

SOUTHLAND CHURCH

THE BOOKS OF
**AMOS
& HOSEA**

14 Day Devotional



foundations
daily devotional

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& HOSEA**

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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

INTRODUCTION

In order to better understand the ministries of Amos and Hosea it is important to review some of Israel's history. The nation of Israel was established with the conquest of Canaan and after years of having no human ruler God allowed Saul to become a visible king. After just three kings (Saul, David and Solomon) the kingdom split as civil war ensued upon Solomon's death. The north rebelled against the south and eventually the kingdom was divided with ten tribes in the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and two tribes in the Southern Kingdom (Judah). The Southern Kingdom occupied Jerusalem which meant that the Northern Kingdom was left without a place of worship so they established their own holy shrines. The history of Israel was bleak as many of their kings did not follow God. The south fared better but was not without struggles. In the time of Hosea and Amos Assyria was the superpower of the day. It was a relatively peaceful time as Jonah's ministry in Nineveh had brought some relief to the people of Israel as their foes temporarily chose the path of repentance. Because of Israel's location on trade routes between Europe and the Middle East many merchants and bankers became very wealthy during these peaceful times. Although the standard of living rose with many enjoying luxuries in society there were those that were quite poor. It was a time when the rich got richer and the poor seemed to get poorer. Affluence brought along with it moral effects such as corruption, bribery and financial scandals. There was no justice in the courts, people ignored the Sabbath, and promiscuity and drunkenness rose. The people had strayed far from the commandments of God in both moral and religious life as idolatry was the norm. God would not turn a blind eye to their behaviour. The books of Amos and Hosea show how God brought warnings to His people. The message of Amos was about the wrath of God and the coming judgement. Hosea focused more on the love of God and His mercy. Both were used to warn Israel of what might happen if they continued in disobedience and rebellion.

DAY 1



READ: Amos 1-2

Amos was not a religious leader who was part of the court like Isaiah or Zechariah but rather was a shepherd (v. 1). Even though Amos had no religious training His message was straightforward. He condemned Israel's veneer of religion and exposed idolatry, luxuriousness, corruption and injustices in society. As an ordinary person he called Israel's leaders to wake up and pay attention to the needs of the poor. In the first two chapters, Amos goes through a number of Israel's neighbors and announces the punishments awaiting them. He begins with Damascus (1:3-5), Gaza (1:6-8) and then Tyre (1:9-10). As the people listened to these pronouncements they must have been happy to hear the downfall of their enemies. Amos then moves on to announce punishment for Edom (1:11-12), Ammon (1:13-15) and Moab (2:1-3). This is now getting a bit closer to home geographically for the Israelites. Amos does not stop with the Gentile nations but also includes Judah (2:4-5) and Israel (2:6-16) in his list of nations who were morally depraved. In fact, Judah's sins differed from those of the other nations in that they violated the laws of God and knew better. Israel's sins were also grievous – slavery (2:6), sexual promiscuity (2:7), dishonoring the temple with drunkenness (2:8) and greed (2:6). The message is clear - punishment is coming, there is no escape.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Amos was an unlikely person to bring God's message of judgement to the people because he was a shepherd and not a priest. This shows that God can use anyone who desires to faithfully obey Him. Have you ever eliminated yourself from ministry because of lack of skills or talent or because of your position in life? Talk to God about this, what does He say is important for those who serve Him in the church?
2. It is easy for us to measure others with a stricter measuring stick than which we measure ourselves. We often want justice for others and mercy for ourselves. In this case, God held Judah and Israel to a higher standard than the pagan nations because they had received the revelation of God's laws and knew better. What does God want to say to you about this?
3. God's character does not change. What would it look like if He were to say to us, "For three sins of Canada, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath?" How should this motivate us to live holy lives?

