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SENIOR PASTOR

SEPTEMBER
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,

Having just come through the hottest month of the year, August, I noticed that the ground around my home had become hard and barren in spots. We had gone several days with no rain and just the intense heat. The effects were visible in our home's foundation and when we tried to dig in the garden we found it hardened! As we continue to study in Hosea about the children of Israel's journey, we see that they too had become hardened because of their disobedience and the lack of following God's Word which manifested itself in ingratitude, deceit, and other areas that displeased the Lord. How often does this mirror the current Christian culture? Sad to say, too often.

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.

Let's not become consumed with the everyday routines of activities to the point where we are not getting the necessary spiritual nourishment which will keep our hearts and lives pliable to God's leading. God desires to continue His work in us and through us, but we must submit ourselves to His Word, His will, and His way.

-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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September 1, 2019



Walk with the Lord

Hosea 11:1-12

Focal Verse:

“They shall walk after the Lord. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west.”

Hosea 11:10

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Introduce

In battle, the enemy bombards us with all kinds of distractions in order to divert our attention from the true objective. Perhaps, one of the most-brilliant and successful examples of this strategy was employed in the creation of the “ghost army.” During World War 2, Allied forces masterfully used this deceptive technique to distract Axis forces and divert their attention from the real location in which battles would take place. Before the June 6, 1944 invasion of occupied France on the beaches of Normandy to which we refer to as D-Day, Allied forces deceived the Germans by

building mock army and air force units and stationing them throughout Great Britain in strategic positions. Using special effects artists from Hollywood, the military designed special, realistic-looking inflatable tanks, rubber aircraft, and wooden horses dressed in military regalia by the thousands. With only 1,100 actual soldiers, including General George



S. Patton who posed as the commander in charge, Allied forces undertook Operation Fortitude with resounding success.

Concentrating these fake troops in Southern England across from Calais, France, the Allies hoped that it would draw German troops and resources away from the Normandy coast and allow them to break through the Nazi defenses to attack the main army from the rear. Indeed, this strategy worked as the Axis powers began to move troops to counter this supposed build-up across from Calais. Axis leaders had been so badly deceived in part by General Patton whom they considered the fiercest and most-effective leader of the Allies’ ground forces. They simply wouldn’t believe that the US would use such a fiery and brilliant general for a hoax.

Still, the Allies continued to bolster their deception by adding more elements. They began broadcasting false radio transmissions and sending fake correspondence between units about troop movements and plans for attack. They spared no expense in selling this deception to the enemy. In fact, it worked so well that they employed this technique around twenty times from 1944 to 1945 in various locations throughout

Introduce

the European and North African theaters. Ultimately, these deceptions and distractions led to the downfall of the Axis powers not only in Europe, but also world-wide. They never learned from the first hoax and repeatedly fell into the same trap over again! The spiritual enemy uses similar techniques to deceive us, so that we lose focus and stumble. When we walk with the Lord, however, we will not succumb to such deception! To walk with the Lord requires that we walk toward maturity, walk on mission, and walk with morality. In particular, to walk on mission means that we walk with focus and don't let the things of life distract us from our relationship with Christ. Unfortunately, Israel during Hosea's time didn't walk with purpose on mission, but they allowed materialism, false worship, and fleshly desires to distract them. Let us, therefore, remain focused as a community; let us walk with the Lord daily and keep our eyes fixed on Him!

Key
Question

What can distract you in your relationship with Christ?

Instruct

Hosea 11:1-6

WALK TOWARD MATURITY IN THE LORD:

Hosea takes the people of **Israel** on a journey all the way back to their beginning as a nation when the Lord freed them from bondage in **Egypt** (v. 1). He describes **Israel** as a **child** whom the Lord **loved** dearly. When He looked upon their plight as a people, He **called** His **son out of Egypt** and delivered them from slavery to fulfill His promise of giving them a land of their own ([Exod 6:4-6](#)). Even though **Israel** had rebelled against the Lord many times from the exodus to Hosea's time, He still **loved** them as children and wanted to rescue them from sin and destruction if only they would return to Him! Just like a child, the nation of **Israel** had to learn to trust the Lord and depend upon Him for everything. This trust required them to mature in their faith as a people, so that they would rely wholly upon God rather than their own abilities or attempt to find security in secular nations through material wealth. To mature, **Israel** must believe God just as Abraham did, but they must also come to understand that the boundaries He set for them and the ways He provided for them demonstrated His love (see [Gen 15:6](#)).

In what areas have you trusted God in your life? How has this helped you to mature and understand His will?

Question
1

During one's adolescent and teenage years, it often becomes difficult to understand why our parents respond in a certain way or set boundaries for particular reasons. At the time, it may seem as if our parents want to stop us from having fun and experiencing life. Sometimes, we ourselves may have said or have heard it said to us, "You don't love me because you won't let me do *this!*" Then, in the cloak of secrecy when we think our parents can't see, we engage in the forbidden



Depiction of Jesus and His family fleeing to Egypt.

Instruct

activity. We may even have fun at first, but later we will inevitably experience the heartache and pitfalls of which our parents had tried to warn us. Israel did this very same thing in the wilderness. As soon as Moses ascended to Mount Sinai to meet with the Lord to receive the Ten Commandments, they erected a golden calf and worshiped it led by Aaron ([Exod 32](#))! They had already turned their back on the God who had so graciously rescued them from **Egypt**!

In what ways do we wrongly test God at times?

Question
2

In-Depth Information



God first **called Israel His son** when He had Moses announce to Pharaoh: “Thus says the Lord: ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn’” ([Exod 4:22](#)). Clearly, in this context, it refers to the nation of **Israel** as a whole, but in [Matthew 2:15](#) it applies to Jesus when He and His earthly family flee to **Egypt** to escape the terror of King Herod who sought to kill Him. When applied to Christ, it shows not only His literal trek to **Egypt**, but also how He fulfills an even greater exodus—not only for Israel, but the whole world! Just as God had rescued **Egypt** from literal bondage in **Egypt**, so also would He rescue Jew and Gentile (i.e. the whole world) from enslavement to sin and death through the sacrifice that His Son would make on the cross.

Verse two makes it clear that Israel failed to trust the Lord and saw better opportunities elsewhere; the grass looked greener on the other side in Egypt so to speak. Hosea, therefore, points out that **as they** (Israel) **called them** (Egypt) **so they** (Israel) **went from them** (Egypt). This expression in verse 2 may appear vague in English, but historically Israel began to complain as soon as they left **Egypt** and entered the wilderness. They accused God and His servant Moses of bringing them into the wilderness to die—even though He had provided everything they needed ([Num 20:3-5](#)). They even contended that it would have been better for them to have remained in Egypt because they had it so good there ([Exod 14:11-12](#); [Num 11:4-6](#))! Maturity in the Lord enables us to see the bigger picture and not just our immediate circumstances. When we see the bigger picture, we have a completely different perspective because we rely not on the emotion of the moment, but the logical facts that can be seen and

weighed. If Israel had taken the time to stop and think, they would have seen how God had provided for them in the past. They would have seen evidence not only in Egypt during the exodus or even at the Red Sea, but also through their ancestor's history through whom God had worked to bring them to this point!

In what ways have you seen God work in the past to which you could point as evidence that we can always trust in Him?

Question
3

Because of their fickleness as a people, they didn't trust the Lord; instead, they **sacrificed to the Baals** and **burned incense to carved images**. This false worship began in the wilderness with the golden calf, continued at Baal of Peor ([Num 25; Hosea](#)

[9:10](#)), occurred throughout the period of the Judges, and peaked during Hosea's time. Israel never realized that God was the One who provided for them and cared for them just like they would care for their own children. Hosea pictures God as a teaching **Ephraim to walk** (v. 3). Like a loving Father, God stoops over us as His **children** and takes us **by our arms**, walking



beside us. However, Israel didn't even know it! As Hosea exclaims, **they didn't know the Lord healed them!**

Mature believers know from where their security comes and they don't need to experiment by trial and error to find it. Instead, they know to turn directly and immediately to the Lord—not just in times of trouble, but for everything at all times. Unfortunately, many believers act like Israel and search everywhere else first; they try to do things on their own, they listen to the advice of others, or they may turn to fleshly desires in an attempt to find comfort and solace when all else fails. For this reason, Hosea reminds the people that God guided **them** to safety **with gentle cords** like an animal laboring (v. 4). **With bands of love**, He set them free from slavery in Egypt **like those who take the yoke from the animal's neck**. God didn't stop there, but He provided for them at every point; He **stooped** and **fed them!** He provided everything for them in the wilderness and this should have taught them to depend solely upon

Instruct

Him, but it didn't because they failed to attribute their provision to the Lord.

How has God given you security in your life?
How can you use these examples to glorify Him
and point others into a relationship with Him?

Question
4

We live in a somewhat immature society today that largely wants to have the security of wealth, possessions, and prosperity without working for them. Although many people whether young or old do know the value of hard work, many still cannot grasp the value of the dollar because they've had everything given to them and they have come to expect it. In many cases, these people can never grasp the concept that nothing is actually *free*; someone had to make a sacrifice and pay for it. Because of this attitude, consequently, few people show gratitude for what they have received or even more rarely acknowledge the sacrifice the person made to give them that opportunity or physical possession. Israel, at this time, acted much the same way toward the Lord that our society does—like a spoiled child who expects everything to be given to them, but then never shows gratitude toward his parents. Although we don't "work" for salvation or the things with which God often blesses us, we still need to acknowledge that He is the source of all our blessings and we need to treat Him with the reverence and respect that He deserves.

How does recognizing the Lord as the source of
our blessings help us to mature in our faith?

Question
5

Because Israel continues to walk in immaturity and rebel against the Lord, Hosea explains what will happen to the people. Although they will **not return to the land of Egypt**, they will be taken captive by another nation—Assyria (v. 5). He makes the reason for their downfall clear when he asserts that **the Assyrian will be their king because they refused to repent**. This destruction didn't happen to them just because of bad luck; they have brought it upon themselves because they have repeatedly rejected the Lord's warning to return to a relationship with Him! As a result, their **cities** will be completely destroyed by **the sword** (v. 6). Hosea reveals that the enemy will **devour his districts** and **consume them**. In Hebrew, the phrase literally means "devour and consume his poles / bars." This refers to the city gates; the enemies will break down their city gates; the security in their own defenses which they thought they

had will vanish in an instant. They face this imminent danger because they refuse to listen to the Lord and continue to walk according to **their own counsel**. Although we could discuss what it means to have maturity in the Lord in-depth for months, we can learn three valuable principles from this text here in Hosea which we can summarize briefly. First, we should let the



Lord guide us. Just like a Father who holds His child's hand as he learns to walk or gently takes the reins of a laboring animal to borrow Hosea's metaphors, we should allow God to guide us where we need to go each day. Don't fight Him, but surrender control to Him! Second, we need to acknowledge He is the source of all provision for our lives by the way that we live. We need to follow the boundaries that He has set for us, so that we represent Him well and we don't become side-tracked in our journey. Like a parent, God wants what's best for us; He doesn't want to ruin our joy or kill our fun. On the contrary, He desires us to have an abundant and safe life in Him. Third, we need to seek counsel from the Lord first. We need to know what He says in His Word before we seek any other advice! We need to hear Him speak through prayer, through His Spirit, and through His Word; then, we can ask other mature believers whom we know will give godly advice squarely based on Scripture to help us confirm how God may be speaking to us.

What does a mature walk with the Lord look like?

Question
6

Hosea 11:7-9

WALK ON MISSION WITH THE LORD:

When believers don't walk toward maturity, they become **bent**, or determined, **on backsliding from** the Lord (v. 7). In Hosea's illustration, we either go forward or backward; in the Lord there's no standing still. To move forward in maturity, we must be on mission with the Lord daily. On mission means that we walk purposefully and

Instruct

intentionally according to God's will, so that we don't become distracted and thrown off course. Instead of being determined to backslide, we must be determined to fulfill His purpose for our lives. Israel, on the other hand, **did not exalt Him at all** even **though** they called upon **the Most High**. They only called upon Him when they wanted something; they never showed gratitude or offered thanksgiving. They complained when they didn't get what they wanted and they ignored God when they had success! They couldn't distinguish His voice from their own selfish desires!

In what ways can we walk intentionally with the Lord on mission every day so that we don't backslide?

