

DONALD J. WILLS  
SENIOR PASTOR

JULY  
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,

Often times with the busyness of life and things that attract our attention, we can lose focus on what is important. Many times in these moments relationships, quality of work, investing in our children, and other significant areas of our life suffers. The most important issue at hand is our spiritual walk with the Lord and how distracted we can become which affects all these other areas in a major way. The writer of Hebrews reminds where our focus should be in Hebrews 12:2 where he writes, "Looking unto Jesus." As we look at Hosea, we find that these things that vie for our attention are not anything new.

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.

Now as we turn our attention to this study, may it help each of us refocus or simply stay focused on what is vitally important on our journey. Keep looking to Jesus!

-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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*July 7, 2019*



*The Need for  
the Right Plan  
Hosea 4:12-19*

Focal Verse:

"My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God."

Hosea 4:12

## Introduce

One Saturday morning on which she intended to sleep late, Ima Shocked awoke early and laid in bed staring at the ceiling, desperately hoping to fall back to sleep. Yet, nothing worked, so she decided to get out of bed and make some coffee. As she approached the kitchen, she began to smell something burning and then noticed a thin trail of white smoke coming from the door. Getting closer, she noticed a white, powdery substance on the floor along with several types of liquids oozing down the slope of the floor toward the dining room. One looked like milk, another like water, and still another like orange juice, but she couldn't really tell because they had all begun to run together.

As she broke the threshold of the door, she saw her son and daughter covered in flour, standing amongst broken egg shells with the yokes dripping from the counter. Although Ima Shocked so desperately wanted to be angry, she couldn't because her two children wanted to surprise her by making breakfast for her in bed. Ima began surveying the meal; the children at least had a plan—even though it definitely wasn't the *right plan*! The



scrambled eggs didn't have their normal yellow color, but one of deep brown from the chocolate syrup which had been mixed along with white spots which turned out to be marshmallows. A trail of smoke wafted from the toaster where the children thought it would be quicker to butter the toast before toasting it—that way they wouldn't have to do it later! Opening the microwave, Ima found what remained of link sausages splattered on the glass, the sides, and the top; although very little remained, the children at least tried to scrape some of it out and put it on the plate for their mother. Knowing how much she would have to clean, she didn't want to think about it anymore, but nonetheless she was grateful for her children. The only lament she had is that she hadn't taught them more about cooking and that they didn't have the *right plan* to succeed. During Hosea's time, Israel didn't have the right plan either because they turned to "wooden idols" and false gods, being unfaithful to the Lord. With this

## Introduce

plan based on foolishness, Israel had no future except that which would only lead to failure and destruction. In life, only one plan leads to success and that is salvation through Christ Jesus by grace through faith in which we are transformed to serve Him in righteousness. We may do our best and have a plan which seems to work for us, but in the end it only leads to failure and we will have no future apart from eternal destruction and separation from the One who created us. Therefore, our prayer as a community is that you follow the right plan which God has clearly outlined in Scripture so that you might have life everlasting in Him.

Key  
Question

According to Scripture, how can we ensure that we have a successful life?



### Hosea 4:12-13

#### ***A PLAN BASED ON FOOLISHNESS:***

Foolishness biblically defined means that people have denied the existence of the Lord and rejected His offer to have a relationship with Him; instead, they continue to live immorally and wickedly. Technically, Israel didn't deny God's existence, but they broke their covenant with Him and lived in rebellion and disobedience. Thus, a plan based on foolishness always omits the Lord, never seeks knowledge and wisdom from Him, and always engages in "corrupt" and "abominable works" ([Psalm 14:1](#)). When we leave God out of our lives, we set ourselves up for failure and we truly have no future apart from Him. As followers of Christ, we definitely don't deny God exists, but many times we love as though He doesn't. We don't consult with Him before we make decisions; we live inconsistently as though He cannot discern our motives, know our thoughts, and see our actions which we try to do in secrecy. Moreover, we don't give Him priority in our lives; we only worship and serve Him when it fits our schedule. Functionally, we exclude Him from our lives until things become so bad that we have nowhere else to turn. That is the epitome of a foolish plan. We cannot live according to our own strength and power and expect success!

In what way(s) have you foolishly left God out of your life at times?

Question  
# 1

In verse 12, Hosea highlights the problem with Israel's plan. The people seek wisdom from inanimate objects which cannot see, hear, or speak; yet, they foolishly follow them as though they can respond to their requests and make provision for their needs. Instead of turning to the Lord who can, the **people sought counsel from wooden idols and their staff**. At this time, pagans commonly constructed their household idols from wood and used sticks (i.e. **staff**) in the way in which some would use dice to determine their fate. Just as one might ask a question and then roll dice determine the answer, the secular culture used sticks for this purpose. In more modern terms, many of us may recall the toy called the "magic eight ball"; we would hold it in our hand, ask a question, shake it, and receive an "answer." No one with a sane, logical mind would place any value upon the answers from this device, but unfortunately people often turn to similar sources for understanding and wisdom rather than the Lord. During

## Instruct

Hosea's time, Israel adopted these odious methods to seek **counsel** rather than seeking **counsel** from the Lord!

God makes His will clearly known to us in an orderly and systematic way through Scripture; it's not guesswork or chance! When we read the entire **counsel** of God's



Word, pray, and allow the Spirit to guide our understanding and application, we can know in what direction that we should proceed with clarity. God will always speak to us with logic and reason—for He created us that way! Several years ago, I attended a family coaching seminar. They gave us The Good News for Modern Man version of the Bible to use to apply their

technique for counseling hurting and distressed people. They instructed us to throw open the Bible randomly, plop our finger on the page, and read the first verse to which we came. The instructors assured us that this technique would reveal exactly what we needed to hear and what God wanted to speak to us. My finger landed on Isaiah 24:16! It says in the Good News translation, "From the most distant parts of the world we will hear songs in praise of Israel, the righteous nation. But there is no hope for me! I am wasting away! Traitors continue to betray, and their treachery grows worse and worse." Specifically, the first statement that I saw was "there is no hope for me!"

Knowing that I must read the entire context to understand the verse, I took several minutes and still hadn't written anything. One of the instructors approached and asked what I was doing, so I explained the flaw in their method. To which she responded, "You're doing it wrong." However, I had followed their "method" exactly and knew it was neither right nor practical. Imagine if I had truly been depressed, broken, or hurting and used this method and read that verse only. It could have caused great harm and led to more serious problems! It could have left me feeling even more hopeless, helpless, and distressed! When we seek the will of the Lord, we can't rely on chance or fate like Israel did in Hosea; we must rely upon the knowledge and understanding that He has clearly given us in Scripture. God doesn't hide His will from us, but He has

spoken plainly. He will never lead us astray; He will never confound and confuse us with His instructions. He will always speak precisely, concisely, and clearly so that we can follow Him, make the right decisions, and mature in His Word.

Why is it both dangerous and foolish to fail reading the complete context of Scripture? How would reading the complete context of Scripture help us to know God's will and make the right choices?

Question  
# 2

At this time, Israel had gone astray by seeking **counsel** from these **idols** which caused them to become unfaithful. In fact, Hosea points out that this spirit of **harlotry caused them to stray** because **they have played harlot against** the Lord. What made Israel's sin so grievous is that they continued to worship the Lord through ritual, but they mixed it with other religions, beliefs, and practices—abandoning their relationship and allegiance to the Lord. Therefore, Hosea chastises them for offering **sacrifices on the mountaintops** and **incense on the hills** as well as **under oaks, poplars, and**

**terabinths** (trees) **because their shade is good** (v. 13). When entering the Promised Land, God had commanded Israel to “destroy” all the places where foreign gods were worshiped—“on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree” ([Deut 12:2](#)); however, the people ultimately disobeyed and failed to destroy these altars, so as time passed they



negatively influenced their relationship with the Lord. These outlawed altars to foreign gods as well as unauthorized altars to the Lord inundated their land and led all the people astray. This high concentration of altars, consequently, shows how widespread their false worship had become and how thoroughly they had become secularized by mixing and mingling with the foreign cultures around them.

We live in a culture today which shares this same problem. People treat theology and the interpretation of God's Word like a buffet; they pick and choose what they believe based upon what they like or what best suits their personal opinion and outlook or by

how they feel rather than what God actually *says*. As people go down this figurative buffet line of man's opinion whether on the Internet, through mediums like television or books, or by hearing ideas in person, they simply pass over the things they don't like and pile up the things which look good to them regardless of what the full biblical context on the topic may say. It's not up to us to choose what we like or don't like; we *must* follow what Scripture states authoritatively on the matter! Moreover, we must understand the *entire* context of Scripture—historically, grammatically, and literarily—and allow the Spirit to help us right apply these timeless principles which God has clearly given us to live. Taking verses out of context and misapplying them has become commonplace today, especially with the ease of which we have access to information and the little people know about the biblical context. However, we must study God's Word diligently and apply it correctly in our lives. We cannot mix it with man's opinion based upon faulty interpretation!

In what way(s) have some in the church mixed man's opinion, personal belief, and faulty interpretation with the true worship of the Lord? How can we guard against this syncretism (mixing of beliefs) as a church?