DAY 2



READ: Amos 3-4

The Lord is calling His people into account because of their sin. God had chosen Israel to be His people and they had forgotten what this privilege involved. Using a series of rhetorical questions (3:3-6), Amos builds up to the explanation of why he is speaking these harsh words. The Lord is revealing things to His servants (the prophets, 3:7) because He is just and will give them adequate warning before He will judge them. The Israelites had built their prosperity on oppression and robbery and God will judge such greed (3:10). Using the analogy of how a shepherd saves only two leg bones or a piece of an ear when a lion comes to devour his sheep Amos gets his point across that only a small remnant would survive the coming punishment. He condemns the upper class women who he refers to as cows of Bashan. They pampered themselves while oppressing the poor and crushing the needy (4:1). This is a society where some live in luxurious summer and winter houses (3:15) while others are oppressed and abused. In verse four of chapter four we read of Bethel and Gilgal which were centres of worship for the Northern Kingdom. These places should have been sacred but the people desecrated them with enormous idolatries offering sacrifices to senseless gods. In the past God had used natural disasters to discipline and warn His people but those lessons were forgotten (4:6-11). In each case they did not return to the Lord (4:8, 9, 10, 11). After having been given chance after chance by God He was giving them one last chance through the prophet Amos, to turn to Him and repent.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. When we look closely at the sins of Israel in the book of Amos we can't help but see many of them in our society today. Spend some time re-reading Amos 3-4 asking God to reveal to you sins that are prevalent in our society. Take a moment to repent of these sins on behalf of our nation.
2. We know from other parts of Scripture that wealth in itself is not sinful (it is the love of money that's sinful). Amos rebukes the people for gaining wealth at the expense of the poor and oppressed and for ignoring the needs of the underprivileged in society.

What does Jesus want to say to you about this? How can you show God's love through concern for the poor and oppressed?

3. Pray for the church to grow in showing genuine authentic love for others through acts of justice in society. Thank God for the ministry of the Four Winds Distribution Centre and generosity of God's people here at Southland! Pray that more people would answer His call to help the needy!

DAY 3



READ: Amos 5-6

Chapter five begins with a lament and call for Israel to repent. Amos reviews how Israel had fallen and the devastation that is to follow (5:3) and pleads with them to renounce their idols and seek God and live (5:4). Even after their great sinfulness there was hope for this nation if they turned to God. Amos then gives a magnificent description of the Lord who turns night into day and governs the order of the universe (5:4-9). He rebukes their injustices and oppression and encourages them to repent (5:10-24). The appeal is summed up by the prophet's passionate plea to "seek good and not evil that you may live" (5:14) - it is up to them to decide. In verses 21-27 of chapter five God directly addresses Israel with the charge of unfaithfulness. God rejected the current practice of religion in Israel because the people had no basis on which to come to God because their conduct reflected disobedience of His laws. It was the hypocrisy of the people's behavior that God hated. In the midst of their wickedness they were still going to church and sacrificed animals. God hated their religious celebrations and won't accept their offerings or listen to their worship. What was inside their hearts mattered most and there they were lacking. Even though the people felt secure (6:1) and lived lives of luxury (6:4-6) this would soon end. God would use a nation to punish them (6:14).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Many people in our society eagerly seek success, wealth, prestige and power. In their pursuit, some people end up sacrificing their marriages, families and even their health. What does today's passage teach us to seek? Ask the Lord to show you what this should look like in your life.
2. Re-read Amos 5:21-24. Ask the Lord to show you any areas of hypocrisy that you struggle with. Ask Him what He requires of you in these areas – what changes are you to make in your lifestyle?
3. In their complacency Israel failed to grieve over the spiritual ruin of their nation (6:6). What should grieve us today about our nation? Take time to pray about these things and dialog with God about them. Ask the Lord to help the church/Christians to be faithful and obedient to His Word in these areas.

DAY 4



READ: Amos 7-8

These chapters contain five visions of disasters that were seen by Amos the prophet. The first was a plague of locusts (7:1-9) which would devastate the crops. Amos cried out to God, who heard and relented so that the locus plague would not happen. The second vision was that of fire devouring the deep (7:4-6). Once again Amos cried out on