Question
7

Despite Israel's outright rejection of Him, God still loves them and offers them hope even when they don't deserve it. In a series of rhetorical questions, God gives them hope, but at the same time He shows the seriousness of their sin. He commences by asking **how** He **can give up Ephraim** and **hand over Israel** to the brutal Assyrians for punishment (v. 8). God isn't having second thoughts or changing His mind, but He's expressing His deep love and devotion for Israel—longing for them to return to



Depiction of The Prodigal Son by Liz Lemon Swindle.

Him like a parent with a wayward child. At the end of this verse, God declares that His **heart churns within** Him and His **sympathy is stirred**. Even though God will go through with the punishment that He has specified since the beginning of Hosea, He does not do it in wrath, but love so that Israel will return to Him for restoration. As a parent, God upholds the boundaries that He

has set and punishes sin because He loves us and wants to restore us and save us from eternal destruction! We must heed His voice and mend our ways to receive restoration in Him!

The middle two questions in this series of four still express hope, but they also show

the gravity of Israel's sin. The Lord asks **how** He **can make** them **like Admah and Zeboiim**. Perhaps, we may know these two cities in relation to their more well-known counterparts: Sodom and Gomorrah. God destroyed these four cities of the plain for their utter wickedness and sexual immorality. Deuteronomy 29:23 describes the destruction in stark terms: "The whole land is brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and His wrath." Not only would God destroy these four cities, but He would never allow them to be rebuilt again. Surely, such a grim comparison of Israel's sin to the sin of these four cities would cause the people to awake (see also [Isa 1:10](#)). Any Israelite should find a comparison to these four cities detestable and change his ways.

Yet, lest all Israel despair as one without a future hope, God offers them a promise of restoration as the chapter comes to a close. Although He will punish them for their heinous sins, He's not finished with them as a people; He will restore a remnant and bring salvation to the whole world through the Messiah. When God says that He **will not execute the fierceness of His anger** nor **destroy Ephraim again**, He means that He will not destroy them so completely that they will cease to exist like the four cities of the plains. They can expect punishment just as He has said throughout Hosea, but one day they will return from exile and the remnant whose heart God has renewed will bear the promised Messiah who will offer salvation to the entire world.

Why does God discipline us? Why do we still have hope if He disciplines us?

Question
8

To end this section, God announces why He can pronounce judgment, as well as restore: He is **God and not man**. He can offer impartial and truthful judgment because He is **the Holy One** in our **midst**. He has no ulterior motives or biased opinions; therefore, He does **not come with terror** as someone corrupt who brings fear. On the contrary, He brings justice and righteousness. Because He is **holy** and cannot stand the presence of sin, He must punish evildoers. On the other hand, in His righteousness and loving mercy, He can also provide restoration if we choose to receive it and return to Him through His Son. Based on this, therefore, what does it mean to walk on mission with the Lord? It means that we must seek Him daily and know His voice. We must recognize the boundaries by which we ought to live, but we must also recognize when we err so that we can find restoration in Him. At the same time, we must strive

Instruct

to imitate His holiness and bear His perfect image so that we can enter His presence through Christ—a theme to which the last section now turns.

How can we learn to recognize God's voice?
Why is it such an important part of being on mission with Him that we can distinguish His voice from our own desires or the voice of others?

Question
9

Hosea 11:10-12

WALK WITH MORALITY FOR THE LORD:

After God restores them, Israel will **walk after the Lord** (v. 10). No longer will they be characterized by sin, immorality, deceitfulness, and false worship, but they will seek the One true and living God. Thus, the Lord's affirmation "**I am God, not man**" takes on a slightly different nuance here in this context. No other gods exist besides the Lord; Israel has only followed man-made idols which have gotten them into serious



trouble. They need to throw them off and seek to worship the Lord in all righteousness and **walk** with Him according to His way! Just as God had originally brought Israel out of bondage in Egypt, He now brings them out of a second exile—this one the spiritual exile of enslavement to sin. Rather than fearing the roaring **lion** which represents God, the people will

return to Him **from the west** (see [Num 24:8-9](#)); rather than being a stupid **dove** without any sense, the people will return to the Lord who will once again allow them to **dwell in their houses** upon their return from exile in **Assyria** (see [Hosea 7:11](#)).

This chapter closes with another warning which bids Israel to stop chasing other gods and start living a **holy** life that reflects God's character. God denounces **Ephraim** for encircling Him **with lies** (v. 12). We aren't told what specific **lies**, but just generally that **Israel** acts **with deceit**. Coupled with the assertion that God is both **holy** and

faithful, the **lies** likely constitute Israel's general unfaithfulness and immoral actions. This unfaithfulness and immorality not only appears in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, but also the Southern Kingdom of Judah as well. When the texts says that **Judah still walks with God**, the term **walks** is better translated as wanders; thus, it is a negative indictment that Judah too practices this immoral lifestyle by worshipping the Lord while still participating in the secular culture of the nations around them. Both Israel and Judah wander aimlessly searching for the truth in life which God has already made plainly known to them and offered them!

As maturing believers who seek to grow in Christ daily, we must understand that to be on mission with the Lord means that we have a relationship with Him where we seek to imitate His holy character. When we're on mission, it doesn't mean that we can act any way that we want. We must represent the One who has called us to that mission! We don't have a license to sin continually and abuse God's grace. Instead, we must purposefully seek to live by the mission objectives that He has given us to show our love for Him and represent Him well to others. As a community, we need to encourage each other to walk with the Lord daily, so that we can mature as a body, accomplish the mission to which He has called us as His children, and to make morally right decisions which reflect the way He has called us to walk in Him.

Although we're not saved based on good works or being a good person, what does Scripture say about living holy lives and not acting immorally?

Question
10

In the introduction, we learned how the enemy attempts to deceive us and distract us from our true purpose. We see that deception in many forms in our society which has tried to creep its way into the church. Society, for example, teaches that truth is relative to each person and we can act in any way that seems right to us regardless of what may be moral and good. Instead of being true to the purpose for which the Lord has called us, people promote being true to yourself! This is an ungodly and dangerous concept because we have no standard by which to judge right from wrong. When left to our own devices apart from the Lord, we will ultimately destroy ourselves like Israel by making a series of wrong choices.

On the other hand, God has called us to be distinct from the world in the way that we live. This requires that we walk with the Lord daily so that He can continually renew our minds and cleanse our hearts, so that we don't fall into the snares of this world. God desires that we live authentic lives which display the holiness which He has imputed within us. To do this, we must constantly be on a quest to mature, understanding that we are either advancing or regressing; in Christ, there's no standing still! God has given us a clear mission in life in which we must live by the bounds which He has established and seek Him for moral counsel when we make any decision. As a community, therefore, let us walk with the Lord in every way every day.

Incorporate

What does a mature community in Christ look like? As a community, how can we help spur one another to maturity?

As a community, in what ways do we need to be more intentional about our mission?

As a community, how can we better reflect the holiness of Christ? How can we help struggling members in the community to make morally right or holy decisions?

September 8, 2019



Wait upon the Lord

Hosea 12:1-14

Focal Verse:

“So you, by the help of your God, return; observe mercy and justice, and wait on your God continually.”

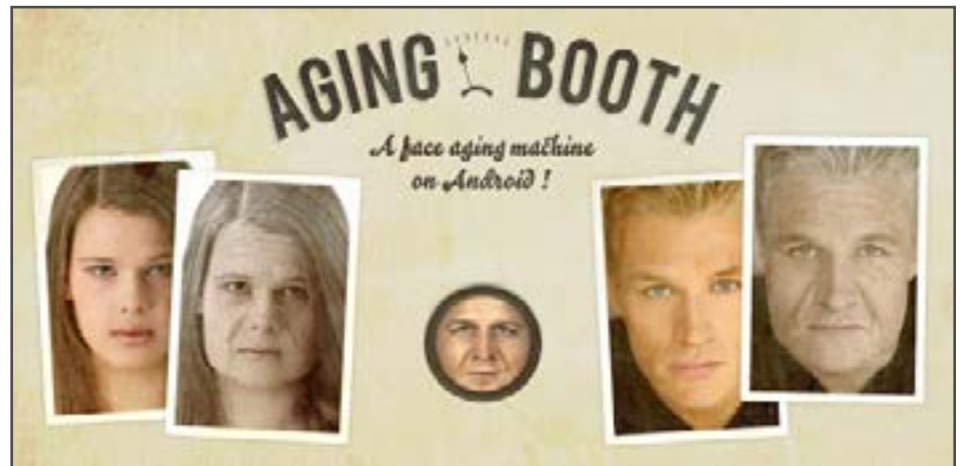
Hosea 12:6

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Introduce

In his famous radio monologues, Paul Harvey would always commence his broadcast with these words: “And now for the rest of the story.” Many times in our society, people become too impatient to wait for the rest of the story and they want to jump right in with the little knowledge they may have. Without the full story, however, a little knowledge frequently poses a great danger as Rachel A. Eager learned. A dedicated user of social media,

Rachel one day saw an app advertised that she could download for free to see what she would possibly look like as an older woman. Intrigued, she went to the App Store where it stated in large, bold letters that it was



free with no in-app purchases required. However, she didn't bother to read the rest of the fine print since it didn't charge her anything to download it to her phone.

So, Rachel immediately began to upload pictures into the app to see how she would look. She uploaded one after another—all seemingly free. She even began to take pictures of her friends off social media and upload them to see what they would look like. She had a blast and got several laughs as she saw what perhaps she and her friends would one day look like. Several months had passed and she lost interest in the app and never really even thought anymore about it. After a couple of years had passed, she was waiting to ride the train to the airport when a city bus passed. She quickly became startled as the bus stopped because it had her image plastered on the side in an advertisement.

As Rachel sat and stared in disbelief, she looked at her face and read the advertisement which described an anti-aging cream for wrinkle reduction. There was no mistake that it was her likeness because she remembered the time that the picture was taken and the outfit that she had worn. To herself, she thought, “How can this be? I never agreed to model for this product.” She went home and began to search for her pictures online and found them advertising various products from dating websites to dog food. As she put two and two together, she realized that she had uploaded all these pictures to the aging app!

Introduce

So, she went to the App Store again to read the rest of the story in fine print that she had skipped. The fine print specified any pictures uploaded to the app belonged to the parent company. They could use the pictures for any promotion or purpose that they determined expedient; they would also retain any rights to royalties that the images produce! Suddenly, Rachel A. Eager wished that she had waited and read all the fine print before uploading many of her own pictures, but also the pictures of her friends. Too many times, as believers, we find ourselves in trouble because we fail to wait upon the Lord. Therefore, Hosea urges his audience to “wait on your God continually.” God sees the whole picture; He knows the beginning and end. We need to wait upon Him for direction, discernment, His declaration, and deliverance. We need to move in step with Him as a community and not get ahead or behind. We must move in concert with Him!

Key
Question

What does Scripture mean when it says to wait upon the Lord?

Hosea 12:1-5

WAIT UPON THE LORD FOR DIRECTION:

Chapter 12 opens with Hosea criticizing Israel for not waiting upon the Lord to give them direction. Instead, they foolishly attempt to control their own destiny by making an alliance with Assyria which would only end with their complete destruction. Hosea asserts that **Ephraim feeds on the wind** and **pursues the east wind** (v. 1). The Hebrew word translated **feeds on** can also mean “to act as a shepherd” or “to tend / care for.” Therefore, it metaphorically means in this context that Israel sought to determine their own fate by proactively dealing with the Assyrians rather than seeking the will of the Lord. During the initial conquest of the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, Israel also made such a foolish treaty with the Gibeonites without consulting the Lord and waiting for direction from Him (see [Josh 9](#)). The Gibeonites deceived Israel’s leaders by making it appear that they had traveled from a long distance, so that they would not drive them from the land as God has specified. In the end, however, the treaty with them actually ended up bringing harm upon Israel because “they did not ask counsel of the Lord” (Josh 9:14).

Just as with the Gibeonites, Israel’s attempt at a treaty with Assyria would bring ruination upon the entire nation.