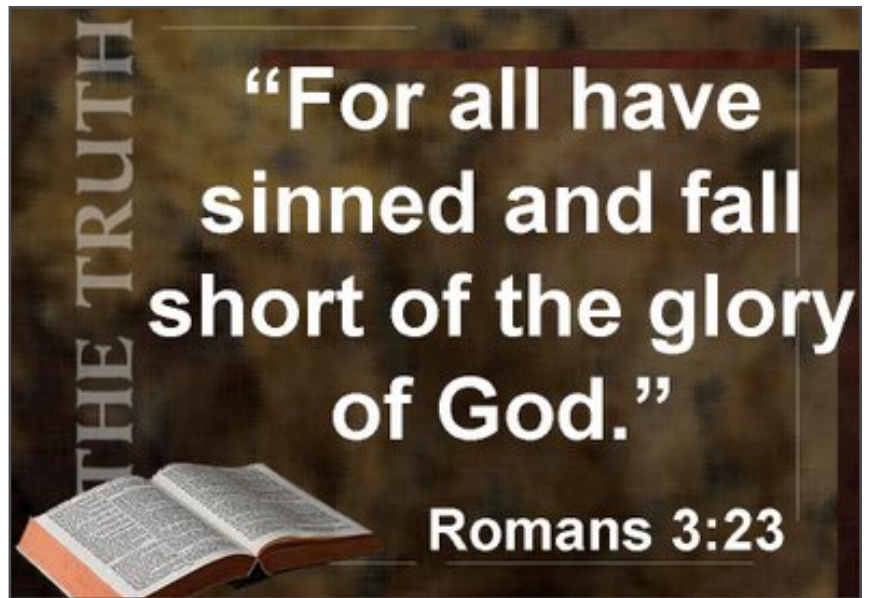
Question  
# 3

When we mix secular ideas and wrong interpretation with what the Lord *actually* declares, it always leads us to a diluting of the truth and unfaithfulness. Because Israel worshiped the Lord ritualistically along with these other false gods, Hosea reveals how it caused their **daughters** to **commit harlotry** and their **brides** to **commit adultery**. Speaking figuratively, Hosea details how mixing these secular ideas and practices together caused the people to become unfaithful in every way. Not only were they unfaithful to the Lord and had broken His covenant with them, but they also lived openly in sin. They mimicked the secular culture! They did what was right in their own eyes. They did what felt good to them. Rather than live with integrity and behave honorably, the people boasted and celebrated their sin. They didn't care about the consequences nor did they care about how their actions reflected upon the Lord who wanted a relationship with them! They simply lived selfishly in the way which they thought most benefitted them. This sounds so much like our own culture!



**A PLAN WITH NO FUTURE:**

Apart from having an intimate and exclusive relationship with the Lord, no plan will lead to a successful future; it will only lead to punishment, destruction, and ultimately separation. Based on God's Word, we know with absolute certainty that God **will punish** unrepentant sin. In verse 14, Hosea demonstrates how their sinfulness as a nation will lead to their collective punishment because they all have participated and all have acted unfaithfully toward the Lord. Based on the entire context of this passage which lays out the charges for Israel's punishment as a nation and the original Hebrew sentence structure, it best captures the idea when we regard this as a rhetorical question. Therefore, Hosea rhetorically asks, "**Will I [the Lord] not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry and your brides when they commit adultery and your men when they separate themselves with prostitutes and offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot?**" When the people heard this read aloud, they would have recognized this as a question based on the inflection at the end of the sentence. In other words, the voice of the reader would rise at the end of the sentence to indicate that he was posing a question—much like we do today when speaking rather than writing. God isn't saying here that He **will punish** one group and not the other, but rather He is declaring that all Israel will be punished because they all have sinned and turned from Him. Just as Paul exclaims in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Hosea underscores that everyone in the entire nation has willfully chosen to participate in sin against the Lord and they will all face punishment unless they repent and turn from their wicked ways.



For eight years, I served as an adjunct professor at The College at Southwestern, teaching everything from New Testament courses to English. Most of my courses dealt with teaching students to write research papers. Many students had a hard time grasping how to write clearly, coherently, and concisely because they lacked a plan and

their papers had no direction because they didn't have a thesis (purpose) statement to follow and keep them on track. Without a thesis statement, their papers had no "future" in which they could draw a coherent conclusion about the topic because they would ramble aimlessly without purpose. They filled their papers with random thoughts which were disconnected and hard to follow. They also had superfluous and unnecessary information which made the paper difficult to read as if they had simply written whatever came to mind at that moment (which they probably did).

Without a purposeful plan in life which comes from the Lord, we too will wander aimlessly without direction. We will tend to experiment in an attempt to find what pleases and satisfies us in order to find so-called happiness. We will try everything the world has to offer regardless of the consequences and we will mix beliefs until we find something that we think works for us. However, in the conclusion of our life's story, apart from God we have no future; we have no hope. In life, therefore, what should our thesis (purpose) statement be? Our purpose ought to be found in Christ by having a relationship with Him, whereby we serve Him and mature in our walk by imitating Him and following the boundaries that He has given us. We see so much dysfunction and heartache in the world because people have no direction or purpose; they live a sinful life apart from Christ which only leads to emptiness because they refuse to seek God's wisdom.

In what ways do we see a lack of purpose and direction in life amongst the secular world?

Question  
# 4

As a consequence of their sin, Hosea announces that the **people who do not understand will be trampled**. This declaration alludes to [Hosea 4:6](#) where God proclaimed His people would be "destroyed for lack of knowledge"—which we learned meant that the people didn't have an intimate relationship with Him and know Him as their God. As a result of Israel's unfaithfulness (i.e. they **play the harlot**), God will not accept their worship because they only go through the motions and rituals; they do not truly worship Him with a pure and transformed heart (v. 15). Instead, they pollute their worship of the Lord by mixing it with their service and devotion to false gods of the nations around them. Therefore, God tells them **not to come up to Gilgal or Beth-Aven and swear an oath to Him as He lives**. God rejects our worship when we make Him One among many other idols; He alone deserves our full devotion and attention.

When we pray and lift our hands in worship, but live sinfully and dishonor God's name, He will not hear our prayers or accept our worship! Instead, He wants us to worship in purity and holiness rather than simply go through rituals mindlessly (see [Isa 1:11-18](#)).

Although there is nothing wrong with tradition or developing good habits, God doesn't want us to worship Him mindlessly. He wants us wholly engaged in worship! To be engaged in worship means that we surrender to His will, know His Word, and walk in the way of the Spirit

([Gal 5:22-23](#)). Genuine worship isn't a weekly or bi-weekly activity which we attend, but it's a lifestyle and complete transformation in which we serve the Lord willingly! We don't *come* to worship; we *live worship* out in our daily lives! Too many times, we treat "church" like a movie. We come, we watch, and we leave when it's finished without ever participating or seeing significant life-change which impacts our lives and causes us to act. What movie has ever *really* changed our lives? We may be emotionally affected by the acting, become engrossed in the plot, and may even talk about it with others, but these feelings and this excitement come and go. Worship isn't a feeling; it's a state of being—a lifestyle. It's who we have become in Christ! We shouldn't mix our worship and devotion to the Lord with other activities, other practices, and even other religions, but we must serve Him alone and walk with Him daily, allowing Him to lead us to a brighter future under His control and in His care!



In what ways should true worship of the Lord influence our lives?

Question  
# 5

## ***Hosea 4:16-19***

### ***A PLAN THAT LEADS TO FAILURE:***

In the concluding verses, Hosea explains why their plan failed. He compares **Israel** to a **stubborn calf** and a **lamb** left to **forage** and fend for itself **in open country** (v. 16). Israel failed because they developed a self-centered plan that omitted the Lord.



## Instruct

In their stubbornness, they wanted to get their way at any cost and didn't follow the most-perfect way that the Lord had outlined for them. In essence, therefore, the Lord abandoned them to their own lusts and desires. The image of the **lamb** is negative in



this case. They have no "Shepherd" because they have rejected Him. Therefore, God lets them wander aimlessly in the wilderness. He no longer protects them or provides for them. They are on their own! A plan based on our own wisdom, strength, and ability may seem to work for a time, but in the end it will only lead to failure. We need to follow the Shepherd who loves us

and wants a relationship with us. He will protect us; He will provide for us; He will guide us through both good and bad times. Let us, therefore, base our plan upon His Word and submit to the leadership of His Spirit whom He sent to dwell in our hearts when we began our relationship with Him.

What does success look like from God's perspective? To have a successful life according to God's perspective, what does He require of us?

Question  
# 6

Next, Hosea lists the charges against the people. He points out that **Ephraim** (another name for Israel's Northern Kingdom) has **joined himself to idols** (v. 17). Once again, God abandons them to their own destructive choices when He cries, "**Let him alone.**" God loves us and wants a relationship with us, but He will not force us to worship Him and accept the free gift of grace His Son offered on the cross. Even in His sovereignty, God allows us to make our own choices—even if that means destructive choices based on a plan that will fail. Furthermore, Hosea notes that the people **drink rebellion**; he also shows how they **continually** act in unfaithfulness (i.e. **commit harlotry**) and how their **rulers** cherish **dishonor** (v. 18). Everyone in the nation stands guilty before the Lord because they have joined themselves with this secular, sinful way of living. They are disobedient children who throw tantrums when they don't get their way and they rebel



against the Lord's commands. They have corrupt earthly leadership which drives them further from the Lord through their despicable acts.

Moreover, the **wind** has swept Israel away **in her wings** and the nation has been caught in shameful situations because they have dishonored the Lord in their **sacrifices** or worship (v. 19). The reference to **wind** here can be equated with the modern concept of peer pressure. We often hear a similar expression today when someone succumbs to temptation and follows the crowd; we say that they got "caught up" in a certain situation or idea. In other words, they went along with the crowd. During this period, it was difficult to distinguish an Israelite from the secular nations living in Canaan. The people acted no different and lived just as corruptly and lawlessly as they!

In what ways do we see some "believers" getting caught up in secular ideas promoted by the culture? How can we combat that in the church?

Question  
# 7

In conclusion, we need to have the right plan to avoid foolish mistakes, to have a promising future, and to prevent failure. Any plan that does not include Jesus Christ at the center is pure folly and will always end in failure. So how do we have a plan that leads to success? First, we must *know* Christ; we must have a personal relationship with Him. A relationship doesn't happen because we've memorized Scripture, attend church semi-regularly, pray once and a while, or even because we've been baptized. To *know* Christ means that we have confessed and repented of our sin and surrendered our lives wholly to Him. Second, a successful plan requires submission to the Lord's will and a commitment to Him through which we spend time daily seeking Him and maturing in our faith. We must rid ourselves of the distractions and influences of the world and focus on Christ. We can't do this if we don't have a daily quiet time and only depend upon once-a-week meetings at church for instruction. We must walk with Him daily, we must spend time in His Word, and we must spend time worshiping Him authentically through our service and our way of life! Let us, therefore, be a community that has a plan that depends upon the Lord and will succeed according to His standards and perspective.