behalf of Israel and once again the Lord heard and relented from bringing this disaster upon them. Whatever this judgment represented it is clearly averted by the prayer of Amos. The third vision was that of a plumb line (7:7-9) - the Lord is standing on a wall with a plumb line in hand and He is setting the plumb line in the midst of Israel and will bring destruction upon the places of idolatrous worship and the house of Jeroboam (ruling king of Israel). In construction, a plumb line is used to measure the correctness of a building. God has measured Israel and can no longer overlook her sinfulness. The next verses provide a brief interlude from the visions of Amos. Amaziah, priest of Bethel (the centre of idolatrous worship) accuses Amos of conspiracy against king Jeroboam of Israel. He tells Amos to leave Bethel and go back to Judah. Amos defended his prophetic mission (7:14-15) and prophesies against Amaziah and Israel telling of what would become of his family: his children will be killed and his wife will be sold into prostitution, his land will be taken and he will die far from home in a foreign land (7:17). Chapter eight continues the visions of Amos. The fourth vision is of a basket of ripe fruit (8:1-3). The Lord revealed that Israel's end is near and is ripe for judgement. Israel's sin is described as oppressing the poor and needy (8:4) as well as contempt for religious observances because they hinder economic enterprise (8:5) and dishonest economic practices which further abuse the poor and needy (8:6). The nature of Israel's judgment is described in the following verses (8:7-14) as a fifth vision. A day of mourning is coming (8:10), a day when the Lord will be silent (8:11-12) and those who trust in idolatry will fall and never rise again (8:13-14). The silence of the Lord is a terrible punishment. In the past when Israel faced times of great distress they turned to God for a prophetic word of hope or guidance but in the coming judgement the Lord will answer all such appeals with silence.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Amos was not just a prophet but a man of prayer. When God showed him the visions of the locust and the fire he cried out to God and pleaded with Him not to do it and God drew back from what He had said He would do. It is remarkable that prayer can affect God in this way. God is personal, He listens and He is willing to be persuaded. What does this teach you about prayer? How is this a motivation to be faithful in prayer?
2. A basket of ripe fruit was normally associated with the joys of summer harvest but in this case it was a divine picture of judgment. When we listen in prayer we can often receive a correct word, picture or thought from the Lord but sometime we can apply it incorrectly. It is God who gives prophetic words/thoughts/pictures and their interpretations also belong to God (Gen. 40:8). Have you ever been disappointed by a prophetic word that did not come true according to what you thought was spoken? Dialogue with God about this. What does He want to say to you today about these things?
3. In Amos 8:11-12 we read of a famine of the Word of the Lord. We must make sure that we don't experience a self-imposed famine of the Word by neglecting to study the Scriptures and listen in prayer. Pray for believers to grow in desiring and obeying God by spending time in the Word and in prayer. Ask God to grow the church in seeking Him and in prayer/intercession.

DAY 5**READ:** Amos 9

In a final vision Amos sees the Lord standing by the altar, He is about to initiate the people's destruction from the very place that they expect to hear a word of peace or blessing. The altar will be destroyed and none shall escape (vs. 1-4). This is accomplished by God who is described as Creator and Sustainer of the universe (v. 5-6). Israel had become like the pagan nations (vs. 7) and will be utterly destroyed (v. 8-10) but yet they will not be completely destroyed. What little good remains will be sifted like grain nevertheless the sinners will not escape but will die (vs. 9-10). With all the doom and gloom in the book of Amos it has a hopeful ending with a glimpse of a brighter future for Israel. The restoration of the tabernacle of David is foretold in which even the remnant of Edom and the Gentiles, who are called by His name, are included (vs. 11-12). James applied this prophecy to the church and the inclusion of Gentiles in Acts 15:13-17. What a hope for the people! The final vision of the book is one of a glorious time when God will restore His land, when the harvest will be bountiful and Israel will be firmly planted in the hand of God with nothing able to uproot it again. We are still longing for the complete fulfillment of this prophecy!

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. In the book of Amos we learn that God rules over nations and holds them accountable. This is still true today. Spend some time in thanksgiving prayer for God's sovereignty. What struggles are you having in your life that you can trust to the sovereignty of God? Thank Him for this too!
2. Another lesson from the book of Amos is that our walk with God has to be expressed in love and concern for the poor and oppressed. Over the past five devotionals what has God been saying to you about this? How can you grow in loving God by taking care of the weak and the needy?
3. The last chapter of Amos is filled with hope and promise for Israel. God is a God of hope. How does this portrait of God give you confidence when things seem hopeless?

DAY 6**READ:** Hosea 1

Hosea lived in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and prophesied soon after Amos. Like Amos, Hosea condemns social injustice, false gods and fake worship. While Amos showed little patience with Israel, Hosea displayed a large degree of sympathy and understanding. The unique thing about Hosea is how he lived out his message with his whole life as a prophetic act including his marriage and the names of his children. The message of the book is quite clear. Despite Israel's unfaithfulness God still loves His people and doesn't want to punish them for their spiritual adultery. God repeatedly urges them to return to Him.