In this illustration, **the east wind** represents the hot, dry **wind** off the desert which often brings drought and massive dust storms—much like the southwest wind here in Texas. Moreover, this **covenant**, or treaty, appears to be based on funneling money and material wealth through **oil** and other goods to placate **the Assyrians** and subvert any physical



Effects of the East Wind

attack on their land. By making such a deal with Assyria and refusing to wait upon the Lord, Israel acts unfaithfully toward God; as a result, they multiply their **lies and desolation**. In other words, they continue to make their situation worse by ignoring

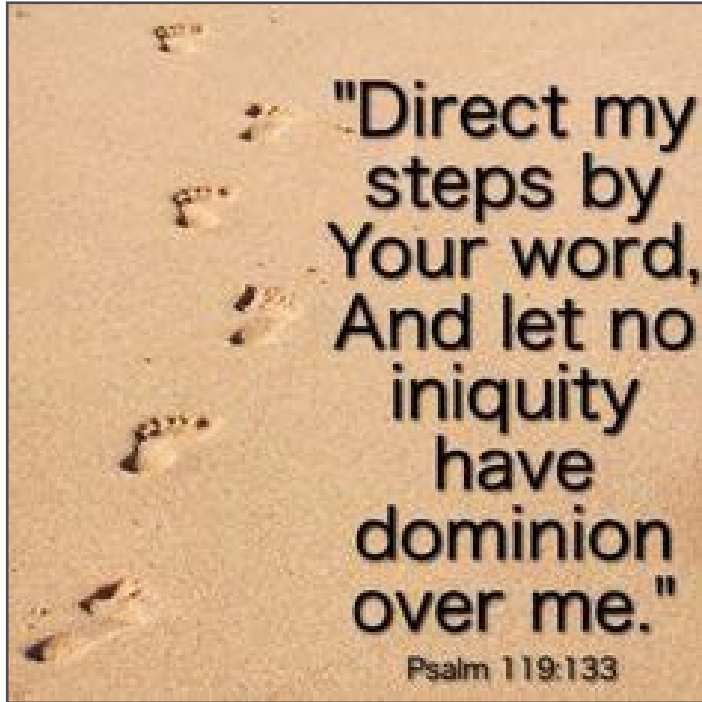
Instruct

the Lord; they are metaphorically digging their own grave by making alliances with these nations who will also treat them treacherously in the long run!

What other biblical examples can you cite where people didn't wait upon the Lord for direction? How can we learn from their mistakes?

Question
1

All-too-often, we may grow impatient with the Lord and jump into decisions without



seeking Him first—especially because we live in a fast-paced, ever-changing world. After we make the decision, we ask the Lord to bless us and help make the decision that we made work—even when we didn't seek Him in the first place! Then, we are perplexed as to what went wrong when we fail. God hasn't failed us, but we've failed Him because we never sought Him during the process. We need to slow down and take time to hear God speak before we act definitively. However, this doesn't mean that we sit and do nothing in the meantime, but

we should do what we *know* to be His will while waiting to hear about a specific plan or purpose that He has for our lives.

In what way(s) have you ever gotten ahead of God when making a decision? As we wait upon the Lord to reveal His specific will, what should we be doing in the church?

Question
2

Because of their impetuosity, **the Lord also brings charges against Judah and will punish Jacob (Israel) for his wickedness** (v. 2). Last week, we learned in [Hosea 11:12](#) that Judah wanders ("walks") with God, acting without honor and holiness by worshiping Him among many other gods. Therefore, based on **his evil deeds**, God will repay (i.e. **recompense**) **him** for everything he has done. In other words, Israel will get what he deserves because he refuses to repent and return to God. Fortunately, we don't have to go down this same path as Israel; we can learn from their mistakes

and avoid repeating them. To do so, we must seek the Lord first and wait upon Him to transform our perspectives and guide our decisions. When we allow Him to guide our lives, He will dispense mercy and we won't get what we truly deserve! Instead, He will instill us with His righteousness and truth; in Him, therefore, we can be confident that we'll always make the right decisions!

In-Depth Information



*In verse 2, **Jacob** refers not to the individual yet, but to the entire nation of Israel. Recall that God re-named **Jacob** Israel in [Gen 32:28](#). Beginning in verse 3, however, Hosea will compare **Jacob** the individual with the entire nation of Israel to show where they as a nation have gone wrong.*

In verse 3, Hosea compares the nation of Israel to their ancestor Jacob to demonstrate how God had transformed him from a deceptive, self-centered man to a righteous and blessed man who sought Him. Just as God had done with Jacob, so He would also do for Israel if they would only seek Him! Hosea begins his remarks by showing how Jacob grasped **the heel of his brother** Esau while still **in the womb** ([Gen 25:26](#)). As we know from the rest of the story recorded in Scripture, Jacob engaged in a power struggle with his brother for his birthright as the firstborn; along with his mother Rebecca, he concocted a plan to deceive his father in failing health with poor eyesight in order to steal the blessing meant for his brother ([Gen 27](#)). This selfishness and deceptiveness created animosity between the twins, causing Jacob to flee to escape Esau's wrath which most likely would have resulted in his murder ([Gen 27:44-45](#)).

Unlike the nation of Israel, Jacob eventually returned to the Lord and **sought** Him; God then performed a mighty work to transform Jacob. At **Bethel**, as Hosea points out, Jacob encountered (i.e. **found**) the Lord; as he fled from his brother, he began a relationship with God (v. 4). Just as God had personally come to Abraham in Haran to offer a relationship to Him, so He also did with Jacob in **Bethel** who accepts His invitation and declares that "the Lord shall be my God"



Depiction of Jacob's Dream from Gen 28 by Vladimir Bibikov

Instruct

([Gen 28:21](#)). As a result, Jacob **wept** and **sought favor from Him** ([Gen 28:10-22; 35:6-15](#)). Throughout his life, Jacob had struggled to find **favor** among men; he wanted the blessing from his father and even later from his brother when he sought to return home ([Gen 33:3-4](#)). Now, however, he **found favor** with the Lord; he no longer looked to other humans to find his value or self-worth.

In what way(s) do people seek approval or favor from other men?

Question
3

Ironically, at Peniel, Jacob **struggled with God in his own strength** (v. 3). The phrase **in his strength** is difficult to translate into English. It means something like “according to his human power / strength”; therefore, some translate it “as a man,” “as an adult,” or “in his manly vigor,” **he struggled with God**. Although **he struggled with the angel** of the Lord as a man, **he prevailed** because he **sought favor** from the Lord and not from men ([Hosea 12:4; Gen 32:22-32](#))! At this point, Hosea compares Israel unfavorably with Jacob because the Lord has spoken to them at **Bethel** too. However, throughout his book, Hosea calls **Bethel** Beth-Aven because Israel had turned it into a shrine for idol worship. In contrast to Jacob who listened to God and turned to Him, the nation of Israel refused to listen! They rejected **the Lord God of Hosts** (v. 5). Instead of worshipping Him alone and remembering what He had done for them, they worshiped man-made images and made ill-fated treaties to align themselves with secular nations. Today, we are surrounded by many voices that compete for our attention; consequently, some people have a hard time discerning to which voice they ought to listen. Humanism tells us that we can accomplish anything we desire as long as we set our minds to it and work hard. However, this causes people to seek approval and applause from secular society. People then try hard to impress other people. On the contrary, Scripture clearly instructs us to find approval in the Lord by doing His will. To do God’s will, we need to learn to recognize His voice. In [John 10:27](#), Jesus tells us that His sheep will know His voice. Therefore, we need to focus on Him; we need to put everything else out of our minds and seek the direction that we ought to go from Him.

What are some things that we can do to help us focus on Christ and hear His voice clearly?

Question
4

Hosea 12:6-8

WAIT UPON THE LORD FOR DISCERNMENT:

Not only do we need to wait upon the Lord for direction, but also for discernment. When we rely upon Him, the Lord will give us discernment for how we ought to live. For this reason, Hosea implores the people to **return to their God** and seek **help** from

Him to **observe mercy** and **justice** (v. 6). Discernment enables us to know the direction that God would have us go because it helps us distinguish right from wrong based upon Scripture. The phrase **observe mercy** actually means to “remain faithful” in this context; thus, Hosea urges the people to remain

faithful by keeping the covenant God has established with them. Certainly, we should show compassion or mercy to others, but that’s not the primary point Hosea wants to make here. Just as Jacob demonstrated the authentic life-change that God produced in him by having a transformed perspective and attitude, so also should Israel return to God and manifest His life-changing grace through their faithful obedience.

The word **justice** comes from the Hebrew word for judgment in which one’s actions are evaluated in a court of law against the perfect standard God has set forth. In other words, we need discernment to help us differentiate right from wrong—not based on man’s opinion or perspective, but God’s Word. Too often, Christians become entangled with sin because they don’t take time to seek the Lord’s Word. Sometimes they outrightly reject His Word and do the sinful things they want, but most often they become trapped because they actually haven’t read His Word and heard *Him* speak! (We’ll speak to this issue more directly when we reach verses 9-11.) As believers, we need to stand in stark contrast to the world; people should see a visible difference through our faithful obedience to the Lord in how we live by keeping His holy commandments. To **wait upon the God continually** means that we seek Him above all others—other humans or even ourselves. We remain faithful and true to Him and His Word!



How does the Lord give us discernment as believers? What does godly discernment look like in a believer’s life?

Question
5

Instruct

Godly discernment keeps us from being deceived by the secular world and from being deceived by ourselves. First, Hosea calls out a **cunning Canaanite** who operates **deceitful scales** and **loves to suppress** (v. 7). The phrase **deceitful scales** pictures a



dishonest merchant who either alters the **scales** to make more money or puts his thumb on them to skew the weight. In either case, they swindle others by misleading them. The world deceives people by promising peace and freedom if we go along with their views—not simply tolerate them. In reality, this enslaves or **oppresses**

because one can never oppose their views; one must always accept it exactly as they present it! In addition, the world deceives us by telling us we're good enough to have life on our own or that we're wise enough to change on our own; the world fools us into thinking we can make a difference on our own apart from Christ. Furthermore, the world deceives us by making us think that we have more than one path to enlightenment or eternal life; it all depends upon our perspective. However, we cannot allow the world to influence and deceive us in these ways! We must depend upon Christ, for He alone is the only way!

In what other ways does the world try to deceive us?

Question
6

Second, godly wisdom keeps us from deceiving ourselves. Perhaps, self-deception is the greatest threat we face today because we value independence and healthy self-esteem which has been falsified to tell us that we can achieve anything or do anything we want without fear of consequences. Therefore, rather than having the right perspective imbued with humility that causes us to seek the Lord, many tend to have a self-centered and arrogant attitude that says only the weak need the Lord! **Ephraim** found himself in this very situation if we listen to the words that he speaks (v. 8). With self-assurance, he boasts, "**Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors, they shall find in me no iniquity that is sin.**" Notice all

the first-person pronouns he uses to describe himself! Increasingly, this sounds eerily similar to the foolish mindset of our own society. They believe that man is the source of all good things that's happened to him and the blessings he's received. They assert that they don't need God and attempt to eradicate Him from every walk of life! Moreover, many in society claim they are the ones who determine right from wrong (see [1 John 1:8](#))! However, we need discernment from the Lord to save us from ourselves! We need to appeal to Him for wisdom about how we should live and not rely upon mankind's flawed judgments!

How else do people deceive themselves in relation to God?

Question
7

Hosea 12:9-11

WAIT UPON THE LORD FOR HIS DECLARATION:

Once again, God reminds them that He is **the Lord** their **God ever since** He brought them out of **the land of Egypt** (v. 9). As their God, they must listen to His declaration and heed His warning, for He has spoken to them directly and repeatedly. If they refuse to listen, He will again make them dwell in tents like the days of the appointed feast. In other words, He will take their land away from them and send them into exile just as when they wandered in the wilderness for a generation after they left Egypt. God hasn't remained silent in all this, but He has clearly **spoken** to them in many ways. God has **spoken by the prophets**—Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea (v. 10)! He has given them divine revelation through **multiplied visions, symbols**, and their testimony or **witness**. The people have no excuse for not waiting upon the Lord! He has declared what He wants from them exactly!

In-Depth Information



The **appointed feast** to which Hosea refers is the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths where the people would erect temporary shelters and live in them to commemorate God's provision during their wanderings in the wilderness before He gave them their land.

Rather than listen to the Lord, they turn to useless **idols** who cannot see, hear, or respond in **Gilead** (v. 11). They offer the **sacrifice** of **bulls in Gilgal** in vain because they have turned far from the Lord and forgotten His voice! Indeed, their **altars** aren't merely useless, but they're a stumbling-block that needs to be removed. As a

Instruct

meaningless pile of stones in an otherwise potentially productive **field**, they contribute



nothing of value and actually cause Israel himself to be unproductive in relation to the Lord. God has not only given us clear instruction in His written Word, but also in the Word who become flesh—Christ. We have no excuse not to know it or follow it! God has written it, repeated it often to different generations, and became a living example Who showed us how to

apply it! We need to know His declaration and abide by it lest we experience an exile far worse than Israel if we don't have a relationship with Him or experience loving correction if we do. Therefore, let us know His voice and abide by His plan for us.