In the introduction, we met Ima Shocked and her children. Although her children desperately wanted to please and surprise her by cooking breakfast, they had the wrong plan. They mixed a bunch of random ingredients together, making the meal inedible. Many people who call themselves Christians act the same way; they don't know the true plan which pleases the Lord. They mix a bunch of ingredients together randomly, creating a destructive cocktail of poison. They take a little truth from God's Word here and there, add a dash of personal opinion, throw in a pinch of secular ideas, mix in a few other religions together, and bake with a little "worship" on Sunday which has no life-changing power.

The problem when we have no effective plan is that we simply worship the Lord in the way that we see fit. We don't acknowledge Him as the One true and living God, but we worship Him among many other beliefs and practices; we don't exhibit any life-change because we have tried to dictate the terms of our service; we try to create a suitable "religion" for ourselves. We must remember, however, that we don't dictate the terms of our service and worship; He has already clearly outlined them in Scripture. God wants our obedience, our fellowship, our complete surrender, and our complete devotion; more than anything He wants a relationship with us that creates a clean heart within us and transforms the way that we live so that we may glorify Him in every way. We can have this relationship only through the sacrifice that Christ has already made and which He offers to us as a gracious gift! Therefore, let us seek to know the Lord, follow His plan, and do His will collectively as a community whom He has called.

## ***Incorporate***

Why do so many plans, even among believers, fail? How would you describe a successful plan to someone according to God's standards?

What is required for us to have a successful plan as a community? What plan and purpose has God given us as FBCFW?

Why is it important to have correct theology based upon what Scripture says rather than what people say? In what ways have some in the church become influenced by what the culture says? How can we as a church safeguard the correct interpretation of Scripture?

July 14, 2019



*The Need for  
the Right Perspective*  
Hosea 5:1-15

Focal Verse:

"Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked by human precept."

Hosea 5:11

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## Introduce

Since high school, Steve Workman had aspirations of starting his own architectural firm which would make him independently wealthy. To achieve his goal, he knew it would require dedication, commitment, and sacrifice. Yet, Steve didn't fully realize the price that he would pay until years later when he looked back on the choices that he had made. Although he studied diligently in college, graduated with honors, and procured a prestigious internship at an internationally renowned company, he found little time for God or anyone else in his life for that matter. He had shut everyone out from his life and had



few, if any, meaningful relationships. Lonely, Steve only found a minute or two to pray to the Lord which usually involved a request for a better, higher-paying position and he would always bargain with the Lord that if He saw fit to give him a girlfriend, then he would attend church. God graciously granted his request for a girlfriend whom he would eventually marry, but he still never really spent meaningful time with her and he eventually broke his promise to the Lord about attending church.

Steve's marriage understandably got off to a rocky start because he spent long hours—including many weekends—working on projects. He rarely saw his wife, he never celebrated special days like her birthday and their anniversary, and he always obsessed over every dime of their finances because no matter how much money they made it was never enough! After the couple miraculously found time to have children, this same pattern continued. Steve almost never saw his family as they grew; he was always too busy! He never celebrated any of their birthdays, watched any of the band performances or sporting events, or even attended their graduations. He focused on work and earning the big bucks; he thought that he had provided his family with everything they needed materially.

As his hair grayed and thinned and retirement approached, Steve looked back on his life and began to notice how much he had actually missed because he had the wrong perspective. Certainly, we should set attainable goals and work hard to provide for

## Introduce

our families, but life is more than money and overtime! Looking at how his children related to their children and how happy and content they were living a modest life with many conveniences, he realized that their contentment came most from the meaningful relationships that they had with one another—which He had missed out with them. When we have a human perspective, selfishness tends to abound and people, possessions, and experiences become more important than a relationship with the Lord. However, let us not look back on our life with regret, but let us have the right perspective in which we place the Lord in the rightful position of priority that He deserves. Let us seek to worship, serve, and follow Him and not miss opportunities to spend meaningful time with our Lord and Savior.

Key  
Question

What type of perspective does Scripture call us to have as believers?

## Hosea 5:1-4

### *THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PERVERSE:*

With three succinct commands to **hear**, **take heed**, and **give ear**, Hosea wants the **priests** and government leaders of Israel to pay attention and take to heart the message God is giving them (v. 1). Like a coach who shouts, “Listen up!” or a parent who says, “Look at me when I’m speaking to you,” Hosea desires the people not only to hear the message physically and understand it cognitively, but also to respond by repenting and changing their behavior. In addition, this three-fold repetition of the command to **heed** the warning emphasizes the serious nature of the message in which the Lord announces their **judgment** because they have acted unjustly and become **a snare to Mizpah** and **a net spread on Tabor**.

All Israel’s leadership, both the **priests** and government officials, receive this **rebuke** from the Lord because they **are deeply involved in slaughter** (v. 2). Not only do they exploit the people and take advantage of them, but they also lead them down a path of destruction by driving them further from the Lord and pushing them to intermingle with other secular cultures. Hosea uses the city of **Mizpah** and the mountain named **Tabor** to show the scope of Israel’s depravity; the entire nation had become corrupt—even insignificant places such as these where not much of noteworthy consequence had happened. Because both cosmopolitan Israel and rural Israel acted sinfully, they brought upon themselves God’s curse succinctly stated in Deut 28:16: “Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country.” The entire land had brought these curses upon themselves for living in iniquity!



*Mount Tabor, Northern Israel*

Even though peer pressure may be great, why are people still responsible for their own actions?

Question  
# 1

## Instruct

Speaking figuratively, Hosea chastises the leaders for being **deeply involved in slaughter** (v. 2). In other words, they have engaged in corruption and depravity by using other people and taking advantage of them. People with a perverse perspective tend to use other people as pawns in order to get their way and provide benefits for themselves. Although they don't physically **slaughter** the other person in most cases, they abuse the relationship until it brings total destruction and ruination upon both individuals. In our culture, for instance, too many relationships are one-sided; people often look at what they receive. If they no longer feel they benefit from it, the relationship becomes disposable. They will abandon it and seek to find what they desire in another, repeating this destructive process indefinitely and leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. Just look at all the broken relationships in our world. We often hear a relationship referred to as "high maintenance." Friendships sometime selfishly end because one person perceives his needs aren't being met—in whatever way that may be. The same can happen in marriages and other relationships in the family if we don't truly invest in them with a godly perspective.

What steps do we need to take in order to maintain a godly perspective on relationships rather than a selfish one?

Question  
# 2

Even though we may think we have concealed our sin and gotten away with it, God knows everything! Therefore, the Lord announces, "**I know Ephraim**"—**Ephraim** is simply another name for the Northern Kingdom of Israel (v. 3). He then emphatically



declares that **Israel is not hidden from Him** and He has seen how they have committed **harlotry** and **defiled** themselves. The perverse may often perceive themselves as invincible because they can manipulate and deceive others. From time to time, we may be able to keep secrets and fool other people—even our closest friends and family—but God sees and



knows our hearts. We can hide nothing from Him! God knows if we cheat on our taxes; He knows if we plagiarize a paper or speech; He knows if we skip work early and falsify the time card; He knows if we overcharge people in our business; He knows if we act unfaithfully in marriage; He knows what we consume on the television and Internet. We may do these things secretly in our own homes out of the public eye; we may even take steps to cover our tracks and erase our history so-to-speak so that no one can find out what we have done. Yet, God knows! Put your name where Ephraim and Israel are: **"I know"** Mike; Mike **"is not hidden from Me."** How does that change your perspective?

In what ways can and should we remind ourselves that the Lord sees all that we do and even what we think?

Question  
# 3

In addition, Hosea acknowledges that the people **do not direct their deeds** and turn **toward their God**, but rather they commit **harlotry** and **do not know the Lord** (v. 4). The most-telling characteristic of a perverse perspective is the rejection **of the Lord** which leads people to live in depravity, making immoral and unholy choices. Without a relationship with the Lord, people may make good decisions from time to time and act morally according to the world's standards, but we're not judged by the world's imperfect standard. A "good" person in the eyes of the world may look "good" in comparison to a morally bankrupt and vile individual, but in comparison to Christ he still falls significantly short! Apart from Christ, all our decisions are selfish; we base our choices on what is most beneficial or profitable to us. Therefore, we **direct** our **deeds** to placate our desires rather than please the Lord! Our actions stem from what we want rather than what God wants. The materialistic people during Hosea's time function in this same way! They omitted the Lord from their lives in search of wealth, prosperity, and happiness according to their own desires; however, in the process, they actually destroyed themselves!

In what ways does the world direct their deeds in opposition to the Lord?

Question  
# 4

## ***Hosea 5:5-7***

### ***THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROUD:***

The perspective of the proud centers around their own self-sufficiency; in their arrogance, the proud wrongly believe that they don't need the Lord. They believe

that by their own hard work and ingenuity they have achieved their own success



*“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Proverbs 16:18*

independently of God. This is the epitome of a “self-made man.” Although the children of Israel had seen the Lord work in miraculous ways and had a historical record of how He benevolently blessed them during the times of the patriarchs through the monarchy of David, they still become distracted; they still lost focused and thought that other gods had done these things for them instead of the Lord!

Consequently, Hosea notes that

the **pride of Israel testifies to his face** and the children **stumble in their iniquity**—both **Israel** and **Judah** (v. 5). Israel can’t hide their arrogance; it’s displayed on their faces! Usually, we can identify an arrogant person quite easily—not just in their posture and demeanor, but in what they say. Proud people constantly talk about what they have accomplished, how hard they have worked, how intelligent they are, and how successful they have become—even despite their humble beginnings. Yet, they omit the Lord entirely!

Even though Israel has abandoned the Lord in favor of their own self-sufficiency and self-indulgence to chase after other gods and cultures, they still continue to go through the rituals of worship. Hosea notes that they still **bring their flocks and herds to seek the Lord** (v. 6). In other words, they bring these animals as offerings and sacrifices unto the Lord, but He doesn’t receive them; **they** won’t **find Him** when **they seek** Him because **He has withdrawn** His presence **from** among **them!** These sacrificial rituals had become meaningless because the people didn’t perform them out of love and obedience. Instead, they mindlessly participated in them rather than offering them with sincere repentance for their sin which would cause them to flee immorality and turn toward the Lord.