In the first chapter we are introduced to Hosea's family which symbolizes Israel's rejection of God. Hosea is commanded by God to marry the prostitute Gomer (v. 2), who bore him a son named Jezreel, meaning God scatters (v. 4). This name anticipates God's judgment on Israel. Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter, Lo-Ruhamah, which means no mercy (v. 6). Her name describes God's attitude towards Israel. Finally,

Gomer bears another son, Lo-Ammi, whose name means not my people (v. 9). This declares God's rejection of Israel. Some suggest that only the first son was the biological child of Hosea as the text says that Gomer bore the children but says nothing about the daughter and youngest son being Hosea's offspring. The concluding verses of the chapter foretell Israel's restoration (vs. 10-11). This could be a reference to the restoration from Assyrian and Babylonian captivity however both Paul and Peter apply this promise to believing Jews and Gentiles in the church (Rom. 9:25-26; 1 Pet. 2:10).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. God asks Hosea to marry a prostitute in order to characterize how Israel has been unfaithful to Him. In what ways have you been unfaithful to God?
2. What Hosea illustrates is still true today about God. In spite of our unfaithfulness, God still loves His children and desires for us to walk wholeheartedly with Him. Each of us to prone to wander away from God at times. Thank God for His love and forgiveness when we genuinely turn to Him in repentance.
3. A promise is given in verse ten, *"Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'children of the living God.'"* Meditate on this passage of Scripture. Ask God to show you how these promises relate to your relationship with Him. What does He want to speak to you through His Word today?

DAY 7



READ: Hosea 2-3

The relationship between God and Israel was symbolized in the life of Hosea. After Gomer had three children, she returned to her old occupation. Hosea found her, brought her home and put her through a period of discipline when he didn't know her as a wife. Then he courted her and started all over again with her as his wife. Gomer was reproached by her children for what she was doing and Hosea punished her for her behaviour but she was restored as his wife. Throughout Gomer's promiscuity Hosea was faithful to her even when she was faithless to him. He was firm with her and for a period of time he did not treat her as his wife (which most likely means that he didn't share the bed with her). Gomer had a healthy fear of Hosea which led to respect and loyalty being slowly brought back into her life. Through Hosea's experience with Gomer God provided Israel with a concrete illustration of what His relationship with them had been like. They had played the harlot but God would take them back, following a period of punishment and probation.

In today's passage, we see God depicted as a jilted husband who wants to win his wife back. This husband not only learns of his wife's unfaithfulness but also learns that the children are not his (2:2-5). Israel is condemned for her unfaithfulness with charges of harlotry and adultery and will be punished for this sinful conduct. Because of this her path will be blocked and she will be walled in (2:6) so that she cannot find other lovers and will go back to her husband (2: 7). She returns without acknowledging what God has provided for her (2: 8) so her provisions are taken away from her (2: 9) and she will be kept from experiencing celebrations and festivals (2: 11). The things that she acquired with the pay from her lovers will be destroyed (2: 12) and she will be punished for going after other lovers and forgetting her husband (2: 13). Then, she (Israel) would be wooed by her husband (God) who will lead her into the dessert and speak tenderly to her (2:14)

and win her back curing her of her idol worship (2:17) and establishing a covenant of peace and safety, betrothed to her once again (2:18-20). God does not want to punish Israel; instead He wants to marry her (2:19) and win her back to a life of righteousness and mercy and love.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. We can learn from this passage a bit about how God feels about apostasy and spiritual harlotry. Christians are betrothed to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2) and must be careful not to fall into spiritual adultery (2 Cor. 11:3). Ask the Lord to show you any areas of sin in your life that you need to repent of today. Confess these things as sin and then ask Him to show you how you can walk in accordance with His Word.
2. Mediate on Hosea 2:19-20. It is interesting to note the image God used to communicate His relationship with us. It isn't a judge who is passing a sentence or a father scolding his children. The picture is that of the intimate relationship of marriage. This paints the picture of God as a husband who longs for intimacy and closeness with us. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what this tells of your worth to Him.
3. The story of Hosea and Gomer is our story. We all must come to the realization that "I am Gomer". Each time we sin we are being unfaithful to God. He is compassionate and forgiving but my sin causes great damage to our relationship. God sees our unfaithfulness and we are disciplined for it but ultimately God wants us back. He loves us and wants relationship with us. There are times when we may feel like quitting because of our own unfaithfulness to Him but He says, "I'm not done with you, I desire to restore you as my bride. I desire to continue my love relationship with you, return to Me!" What else does Jesus want to say to you about this?