Why must what God speaks to us always match what He has declared in His written Word?

Question
8

Hosea 12:12-14

WAIT UPON THE LORD FOR HIS DELIVERANCE:

With the chapter coming to a close, Hosea returns to His comparison of Israel with the patriarch Jacob. After conning his father to bless him, **Jacob fled to Syria** where he worked in hard labor **for a spouse** by tending **sheep** ([Gen 29](#)). However, his father-in-law deceived him by giving him his first daughter Leah and making him work seven more years for the promised daughter Rachel. If that weren't enough, Laban tried to keep him as a poor indentured servant with no property he could call his own ([Gen 30:25-43](#)), but God miraculously delivered him. In the same way, God delivered the nation of **Israel out of Egypt** through Moses (i.e. a **prophet**) and preserved them as they trekked through the wilderness (v. 13). Israel entered Egypt with nothing, but left enriched by the Lord ([Exod 12:36](#)). Even more, God miraculously provided for the people throughout the wilderness whether physically in the form of food, water, and protection, but also spiritually in the sense of guidance. God delivered them mightily!

On the other hand, the people during Hosea's time **provoked** God **to anger most bitterly** (v. 14). Therefore, God delivered them to judgment rather than from bondage to freedom like the previous generation. For this reason, God **will leave the guilt of his bloodshed upon him and return his reproach**. Because they have rejected the Lord and severed their relationship with Him through their unrepentant sinfulness, they will be cut off from the Lord and sentenced to destruction. Although we like Israel deserve the death penalty for our sin, God will deliver us if we repent and turn to Him! Jacob and Moses had a personal relationship with the Lord. They were far from perfect, but they still surrendered to the Lord and sought deliverance from Him alone. Nothing else in this world can deliver us: other people, human philosophy, our wealth and possessions, good works, or even religious rituals. We must depend upon a relationship with God through Christ Jesus for our deliverance!

In what do people seek deliverance today?

Question
9

In the introduction, we saw what happened to Rachel A. Eager when she failed to read the fine print of the aging app she installed on her phone. Like many, Rachel sprang into action without thinking about the consequences and taking time to determine the right path she ought to take. Before we act on our own and seek to placate our desires, we must wait upon the Lord. We need to seek Him prayerfully by reading His Word and applying its principles. We need to get our direction from the Lord and not society or anything else.

Fortunately, God has spoken clearly to us just as He has to His children in every generation. He has not left us as orphans, unprepared for life's journey, but He has explicitly told us and even showed us through Jesus. Therefore, let us be a community who seeks God through Scripture and prayer, so that we can clearly know the direction He wants us to go. While we seek His specific direction, let us practice what we know He expects of us: let us worship Him alone, let us serve Him faithfully, let us share the gospel, and let us live righteously as He shows us His the specific path He wants us to go. When we actively seek Him, God will grant us discernment in how to live, so that we can make the right choices which are holy and true to His character. Let us listen to the Lord and not reject His loving offer for a relationship or miss the warning about sin that He clearly gives, but let us trust in Him alone for deliverance. Let us "wait upon Him continually" as we cultivate a relationship with Him daily.

Incorporate

As a community, why is it important to wait upon the Lord for direction while still doing what we know to be His will? What happens to unity within the body when we don't wait upon Him?

As a community, why is discernment important in protecting the integrity of the body? How does discernment help us to maintain faithfulness to correct doctrine and practice?

How have some become deceived by the world or self in the community? How should we deal with such deception in a biblical manner?

September 15, 2019



Worship the Lord

Hosea 13:1-9

Focal Verse:

"Yet I am the Lord your God ever since the land of Egypt, and you shall know no God but Me; for there is no savior besides Me."

Hosea 13:4

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Introduce

Every morning, Michael A. Mazing looked in the mirror as he prepared for his day; he would linger, staring a while, as he thought about how intelligent, popular, and handsome he was. Although he didn't literally bow down to worship his striking image in the mirror, he did know the origin of his first name which is actually a question in the Hebrew language: "Who is like God?" Feeling like the character Fonzie from *Happy Days*, he would gaze at himself and boastfully ask, "Who is like God?" In his mind, he would always answer, "No one, except me!" He never uttered these words aloud or to anyone else, but everyone whom he had met and with whom he interacted, even for a brief time, knew that



he perceived himself in that way. He didn't act so arrogantly that it turned people off and caused them not to like him, but he carried himself with an air of confidence and superiority that seemed to give him an advantage.

As he proceeded through the day, Michael never needed help from anyone and always fancied himself as the source of help for everyone else. He could handle anything that came his way. He never lacked his own wisdom to give advice; he always assisted people in the office whenever they had problems of any kind. He even put tech support out of business! Once, he saw a lady struggling with the soda machine in the break room. Similar to the fictional Fonzie who could start a juke box with a tap, he walked over to the machine, ran his hand along it for the right spot, and then gave it a gentle tap with his fist. Two sodas suddenly dropped from the machine as if on cue. With a smile, he walked away without saying a word, listening to the praises of the woman.

Because of his personality and friendliness, people flocked to him. Michael always smiled from ear to ear and basked in their attention. He had it all! He subconsciously thought, "Who needs God when you have it all like me?" One day, however, stark reality hit literally. As Michael walked to the office from the parking garage, a careless driver on his cell phone hit him in the crosswalk. Michael tumbled over the bumper onto the

Introduce

hood, eventually bouncing off the windshield before crashing back to the ground. As he lay on the concrete with broken bones, deep lacerations, and internal bleeding, the car sped away leaving him helpless. He couldn't move because of his broken legs, so he laid their motionless waiting for someone to help.

Many people just casually passed by the scene because they didn't know what to do and thought that someone else would help—even most of his friends in the office failed to stop. Finally, someone called 9-1-1 and Michael received the medical attention that he so desperately needed. As he laid there that day, he couldn't help but remember Hosea 13:4 which declares, "Yet I am the Lord your God ever since the land of Egypt, and you shall know no God but Me; for there is no *Savior* besides Me." During Hosea's time, Israel was in a world of hurt just like Michael because they rejected the Lord and trusted in their own abilities. They may not have outwardly worshiped themselves, but inwardly they believed that they had made themselves successful. In fact, God points this out in 13:1 when He affirms, "When Ephraim spoke, trembling, he exalted himself in Israel."

Most of us would never outwardly claim to worship ourselves or even other people, but many times our actions betray us. We falsely exalt ourselves by overvaluing our own intelligence and abilities. In fact, the philosophy of humanism—which places mankind, not God, at the center of the universe—dominates our world today. Many people wrongly believe that if we as humans simply put our mind to something we can overcome anything. However, this is far from the truth; we need the Lord. Only He can save; only He can guide us in the right path. We need to put all our trust in Him and, as a community, we need to worship and serve Him alone!

Key
Question

In what ways does our society and even some Christians exalt themselves above the Lord?

Hosea 13:1

WORSHIP THE LORD, NOT SELF:

Not much has changed since chapter 12 where Hosea called out Israel for their arrogance and ignorance in elevating themselves over the Lord and seeking to determine their own path. Throughout his prophecy, Hosea uses **Ephraim** synonymously or interchangeably with Israel to show how widespread wickedness had become in the Northern Kingdom. In 13:1, however, he singles out **Ephraim** as the one to whom the rest of the tribes looked up to and wanted to imitate. This tribe, in particular, had become so thoroughly sinful and prideful that they influenced the rest of Israel to participate in the same things.

Therefore, Hosea reveals that **when Ephraim spoke** the other tribes trembled and listened intently. Because of the great influence he had, he distinguished and **exalted himself** above everyone else **in Israel**. Despite his own exaltation and greatness, Ephraim **offended** the Lord **through** the **worship** of **Baal**; he also dragged the rest of Israel down with him. As a result of his false worship and broken covenant with the Lord, he received the death penalty—**he died** spiritually. Apart from a relationship with the Lord, neither Israel nor **Ephraim** had hope of eternal life.

We can observe this pattern in much the same way today as people idolize their heroes and do everything within their power to emulate them. People imitate their heroes by acting like them, dressing like them, talking like them, and even thinking like them. Whether one wants to admit it or not, they have great power of persuasion to influence the lives of individuals who follow them. As much power as they wield to influence, these people often bring great disappointment when one meets them in person because they're not really what they seem. They turn out to be completely different! On television, they may seem accommodating, cordial, humble, and approachable; however, in person, they are the opposite. The rest of Israel had idolized Ephraim because he seemed to have it all together; he had wealth, prestige, and was outwardly happy and content. However,



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on the inside, he was dead (see [Hosea 12:1](#))! Israel had been fooled and patterned themselves after the tribe who would ultimately lead them to destruction.

Who does the world idolize? What causes people grave danger when they idolize other human beings?

Question
1

Looking at it from Ephraim's perspective, he idolized himself and boasted arrogantly in his influence among the other tribes. In fact, Hosea has already chastised them saying, "And Ephraim said, 'Surely, I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they shall find in me no iniquity that is sin'" (Hosea 12:8). At the heart of sin stands the philosophy or humanism which elevates man to the position which rightfully only belongs to God. For example, to justify their sinful choices which God clearly abhors in Scripture, humanists will appeal to the social and mental advancement (or evolution) of humanity. They would argue that we have a better understanding of ourselves and our universe which has "liberated" our thinking. With this "new" understanding, we can determine what's right and wrong for ourselves; therefore, we, not God, become the standard for truth which allows us to live any way that we want or adopt any lifestyle we so choose. The world has deceived itself! Sin always degrades and devalues; it never enhances or illuminates. God alone is the perfect standard who determines right and wrong.

Humanism also wrongly teaches that we have all the answers within ourselves; all we must do is look long enough and hard enough and we'll find them within us. This philosophy also asserts that we can be whatever we want to be or achieve whatever we want to achieve if we simply try and work hard enough. Their version of "the power of positive thinking" omits the Lord entirely! We are to be who God has called us to be in Christ. This means that we should know His Word, apply it in our lives, and imitate His holiness by living according to the boundaries that He has established for us. Apart from Christ, we're hopelessly lost and unable to save ourselves. No solution that we come up with ourselves will ever be sufficient for salvation. We must trust in what God has said and live according to His plan. To trust in "self," therefore, is utter folly and foolishness.

In what ways do people trust in themselves rather than in the Lord?

Question
2

WORSHIP THE LORD, NOT SACRIFICE:

As a result of their self-centeredness and arrogance, they continue to **sin more and more** because they slip further into false worship and drift further from the Lord (v. 2). Pompously, the people exclaim, “Look at me! I’m perfect! I have it all and no one can take it from me.” How wrong they were; they had nothing apart from the Lord. Yet, people still act like arrogant fools by dismissing the work of the Lord in their lives and rejecting His offer to establish a relationship with them through His Son. In rejecting the Lord, they **made for themselves** carved **images** and **silver idols** by their own hand and **the work of their craftsmen**. They devoted themselves to these worthless **images**, showing their devotion by kissing these **idols** formed in the likeness of **calves**.



In-Depth Information



The last phrase of this verse, “**They say of them, ‘Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves,’**” is difficult to interpret. Translated literally from the Hebrew, the line reads: “They say of them, those who sacrifice of man they kiss calves.” Because of their total depravity and their utter sinful disregard for anything holy, this type of human sacrifice could have occurred at this time. We have biblical evidence both earlier than Hosea ([Psalm 106:28](#); [Num 25:1-13](#); and [Judg 11:30-39](#)) as well as later ([Jer 7:30-31](#); [19:5](#); [32:35](#)) that such sacrifices did occur in Israel as well as the secular culture around them. However, we also know that God detests and outlaws any such sacrifice ([Lev 18:21](#); [20:2](#); and [Deut 12:30-31](#)). Whether it refers to human sacrifice or men showing their devotion by sacrificing to and kissing idols, the point remains clear: God utterly disdains any false worship.