Today, some people attend church semi-regularly, they may even give money at times, they might have come forward for baptism, and perhaps they might even “confess”

their sins once and awhile, but they continue to live in sin without any conviction; they never truly repent and turn from their sins even though they have gone through these so-called outward acts of worship! Indeed, they have no relationship with Christ based on these things that they have “done.” Without a relationship with Christ and salvation found only in Him, these ritualistic acts truly have no meaning at all!

What does the Lord desire more than sacrifice?

Question  
# 5

Further, Hosea shows how they **have dealt treacherously with the Lord—they have begotten pagan children** (v. 7). As illegitimate (i.e. **pagan**) **children**, Israel no longer has a right to an inheritance (i.e. **heritage**) in the Lord. They have forfeited everything by following foreign deities! Consumed by their false worship (i.e. **new moon** festivals), Israel doesn’t even recognize their own peril; they’ve lost everything because of the foolish choices they have made. The Lord will no longer provide for them and He will also give away their inheritance of land by sending them to exile in Assyria. The point of this declaration isn’t that the children inherited the sin of their parents who passed it down to them through their genes, but that all Israel—every citizen—chose to engage **treacherously with the Lord** by sinning. Indeed, their parents did fail at their responsibility to each their children the way of the Lord (see [Deut 6:7-9](#)), but each child still had a choice of what path he would ultimately take. Our environment, our work setting, and our families and friends do have a great impact on how we live and what we believe, but we still choose to continue down that path—they don’t force us! We have no excuse and no one to blame except ourselves!

However, this does serve as a crucial reminder of the importance of teaching our children the wisdom found in Scripture. To have a successful life in this fallen world, children must have a strong foundation built upon Christ. As parents, we must provide the environment in which they can be pointed toward a relationship with Him! Therefore, we must consistently apply biblical principles in our own lives in front of them and



## Instruct

persistently teach them directly from God's Word—not basing our instruction on trial and error, pop-psychology, or personal opinion. When teaching them the right path, they are still responsible for making the right choices themselves—no matter how much we want to make the choices for them and guide them down the right path. Just like Israel, God has given us clear direction, shown us the right path to take, and even provided the way for us through Christ, but the choice remains ours. Israel chose to act **treacherously** and reject the Lord; let that not be the case for us!

How do one's environment and friends affect a person's thinking? If they influence us to have a perspective other than of Christ, what should we do?

Question  
# 6

## Hosea 5:8-11

### ***THE PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN PRECEPTS:***

Having a perspective predicated upon **human precept** causes a lapse in judgment and obscures the warning signs of the imminent danger we face. In an attempt to awake Israel from their slumber and warn them of this impending destruction, God summons them to pay attention and brace themselves against the coming of the enemy. To warn of an attack, a sentry from an elevated position would **blow a ram's horn or trumpet** to alert the people and call them to their defensive positions (v. 8). In this scenario, the enemy has actually surrounded Israel on all sides; they have no hope of escape! Therefore, the watchman cries **aloud** and even bids them to **look behind** them! The Lord Himself goes throughout the whole land (**Gibeah, Ramah, Beth Aven, and Benjamin**) to warn the people and call them to repentance, but they still refuse even in this moment of imminent danger!

Because they fail to heed the warning and persist in their sin, God outlines their fate. By rejecting the Lord, **Ephraim** will become **desolate on the day of the rebuke** (v. 9). When the Lord asserts that He will **make known what is sure among the tribe of Israel**, He is reassuring us that He speaks with certainty. In other words, this judgment and destruction is a foregone conclusion; it will absolutely happen because Israel has hardened their hearts and stubbornly refused to repent. Moreover, God will also pour out His **wrath** upon the government officials (i.e. **princes of Judah**) **like water** because in their corruption they have greedily attempted to move the tribal



boundaries (i.e. **landmark**) instituted by the Lord (v. 10). In other words, the leaders of the tribes engaged in territorial or property disputes. Today, this would amount to moving a fence several feet over onto your neighbor's property and claiming it as your own. In Deut 27:17, God warns, "Cursed is the one who moves his neighbor's landmark. And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'" Following **human precept** always leads to disastrous consequences because greed, pride, and arrogance fills our hearts and consumes our minds!



How does having a human perspective cloud our judgment at times and influence the choices we make?

Question  
# 7

According to Hosea, the root of the problem boils down to Ephraim's choice to walk **willingly by human precept** (v. 11). The people had become **oppressed** and **broken in judgment** because they followed their own desires; they got themselves into this mess because they trusted their own faculties! To illustrate the folly of **human precept** or wisdom, I recall hearing a story about a young man who lived in another state. Without any good male role models, he desperately longed for a father-like figure in his life. One day while at a store, a stranger struck up a conversation and befriended him. After buying the young man the apparel he wanted, he continued to "mentor" him and one day offered him the job of taking a suitcase to a particular town for which he would pay him well. Elated, he didn't ask any questions, but foolishly trusted the man who had filled this void in his life! The suitcase, however, turned out to be filled with money which he later learned came from the distribution of illegal drugs. He continued his relationship with this man who had connected with him; therefore, he became further entrenched in the distribution of drugs even though he knew the consequences if he were caught. The satisfaction of having such a "friendship" in his life along with the greed of making so much money became overwhelming and caused him to ignore the warning signs and shun the consequences! Eventually, he did suffer the consequences when federal authorities arrested him and convicted of criminal



## Instruct

acts. When we **walk** according to **human precept** like this young man, we will make uninformed and foolish decisions based on our desires rather than God's holiness. As believers, we must always seek God's wisdom first and allow Him to help us investigate situations and opportunities that arise in our lives wisely. Moreover, we must always recognize the consequences of our actions and seek to represent the Lord well in all that we do—not becoming embroiled in the immoral schemes of man which may seem logical and practical at times, but seeing things from the perspective of the Lord!

In what ways can we protect ourselves from succumbing to the folly of human wisdom?

Question  
# 8

## Hosea 5:12-15

### **THE FATE OF THE PROFANE:**

Finally, God details the fate of the profane—that is those who have rejected Him and chosen to follow their own path. The wicked will face destruction! God declares that He **will be like a moth to Ephraim** and **like rotteness to the house of Judah** (v. 12). Just as moths destroy clothing by eating the fabric and perishable goods like fruit rot over time, God will sentence the profane to destruction! Israel had become so entangled with secular culture that they didn't cry to the Lord when they needed



help. Instead, both **Ephraim** and **Judah** turned to **Assyria** and their great **king (Jareb)** for help when they saw their **sickness** and **wound** (v. 13). However, **Assyria** couldn't help them at all; they couldn't **cure** or **heal** them. Yet, it didn't even cross their mind to turn to the Lord! Israel had become like a hypochondriac who tries every other cure before going to the doctor to receive treatment

that actually works! In many ways, people still do the same today; rather than turn to the Lord, they try everything else and when all else fails they even blame God! We

must seek the Lord first and trust in Him alone lest our own foolish wisdom lead us to destruction.

To whom or what do people turn today for help rather than the Lord?

Question  
# 9

In verse 14, the Lord continues His rebuke of Israel by asserting that He **will be like a lion** to both **Ephraim** and **Judah**; He **will tear** them to pieces and **no one** can **rescue** them. Although God gives us numerous chance to repent and patiently extends His loving mercy, God's judgment is final when He speaks; **no one** can talk his way out of it. Unless we have a relationship with Jesus Christ when we stand before God in judgment we will certainly be sentenced to eternal death and destruction. Yet, with Christ, we have life—not because of what we have done, but because of what He has done for us! Because we don't know when our final breath will be, today is the day of salvation; today is the day we must repent and surrender to Christ.

For this reason, verse 15 ends on a positive note which anticipates the call of repentance offered in chapter 6. The Lord states that **He will return** to His **place** and wait until they **acknowledge** their sin and **seek** His **face**. When they realize the source of **their affliction** comes from their sin, **they will earnestly seek** the Lord. The whole purpose of God's punishment and even His abandonment of Israel was to cause them to realize the folly of their ways and return to Him before it is too late. We serve a God who desires a relationship with us. He wants us to demonstrate our love to Him through our obedience and worshipful service. God doesn't want some mindless ritual where we go through the motions; He wants an authentic relationship with us where we devote ourselves to Him. God doesn't want part of us that's left over from all our other activities; He wants every part of us! He wants us completely surrendered to Him alone!

According to Scripture, in what ways does God reveal Himself to us when we earnestly seek Him?

Question  
# 10

When we look at the society around us, we see a great need for people to have the right perspective. Primarily, our world has a selfish perspective that guides their thinking and influences their actions. Rather than evaluating a decision based upon right and wrong, they base their choice on what feels good and what most benefits them regardless of the consequences. Often, truth and reason are dismissed because they don't fit their plan and perspective. Sometimes, as in the case of Steve Workman, he had the wrong priorities and a skewed view of success according to human precept. In the end, all the "success" he had turned out to be hollow and worthless because he missed the truly important things in life.

As a community, we must base our perspective on God's wisdom and order our steps according to His precepts. This requires a conscious effort on our part as we evaluate our attitudes, actions, and thoughts against the Lord's standards. We can't skate through life oblivious to the pitfalls and dangers, simply going about our usual routine. We need to seek the Lord daily and hear His voice. When we err, we need to repent and return to Him rather than harden our hearts. Let us make a conscious effort as a community, therefore, to see other people and circumstances from the Lord's perspective and not get stuck in the rut of going along with the rest of the world that leads to a destructive lifestyle.

## ***Incorporate***

According to Scripture, what does it mean to have a Christ-like perspective? When we have a Christ-like perspective, how does it affect life in the community?

In what ways can we as a church supplement parents' teaching of their children in the home, realizing the primary responsibility for teaching still lies with parents?

In what ways have human precepts, understanding, and wisdom crept into the church? How can we as believers lovingly combat such thinking?