DAY 8



READ: Hosea 4-5

Chapter four begins the passages about God's charges against Israel. As we read them we must remember that the entire book of Hosea is structured around two key things: Israel's unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness. *"There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. ²There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed"* (4:1-2). The land mourns (4:3) because sin affects all living things. The priests should have known God and should have reminded the people to follow the laws of the Lord but they shirked their responsibilities and did not act as guardians of God's laws or give proper religious instructions to the people. The prophets were also guilty of stumbling. Hosea warned the priests not to blame the people for they themselves were guilty of twisting the law of God for their own benefit (4:6-8). The people willingly followed the priests in their degraded lifestyle and they all would be punished – priests, prophets and people. They all entered into idolatrous relationships and practiced the religious rites associated with them (4:9-10) including cult prostitution, drunkenness and worshipping wooden idols (4:11-12). Even their daughters had been led astray into prostitution in the name of worship (4:12-13) however the Lord lays the blame on the men who sponsored such conduct (4:14). The people lack understanding and will come to ruin (4:14b). Hosea concludes with a stern warning of the consequences of Israel's spiritual adultery (4:15-19) and issues a plea to Judah to not follow in the ways of Israel (4:15). His final verdict is that because of their adultery and idolatry Israel will be put to shame (4:19).

The accusation against the priests, rulers and people continues in chapter five. The rulers of Israel have led the people into unfaithfulness. Hosea sites two examples of this, the first is at Mizpah (5:1) and the second is at Mount Tabor (5:1). The result of poor leadership was a “deep slaughter” which may refer to child sacrifice. God warns the people that He knows about their sins. God is omniscient and is fully aware of all that transpires on planet earth. The Lord singles out Ephraim who led Israel into sin (5:3) and also caused Judah to stumble into sin (5:5). The oracle ends with Hosea telling the people that their religiosity will not help them. Because of their false worship, idolatry and promiscuity they have no real knowledge, devotion or commitment to God and without real repentance they cannot find God (5:6-7). The next section begins with a call to action. “*Blow the horn,*” (5:8) as a warning that the danger of God’s judgment is near. The people would be judged in the form of foreign invasion (5:8-11). This coming judgment is likened to two destructive forces: a moth and dry rot (5:12). Just as moths eat away at clothing and dry rot causes gradual deterioration, God’s people will waste away. Instead of turning to God, they turned to Assyria (5:13) and now God will consume them like a lion consumes his prey (5:14) and carry them off into exile. God will deprive the Israelites of His gracious helpful presence until they realize that turning to anything other than God is useless for help and repent, earnestly seeking Him (5:15).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. God’s people casually followed religious traditions and were slowly enticed into the trap of spiritual adultery and idolatry. There is a difference between religion and having a genuine relationship with God. The Israelites were full of religious activity (much of which was a perversion of God’s law’s) but lacked genuine relationship with God out of which flows love, repentance and devotion to Him. How is your relationship with God? Are you living a life of regular confession, genuine faith and obedience? Ask the Lord about each one of these things. What does He want to say to you about this today?
2. Pray for the leaders of the Canadian church to follow through on their responsibility to deliver God’s Word faithfully and represent Him in all they do. Ask the Lord to show you how you can pray for church renewal in Canada.

DAY 9



READ: Hosea 6-7

“Come, let us return to the Lord!” This is the plea of Hosea as he urgently exhorts the people to return to God. Even though Israel deserved punishment, the God of mercy stood ready to restore His people and heal their nation. With repentance they can be fully restored. The prophet assured them of God’s forgiveness if they repented. This forgiveness was as sure of the dawning of the sun each day and as sure as the spring rains. God is compassionate, with genuine repentance there would be not only forgiveness but restored blessing. God asks a rhetorical question in 6:4, “What shall I do with you?” The faithfulness of the people was like the dew that disappeared quickly in the morning. In His loving concern, God sent prophets to warn the people but now the words of the prophets will be fulfilled – the people will experience judgment (6:5). He then gets to the heart of the matter in 6:6. The sacrificial system was never meant to be an end in itself but as an expression of genuine love and commitment to the Lord and His holy ways. Any offering without sincere faithfulness to the Lord and true acknowledgement to Him was meaningless ritual. What the Lord desired was devotion,