Because they refused to show devotion to the Lord alone and have been unfaithful in their covenant, punishment will come upon them swiftly and thoroughly. Hosea uses four familiar things that quickly fade and disappear to describe how Israel will be overtaken as a nation: a **morning cloud**, the **early dew**, **chaff on the threshing floor**

blown by the wind, and **smoke from a chimney** (v. 3). Along the coast, particularly in the Los Angeles area, they have a phenomenon called “the marine layer” that brings cloudy skies from ocean-cooled moisture as it rises over the San Gabriel mountains; however, it quickly burns off once the sun rises. Here, in Texas, we know how quickly dew dissipates during the summer months as soon as sun hits the blades of grass in our lawn. From these illustrations, we can understand how swiftly judgment befalls the wicked. Although wickedness may seem to last awhile here on earth and go unpunished, in the end it is swift and permanent when compared to all eternity! People may not literally worship and kiss an idol of a calf, but they still display utter devotion to things and activities other than the Lord. Although some hobbies can have a positive influence on our lives and there is nothing wrong with participating in them unless they violate God’s boundaries in Scripture, people can become so engrossed, dedicated, and devoted to them that they lose focus! It doesn’t matter what hobby it may be or even whether you consider it a “hobby” at all; examine how you spend your time and resources by asking these questions: 1) How much time do I *devote* to my hobby? / How much time do I *devote* to the Lord (personal quiet time, corporate worship, and serving)?; 2) How much of my resources (money, possessions, or talents) do I *devote* to it? / How much of my resources do I *devote* to the Lord?; 3) How do I share my passion for my hobby with others? / How do I share my passion for the Lord with others?; and 4) How do I invest in my hobby? / How do I invest in the Lord?

What are some things to which people devote themselves? How can we as believers keep from becoming distracted by these things?

Question
3

If we are truly honest in our assessment, we will most likely find that we spend more time doing the things we want to do than we spend with the Lord. We can still do the things we enjoy, but we can’t lose sight of the Lord. We shouldn’t have an imbalance in our lives. We must place the Lord first in everything! When we’re doing the things we enjoy, use them as an opportunity to talk to others about the Lord! Share Christ and His gospel! Give the Lord thanks for the ability, time, and resources to do the things you enjoy. Use them to honor Him. Too many times, we forget that all good things come from the heavenly Father ([Jas 1:17](#)). Let us have the proper perspective! God doesn’t want us to go through mere religious rituals; He wants us to have a relationship with

Him. Above all, He wants us to devote ourselves completely to Him through genuine worship and service.

Hosea 13:4-6

WORSHIP THE LORD AS SAVIOR:

Although Israel refused to worship God alone and devoted themselves to meaningless sacrificial ritual, God clearly displayed love and devotion to them. He reminds them that He is **the Lord their God since the land of Egypt** (v. 4). On their way to the Promised Land, He instructed them through His law delivered to Moses that they should **know no other God, but Him alone** ([Exod 20:3](#))! With stark clarity, God declares **there is no other Savior** except Him! God had physically rescued Israel and their forefathers many times throughout their history. He saved Abraham from famine in Canaan, a lustful Pharaoh in Egypt, and Abimelech upon His return to Canaan. He rescued Lot from the rampant immorality and physical destruction of Sodom. He saved Joseph from certain death at the hands of his own brothers and prospered him in Egypt because of his faithfulness. Through Joseph, He provided for Jacob and his eleven other sons during a seven-year severe famine. He delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt and saved them from death by the Egyptian army by parting the Red Sea. He provided the staples of life (water and food) for them constantly during their wandering in the wilderness. No other god had the power to do these things and bless this people in such a mighty way; only the one true and living Lord God who created the universe can respond in such a way.

Therefore, in Hosea 13, the Lord reminds the people that He **knew them in the wilderness** and saw them **in the land of great drought** (v. 5). In other words, He alone was their source of provision and protection. In every way, as we have seen, God provided for them; He didn't just watch what happened to them from a great distance, He was intimately involved with their daily lives! Thus, God explicitly recalls how He demonstrated His care for them: **they were filled when they had pasture and their heart was exalted** (v. 6). When things went well, the people rejoiced, but their perceived success caused them to lose focus and misunderstand the source of their joy. God had given them everything they needed physically! Tragically, however, the people **forgot** the Lord. They wanted nothing to do with Him.

In what way(s) has God provided for you physically or perhaps even "saved" you physically from danger or harm?

Question
4

Instruct

Recently, a Canadian judge sided with the parents of a thirty-seven-year-old daughter who were in a dispute over selling a house. The parents had paid \$110,000 for this house while their daughter attended college and let her reside there, but now they needed to sell it because they had encountered financial and tax problems. The daughter refused, claiming it was “her” home. According to Dom Calicchio, “the parents reportedly paid for their children’s education and their vehicles, covered the cost of their daughter’s elective surgery and helped finance homes for both of them.” They had provided everything for their children, but their daughter was ungrateful and had the wrong perspective.

Rather than working with her parents and helping them in a time of need, which is a



biblical principle, she viciously fought them and destroyed their family’s relationships ([1 Tim 5:8](#))! Although God doesn’t “need” our help, He deserves our worship and devotion—not just because of what He has done, but because of who He is! We should honor Him simply because He is our heavenly Father and Creator and because of what He has done for us as our

Savior! Too many times, people treat God like this daughter treated her parents; they feel entitled and demand things from God, but abandon Him when things go well. They forget their source of blessings and do not serve and worship Him.

Why do we tend to forget to show gratitude to the Lord when things go well?

Question
5

In Reference



For the article, see [Dom Calicchio, “Judge: Parents Can Sell Home of Daughter, 37, because They Supplied Cash,”](#) available from [www.foxnews.com](#) (July 31, 2019).

God not only provides for us physically, but He also restores us spiritually. He saved Abraham from worshipping many gods and blindly following the traditions of his

forefathers. He transformed Abraham into a man of faith through whom all nations would be blessed by the coming Messiah—the **Savior** to the whole world! God saved Jacob and transformed him from a deceiver to one who sought Him in everything. He also saved King David from adultery, pre-meditated murder, and deception; He cleansed His heart and restored Him as a new creation. We cannot forget that God alone is our **Savior**! Outside of Him, we have no hope at all. Every Christmas, we probably read or hear Luke 2:11: “For there born to you this day in the city of David, a **Savior**, which is Christ the Lord.” Does it resonate with us, however? He came for us! He came to save us when we could not save ourselves. The God who created us and against whom we have rebelled made Himself in the likeness of human flesh and shed His blood on the cross to redeem us from the penalty of sin. As a community, let us gratefully remember what the Lord has done for us and respond through pure, genuine worship directed to our only **Savior**—Christ Jesus our Lord.

How has the Lord revealed Himself as Savior in your life?

Question
6

Hosea 13:7-9

WORSHIP THE LORD AS SOVEREIGN:

Because He is just, God will punish sin and reward righteousness according to His holiness and perfect standard. God alone has the right to execute such judgment because He isn't bound by the fickleness of man and doesn't engage in arbitrary judgments. As our Creator, He is superior over us and sovereign over all creation. Because He is holy and sinless, God maintains the perfect standard by which we can be judged. No other standard will do; therefore, whatever sentence He decrees against sin will be an incontrovertible verdict.

Therefore, God abandons them over to the destructiveness of their own sin and exposes them to His wrath against all unrighteousness. Hosea uses several wild animals as illustrations of the destructive power of Israel's sin. God **will be like a lion and a leopard to them** lurking by the road waiting to pounce upon their prey (v. 7). He will charge against them like a mother **bear** separated from **her cubs** (v. 8). He **will devour them like a**



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lion eating its fresh kill and tear them apart like **a wild beast** fighting over a carcass for food. Consequently, God laments how Israel has **destroyed** themselves (v. 9). Yet, God contrasts all this destructiveness that Israel has chosen and brought upon themselves with His grace. God once again declares He's their **Savior** because their **help is from Him!**

One day, whether people worship the Lord here on earth or not, they will indeed bow down to Him upon His return ([Phil 2:9-11](#)). On that day, they will recognize His sovereignty over all creation; they will also recognize the path that they have chosen for themselves. Either they have accepted His gift here on earth and have life in Him or they have rejected Him and chosen to face judgment. The choice couldn't be clearer. God has made it so easy that a child can have faith and understand. Therefore, let us be a community who gladly accepts God's gracious gift and celebrates the love He has lavished upon us. Let us worship our sovereign Lord with authentic praise that pursues a relationship with Him daily.

How would you explain to someone why God has the right to judge us and the works we do?

Question
7

In the introduction, we met Michael A. Mazing who seemingly had everything in life going for him, but he began to allow arrogance and pride to dominate his attitude. Although we may not have as much hubris as Michael which led to “self” worship, many of us probably share some of his same tendencies if we’re honest. Most of us wouldn’t blatantly and openly worship ourselves neither would we demand worship from others. Still, we often allow ourselves to get in the way of worshipping the Lord. Our preferences become more important than the Lord; getting our own way becomes a battle to establish dominance and superiority. Any time we allow our own desires and preferences to interfere with our worship of the Lord, it becomes “self” worship. We’ve polluted our worship and made ourselves odious to the Lord because we haven’t sought Him.

On the contrary, authentic worship of the Lord isn’t about victoriously gloating over getting what we wanted, but instead it’s about aligning our desires with His will and doing what He has called and commanded us to do. True worship isn’t something we attend once a week to mark off our checklist; it’s not even really something that we do through rituals or tradition. Yes, God does call us to serve Him by performing good works as a result of our salvation, but worship is more about who we are in Christ. Who we are in Christ indeed affects what we do, but God is more concerned that we mature in our salvation and become more like His Son every day. True worship, therefore, seeks to imitate the Lord, conform our desires to Him, and serve Him daily through acts of goodness that reflect His character. Therefore, let us be a community that worships the Lord alone and rightly gives all our devotion to Him.

Incorporate

When we worship “self” rather than the Lord, how does it affect the community? What does authentic worship look like as a corporate body?

As a community, how can / should we balance worshipping the Lord with service? How can we sometimes become too busy “serving” and forget who we worship?

How do we worship the Lord as Savior here at FBCFW? In what ways does the Lord help us to mature in our salvation?

Journal: Document God's Work

September 22, 2019



*Welcome Leadership
from the Lord
Hosea 13:10-16*

Focal Verse:

"I will be your King; where is any other, that he may save you in all your cities?
And your judges to whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes?'"

Hosea 13:10

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Introduce

In order to prepare effectively for retirement, many of us will or have already opened one of several different types of retirement accounts. With all the different kinds of accounts that exist, it can become a very complex and overwhelming matter which requires an expert to give us sound advice and help us find the right option that's best for us. If we don't seek help from an expert, we could easily make devastating decisions that could not only put our future financial situation in jeopardy, but also our current financial stability. Therefore, we need someone not only with vast knowledge and experience, but also someone we can trust has our best interests at heart.



Although many may hire specialists and turn their finances over to them without worry or interference, some will still try to micromanage their own accounts—often at their own peril. Even though they have qualified fund managers, many people who micromanage and obsess over things will tend to circumvent their authority and go against their expert advice. One recent television commercial by T. D. Ameritrade portrays a gentleman sitting on a couch like a patient with another man intently listening. The first man begins to describe all the research he performs and the models that he builds before trading stocks and shifting resources. Admittedly, despite all his own research he still can't quite pull the trigger and make the definitive decision he knows to be right. Playing the role of the "psychiatrist," the other man confidently diagnoses the problem and says, "Sounds like a case of analysis paralysis." To which the insecure man asks, "Is there a cure?"

Imagine for a moment that this man somehow put all his trust in a particular company to make decisions for him. Based upon his personality by his own admission, he probably couldn't go along with their suggestions without micromanaging things; he would need to manage it all himself! Although neither the fund manager in the company nor the man are infallible and the stock market is always volatile, this man could fiddle with things until he loses it all—not ever giving the fund manager the

Introduce

chance to utilize his expertise.

Frequently, we treat God in the same way. God always wanted to be Israel's King, but the people clamored and complained that they wanted a human king and never recognized the Lord as their King. God relented and gave them a king in Saul; though outwardly he looked the part of a king in physical appearance, he was a horrendous and unstable leader overall. Despite the terrible decisions that we've made, God still wants to be our King if only we would trust Him and surrender to Him (Hosea 13:10). Unlike the fund manager in this example, God never errs, never fails, and never guides us to make the wrong decision. We can trust Him implicitly with our lives. Many times, however, we will tell God in theory that we'll make Him King, but we continue to micromanage and wrest control away from Him. We put ourselves at risk of complete failure! As a community, however, we need to welcome leadership from the Lord and trust Him to reign in our lives by allowing Him to reconcile and restore us in a relationship with Him. Let us, therefore, be a community who acknowledges the leadership of the Lord and surrenders completely to Him; let us not merely claim in theory that He is our King, but let us allow Him to reign fully in our lives.

Key
Question

In what ways do we try to seize control from the Lord even though we have in theory made Him King of our lives?