July 21, 2019

# Pursuing God



## *The Need for the Right Pursuit*

### Hosea 6:1-11

Focal Verse:

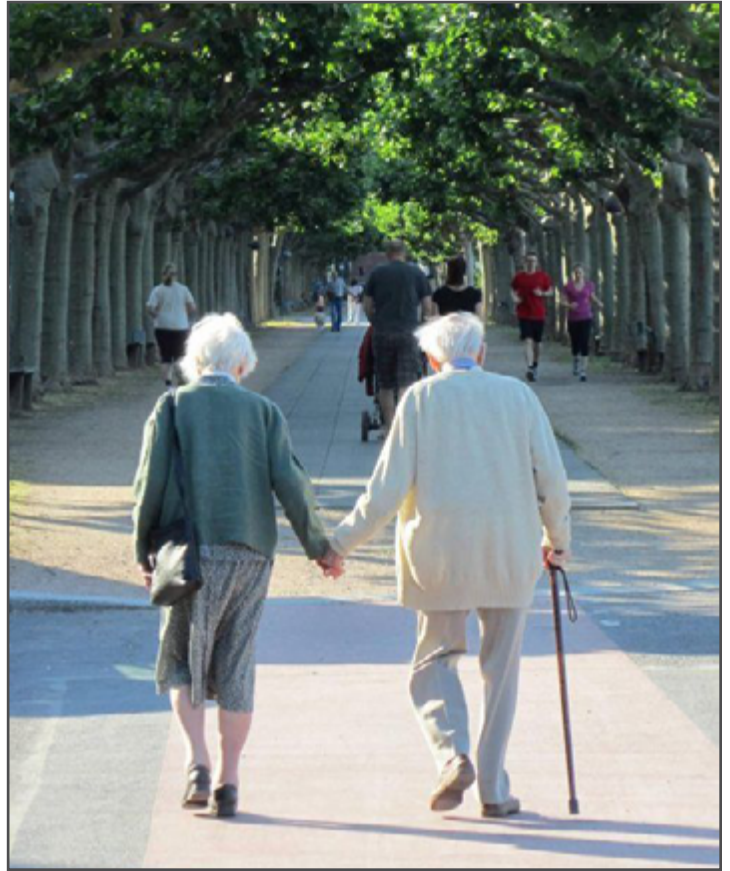
"Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth."

Hosea 6:3

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## Introduce

Marriage requires a life-long pursuit to know one another more intimately every day and to grow together as one body in Christ. What tends to happen over time, however, is that the couple's pursuit of one another fades and each begins to pursue his or her own individual interests. When dating, a gentleman pursues a lady by investing time, effort, and resources in the relationship. Sometimes God gives us a relationship despite our own ineptness and inattentiveness—such as Steve Workman whom we met last week in the introduction. Steve, however, serves as an atypical example of how a relationship ought to function because he truly did not pursue his wife, but rather he pursued his career instead.



Imagine for a moment what a dating relationship might have looked like with Steve Workman. Surveying his busy schedule, Steve finally found time to ask his girlfriend to accompany him—to which she surprisingly said yes. Arriving at her house promptly at 6:00 pm, he sat in his car at the curb and honked until she came out. He never left the driver's seat and made her open the door and seat herself. Having not told her what he planned for dinner, he drove to a mediocre fast-food restaurant and dug in his pocket for the coupons he had clipped from the flyer. He then proceeded to give her instructions on what she could order so as to maximize the benefit of the coupon. As they sat and waited for their food, they talked primarily about his interests and architectural business, but he did at least get up and get the food when they called rather than making her do it!

After dinner, he took her to see a dollar movie in one of those theaters you have to sweep the seats off before sitting. They didn't talk at all and he even fell asleep during the movie! When they did talk on the way home, Steve never asked about her day, how she was doing, how we could pray for her, or even her perspective. Everything centered on him! When they got to her house, he said good night from the driver's seat

## Introduce

without showing affection and said that he would call. Weeks passed, however, until he finally called again. He wasn't apologetic, but matter-of-factly stated that he had been busy and didn't have time. Probably most women would have dumped Steve by this point and most of us wouldn't maintain a relationship with someone who didn't actively pursue us! Yet, why do we treat God this way?

In prayer, we may frequently focus on our needs and selfishly speak to the Lord never pausing to hear from Him. We may pray so infrequently that weeks pass before we speak to Him because we perceive ourselves as too busy. At other times, we pray all-too-briefly at the end of the day and fall asleep on the Lord just like Steve did during the movie. We treat God cheaply despite all the blessings He has bestowed upon us. We rarely make time to serve Him, we fail to share the gospel, and we give only from our leftover resources. We want to receive all the benefits from a relationship with the Lord, but we aren't willing to make sacrifices and invest in Him! We shouldn't treat the Lord this way as if He were a second fiddle, but we should pursue Him just as He pursued us!

Key  
Question

What does it look like to pursue God in a relationship?



### Hosea 6:1-3

#### ***PURSUE RESTORATION IN THE LORD:***

With all hope seemingly lost for Israel as God leaves them on their own to face destruction ([Hosea 5:15](#)), Hosea surprisingly announces hope and encourages the people to **come** and **return to the Lord** (v. 1). Although Israel had sought help elsewhere in Assyria for their “sickness” and “wound” ([Hosea 5:13](#)), God would be the One to **heal** them! Even though God has torn them apart like “a lion,” He will **heal** them and **bind up** their wounds. However, to receive this restoration and healing, Israel must choose to repent and **return to the Lord**. Every day a man with a chronic and terminal illness passed by the same hospital with a large billboard that offered free treatment, guaranteed to heal his specific ailment. Every day his routine remained the same; he read the sign, kept walking, and never went inside the building. When the man died and stood before Christ, the Lord asked him, “Why didn’t you go and receive the free treatment?” The man replied, “I was too busy making the most of the time I had left, so I never went to receive it.” Unfortunately, many people are like this man. They want to make the most of their lives and enjoy what time they have here on earth, but they don’t want to seek the free treatment that can make them completely well and whole. They miss the gift of salvation merely because they refuse to repent and accept it. For those of us who have accepted God’s gift in Christ, we are guaranteed to be made whole! When Hosea speaks of healing and bandaging our wounds, he is referring to our restoration spiritually and not physically. We can better understand the context of this spiritual restoration when we see how the Lord promises to **revive** Israel **after two days** and **raise them up on the third day** (v. 2). From our perspective, **two** and **three** days simply mean at an appointed time. At the appointed time, God will restore Israel from Assyrian and Babylonian exile to continue working through His people to bring about





## Instruct

the Messiah. For us, it means that on the appointed day those of us who have a relationship with Christ will be raised physically from the grave (if we indeed die before His return) and we will **live** together with Him **in His sight** in heaven forever! We can be assured of our bodily resurrection and that we will **live** again because just as God raised Christ from the dead **on the third day** so also will He raise us at the appointed time when He sends His Son again! We have a better life to which we can look forward and a grander hope that awaits us!

How does / should knowing God's promise of restoration and resurrection influence the way we live?

Question  
# 1

When we pursue restoration with the Lord, we must also **pursue knowledge of the Lord** (v. 3). Thus, Hosea admonishes us to **know** Him! To **know** someone means to have a personal relationship with them; it doesn't mean that we simply *know about* them. Today, however, we have obscured this concept because we may be acquainted with someone briefly and say that we *know* them, but in reality we don't **know** them intimately. As in the illustration of marriage from the introduction, it takes a life-long pursuit with consistent and regular fellowship with someone to **know** them. The old television show *Cheers* had the tagline a place "where everybody knows your name." God doesn't just want us to **know** His name! God wants us to **know** His plan for us, His desires, His will, His personality, His character, and His love! He wants us to **know** Him intimately and pursue a relationship with Him daily!

In what ways should we seek to know one another in the community more personally in addition to knowing God more intimately?

Question  
# 2

When we pursue knowledge of the Lord, we will see His faithfulness. Hosea points out that God always acts consistently and never arbitrarily; **His going forth is established as the morning**. Just as the dawn comes every day without fail, we can depend upon the Lord! As the rainy seasons come and go with regularity (i.e. **latter** and **former rains**), we can count on God always to fulfill His promise to bring life and restoration to those who follow Him. Every day we see God's faithfulness in manifold ways! Although we may have trials at times, suffer, and experience persecution, God remains faithful to His Word and He sees us through the tough times. Even when we have acted

unfaithfully toward Him as Israel had, He remains faithful to us and constantly invites us to enjoy restoration through Christ. Few things in life are consistent and dependable; we often experience frustration and disappointment. Fortunately, we serve a God who never fails; He never disappoints. When we turn to Him to find our hope, He will turn our disappointment into rejoicing!

How have you experienced God's faithfulness in your lives *this week*?

Question  
# 3

## Hosea 6:4-7

### ***PRACTICE FAITHFULNESS IN THE LORD:***

After experiencing a brief respite of hope, we transition back to reality where Israel has refused to repent and they continue their opposition to the Lord. With two rhetorical questions, God attempts another time to get Israel's attention. To both **Ephraim** and **Judah**, He asks, "**What shall I do with you?**" (v. 4). God isn't exasperated, frustrated, or caught off guard, but rather He merely asserts that He's tried everything; He has given them numerous chances, but they still refuse to repent and **return to** Him. Despite all the messengers that God has sent, all the warnings He has given, and the patience that He has exercised, the people still act unfaithfully toward Him. He identifies their faithfulness like a **morning cloud** and **the early dew** which burns off quickly and disappears in the bright sunlight; the people are fickle and unstable! They go back and forth depending upon their whims and how they feel that particular day. In Christ, however, we ought to exercise consistency; we ought to be faithful—not just when we "feel" like it-but we must learn to trust and rely upon God in every circumstance.



*"For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud,  
and like the early dew it goes away."*

God has tried everything to get His children's attention, but they still persist in their stubborn, rebellious ways. He has sent **prophets** to reveal their wicked ways and warn them of the judgment they will face (v. 5). He has also spoken directly to them **by the**

**words of His mouth.** Therefore, the people have no excuse; God has clearly revealed to them the path they ought to take and the consequence of their actions. As earthly parents, we may ask ourselves this very same question which God asked of Israel: **“What shall I do with you?”** We’ve tried everything to reach our children and train them in the right way, but they’ve refused to listen. We’ve modeled consistently the righteousness, love, and forgiveness of Christ. We’ve disciplined them in the right way and attempted to guide them with godly wisdom which the Lord has revealed to us through Scripture and through our own personal life experiences. We must continue to speak the truth to them from Scripture, pray for them, and love them without accepting their sin and unrighteousness.