not rituals. The Israelites lived like they could do whatever they wanted (including cultic pagan worship) as long as they turned up at the temple and took part in the necessary sacrifices and festivals. God says that true worship is not found in saying the right words or obeying rituals but in trying to live according to the will of God. God desired their hearts. Just like Adam failed and was exiled from the Garden, Israel had failed and would be exiled from the Promised Land. Hosea declared that even the priests were corrupt (6:9) like a murderous gang of thieves. One of the most disgusting aspects of Israel's rebellion was their sexual sin (6:10). Because of this a harvest time is coming (6:11a). Even though God has tried to woo His people through the prophets because of their deep sin and moral wickedness they didn't even notice what He was trying to do so they did not receive the healing that He promised. In fact, it was so bad that their evil made the king glad (7:3). Their spiritual adultery is likened to four different things. First, an oven that is supposed to be kept hot while the dough rises (7:4) except the baker doesn't show the needed attention to the flames. He then uses the illustration of a cake that is half baked. The basic problem here is that they have failed to seek the Lord (7:10). The third image is that of a dove. Doves are often noted for their good qualities but Hosea is clear that this dove is without sense (7:11) by making secret alliances with the two opposing powers of Egypt and Assyria. The last picture is that of a treacherous bow (7:16). Bows that lose their tension so that the archer cannot hit his intended target are very dangerous. Israel's relaxed attitude towards God will cause them to fail.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. God is compassionate. Each time we turn to Him with genuine repentance we are forgiven. Ask the Lord to show you the depth of the forgiveness that He has given you, if you have sincerely repented. Spend some time thanking Him for His love, mercy, compassion and forgiveness.
2. God says that true worship is not found in saying the right words or obeying rituals but in trying to live according to the will of God. Sometimes it's easy to get caught in the trap of going through the motions without engaging with God. Re-read Hosea 6:6, meditating on it. What does God want to say to you today about this? How does this verse apply to your life?
3. Pray for believers to experience a deepened awareness of the need to walk in genuine relationship with God. Pray for many people in our church to model this in the way they live their lives. Pray for the church to grow in authentic worship of God.

DAY 10



READ: Hosea 8-9

Hosea sounds the alarm! The people of Israel claim to know and love the Lord but their deeds tell another story. They have failed to follow the Lord's instructions and they have broken their covenant with Him (8:1). By choosing to follow a morally corrupt path they will be invaded by an enemy army (8:2-3). One of their sins was choosing their own kings and royal officials instead of letting God lead and guide (8:4a). These leaders sinned by creating idols of silver and gold (8:4b-6). Hosea related the foolishness of the people to a farmer who plants under wrong conditions and doesn't reap a harvest (8:7). He then described them as a useless cup/vessel (8:8) and finally as a wild donkey (8:9). The next charge related to their foreign policy of hiring allies (8:10). This would cost them dearly leading to their defeat and severe oppression at the hands of the Assyrians. The very altars that were to take away the sin of the people had become a

place that multiplied sin (8:11). The Lord condemned their worship practices in previous chapters and again emphasizes the unacceptable nature of their sacrifices as being in clear violation of the Law (8:13). The Lord did not accept their offerings and would punish their sins (8:13). They had forgotten the One who had made them (8:14). They had built palaces and fortified cities and would pay for their self-reliance. In chapter nine Hosea continues His condemnation of Israel by warning them further. Because they had forsaken God the land would produce diminished harvests (9:2) and they will be exiled to a foreign land (9:3). In captivity they would eat food that was ceremonially unclean (9:3) and would no longer have the privilege of offering sacrifices to the Lord (9:4). Even if they could offer sacrifices while in captivity they would not be considered acceptable by the Lord. Those who would try to escape the invading army by fleeing to Egypt would end up dying and being buried in Memphis (9:6). "The days of punishment have come" (9:7), God would no longer withhold His judgment but would punish them for their sins (9:9). Imagery is used in verses 10-17 of chapter nine for unfaithful Israel. First, they are compared to grapes in the wilderness or the first fig on the fig tree (9:10). A traveler would find delight in this discovery and be refreshed by them as God initially took delight in His people. But that was short lived. Because of their compromise they and their offspring would perish. The lack of spiritual productivity will be reflected in the people's inability to have children. There would be miscarrying wombs (9:14), their children would die (9:16b) and their babies would starve (9:14b). If this nation did not change it would head toward extinction. In their hearts they had strayed from the Lord therefore they would physically wander among the nations (9:17) as exiles from their land.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. The people of Israel claimed to know and love the Lord but their deeds told another story. We know that salvation is by faith, not by works, nevertheless James is clear that works should be evident if there is genuine faith (James 2:14-26). What type of story do your deeds tell? Ask Jesus to give you insight into the combination of works/faith and show you how to apply it to your life.
2. One of the sins of Israel was choosing their own kings and royal officials instead of letting God lead and guide. They made their own plans, showing self-reliance, instead of following God's plans. Christians today do this when they make all their own decisions (often asking God to bless those decisions) instead of spending time in listening prayer seeking out God's will and direction. What is one area in your life where you need direction? Spend some time in listening prayer asking God what His will and plans are in that area. Commit to doing this regularly until you receive confirmation of God's will. Then commit to obeying what He shows you.
3. Pray for believers to learn to intentionally seek God's guidance and direction in their lives. Pray for a growth in hearing God among His people and for obedience to naturally follow.