Hosea 13:10-11

TRUST GOD TO REIGN:

God had always intended for Israel to make Him their **King** rather than seek to emulate the world and follow an imperfect human **king**. In Hebrew, verse 10 actually opens with a question asking, “**Where is your king?**” By phrasing it this way, the Lord wants them to understand that no earthly **king** can save them (see [Hosea 13:4](#)). Only He alone can save them from their own folly and impending judgment which they ignorantly brought upon themselves. During a time of national turmoil and uncertainty such as what Israel faced at that time, human leaders came and went at an astonishing rate—whether overthrown by a coup, assassinated by a rival, or killed / led into captivity by another invading nation. The people literally had no earthly leader upon whom they could rely; this should have made them realize that they could only rely upon the Lord as their **King**, but they continued to search relentlessly for an earthly leader to find their answer!

Upon what things do people rely instead of the Lord?

Question
1

God continues to emphasize that no earthly leader could save them by asking a series of rhetorical questions. Hence, he inquires, “**Where is any other person who can save you in all your cities?**” **The judges**, upon whom they relied to provide wisdom in the selection of their earthly leaders, could not direct (i.e. **give**) them to a **king** and **princes** who could provide effective leadership! Instead of seeking wisdom from the Lord when selecting their leadership, Israel relied upon human intuition and wisdom; previously, God had always appointed Israel’s leadership, whether the high priest or government officials—we can see this in



Illustration of Samuel anointing David as King.

Instruct

Samuel's search for and appointment of David rather than Jonathan--Saul's son and the rightful heir to the throne by human standards. Now, however, the people omitted God's role in this process altogether. After an extensive search during Hosea's time, they still couldn't find a king to guide them or any other leader to save them from this inevitable Assyrian attack. Ultimately, Assyria would utterly destroy their cities, plunder their goods, kill their citizens, and carry off the remaining people into captivity. In verse 11, God states emphatically, "I am giving **you a king in My anger** and I am taking **him away in My wrath.**" The two verbs in the imperfect tense (giving / taking) establish the idea that these actions began in the past when Israel stopped seeking the Lord and will continue indefinitely until they return to Him. Thus, as long as they omit God in the process of selecting their leaders, they will continue to have political instability. Since the days of Saul, Israel had begged for a human king and rejected God as their only King; God indeed relented and gave them what they sought, but this succession of human kingship was fraught with problems. Eventually, the people stopped seeking the Lord altogether. His **anger** and **wrath**, however, don't occur just because they stopped seeking His appointment for their leaders, but because also they abandoned Him completely and lived wickedly. Their fickle earthly leadership was only a symptom of a much larger problem: the people's sin.

How does omitting God from our decisions show a lack of trust in Him?

Question
2

Too many times, we find ourselves in a predicament because we haven't sought the Lord when making a decision. We may have thought we're too busy to wait upon the Lord and seek an answer from Him; we may have been put on the spot to make a split-second decision in our fast-paced world for which we weren't prepared; we may have even become prideful in thinking that we can make most of our own decisions because we have knowledge and wisdom from our own personal experience. Regardless of the reason we may give, we need the Lord to help us make our decisions because we need His perfect wisdom. Through Scripture, God has provided a pattern whereby we can learn to make good decisions.

In learning to trust the Lord to guide our decision-making process, we can discern four principles which we must apply: *avoid* distraction, *anticipate* a response, *act* upon righteousness, and *accept* correction. First, we can *avoid* distraction and personal

struggle by knowing God's voice; this comes from an intimate daily relationship with Him through Scripture and prayer. This relationship enables us to discern right from wrong and differentiate our fleshly desires and secular opinion from His perfect will. Second, knowing God's voice allows us to *anticipate* what He desires us to do, so that we can prepare a response before a decision must be made and we're caught off guard. Third, we must *act* on what we know to be right based upon God's Word. We don't sit passively while we're ascertaining God's direction, but instead we abide by the principles in His Word by which He has clearly called us to live. Finally, we must *accept* correction from the Lord and learn from our mistakes rather than habitually repeating them. If we apply these four principles to our lives, God will guide us in making the right decisions and we will never wander off course when we listen to Him. Therefore, let us be a community that trusts God to reign in our lives and relies wholly upon Him to guide us in making the right decisions which honor and glorify Him!



Why must we always base our decisions upon God's Word rather than what we think or feel?

Question
3

Hosea 13:12-13

TRUST GOD TO RECONCILE:

In addition to rejecting the Lord's leadership in their lives, Israel **stored up** a multitude of **sin** because they refused to repent and be reconciled with Him (v. 12). Hosea, therefore, declares that **the iniquity of Ephraim is bound up** and **his sin stored up**. Even though He graciously offers forgiveness to those who confess their sin and repent, those who stubbornly continue in their **sin** will receive God's wrath and incur the punishment He has specifically specified. In [Leviticus 26:21](#), for example, the Lord emphatically states, "Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins." **Ephraim** is certainly entangled and enslaved by sin, but the phrases **bound up** and **stored up**

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carry with it the idea that God has kept a record of their sins and will hold them against them because they have refused to repent.

Even though God forgives sin if we confess and repent, why is it not a license to do as we please and then ask God for forgiveness later?

Question
4

In order to reconcile his books, an accountant must keep detailed records of transactions. Ideally, each month he would reconcile his records with the bank



statement to make sure that they match and he knows exactly how much money he has. An accountant, therefore, adds the funds that he receives and subtracts the expenditures that he pays out, so that he is in balance or right standing. Unfortunately, in Israel's case, their spiritual books didn't match because they thought their righteousness far exceeded

their **sin** and unrighteousness. They had fooled themselves! In fact, Israel was morally and spiritually bankrupt because they rejected God's own righteousness which He wanted to deposit within them through a relationship in which He Himself reconciled them by cancelling their **sin** debt. Instead, Israel kept adding **sin** to **sin** just like in Isaiah 30:1: "Woe to the rebellious children,' says the Lord, 'Who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin.'" By adding **sin** to **sin**, Israel racked up a huge debt that they could not pay!

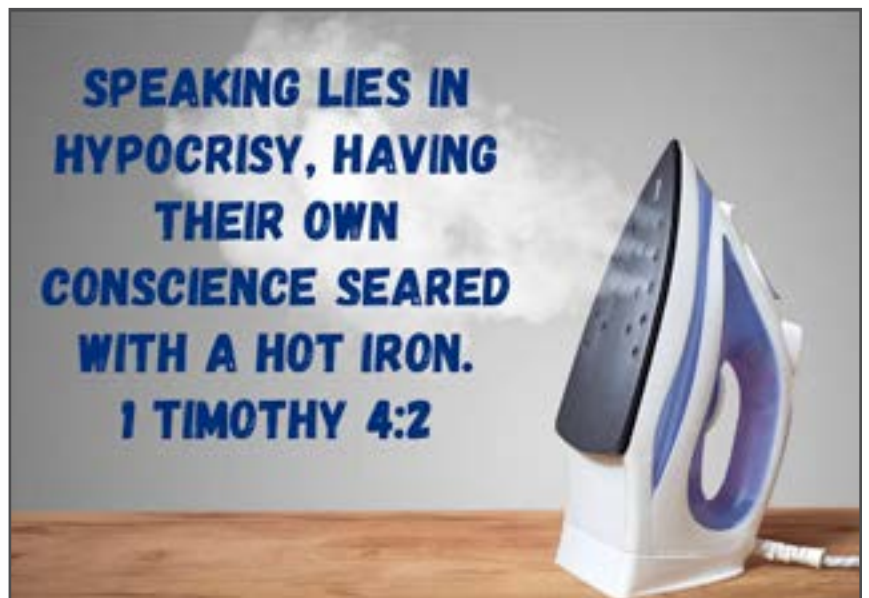
Only God's righteousness through Christ Jesus can reconcile us by canceling our debt and bringing us back into right standing with the heavenly Father. Through His blood shed upon the cross, Jesus washes away all our sin and imparts His own righteousness in us, making us acceptable to stand before the Father. Imagine that we become trillions of dollars in debt as an individual; there would be no way that we could ever earn enough money or work our way out of this debt. We'd be at the mercy of our creditors. Yet, one day, we find that someone has deposited trillions of dollars into our account, bringing us into balance! We would rejoice endlessly! God does this

same thing with us through Christ Jesus in an even greater way! Christ took upon our tremendous **sin** debt and gave us His own righteousness, reconciling us with Him. We couldn't do anything to earn His forgiveness or pay our way out of our sin debt, but God graciously and mercifully acted on our behalf to save and reconcile us, so that we can spend eternity with Him.

Why can't we repay our own sin debt? How would you explain this to the secular world?

Question
5

God illustrates Israel's dire position by comparing the nation to a mother and baby who die during childbirth. He points out **the sorrows of a woman** in labor **will come upon him** (v. 13). This isn't the "normal" labor pain and travail associated with childbirth, but it signifies a baby in the wrong position for birth with his feet, not head, first. Thus, Israel **is** like **an unwise son** who dwells **too long** in the place where **children are born**. If the breech of delivery had been caught in time and the proper steps had been taken to help the mother deliver without delay, then both individuals may have been saved; however, since the baby isn't in the right position for birth and the child stays there **too long** during the birth process, both he and the mother will die because the labor can't be completed correctly.



When we continually sin and constantly rebel against the Lord, it becomes more difficult to leave the lifestyle with which we are most familiar—whatever sin that may be; we continually dwell in it. We get stuck in a deadly routine in which we're powerless to overcome. We keep participating in the same sin without ever thinking about it. It's not impossible to be rescued and receive life through Christ, but it becomes harder the more times we sin because we become trapped in our errant ways. The more we participate in sin and degradation, the more we become desensitized to it and the more we become unaware of the actual danger in which we live. Paul describes this process of desensitization of our minds as "having [our] conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim 4:2). We no longer "feel" anything because we've killed all the nerve

Instruct

endings; in terms of sin, we can no longer distinguish right from wrong and we continue in sin unabated toward our destruction.

How does participating in sin deaden our conscience and make it easier to sin habitually?

Question
6

We need Christ to reconcile us and set us free from the enslavement to sin. We can't do this on our own; on our own, we're powerless to change and make our lives better. Israel, unfortunately, found this out the hard way. They refused reconciliation and remained in their sins; they brought upon themselves the penalty of their sins: death. In Romans 6:16, Paul asks this question: "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" Let us ask ourselves these questions too: who do we obey and to whom have we surrendered? Only one way leads to life! If we find ourselves repeatedly sinning without experiencing conviction from the Lord, we need to determine if we truly have a relationship with Him. As His children, we will all experience failure and we will all still sin at times; however, as His children, He will convict us and seek to lead us back to the correct course! If He doesn't convict us and attempt to restore us, then we likely don't belong to Him and we need to take time to seek reconciliation with Him ([Heb 12:5-11](#)).

Hosea 13:14-16

TRUST GOD TO REDEEM:

In the midst of this great despair, God still offers hope just as He has throughout Hosea. On their own, Israel was as good as dead in their sin, but through the Lord they can have life! Because of His grace and mercy despite all they have done sinfully, God triumphantly offers, "**I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death**" (v. 14). God has sent them a lifeline which would rescue them from death and guarantee them life if only they would reach out and grab it! Stubbornly, many still refused to accept it and perished as we will see in the last two verses of this chapter!

Imagine falling overboard on a cruise ship in the middle of the sea far from any land mass—too far to swim on your own. The only hope would be for a person on the ship to throw a life-preserver attached securely to a rope which would be used to reel you

in. How many of us would recognize this as our only hope and take hold of the rope immediately? We wouldn't flail our arms and wonder if any other options would rescue us; we would grab it immediately! Fortunately, Christ has thrown us a lifeline of salvation through His sacrifice; all we need to do is take hold of it and He will pull us to safety. We don't have to drift aimlessly without hope, wondering if we'll ever make



it. All we must do is hold on to Him! He will **ransom** us and **redeem** us!

To demonstrate the certainty of God's promise, Hosea asks two rhetorical questions which Paul also borrows and adapts in [1 Corinthians 15:55](#) to express the absoluteness of life for those who have believed in Christ and surrendered to Him. Therefore, Hosea asks, "**O Death**, where is **your plagues?**" and "**O Grave**, where is **your destruction?**" In essence, he declares that neither **death** nor the **grave** have power over the Lord; consequently, He will not allow those who have a relationship with Him to see corruption or decay (see [Psalm 16:10-11](#)). Through Christ's restoration, we can share in His resurrection and we will be raised bodily one day to live with Him forever. For this reason, Paul can assert, "But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor 15:23). Praise the Lord that we have a Savior who loves us so much that He seeks a relationship with us and offers us eternal life regardless of what we have done as long as we repent and turn to Him!