Moreover, God hasn’t issued these **judgments** arbitrarily, but He has done so in righteousness, keeping His Word to punish those who have broken His covenant. Thus, when He declares that their **judgments are like light that goes forth**, He demonstrates how their own behavior convicts them and they stand guilty, deserving the punishment they will receive. The people have chosen death and destruction over the Lord and life! Literally, **the prophets have hewn** them in by declaring that they will become captives to Assyria and they **have** been **slain** by God’s **words** because many of them will die by the sword during the conquest. In Amos 9:4, God emphatically states, “Though they go into captivity before their enemies, from there I will command the sword, and it shall slay them. I will set My eyes on them for harm and not for good.” Therefore, God is justified in His response because the people’s unfaithful and rebellious actions have been brought to **light** and are clearly observed.

How would you explain to people today why God is justified in enacting punishment and judgment upon people?

Question  
# 4

Through God’s example as our heavenly Father, we can learn three principles for enacting discipline effectively—whether as a parent or in another relationship, as an employer, or as a person in some type of authority. However, we cannot confuse discipline with condemnation and having a judgmental attitude which Scripture prohibits ([Matt 7:1](#)). On the other hand, Scripture does give us the ability to differentiate right from wrong and lovingly correct those with whom we have a relationship ([Gal 6:1](#)). First, we must be specific about the principles which they

should follow and the consequences they will face for ignoring them, specifically using Scripture to show where the Lord stands on the issue. Moreover, we should speak directly to the person, constantly reminding them of the principles, and monitoring how effectively they have fulfilled their duties. To teach them, we should ask them questions to see if they understand and even give them case studies or examples of how the principles should be applied. This will ensure that they have no excuse; like God, we can later point to the fact that they acted willfully, having known right from wrong rather than in ignorance!



*Why is it important to help people understand the consequences of their choices?*

Question  
# 5

Second, we need to be consistent and keep our word by enforcing the consequences for breaking the principles. Overlooking certain infractions will encourage the unwanted behavior to persist. Certainly, like the Lord, we can give second chances, but there must be a definitive time to enact discipline; we cannot delay it indefinitely and allow the action to continue unfettered. Whether we provide a written or verbal reprimand along with some other form of punishment depends upon the situation. In addition, the punishment that we enact should also conform to the person's personality so that it is an effective deterrent. Third, we need to be ready and willing to offer forgiveness and restoration as the Lord does, but we should never enable someone to exploit the situation and continue down a path of destruction. Since we cannot make choices for people, we must at points wash our hands of the situation and allow them to suffer the consequences of their sin—not because we're frustrated, but because we love them and want to see them change. Sometimes the only way that people wake up to reality is to hit rock bottom, realizing the gravity of their mistakes—just as the Lord did with Israel when He allowed Assyria to take their land.

*How can we apply biblical principles and punishment without becoming legalistic?*

Question  
# 6



## Instruct

Once again, the Lord reminds Israel what He expects of them. He desires **mercy and not sacrifice** and **the knowledge of Him more than burnt offerings** (v. 6). As we have learned in the previous chapters, offering a multitude of sacrifices and participating mindlessly in ritual doesn't impress the Lord. God desires a relationship with us that produces authentic transformation that lasts! In this context, the word translated **mercy** means more than showing compassion; it means **faithfulness** predicated upon love. In fact, this is the same word used in verse 4 that is translated **faithfulness!** Although we should show **mercy** to other human beings, here God desires us to be faithful to Him because we love Him. Ritual has no lasting effects on our lives because it doesn't influence and change the way we live. It doesn't show love to the Lord because we don't cultivate a daily relationship and we simply treat Him as a novelty when we need help rather than the sovereign Creator He is. Therefore, we simply perform the ritual, go home, and forget about it. A relationship with Christ, on the other hand, changes everything!

In what ways can mindlessly participating in ritual distract our relationship with the Lord?

Question  
# 7

Unfortunately, however, God reminds Israel that they have broken **the covenant** and **dealt treacherously** and unfaithfully with Him. Hopefully, many of us can't identify with Israel, but most likely we can all identify with Richard O. Blivious. Richard O. Blivious never missed a church service. He arrived on campus at precisely the same



time each week, carrying his Bible and curriculum book in his right hand. Although he had at least taken time to dust them off, neither the Bible or the book had any wear or creases in the spine from use. Per his usual routine, he procured coffee and a muffin and made small-talk with others in the line. Then, he made his way to the same pew in which he always sat

and sang from the same hymnal he always grabbed, even having memorized the page

numbers of the typical songs.

Even though he usually complimented the pastor's sermon on the way out, it really had no impact on his life. Richard O. Blivious went through life as a routine. He never showed much compassion; he never looked for opportunities to serve the Lord and share the gospel. Generally, he acted with integrity, but every decision he made benefitted himself in some way and he never really cared about whether it was God's will or not. Unfortunately, many Christians go through life like Richard. They believe they have done their "duty" by attending church every once and a while. They rely upon Sunday for their spiritual "food" while the rest of the week they consume the "junk food" propagated by the world. God doesn't honor such behavior and much more desires a personal, intimate relationship with us. He wants us to seek Him daily and to know His will!

How can we as a community help guide people toward an intimate relationship with Christ?

Question  
# 8

## Hosea 6:8-11

### **PARTICIPATE IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LORD:**

This chapter closes on a negative note in which the Lord outlines the vileness of Israel's sin; however, it serves as a reminder for us that we ought to participate in the righteousness of the Lord rather than in the wickedness of mankind. Rather than listing specific charges against them as He has already done, God speaks in broad, general terms to emphasize their complete sinfulness. He describes **Gilead** as a **city of evildoers** which is **defiled with blood** (v. 8). Without further historical reference, this description of being **defiled with blood** seems to capture their general love for violence, rather than a specific occurrence, which has led to their destruction. In this same way, we see a lust for gratuitous violence in our own culture today.

The culture during Hosea's time glorified violence and used it as a primary means to resolve conflict.



## Instruct

Rather than exercise love, compassion, and mercy as characteristic of the Lord and mandated in His covenant with them, the people turned wholly to violence! In our own culture, we see violence glorified gratuitously through movies, video games, and music; it has since spilled over into our neighborhoods and streets. Nowhere is free from the threat of violence! Many cities have rising murder rates and secular society is at a loss at how to confront and combat such evil. Yet, we can do nothing to rid ourselves of this violence and prevent it as a society except to turn back to the Lord and experience true transformation in Him!

In what biblical ways can we as a church confront the lust for violence in our world effectively?

Question  
# 9

Even the **priests** who should have been the ones to lead Israel to repentance in the Lord, they themselves participate in this very same evil and lead the people to further astray toward destruction. They exploit the people like **bands of robbers**, they figuratively **murder** people **on the way to** worship in **Shechem**, and they commit sexual immorality or **lewdness** in all forms (v. 9). Just like one couldn't tell the difference between the nation of Israel and a secular nation, so also people couldn't distinguish a priest from another citizen; they were all the same; they all behaved shamefully in the eyes of the Lord! For this reason, the Lord contends that He **has seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel**; the people have participated in **harlotry** and **defiled** themselves (v. 10). By leaving the Lord and breaking their covenant with Him, Israel gave herself over to every form of impurity: greed, covetousness, lying, theft by exploiting the poor, sexual immorality, and most grievously blasphemy. In every way, both Israel and **Judah** deserve the judgment or the **harvest appointed for** them by the Lord; her citizens will be **returned** into **captivity** under Assyria and eventually Babylon (v. 11).

Despite the ominous conclusion to this chapter, there is good news in which we can find comfort and hope! We don't have to endure such judgment because the Lord has provided us a way of escape if only we would trust Him and turn to Him for the solution! God wants us to have an abundant life that doesn't seek satisfaction in temporary, earthly things, but one that finds contentment in doing His will and serving Him with all our being. God will certainly discipline sinners and punish sinfulness;

however, He will also reward those who live righteously! Our reward may not be in the physical things that the world seeks; instead it comes in truly knowing the One who created us and having a personal relationship with the One who loves us more than anyone else!

In what ways does God reward righteousness according to the Bible? How does this sometimes differ from the way that the world views a reward or success?

Question  
# 10

In the introduction, we saw what a typical date with Steve Workman might look like. He spent no time pursuing a relationship with his girlfriend and merely went through the motions of dating when he found it convenient for him! Unfortunately, many people treat a relationship with the Lord in the same way; they only go through the motions of ritualistic worship when they think they have time. They only seek God when they have a need or they have encountered some type of trial in their lives. To them, God functions much like an ATM at a bank. We put in a little time here and there, punch a few buttons by praying and doing kind acts, and then we expect God to dispense all kinds of favors to us—even when we don't truly deserve them!

God isn't an ATM where we can manipulate His response by inputting the right information and then getting what we want. God desires faithfulness and obedience that flows from our genuine love for Him. We live in a world of instant gratification which often leads to dysfunctional, self-centered relationships. With the Lord, we need to slow down, meditate and study His Word, and get to know Him more intimately through prayer. In many ways, however, we have misunderstood meditation because we simply seek to check having a quiet time off our list. It's not about the quantity that we read or pray; it's about the quality of time that we spend! We should read Scripture carefully and ponder thoughtfully what it actually says so that we can apply it in our lives! Therefore, we need to be a community that has the right pursuit and focus; we need to concentrate on having a meaningful relationship with the Lord based on love for Him rather than a mindless approach based on ritual.



## *Incorporate*

As a community, how can we encourage and aid people in pursuing a relationship with the Lord?

In what ways should we as a community practice faithfulness to the Lord? How will being faithful to the Lord cause us to relate to the secular culture around us?

Why is it important for each member of the community to practice righteousness?

*July 28, 2019*



# *The Need for Penitence*

## *Hosea 7:1-16*

Focal Verse:

“When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria. For they have committed fraud; a thief comes in; a band of robbers takes spoil outside.”