DAY 11



READ: Hosea 10-11

There are two metaphors that are given in chapter ten of Hosea, Israel as a vine (vs. 1-8) and as a trained calf (vs. 9-15). The first analogy repeats the idea that Israel had a good start and then got off track. The vine yielded fruit, which increased. This prosperity and

abundance was risky as the people couldn't handle it and lost their way. Their hearts were false; they pretended to worship God but were actually worshipping idols. Their divided loyalties caused them to ultimately reject the Lord and foretell of the failure of the monarchy (10:3). As a result, empty oaths were uttered and judgment sprung up like poisonous weeds (10:4). Hosea used imagery of thorns and thistles which represented unproductive land (10:8). The people would have it so bad that they would cry desperately for relief, even if that means death (10:8).

The Lord then brings up the matter of Gibeah which referred to the moral and social corruption in Judges 19-21 including rape and murder (10:9). God would bring judgment through the nations which gather against them (10:10). Israel was also like a trained calf that had been given the freedom to thresh the grain in the field. They abused this privilege and now would be muzzled with a yoke of captivity (10:11). Hosea pleaded with them to sow righteousness, to break up their fallow ground and seek the Lord (10:12). The people had trusted in themselves and in their military might (10:13) and therefore their fortresses would be destroyed (10:14). Their fate will be no better than Beth-arbel which was devastated without even sparing the women and children. The people must turn from their self-reliance to God, the only one who could sustain and deliver them. Hosea concluded with a sober warning which should not be ignored.

Chapter eleven contains some of the most touching words in all of Hosea. It speaks of God's early relationship with Israel and His sorrow at their rejection of Him for Baal, despite all that He had done for them (11:1-4). These first few verses show how God loves them and cared for them, leading them with kindness, not harshness. He has loved them from the beginning and has never stopped loving them. The people had taken His love and care for granted which necessitated their coming judgment (11:5-7). Yet God would not give up on His people (11:8). His love would mean that His judgement would not destroy them completely. Here we see that the Lord has emotions, He has compassion and affection and will not renounce His people even though they have renounced Him. After the period of judgment is over the people will be returned to their homes and will respond with faithfulness to Him!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Although God's justice demands punishment for wickedness His deep compassion for His people means that He will not destroy them completely. God is a God of love, holiness, justice and mercy. Spend some time meditating on each of these four characteristics of God – 1) His love, 2) His holiness, 3) His justice, and 4) His mercy. What does He want to say to you about each of these? How have you experienced each in your walk with Him?
2. God prefers to restore the repentant and desires repentance. He will gladly heal those who repent. He desires redemption but sadly not many took Hosea's message seriously. The same is true today. Take a moment to look at your own life asking Jesus to show you areas where you need to repent of your sins. Thank God for His forgiveness and pray that you would grow in holiness in each of these areas.

DAY 12**READ:** Hosea 12

The events listed in verses 3-4 refer to the book of Genesis and the life of Jacob. When Jacob was born his hand was holding his twin brother Esau's heel (Gen. 25:24) and later in life Jacob wrestled with God (Gen. 32:24-31) and was made into a new man, Israel. Afterward God met Jacob at Bethel and renewed His promises with him (Gen. 35:9-15). Here we see that Jacob the deceiver became Israel, the channel of God's blessing. Just like Jacob, the people of Israel must realize that they are nothing without God and return to Him, maintaining His standards of love and justice (12:6).

The dishonest business practices exhibited by the Israelite merchants show a corrupt society, even though they claim to be innocent (12:8). The Lord declared that He would bring them into a place where they would dwell in tents which told of the coming exile. Jacob is mentioned again in verse 12. This time the emphasis is how God preserved him while he fled from his brother whom he had deceived to get the birthright and ended up working for his bride, Rachel. Hosea then gives another example of God preserving and guarding His people through a prophet (Moses) who led the people out of slavery in Egypt. Yet God's people were not thankful for His protection and leadership and chose to reject the Lord.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. *But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.* (v. 6). Meditate on this verse. Ask the Lord to give you insight on how to apply this verse to your life. How should the truths in this passage affect your behaviour?
2. Go through today's passage again asking the Lord to show you each time God used prophets to lead and guide His people. Thank the Lord for His leadership. Ask Him to show you an area in your life where He wants to lead and guide you. What does He want to say to you about this?