If we truly repent, why do we not have to fear death?

Question
7

Tragically, Israel didn't turn to the Lord and they continued in their wicked ways. Instead of receiving comfort and compassion (i.e. **pity**) from the Lord, they experienced destruction and separation from Him. Since they did not turn from their sin, God did not bestow His compassion upon them by rescuing them from death and giving them life. They refused the lifeline that the Lord offered! As a result, God allowed the destructive **east wind** to **come** upon them even **though** they had been very successful and **fruitful** in the eyes of others (v. 15). This **dry wind** will **come** from the desert (i.e. **wilderness**), bringing with it severe drought; their springs and fountains **shall become**

dry. God will no longer bless Israel; the nation's divine **treasury of every desirable prize** has run out and will be plundered. Israel has run out of chances and options; now divine judgment has come.

Therefore, Hosea ends by announcing that **Samaria is held guilty** because **she has rebelled against her God** (v. 16). Because of Israel's hard hearts, God will allow Assyria to overtake them and destroy them. Throughout history, Assyria was well-known for its brutality, especially the events that Hosea describes here in verse 16. Because of their sinful disobedience, the people will **fall by the sword**, but even more gruesome Assyria will dash their **infants into pieces** and rip open the wombs of pregnant mothers. Sin brings unrestrained violence and unspeakable acts; we cannot blame this on the Lord, but it squarely rests on the evil heart of man. God has given us every opportunity to turn from sin and escape judgment. However, an even worse fate than Israel's defeat by the Assyrians will await those who reject the Lord and refuse to repent of their sin: death and eternal torment by being separated from the Lord. Therefore, let us be a community who welcomes leadership from the Lord and allows Him to reign freely in our lives, so that we might experience abundant life and salvation through Him.

In the introduction, we saw what could potentially happen if we micromanage our retirement accounts and reject expert advice. Although other humans can and do fail often, the Lord never fails and has established a perfect plan for our lives. Even though He has made this perfect plan available to everyone who will accept it, many people still reject it because they think that they know best. On the contrary, we must welcome the leadership of the Lord and make Him the King of our lives! In theory, many people say that they allow the Lord to reign, but they retain control in some parts of their lives. God wants every part of us; He wants full access to our lives! Imagine if we paid for unrestricted access to a venue; we could supposedly go anywhere we want without limits. When we got to the venue, however, we learned that some places were actually closed and off limits. After complaining vociferously, we'd come to realize that the advertisement and agreements weren't honest. We really didn't have "unrestricted" access; we had limits. In many ways, we sometimes treat God dishonestly like this. We broadly claim that He has free access, but in the end we try to tell Him that He can't go here or there. We must trust God to reign in our lives and allow Him to reconcile and redeem us into a vessel whom He can use. Therefore, we need to give God "unrestricted" access to every area and make Him King and Lord of our entire lives—not just the areas we want to surrender to Him.

Incorporate

In what areas have you trusted God fully in your life? Are there any areas in which you have not fully surrendered to Him? In these areas, how can you make a conscious effort to trust and surrender to Him?

In what ways do people try to seize control from the Lord in the church? What does it look like when we let the Lord reign in the church?

How does being reconciled to the Lord help us to be reconciled and unified with each other in the church? Why is reconciliation an on-going process even though we have a genuine relationship with Christ (see [1 John 1:9](#))?

Journal: Document God's Work

September 29, 2019



*Wisdom Comes
from the Lord
Hosea 14:1-9*

Focal Verse:

“Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.”

Hosea 14:9

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Introduce

Having worked in the library from my under-graduate to post-graduate degrees, I encountered many students who thought themselves to be wise, but lacked wisdom. One would expect that when reading for a research paper that one would take copious notes, so if they wished to quote something they would have easy access to recall it. Wisdom would tell us to jot down the author, title, page number, and a brief description on a note card.



However, many students failed to do this and came to me for help. They would begin by telling me that it was a book on Ephesians, for example, which had a green cover. In a library of over 300,000 volumes, they might as well have said, "It's a book with words and page numbers!" They had no clue from where their source of knowledge came! Still, others would quote from a book and not *actually* know what the author had said! Frequently, as a teaching assistant and adjunct professor, I encountered students who quoted heresies (wrong beliefs) favorably. One of two things happened: they found the source quoted in another book, but didn't bother to look up the original context or they took a few words out of context from the original author because they skimmed the book rather than read it. Quoting someone who holds unorthodox and errant beliefs can lead to a whole host of problems—let alone cause confusion for the student when they do go back and read what the author actually wrote. If we don't know from where our source of wisdom comes and understand the right context, we can have a whole host of problems in life as well.

Another problem that I've seen not just in the academic world, but also the church is that people have a favorite author or have a book recommended to them by a trusted friend, but they take everything as truth and inerrant in the book without ever comparing it to what Scripture says. Certain authors may generally be orthodox and correct in their views, but it doesn't mean that they're inerrant; only Scripture is infallible, inerrant, and the inspired Word of God useful for teaching at all times! In preparation for this curriculum and for teaching, I read a wide variety of publications—

Introduce

with some of which I agree and some of which I don't. However, I don't merely take these works at face value; I compare them to the truth of Scripture. For example, I may find a commentary to be orthodox and generally correct, but I don't value its interpretation over Scripture—especially when it disagrees theologically and contextually with what God has written!

From these three examples, we see the need not just for wisdom, but for godly wisdom which comes from Scripture. We can trust God to impart wisdom by which we can live successfully, but we must make absolutely certain that the wisdom by which we live does come from Him! The world attempts to bombard us with wisdom from many different sources, but we must rely upon God's wisdom rather than human. As we will learn in this final chapter of Hosea, God has clearly outlined His plan for us and given us the precepts by which we can have life. So as a community, we must return to the Lord for the wisdom to be liberated from sin, recognize Him as the sole source of wisdom, and rely upon Him to impart us wisdom by which to live. When we do, we will have a content and blessed life in Christ.

Key
Question

Why is it important to evaluate every source of so-called wisdom against Scripture?

Hosea 14:1-3

RETURN TO THE LORD FOR RESTORATION:

After covering many difficult subjects, revealing the vileness and repugnance of sin, and showing the utter destruction unrepentance brings, the book of Hosea ends on a high note by pronouncing hope for **Israel** if they would **return to the Lord** their **God** (v. 1). God will gladly restore people when they come to Him for help. To receive restoration, however, **Israel** must first acknowledge their sin as the reason that this destruction has occurred in their lives. They have no one to blame for their condition, except themselves. For this reason, Hosea reveals that they **have stumbled because of their own iniquity**. The word **return** in Hebrew also means “to repent”; we can’t **return** to the Lord if we don’t first repent of our sins and get in right standing with Him!

How can we help people understand the need for repentance in a relativistic world today?

Question
2

As humans, we tend to blame others or even our circumstances for our mistakes and faults. Several years ago when in high school preparing for a field trip, our teacher sent a few of us to the cafeteria to get some things. On every door to the cafeteria at eye-level hung neon signs with large print that said, “Testing Do Not Disturb.” Seeing the signs, I started to go to the back entrance, but one of the boys with me opened the door, making a big commotion. Although he shut it quickly, it was too late as one of the vice principals had already seen him. The vice principal came to door and ask why he had opened it. To



which the boy responded, “Our teacher sent us to get some items for the field trip.” The principal quipped, “You didn’t see the signs or you didn’t think they applied to you?” The boy, pointing at me, said, “He didn’t say anything about them!” With every question the vice principal asked, the boy always blamed someone else; he never took credit for

his own mistake!

We can't blame others for our own faults because the Lord is holy and perfect and sees our hearts. When we stand before Him, we must admit our own mistakes and recognize our guilt. Yet, some still try to blame God for their shortcomings. Some may lament, "You didn't tell me!" The Lord, however, will point to Scripture and say, "I gave you everything you needed to know right here." Others may interject, "I couldn't help myself; I couldn't do it on my own!" The Lord will rightly respond, "I offered you help many times, but you refused." Still others may claim, "I stood no chance in the environment in which You placed me!" God will assert, "You can't blame Me because I gave you many chances and every opportunity to repent." To receive salvation from the Lord, we must acknowledge our sins and repent. We must admit that we need the Lord to rescue us—a subject to which Hosea will now turn!

What are some excuses that you've made in your life? How did your excuses ultimately still fail to produce results?

Question
2

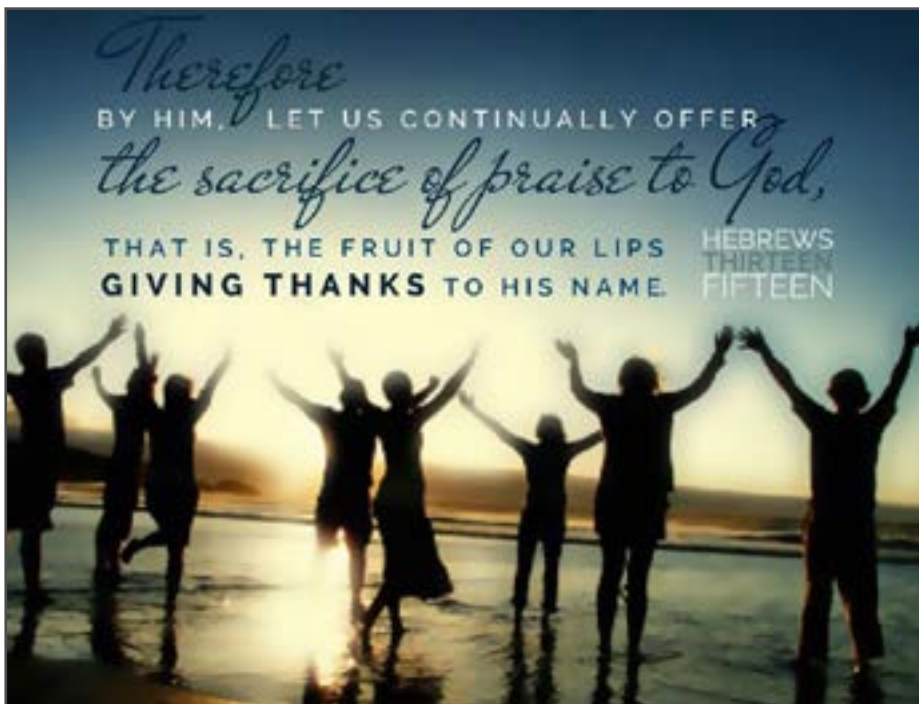
The translation of the Hebrew in verse 2 may sound a bit awkward to our ears, but when we understand it in its context we can ascertain what Hosea means. Literally, the Hebrew text reads: "**Take with you words and return to the Lord, saying to Him.**" Here, Hosea is simply leading the people in a prayer of repentance. He's telling them to express their genuine remorse to the Lord for the evil in which they had participated. In the prayer that follows, he leads the people to confess their sin and repent. After they have acknowledged their sin, the people must ask the Lord to **take away all** their **iniquity** and appeal to Him for forgiveness. The phrase translated **receives us graciously** carries with it the idea of forgiveness. In a more modern prayer, we may say something similar: "Father, take away my sin and graciously forgive me."

In-Depth Information



*The last few chapters in Hosea have some of the most difficult Hebrew phrases to translate. As we've already seen, those in verse 2 are no exception. The phrase translated as **receive us graciously** in the original language is "accept what is good." In the context here, it most likely refers to forgiveness. The people aren't saying that they are good and deserve to be rescued. They have acknowledged their sin and are asking the Lord to accept their genuine apology. They're truly sorry!*

This prayer isn't just another empty promise by Israel, but it is accompanied by genuine life-change within the people's hearts. Throughout the entire book of Hosea, we've seen the people mindlessly participate in rituals and give the Lord lip service only. They would claim to worship the Lord, but they worshiped Him as one among many other false gods! They truly didn't have a relationship with Him even though they claimed to have known Him ([Hosea 8:2](#)). At the close of the book, however, the people have finally realized that **Assyria** cannot **save** them (v. 3). Instead of turning to other nations for help like they have in the past, they will now turn to the Lord and **offer the sacrifices of their lips** (v. 2). In other words, they will praise and worship the Lord with a sincere heart; they will no longer offer Him lip service alone because they will mend their ways and have an intimate relationship with Him.



What does sincere praise look like? Why must sincere praise always be accompanied by life-change and action?

Question
3

Hosea isn't giving Israel a ritual prayer to be repeated verbatim whenever they sin; he's giving them a model or example of how they should pray. A prayer in and of itself doesn't save us if we aren't sincere in our hearts. A sincere prayer will always be accompanied by action which demonstrates life-change. Throughout Hosea, Israel had a bad habit of saying one thing and doing another; even though they went through the motions of ritual acts and prayers, their sinful actions never stopped. In this current passage, however, we can observe that Israel sincerely meant the words of this prayer because they changed their actions. In their confession, Israel acknowledges and asks forgiveness for their specific sins with which God has charged them. They ask God to forgive them for turning to secular nations rather than to Him, for their idolatry, for their materialism, and for rejecting Him and His mercy. When we pray, we ought to confess

our sins specifically as God reveals them to us and brings them to our mind, so that we can repent and stop engaging in these particular actions that dishonor the Lord.

When we pray, why should we be as specific as possible when confessing our sins and not just make broad, sweeping statements like “forgive me of my sin?”

Question
4

In their prayer, Israel declares that they **will not ride on horses** anymore. Coupled with the declaration that **Assyria** cannot **save** them, this assertion that they **will not ride on horses** means that they will trust God and not foreign military powers for their security and provision when they need assistance. **Horses** in this context refer to the primary



mode of battle—just as we would think of the cavalry prior to World War 1. Throughout Hosea, God chastised them for seeking help from foreign nations and trying to imitate their culture. In [Hosea 8:9-10](#), God reveals that “they have gone up to Assyria, like a wild donkey alone by itself; Ephraim has hired lovers. Yes, though they have hired among the nations,

now I will gather them; and they shall sorrow a little, because of the burden of the king of princes.” No longer would Israel seek other cultures and envy them, but now they would seek the Lord.

In addition, the people affirm that they **will not say anymore** that **the work of their hands** is their **gods**. In a broad statement such as this, we can see how that it applies in two ways. First, Israel will no longer craft and carve idols from their own material resources to worship in violation of the first two commandments (see also [Hosea 8:4; 13:2](#)). Instead, Israel will worship the Lord alone and not these secular and false gods as if they could see, hear, and respond to their prayers. Second, they will not be more devoted to their possessions and material wealth than to the Lord. They will have the right perspective and acknowledge God as the source of their blessings; this will result in genuine praise directed toward Him!

Finally, they announce that in the Lord **the fatherless** will find **mercy**. Like the Prodigal Son who returned to his father to find restoration and compassion, Israel has recognized that their true hope and **mercy** resides in their heavenly Father. They have come full circle; they have returned to their senses by returning to the Lord and seeking wisdom from Him! In essence, Israel had become an orphan (**fatherless**) when they rejected the Lord and served Baal. God had abandoned them and given them up to their own sinful and selfish desires (see [Hosea 2:3-4](#)). Yet, He always stands ready to offer forgiveness and compassion when we return to Him—no matter what we have done. For this reason, Psalm 68:5 calls God “a father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation.” When we **return** to seek Him, God will extend **mercy** unto us; He will liberate us from our enslavement to sin and grant us wisdom by which we can live a fruitful life in Him.

In what ways have you trusted God for wisdom in how to live? How does trusting God set us free? Are there any areas in which you need to trust Him more for wisdom?

Question
5

Hosea 14:4-7

RECOGNIZE THE SOURCE OF SALVATION:

Many people lack wisdom because they fail to turn to the source that can truly offer them help; they go through life by trial and error on their own rather than seeking the right way for help in the first place. Israel had sought salvation and healing from every other nation rather than the Lord who alone could save them (see [Hosea 5:12-6:3; 13:4](#)). None of these nations could offer them compassion and assistance that lasted; on the contrary, they made things worse by exploiting Israel and turning them away when they needed help the most! God doesn't turn us away when we need help the most; He picks us up and delivers us through the circumstances and rescues us from our own sinful desires. He's with us every step of the way. Thus, Israel has come to recognize that only the Lord **will heal their backsliding** and offer them restoration and salvation according to His great **love** (v. 4).

In what ways have other people let you down whom you have depended upon?

Question
6

God offers us salvation and restoration through His grace. He contends that He **will**

Instruct

love freely and avert His **anger** when people turn from their sin to Him. This serves as a beautiful picture of salvation. God loves us so much that He offers salvation through His grace and mercy free of charge. We can't earn it; we can't be good enough to achieve it on our own; ritualistic worship doesn't impress Him—only a relationship with the One who created us through the Messiah brings salvation. Therefore, God **freely** dispenses it through the ultimate, once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Using illustrations from agriculture, Hosea explains how the Lord will graciously restore them and help them to mature in His wisdom to live according to the covenant which He made with them.

First, God **will be like the dew to Israel** (v. 5). In a dry, arid environment like Israel



outside of the primary rainy seasons, **the dew** provides life-saving water for the plants. If there were no **dew**, the plants would wither and die in the heat for lack of water. Apart from salvation in the Lord, we too would die! Second, the Lord will cause Israel to **grow like a lily** and **lengthen their roots like Lebanon**. Not only will He save them and sustain them, God will also provide ample opportunity for growth. The imagery of deep roots suggests a firmly grounded plant that isn't fragile and won't topple in storms. For Israel, this means that they will not be blown about by the winds of culture, chasing errant doctrines ([Eph 4:14](#)). On the contrary, they will be firmly rooted and grounded in their relationship with

the Lord; nothing will cause them to stray.

How do we develop deep roots in the Lord so that we will not stray from the truth?

Question
7

Finally, God describes how Israel shall become an example to all the nations and a beacon of hope by pointing others to a relationship with Him. The nations will notice a difference in Israel and they will see how God has blessed them because they have returned to Him. No longer will Israel be an unproductive, barren land, but they will

experience new growth in the Lord ([Hosea 9:16-17; 12:1; 13:15-16](#)). Therefore, Israel's **branches shall spread forth** and **his beauty be like an olive tree; his fragrance like** the appealing aroma of cedar trees in **Lebanon** (v. 6). Rather than repelling the nations and causing them to flee from the Lord because of their repugnant sin, Israel will now be an example to them and demonstrate the desirability of having a relationship with the Lord.

Because the nations will observe that a relationship with the Lord is desirable through Israel's life-change and renewed heart, Hosea notes that **those who dwell under** Israel's **shadow shall return** or repent (v. 7). Just as the Lord called Israel to return unto Him, so also has He called all nations to return and have a relationship with Him! God desires that no one perish, but all have everlasting life ([2 Peter 3:9](#)). In the same way that the Lord aided Israel in their maturation, Israel would also become God's representative once again who would assist the nations in their growth and maturation by constantly pointing them to the Lord. Like Israel, they would **be revived like grain** and **grow like a vine** (see also [Rom 11:11-31](#)). As a result, **their scent will be** as pleasant as **wine** from **Lebanon**.

When we as believers act like the secular nations around us and they can't see a difference between our lives and theirs, we cause them to blaspheme the Lord and reject Him ([Isa 52:5; Rom 2:24](#)). If we are no different than they, why would they want to be reconciled with the Lord and mend their ways? They have no impetus for salvation in the Lord because they don't see visible life-change within us. Consequently, we must present a good example for them to follow; one which attracts them to the Lord rather than turns them off. They must witness the transformation that God has produced in our lives, so that they can see the value of salvation and recognize the source of our salvation comes through the mighty work of the Lord Himself.

How has the Lord called us to be an example to the nations?

Question
8

Hosea 14:8-9

RELY UPON THE LORD FOR THE WISDOM TO LIVE:

Hosea closes his prophecy from the Lord by summarizing what He wants **Ephraim**, or Israel, to be. He will reject all idols and will no longer **have** anything **to do** with them **anymore** (v. 8). God has **heard** Israel's cry of repentance and has **observed him** to see that he truly means it; in other words, God examines their heart to see if they are

genuine and looks for outward transformation which confirms the inward work that He



has done through them. For this reason, God compares Himself to **a green cypress tree** in whom Israel finds his **fruit**. From this metaphor, we can learn two principles: 1) God is the source of life and 2) He is the source of our provision and everything good. An evergreen fir tree, to which the Hebrew in this text refers, never enters a state of dormancy like deciduous trees; the

green represents life and vitality year-around. In the same way, we have everlasting life and vitality in the Lord. In Him, we should be constantly growing and maturing—never entering a state of dormancy or inactivity! In this way, God grants us the wisdom of His Word and the example from His Son by which to live consistently.

In what ways does the Lord call us to grow and mature constantly in Him?

Question
9

Not only is God the source of life, but He's also the source of our provision and everything good. Fir trees usually don't bear edible **fruit**, but Hosea mixes metaphors here to emphasize God's provisions for us. Although Israel had forgotten that all their blessings had come from the Lord, they will now realize that they have no blessings and provisions apart from Him. Their friends failed them; their material wealth failed them; their idols failed them. They found no hope and no provision outside of the Lord! Israel realized just as James said in his letter, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (Jas 1:17). Israel had followed human and secular wisdom that bid them to look inwardly at the successes of mankind for their strength and resilience. However, true wisdom points us to the Lord who gives life, provides sustenance, and gives us everything good we have in life; therefore, let us acknowledge and celebrate the role that He intimately maintains in our lives.

What good things has God given you? How do you use them for His glory?

Question
10

Hosea concludes with a series of rhetorical questions and answers to show how God gives us wisdom by which to live. He asks, “**Who is wise and prudent?**” He proceeds to answer these questions by stating: “the one **who understands and knows these things.**” **These things** specifically refer to Hosea’s prophecy, but even more broadly to the Scripture which contains God’s covenant with the people and the boundaries which He has set for them to follow (v. 9). Throughout Hosea, the Old Testament, and the New Testament, God outlines the way we should **walk**. Because **the ways of the Lord are right**, we as believers, those whom the Lord has made **righteous**, should **walk in them**. Oppositely, those who do not have a relationship with the Lord and transgress His covenant, they will **stumble to do** right and walk continually in sin. God doesn’t set forth vague principles by which He has called us to live, so that we’re constantly guessing what He expects of us. Conversely, He clearly and specifically communicates them to us through His divine Word. In Christ, He has even provided a visible example in how we should abide by them and perfectly fulfill them. We have no excuse! God has plainly given us wisdom by which we must live. His wisdom should govern everything in our lives and influence the choices that we make, so that we live in righteousness and walk in the light as He Himself is in the light ([1 John 1:7](#)). As a community, therefore, let us recognize that all wisdom comes from the Lord alone. His wisdom points to Him as the sole source of restoration through our repentance, the only way for salvation in His Son, and the source of wisdom for how we ought to conduct our lives.

Why should God be the first One whom we seek when we have questions or are struggling with the path to take in our lives?

Question
11

In the introduction, we learned how and why our wisdom by which we live must come solely from the Lord. Man's wisdom may fill libraries world-wide with hundreds of thousands of volumes, but the only volume with a worthwhile solution comes from God—Scripture, His infallible, inerrant, and inspired Word. Rather than relying on man's collective wisdom which will always prove faulty, we must rely upon God's wisdom which proves perfect. Man often has many solutions and opinions in how to fix our problem, but only one solution works—and that comes from the Lord. Many will argue that we have multiple ways to fix our sin-problem and have access to heaven, but none of those solutions work at all! On the contrary, God has clearly given us the wisdom and plan for eternal life by sending His Son to die on the cross and rise again on the third day to pay the penalty for our sin! There is no restoration and salvation apart from Him ([John 14:6](#))!

Throughout Hosea, the people continually rejected God's wisdom and His covenant with them; they searched for contentment in everything temporal: material possessions, other nations, false gods, and ultimately the unbridled "pleasure" of their wicked ways. Human wisdom tells us that we can eat, drink, and be merry without consequence; we can live it up today because we're uncertain of what the future may hold. God's wisdom, however, tells us that there is more to life than what we see here and now; there's something greater that awaits those who have a relationship with Him. Therefore, as Christ says, we should invest in the eternal where moth and rust don't destroy by following God's plan for life.

His plan for life doesn't merely entail a future-only plan, but it communicates with us how to have success now by following the boundaries He has set and serving Him faithfully until He calls us home. Therefore, let us be a community that recognizes God's wisdom by following His perfect plan for our lives which leads to life and contentment in Him rather than being like the people of Hosea's day who followed their own plan and faced the consequences of their actions which led to their destruction.

Incorporate

How does the world attempt to bombard us with its various forms of wisdom? How can we as a community remain planted firmly in God's wisdom?

As a community, how can and should we point others to Christ? How does acting hypocritically or inconsistently influence the secular world when we claim to be believers?

If you could give one example as a testimony to the transformation that God has performed within you, what would it be? How has God given you the wisdom to overcome that area of weakness and transform you into the person you are today?

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