Hosea 7:1

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## Introduce

When visiting the Grand Canyon no matter how many times one has seen it, one can easily become mesmerized at the scale and scope of the vast gorge which the Colorado River has carved and overlook the danger. Pictures cannot do the canyon justice and even viewing it in person leaves one awestruck at its grandeur. In places, the Grand Canyon extends eighteen miles from rim to rim and drops more than a mile in depth to the river and floor below and traverses more than 200 miles in length through the Arizona landscape. The vastness of the canyon is only exceeded by its brilliant hues of purples, greens, reds, tans, and browns that appear to change as the sun shifts in the horizon and shines upon the exposed rock to reveal the majesty and beauty of God's creation. In select locations, one can see the Colorado River meandering with its green tint and white-capped rapids, but the dangers of the river from that height seem obscure and distant. The canyon sometimes lulls people into a false sense of security despite the danger lurking around every corner for those who choose to ignore the boundaries of fences, rails, and walkways which the National Park Service has installed for the safety of visitors. Recently, and tragically, a number of tourists have plummeted to their deaths by ignoring posted warnings that scrambling or climbing on rocks near the edge of the rim poses a fall hazard. Instead of turning from the danger, people deceive themselves into thinking that they can get the most picturesque photograph or the best selfie if only they could stand at the very edge of the precipice of the chasm. Their desire to take the best picture has caused them to abandon all logic and common sense, thinking that they can tempt fate and control their own destiny. Yet, they have no control over loose or slick rocks which can cause them to lose their footing; therefore, they deceive themselves into thinking that they can live on the edge without fear of consequences.



By ignoring warnings, making destructive choices, and chasing their own foolish desires, people put themselves at risk of death to enjoy a moment of bliss—or so they

## Introduce

think. If those who have fallen to their death at the Grand Canyon could advise us, they would undoubtedly warn us to pay attention, turn back, and not deceive ourselves by succumbing to our desires. During Hosea's time, Israel lived much in this same way by foolishly participating in the destructiveness of sin. Rather than repent, the people persisted in their sin. They deceived themselves into thinking that their wickedness had no consequences and that God would not "remember" their sin (Hosea 7:4). However, God has clearly warned us in Scripture what happens to those who refuse to repent; therefore, let us turn from our fleshly desires, destruction, and depravity to serve Him in righteousness all the days of our lives.

Key  
Question

What warning signs in our lives has God given us to turn from dangerous and destructive choices?



### Hosea 7:1-4

#### **TURN FROM DECEITFULNESS:**

Continuing His discussion of Israel's sins in general from the previous chapter, the Lord brings more substantial charges against them. If only Israel would turn from their sins, God **would have** willingly **healed** and restored the nation spiritually, but they steadfastly refused (v. 1). **When** He came to heal them, He **uncovered** their **iniquity** and **wickedness** instead. Specifically, He charges them with **fraud** and acting like a

**thief** and **band of robbers** who steal **spoil**.

First, they **committed fraud** by reneging on the covenant they had made with the Lord. They went back on their word! Both with Moses ([Exod 19:8](#)) and Joshua ([Josh 24:16-17](#)) the people agreed to abide by this covenant! In essence, they signed their name on the dotted line of this contract with the Lord and declared they would

live according to His standards. However, Israel became spiritually bankrupt and **committed fraud** against the Lord because they defiled themselves with other gods and cultures; thus, they refused to fulfill their obligations to serve the Lord alone! Second, they have become like a **thief** to their own kinsmen. From the book of Amos, we know that Israel had become a socially unjust culture which lacked justice, compassion, and ethics. In fact, the rich exploited the poor and stole from the ones for whom they should have actually cared and helped! Not only did they steal from the poor, but they also cheated their own people at the market by manipulating the scales that determined prices and they charged exorbitant interest rates. However, this lack of integrity didn't only manifest itself with relationships amongst those in Israel, but also those outside. As a **band of robbers** who took their **spoil outside**, Israel had the same shoddy and unethical business practices with other nations as well. They had become so corrupt that they not only dealt treacherously with the Lord, but with other humans in every nation as well!



In what ways do some people commit spiritual fraud with the Lord?

Question  
# 1

## Instruct

Moreover, the people deceived themselves into thinking that they have gotten away with **their wickedness** (v. 2). In their current state of prosperity, they mistakenly thought they were on the right path and that they were wealthy enough, intelligent enough, and strong enough to control their own destiny and overcome any obstacle they may face. However, their sins betrayed them! They had forgotten that God knows and will **remember** (i.e. count against them) **all their wickedness** unless they repent. Thus, Hosea declares **their deeds have surrounded them** and have always been noticed by the Lord (i.e. **before His face**). Even though our evil deeds may escape notice from other humans, God will see them and judgment will come. In the end, our sins will be found out no matter how well we may think we have hidden them! Today, people still deceive themselves into believing that God will overlook their sins, so it gives them the false perception that they can behave in any way they choose and God will forgive them in the end—even if they have no relationship with Him and don't repent. God is willing and ready to forgive, but He requires us to repent, accept His gracious gift, and surrender our lives to Him! Others will argue that a loving God won't send people to Hell; therefore, they never acknowledge or serve Him here on earth and take their chances when they stand before Him in judgment. God does love us; in fact, He loves us so much that He has given us a way to escape this judgment and have life through His Son. God doesn't send us to Hell on a vindictive whim, but we choose that path when we reject His Son! God has made it clear to us that we can only have life through His Son who will forgive our sins if we turn to Him.

In what other ways do people deceive themselves about sin today?

Question  
# 2

In addition, the nation as a whole lacks integrity and acts deceitfully. They not only openly participate in sin, but they also boast in it and celebrate it! Hosea points out that the people **make a king glad with their wickedness and princes with their lies** (v. 3). Neither the general population or the leaders, which includes both king and priest, exhibit any shame or remorse over their ungodliness. Instead, they parade their sin openly in public as a badge of honor rather than a scarlet letter! Even in the New Testament period, Paul laments the Corinthian church for taking pride in the sin in their midst: "And you are puffed up, and have not mourned, that he who has done this deed might be take away from you" (1 Cor 5:2). Unfortunately, we see and hear sin on display

publicly even more so today—especially with all the technological advancements we have. People not only sin openly, but they boast in it! They no longer try to hide their sin because they feel shameful, but they put it on display for the whole world to see.

How should we as the church respond to such open sin in a biblical and effective way?

Question  
# 3

## Hosea 7:5-10

### ***TURN FROM FLESHLY DESIRES:***

Not only must they turn from their deceitfulness, but also from their fleshly desires. They figuratively burn with passion to have their lusts placated and their desires fulfilled. Returning to the initial charge of unfaithfulness, Hosea exclaims that **they are all adulterers** (v. 4). He then uses the illustration of a baker's oven to demonstrate how hotly they burn with passion for their **wickedness**. At this time, a **baker** would build a large **fire** in **an oven** to heat the structure which was similar to a modern kiln or pizza oven; the structure would retain and radiate this heat for hours—even long after the **fire** and coals had gone out. After starting the **fire**, the **baker** would leave it unattended (i.e. **ceases stirring**) and go to knead **the dough** and add the yeast (i.e. **leaven**). The focus of this illustration centers on the unattended **fire**. Thus, Israel is burning so hotly with their passion for **wickedness** that they no longer listen to the Lord who seeks to convict them of their sin and call them to repent—which we will see explicitly portrayed in verses 5-7. As a result, they have become oblivious to righteousness and goodness!



What does Scripture identify as fleshly desires?

Question  
# 4

Consequently, Hosea compares their unbridled passion for evil to **princes** who **have** become **inflamed with wine** and fellowship (i.e. **stretched out their hand**) with **scoffers** (v. 5). In other words, the **princes** are in a drunken stupor in which they

## Instruct

have lost all control over their faculties. Just as a drunkard loses control, so has Israel lost the ability to think logically and rationally; they can no longer differentiate right from wrong and distinguish the truth from a lie (see [Hosea 7:9](#)). Moreover, drunkards engage in foolish and bawdy acts; this can manifest itself in fits of anger or rage, lapses in judgment, loose speech, and all other forms of immorality. Israel acts in the exact same way! The people no longer exercise restraint, but they freely and openly engage in every form of immorality.

Moreover, drunkards don't exercise good judgment in the ones with whom they have a relationship or keep company. Israel kept company **with scoffers**—those who blatantly blaspheme and mock the Lord, reject His offer to have a relationship with Him, and refuse to live by His plan and wisdom. This becomes clear in verse 8 where Hosea emphasizes that **Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples**. Hence, he likens **Ephraim** to an **unturnd cake**. At some point during the baking process, the **baker** would need to flip the **cake** so it could finish cooking evenly. If that didn't happen, the **cake** would burn on one side and remain doughy on the other, making it inedible. Because Israel had intermingled with the cultures around them, they destroyed their nation and became useless to the Lord since they had abandoned their covenant with Him.

Why must we exercise great caution in selecting the people with whom we associate or have a relationship?

Question  
# 5



Although we are ultimately responsible for our own choices, other people can have a great impact on our lives—especially if we have a close relationship with them. Therefore, we must guard ourselves and be cautious with whom we associate lest they draw us away from the Lord. Generally, the more closely we associate with someone the more we begin to



adopt their views; we may begin to speak like they do, we may begin to act like they do, we may begin to go where they go, and we may even adopt the same attitude and perspective as they have. Depending upon the type of people with whom we associate, this can either be positive or negative. Consequently, we must make sure that we associate with people who honor the Lord and can help us grow in our walk with Him rather than those who may drive us further down the path of destruction. Furthermore, the people **prepare their heart like a hot oven as they lie in wait** (v. 6). As the **baker sleeps all night**, he awakes **in the morning** to a roaring blaze, burning out of control. The development of this metaphor further illustrates the lack of self-control and restraint by which they live! They burn with so much evil desire that they don't see how they are harming themselves and they don't realize how they are recklessly destroying their own nation. For this reason, Hosea affirms that **they are all hot like an oven**; they have **devoured their judges** and **their kings have fallen** (v. 7). They live in a lawless society; their immorality knows no bounds. They do things based upon how good they feel at the time. Yet, in their ignorance **none calls upon** the Lord. This truly sounds like our own society; people have participated in so much wickedness that they don't ever reflect upon the consequences of sin on our nation. Most people live for the moment! Because they have a skewed perspective on life (see July 14), they value pleasure, experiences, and feelings over God's plan clearly stated in His Word.

In what ways does the world around us lack self-control? How can we as believers utilize self-control to keep our eyes fixed on Christ?

Question  
# 6

Israel had become oblivious to **the problem of their sinfulness**. Literally, Israel lost their land to foreigners (i.e. **aliens**) who **devoured** their **strength**; however, they didn't realize their sin caused it (v. 9). Moreover, they have **gray hairs here and there** on their head, but they do not know it. They didn't acquire this **gray hair** from wisdom, but because they lived a hard, wild life! Rather than recognizing sin as the root of their problem and taking steps to rid themselves of their sinfulness, they blame others, their environment, their lack of opportunity, or even their Creator! Israel had become so prideful and arrogant that they refused to return to the Lord their God and they did not seek Him at all (v. 10). Because of their pride, the people saw themselves as self-sufficient and didn't recognize the grave danger they faced.

Again, this echoes very similarly in our own day where people have completely shunned the Lord. People often go about their business unaware because as a nation

## Instruct

we have been abundantly blessed with resources. Certainly, we have people with needs, but overall this country stands in far better shape than others to provide for her citizens. Still, people have forgotten the Lord and immorality runs rampant in our society. People engage in all types of immoral acts and now even parade them in public as a good and noble choice! Like Israel, people today blame everyone else for their problems rather than looking inwardly and admitting that the problem starts with their own sinfulness. Many secular addiction programs even recognize this fact and state that recovery can only come with admission of guilt (or that one indeed has a problem). It may seem as if sin has won and evil triumphed with the rampant immorality that plagues our society, but a day of reckoning awaits; unrepentant sin will be judged. Let us seek the Lord and return to Him, so that we will be found holy and blameless on that day as His people who are called by His name and conformed to His image.

Why are people unable to recognize the destructiveness that sin causes in their lives?

Question  
# 7

## Hosea 7:11-13

### ***TURN FROM DESTRUCTION:***

Instead of trusting the Lord, Israel foolishly and destructively turned to other nations for their provision and protection, particularly **Egypt** and **Assyria** (v. 11). Just as with the Lord, they don't remain loyal to these earthly nations either and constantly rile them to anger. Therefore, God compares Ephraim to **a silly dove without any sense**. In modern terminology, God calls them a "bird brain" because they are so ignorant that they don't realize in what danger they have placed themselves. Their plight with these secular nations pales in comparison to the **destruction** that awaits them because of their disobedience to the Lord. Consequently, God will **capture** them in a **net wherever they go** just like a hunter brings **down** the **birds of the air** (v. 12). God will chastise them as He has already plainly warned them. He has specifically chronicled their sins, repeatedly given them the chance to repent, and exercised great patience. Yet, like an ignorant bird that continually smashes its head into a window, Israel stubbornly refuses to turn and continues down their path toward self-destruction. The Lord pronounces woe upon them because they have run away from Him straight

toward **destruction** (v. 13). Although God has offered redemption to them, **they** **have** still **transgressed** and even **spoken lies against** Him. Our own culture has run away from the Lord quickly and participated in all forms of immorality freely. To justify their sin, people speak **lies** about the Lord! Some deny their actions are even sin although God has clearly called them such in Scripture. Others proclaim the idea of cheap grace where they can freely and willfully sin without consequences and without ever repenting and God will automatically forgive them! Although salvation and forgiveness from God doesn't require work on our part, it does require us to repent of our sins to accept the gift of eternal life He gives! Because the sinfulness of our culture has skewed their understanding of the Lord, we must ground our faith in Scripture rather than opinion, tradition, or any other man-made philosophy. We can only know the truth by reading His Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who will enable us to interpret it.



In what other ways does culture lie about the Lord?

Question  
# 8

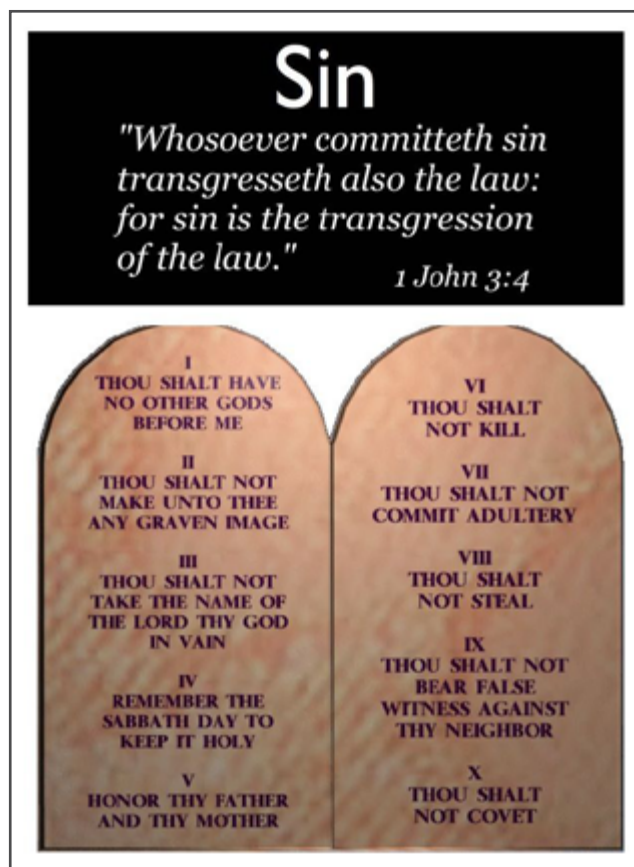
### ***Hosea 7:14-16***

#### ***TURN FROM DEPRAVITY:***

Heading for imminent destruction, Israel still did not turn and only sought to appease the Lord through meaningless ritual. For this reason, Hosea points out that **they did not cry out to** the Lord **with their heart**—they were insincere (v. 14)! They **wailed upon their beds** and lamented their plight, but they didn't repent. They were like a criminal who was only sorry he got caught. Israel wasn't sorry for what she had done, but only sorry that this calamity had come upon her. They went through all the outward motions of worship by assembling together to pray and seek **grain** and **new wine**, but they still rebelled against the Lord! God had given them every chance. He **disciplined** them and **strengthened their arms**—that is He provided for them and protected them (v. 15). However, they continued to devise **evil** against Him. They

worshiped other gods and sought to please them, so that they would be blessed and prosperous. In the end, their depravity brought total calamity upon them. They never returned to **the Most High** and continued to act **like a treacherous bow** (v. 16). Their nation and government (i.e. **princes**) would **fall by the sword** in battle. Because they blasphemed (i.e. **cursing of their tongue**) the Lord, they would not only lose their land, but they would also become enslaved to Assyria like their time in **the land of Egypt** many centuries prior.

Sin and depravity have consequences whether one wants to admit it or not. God always stands ready to forgive if we have a sincere **heart** and genuinely repent. Too many people believe that they can live by their own standards and God will simply forgive them because He is love. This belief contains a major error in accordance with Scripture. God is indeed love and He offers forgiveness, but only when we repent and turn from our sins and surrender to Him; God does not forgive and overlook sin simply because He is love! Because He is holy and just, He must punish unrepentant sin! Although I do not watch *The Bachelorette*, I saw a headline in a news article which read, "The Bachelorette' Star Defends Pre-marital Sex in Latest Episode: 'Jesus Still Loves Me.'" Yes, Jesus does still love her, but He doesn't approve of her sinful choices. God's



Word clearly states that any physically intimate relationship outside of marriage is wrong. When reading the article, the star of this immoral debauchery who claims to be a Christian basically asserted that we can do anything we so desire and God will still love and forgive us automatically. In essence, she denounces the consequences of sin by saying that no other person has the right to "judge" her because Jesus still loves and accepts her. Unfortunately, we see this attitude all-too-frequently in the church and secular society. We can never do anything to make Christ not love us, but at the same time Scripture clearly defines what sin is and how we ought to live in holiness. A "relationship" with Christ isn't a license to sin



and do whatever we want, but a true relationship with Him means that we repent, stop sinning, and surrender to Him. God freely dispenses grace and forgiveness, but we can't cheapen God's grace by continuing to sin! Thus, Paul exclaims, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" Let us be a community that turns from depravity to live holy lives conformed to Christ rather than finding ourselves caught in the trap of trying to justify sin according to human philosophy and opinion.

In what ways does the world wrongly attempt to justify sin?

Question  
# 9

### ***In Reference***



Caleb Parke, "[The Bachelorette' Star Defends Pre-marital Sex in Latest Episode: 'Jesus Still Loves Me,'](https://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2019/06/25/the-bachelorette-star-defends-pre-marital-sex-in-latest-episode-jesus-still-loves-me)" [www.foxnews.com](https://www.foxnews.com) (June 25, 2019).

In the introduction, we saw how some visitors at the Grand Canyon ignored warning signs and fell to their deaths because they didn't respect the established boundaries or fear the consequences of their actions. God has given us clearly marked boundaries in our lives—not to prohibit our fun, but to keep us safe and protect us from any harmful action because He loves us so much! Based on God's warning signs found in Scripture about how we should live, we must pay attention! Instead of persisting in the activity, we need to turn around and go back to Him lest we find ourselves in worse danger. In fact, Jesus tells a man whom He had healed in the temple, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you" ([John 5:14](#)). Sin has consequences and God has clearly warned us what they are; we must turn from sin and destruction lest something worse happen to us!

As a community, we must teach and preach the Word of God unadulterated. We shouldn't have a judgmental attitude, but we should lovingly hold one another accountable and help each other mature in Christ. We must abide by God's Word as a community and keep ourselves unstained from the world around us. In a world where we can easily become distracted and overwhelmed, we need one another to help us maintain focus on Christ. The church cannot tolerate sin, but at the same time we need to point others into restoration with Christ and show them the proper way to receive restoration in Him. We need to be forgiving as Christ was to us, but at the same time we must acknowledge the need for repentance whereby we as God's people turn from our sins and surrender fully to Him.

## ***Incorporate***

In what ways does the enemy try to deceive us as a community? What steps can we take to keep from succumbing to such deception?

In what ways have some in the community become oblivious to sin and its effects? In what ways can we lovingly correct such sinfulness in the community?

In what ways can and should we warn people of the destructiveness of sinful choices? From what destructiveness has the Lord personally rescued you?

## ***Journal: Document God's Work***



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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FORT WORTH

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
OR FOR QUESTIONS  
PLEASE CONTACT  
[MIKENEAL@FBCFW.ORG](mailto:MIKENEAL@FBCFW.ORG)

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