DAY 13**READ:** Hosea 13

Many of the former charges against Israel are reiterated in this passage. Israel had become ungrateful to the Lord and had gone after idols of their own choosing (vs. 1-2). God's people had forgotten who had redeemed them out of Egypt and cared for them on their way to the Promised Land. They failed to acknowledge Him and all that He had done for them (v. 4-6). Their prosperity led to their forgetting the Lord. The imagery of a lion, leopard and bear is used to depict God's judgment that is coming for them (v. 7-8). In verses 9-11 the Lord emphasized Israel's coming destruction. They had begged for a king and now there was no human leader or ruler who could save them. God's intention was to punish His people (v. 12-14) as their sins had been stored up for the future and now that future had come. They were like a child who refused to be born, which is fatal. Israel was warned that a scorching east wind was about to come (v. 15). They will pay a heavy price for their iniquity (v. 16).

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask the Lord to show you ten things in your life that you can be grateful for. Try to include at least three hardships. Spend some time in thanksgiving prayer, thanking God for each of these things.
2. Ask the Lord to show you three ways in which He has been working in your life. Thank Him for each of these things.
3. Pray for believers to recognize the hand of the Lord in their lives and to remember all that He does for them. Pray for an increase in thankfulness in the church.

DAY 14**READ:** Hosea 14

The closing chapter of Hosea begins with a final plea by the prophet to the people of Israel to turn from their sinful ways. He appeals for them to sincerely repent and turn to the Lord. The outworking of their repentance will mean that they would live fully for God including abandoning idolatry. Rather than going through the motions they must reflect a life fully lived for God. If the people repent, confess their sins and pray for God's forgiveness and return to proper religious practices with true devotion reflected by genuine faith and love of the Lord they will find God ready to receive them. By returning to the Lord they would experience His divine compassion. God promised to heal their waywardness and love them freely (v. 4). He used three different images in verse five: 1) Dew – God will be like a life-giving water source of renewed life and strength, 2) Lily Blossom – Israel will blossom which speaks of having a renewed spiritual life, 3) Cedar Tree – Israel's strength and prosperity will be renewed. Verse six also contains some incredible imagery: 1) roots shall spread out – this imagery represents Israel's expanding kingdom or influence in the world, 2) beauty like the olive – a symbol of strength and prosperity, 3) fragrance like Lebanon – references that they will be desirable. People will find rest and refreshment under the shade of this new tree, Israel. The nation would once again be fruitful, a faithful people and blessed by God (v. 7). After one last plea for them to be done with idolatry God likens Himself to a green pine tree who is their source of power and success. A repentant Israel will be forgiven and will once again bear fruit, knowing that this fruit comes from the Lord (v. 8). The closing verse is like an epilogue to the entire book. The choice stands before them – obedience or rebellion. The wise will realize the things that Hosea has been proclaiming, will understand them and choose the path of righteousness. The rebellious will stumble. Each person must decide for themselves.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Just like in the times of Hosea people today must turn to the Lord with genuine heartfelt repentance with dedication to the Lord. What does this look like in your life? In what areas is God pleased with your walk with Him?
2. Only God can produce real fruit in those who follow Him (v. 8). Ask the Lord to show you areas in your life where He has borne fruit in you. Thank Him for this fruit and pray that you would be eager to give Him the glory and not take credit for His work.

3. Each person has a choice to either walk in obedience or live in rebellion; there are only two paths. Pray that the lost would learn of their rebellious ways, seek God, repent and walk in obedience to the Lord. Ask God to show you 1-2 people in your life who are lost and to show you how you can minister to them.

OUTCOME

Unfortunately, neither Amos nor Hosea succeeded in turning the people back to God. The people did not listen to their messages therefore God was forced to judge the Israelites. Assyria invaded and defeated the Northern Kingdom approximately 30 years after the warnings of Amos and 10 years after warnings of Hosea. Their defeat brought them into exile. The important thing to remember is that God was fair and just. He used the prophets to reveal His plans to the people and did not punish the people without proper warning. God sent prophets to explain to the people what would happen if they continued in their wicked ways. Amos and Hosea were “last chance” prophets sent to warn Israel of what God would be forced to do if they failed to turn back to Him. Amos was tough, Hosea was tender, but they both were God’s servants working to bring the people back into obedience. We must remember that God is merciful and that He never punishes without just cause and without warning His people.

The Books of Amos and Hosea

God's intention was that His people be a model to the world of what a relationship with Him was like. But His people had strayed far from Him. Amos and Hosea were prophets sent to Israel to warn them of what He would be forced to do if they failed to turn back to Him.

Hosea 6:6 (NIV)

"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings "