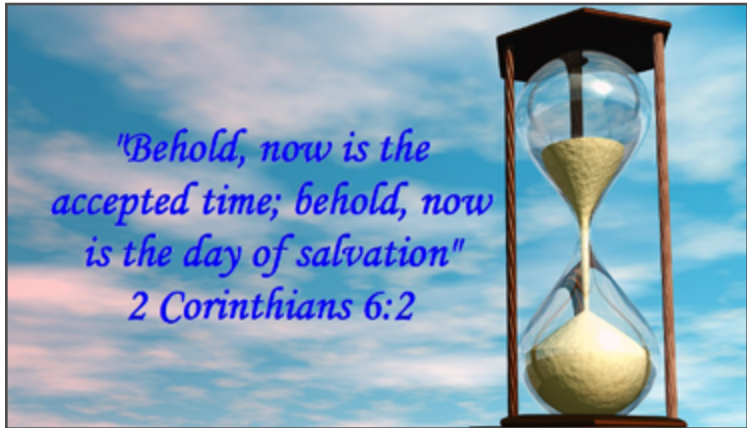
right motives—not in a state of anger, bitterness, and vengeance from a mere human perspective. Ultimately, God is the One who performs corrective acts at the right time according to His sovereign plan. Hence, Hosea reminds the people that God **will chasten them when it is His desire** (v. 10). God always seeks to grant people the opportunity to repent and be restored, so He exercises great patience before sentencing them based on their deeds and choices. For a while, it may seem that evil has triumphed, but this merely shows God’s love in giving a wayward people time to respond with repentance! In the end, however, judgment and correction will come upon all those who have continually rejected His loving offer to be restored through His Son.

Why is God’s patience with us one of His greatest forms of love? On the other hand, how do some abuse God’s patience?

Question
8

After explaining God’s prerogative to correct the people, Hosea outlines what will happen if they fail to respond to His offer of restoration. God will allow their enemies to **be gathered against them** as punishment for **their two transgressions**. Hosea doesn’t specify what these two transgressions are, but broadly we know that they have lived unfaithfully by breaking their covenant with the Lord and engaging in false worship. God will punish the nation for their sin by allowing their enemies, particularly Assyria, to defeat them and carry them into captivity. Referring back to the poisonous, invasive vine that Israel had become (see [verse 1](#)), Hosea points out how much Israel loved participating in their sin. He calls them a **trained heifer** which **loves to thresh grain**—that is to receive prosperity from their own wicked work (v. 11). Yet, God will punish them by sending a nation against them which He will allow to harness **her fair neck**. Thus, both **Ephraim** and **Judah** will pay the penalty for their wickedness by pulling **a plow** to **break their clods**—that is they will be taken into exile.

Once again, the Lord mercifully calls the people to salvation before He enacts judgment. He commands them to **sow righteousness** rather than wickedness, so that they might **reap mercy** (v. 12). They must **break up** their **fallow ground** which only breeds wickedness and turn to the Lord. Therefore, Hosea urges them



*"Behold, now is the
accepted time; behold, now
is the day of salvation"
2 Corinthians 6:2*

Instruct

to seek the Lord because now is the time. Don't wait until it's too late; turn to the Lord now and experience the **righteousness** that He will give you. God gives us ample chances to respond, but many people unwisely delay their response for many reasons. Perhaps, they always think that they have tomorrow or that they may enjoy their life too much to turn to the Lord and serve Him right now. This mentality, however, is fraught with all kinds of danger. Today, at this moment, is the day that we must respond to the Lord when He calls!

How would you explain the urgency of responding to the Lord at this moment (i.e. right now) to someone in our culture?

Question
9

Hosea 10:13-15

WICKEDNESS LEADS TO CORRUPTION:

Although God has given them the chance to repent and reap a harvest of righteousness, the people continue to produce only corruption. Hosea laments that



they **have plowed wickedness** and **reaped iniquity** (v. 13). They have consumed **the fruit of lies** which has told them that they can trust in their own power and follow their own desires; if they do, everything will turn out just fine. Thus, Hosea points out that **they**

have trusted in their **own way**. The people had **trusted** in their own government and military power (i.e. **mighty men**), but they didn't trust in the Lord from whom their strength truly came.

Because they **trusted** in their own strength, they would experience a great defeat at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 BC. Their **fortresses** would **be plundered** just as during **the battle** in which **Shalman** (probably Shalmaneser in [2 Kings 17-18](#)) **plundered Beth Arbel** (v. 14). In a starkly brutal image, Hosea says that **a mother**

would **be dashed** into **pieces** upon her **children**. Based on historical accounts, the Assyrians were known for such brutal and barbaric tactics. They abused and tortured the citizens of the nations whom they captured; Israel would not be spared because they continued in their corruption. Consequently, Hosea informs them that this **shall be done to** them **because of** their **great wickedness** (v. 15). As quickly as Israel's leadership and nation had become corrupt, so they will fall and **be utterly cut off**.

We cannot participate in evil and expect to receive goodness and righteousness. Just as when we plant a tomato vine, we will reap tomatoes; squash will produce squash and so on. When we sow corruption in the deeds of the flesh, we will reap corruption and destruction. Punishment may not occur immediately because God will give us a chance to repent and receive restoration, but in the end unrepentant corruption will lead to destruction. On the other hand, to have a relationship with the Lord means that we surrender to Him and allow Him to produce righteousness through our lives. We bear His fruit! We no longer live for ourselves, we no longer trust in our own strength or wisdom, and we no longer seek to follow our own futile desires. We want to please Him by living in His righteousness, so that we can represent Him and bring Him honor and glory!

How does the Lord help us to produce righteousness in our lives?

Question
10

As believers, we have the responsibility to live righteously by exercising integrity and honoring our commitments. Even if we break one commitment by acting deceitfully, it brings dishonor and shame upon us. In addition, it reflects badly upon our heavenly Father because people tend to attribute our actions to Him. Therefore, when we break a covenant and live in corruption, it ruins our testimony and can cause others to blaspheme the Lord based on our wicked actions. For this reason, we need to be careful how we act, so that we represent the Lord in a positive light and point people to Him rather than driving them away.

In the introduction, we met the salesman Jonathan R. Shady who engaged in a bait and switch scheme while selling vacuum cleaners. If he returned to the same household to which he had sold the Hooper instead of the name-brand vacuum, no matter how persuasive he may think he is they won't listen to his sales pitch and they surely won't buy any other product from him! In fact, if any other legitimate salesman came, they probably wouldn't trust them either because they had been so badly swindled. As a result, Jonathan R. Shady has given all salesmen a bad name because he behaved deceitfully. Unfortunately, it works the same way with believers. Those who sow wickedness and corruption bring a bad name to Christ and all His followers! People who see so-called Christians living in sin and celebrating corruption are driven away from Christ because they begin to believe that the transformation that He says He offers is just a hoax. Therefore, we as believers must make sure that we reside in righteousness, so that we can reap mercy and point people unto Christ.

Incorporate

How has Christ changed you from an unproductive, selfish vine headed for destruction to a righteous person who produces good fruit?

How can we sow righteousness as believers? When we sow righteousness, how does it affect the secular community around us?

What happens when corruption infiltrates the church? How should we deal with corruption if it does enter the church?

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FOR MORE INFORMATION
OR FOR QUESTIONS
PLEASE CONTACT
MIKENEAL@FBCFW.ORG

INTERACTIVE PDF AVAILABLE ONLINE AT
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5001 NE LOOP 820 • FORT WORTH, TX • 76137
(817) 485-7711 • INFO@FBCFW.ORG