

# Anchored by God's Love (Lesson 2)

By: [Kay Daigle](#)   

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## Words to Anchor Your Soul

“I will commit myself to you forever; I will commit myself to you in righteousness and justice, in steadfast love and tender compassion. I will commit myself to you in faithfulness.”

God to Israel in [Hosea 2:19-20](#) (NET)

## Introduction

I am sure that we all know couples whose marriages have been destroyed by adultery. Some of you may be victims of your husband's adultery or guilty of it yourself. From experience and/or observation we all know how damaging infidelity is to a relationship.

So it was between God and His people, Israel. They were unfaithful as God's “marriage partner.” They had taken vows to be exclusively related to Him as their God, just as those in marriage do; however, they turned away and worshipped other gods, creating a gulf between themselves and the God who created and loved them. They refused to follow God's best, and so they had to deal with the consequences.

Sadly, we cannot study the entire book of Hosea because of its length; we can cover only the first three chapters. These are the chapters that I see as most significant in anchoring our souls because they give us insight into the heart of God. So often all we see in the prophets is God's judgment, but there is more there if we study carefully. As we saw in the first lesson, our relationships with God are broken, and He is broken-hearted about it. The story of the Bible is that of God moving us back into right alignment with Him; that restoration then spreads to our relationships with others and all of creation.

## Historical Background to Hosea

The prophetic ministry of Hosea is dated according to the first verse of the book. The reigns of the listed kings extended from 792 B.C. until 686 B.C. <sup>4</sup> Hosea's ministry probably began sometime after the first date and ended before the last king died. Both he and Jonah's prophecies date sometime during the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., but Hosea's seemed to have extended later. <sup>5</sup> Jonah was from the northern kingdom while Hosea lived in the southern kingdom, called Judah.

James Montgomery Boice refers to the book of Hosea as the “second greatest story in the Bible” after that of Jesus. <sup>6</sup> Consider that as you read.

## Day One Study

Read [Hosea 1-3](#). Try to use a modern translation (NET, NIV, NASB, NKJV), but not a paraphrase (*New Living Bible* is an example of a paraphrase) unless you are just completely lost! To help you better grasp the story, keep in mind that “chapters 1 and 3 describe Hosea’s dealings with Gomer, which serve as an object lesson of God’s love for Israel (chapter 2).”<sup>7</sup>

1. Summarize the story of Hosea and his wife.

*Diamonds in the Word:* Read the entire book of Hosea and make a book chart or simply list the themes of the chapters. Use up to four days on this assignment. I will not give you another optional assignment until Day Five.

Different translations use different words for the term God uses to describe Gomer in 1:2. The NASB translates it “harlotry”; the NIV reads “adulterous”; and the NET Bible uses the word “prostitute”. The note in the NET Bible is helpful: “The phrase ‘wife of harlotries’ probably refers to a prostitute, possibly a temple prostitute serving at a Baal temple.”<sup>8</sup> James Montgomery Boice feels that the term refers only to what Gomer became, not what she was when Hosea first married her.<sup>9</sup> Robert Chisholm suggests that either could be true: she may have already been a prostitute or she may have later become unfaithful. “Gomer’s subsequent unfaithfulness, no matter what her status at the time of the marriage, was enough to satisfy the intended symbolism.”<sup>10</sup>

2. God gave Hosea symbolic names for his children as prophecies for the children of Israel ([Hosea 1:4-9](#)). What would happen to Israel according to the prophecies behind the names?
3. Contrast the prophecies in 1:4-9 with the promises of 1:10-2:1.
4. What are your feelings toward the situation into which God led Hosea? How would you have felt if you had been in Hosea’s place?

Dr. Boice comments on God’s leading Hosea into an adulterous marriage:

God does sometimes lead his children into situations that are parallel if not identical to this. We live in an age where everything good is interpreted in terms of happiness and success. So when we think of spiritual blessing we think of it in these terms. To be led of God and be blessed by God means that we will be ‘happy’ and ‘successful.’ . . . This is shallow thinking and shallow Christianity . . . God sometimes leads his children to do things that afterward involve them in great distress. But because God does not think as we think or act as we act, it is often in these situations that he accomplishes his greatest victories and brings the greatest blessing to his name.

***5. What do [Romans 5:3-5](#) and [James 1:2-4](#) teach us about some of God’s possible purposes for us in hard situations? (Each situation is different and there are other purposes in trials.)***

6. *Sharing question:* Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt that God led you into a situation, and yet, when you got there, it was difficult and hard? Maybe a job

situation brought great distress. Perhaps a relationship, which seemed to be ordained by God, went sour and hurt desperately. Can you look back and see a blessing? Share what happened with your small group.

7. *Responding to God:* Write a prayer thanking God for a difficult place that he has you right now and asking Him to bring blessing in it.

## Day Two Study

As we look at [Hosea 2](#) in more detail today, remember that Hosea's marriage was a picture of God's relationship with Israel. In this chapter, the emphasis is on God and Israel.

Read [Hosea 2:2-13](#). You may want to begin reading at [Hosea 1:10](#) so that you see that 2:2 is dealing with Israel, pictured as the mother of the children of the previous verses. Sometimes chapter divisions confuse us!

8. What are God's charges against Israel, the mother (v. 2, 5, 8, 13)?

9. What would be the consequences if the nation refused to change its behavior (v. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9-13)? What was God's purpose in bringing these consequences (v. 7)?

10. Go back through these verses looking at God's feelings as the "husband." Write down your insights and how this helps you understand God's judgments.

Read [Hosea 2:14-23](#).

11. Contrast 2:14-23 with 2:2-13.

This week's memory verse is from this passage. Although the words are specifically written to Israel, they do express God's love for you, also. Spend time memorizing them.

12. *Sharing question:* You are not part of the nation of Israel, but you have made similar choices by being unfaithful to God as you worship the idols in your heart: money, appearance, entertainment, children, success, pleasing people, possessions, etc. How are the two contrasts in 1:4-2:1 and 2:2-23 encouraging to you personally as you think of God's heart for the church and His children? Or if you are a mother, how do they encourage you concerning your children?

13. *Responding to God:* Write a prayer or poem that expresses your thanks for God's encouragement.

## Day Three Study

Read [Hosea 3](#).

14. What did God tell Hosea to do?

It is likely that Hosea and Gomer had divorced at this point of the story because Hosea had to buy her.<sup>11</sup>

15. How did Hosea's actions picture God's relationship to Israel?

16. Parallel [Colossians 1:13-14](#) with what Hosea did for Gomer.

17. *Sharing question:* Summarize your story of Jesus redeeming you from the life that you led apart from Him. If you have not turned away from your other "lovers" to Him, will you choose to align your life with His, trusting that He will forgive you as Hosea did Gomer?

18. *Responding to God:* Picture yourself in Gomer's place because of your choices to align yourself with other lovers rather than with God. Spend the rest of your time today meditating upon the significance of Jesus coming to that place to redeem you. Write your thoughts below.

## Day Four Study

What great love God has for us! Today we will look at true love, not the chick flick or romance novel variety, but the kind of love that God gives us, pictured in the story of Hosea and Gomer.

Read [1 Corinthians 13:4-8a](#).

19. Compare this definition of love with the *Words to Anchor your Soul* for this week ([Hosea 2:19-20](#)). What strikes you about true love?

20. *Sharing question:* What actions are most difficult for you when you need to love someone who is unlovable?

21. *Sharing question:* Choose one particular aspect of love that means most to you as you consider how God loves you. Why is it most meaningful?

22. *Responding to God:* Write a poem or prayer to God, expressing how much His love for you means.

## Day Five Study

Today we will look at [Psalm 103](#). As surely as Hosea took Gomer back into his home and forgave and forgot her sins against him, so our God is ready to bring us back into relationship with Him and forgive and forget.

Read [Psalm 103](#).

*Diamonds in the Word:* Find some of the parallels used by Hebrew poets. One line may restate the same idea as the line before it, or it may extend the thought beyond the first line. Write down the added insights this gives you into the message of the psalm.

23. Which of God's "benefits" (NASB; NIV) or "kind deeds" (NET) does the psalmist instruct us not to forget?

24. *Sharing question:* Which of God's character qualities praised by the psalmist causes you to praise Him today? Why?

25. How does this psalm help you understand how God can love you unconditionally?

26. What does God do with the sins of those who fear Him?

To fear God means that we come before Him in awe and reverence for His power and His holiness. We understand that He alone is God while we are merely created beings who act in much the same way as two-year-old toddlers who want what they want! To fear Him means that we anchor our lives in His life.

George Bowen says this about the fear of God: "The fear of God is that deference to God which leads you to subordinate your will to His; makes you intent on pleasing Him; penitent in view of past willfulness; happy in His present smile; transported by His love; hopeful of His glory."<sup>12</sup>

The prophets and psalms were written many centuries ago. After they were written, God continued to unfold His revelation to mankind, but His greatest revelation came in Jesus.

[Hebrews 1:1-3](#) (NET) says, "After God spoke long ago in various portions and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets, in these last days he has spoken to us in a son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world. The Son is the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence, and he sustains all things by his powerful word, and so when he had accomplished cleansing for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Those who fear God in light of His final revelation recognize that they can do nothing to earn the forgiveness found in Jesus' cleansing death for them; that death and resurrection brought healing of our brokenness and the possibility of anchoring our lives in God and realigning ourselves with His purposes for us and the world.

If you are far from God, choosing to anchor your life in other things, He is calling you to turn around. Jesus is there to take your sins as far as the east is from the west and to heal your broken relationship with the God who loves you.

27. *Responding to God:* Draw a picture today (sticks are great), aligning yourself under Jesus, or draw Him as your anchor. Instead, you may draw a picture of your life in the slave market where Jesus rescued you by redeeming you. Write a prayer of response to what you draw.

### *Nancy's Story*

The need to be loved has been a central theme in my life. When I went away to college, I began to wonder, "Who will love me here?" My family had loved me when I was with them, but I was in Virginia and they were back in Houston. That first year of college I met some nice girls who had very different standards from the ones my parents had taught me. For the first time, I felt challenged as I considered the choices I would make. I knew what my parents would tell me to do, but that was no longer good enough. I needed to decide for myself. That first year I sampled some of what the world had to offer and I was miserable.

One night while I was home on spring break, my younger sister Anne told me what a difference knowing Jesus Christ had made in her life. The difference was apparent, too. She had calm confidence and strength of character that was attractive. Over the summer I read some literature she gave me. As I read, I began to feel that before I could come to God I needed to clean up my life. As I kept reading, I realized that the only way I could be clean enough was to let Him clean me up. I could never do a good enough job on my own. I went back to college the fall of my sophomore year, broke up with my boyfriend and quit hanging out with those girls. One day I noticed a notice on our dorm bulletin board about a weekly Bible study being held on campus. "Anne would go to that," I thought to myself, feeling close to her. "I'll go."

There I met Evelyn Saunders, who along with her husband had been a missionary in India for many years. The pages of her Bible were worn and the margins were full of her hand-written notes. That particular night we read from [Matthew 11:28-30](#), where Jesus said "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden." How that verse described me! I was worn out from searching for love and not finding it. He went on to say, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle. My yoke is easy and my burden is light." That night I said "Yes" to Jesus' invitation to come to Him.

That was many years ago, but this verse has become a picture of my life. Being yoked with Jesus. Walking with Him. He satisfied my search for love by giving me His unfailing love. He satisfied my need for guidance in life by giving me a manual, His Word, so I would know how to make choices in life. When I try to take the leadership away from Him, as I often do, He reminds me that He knows the way and wants to lead me in it.

### *Dakan's Story*

In 1976 I had been married three years to the "perfect" man who had an exciting career with a substantial salary; we had a "perfect" one-year-old baby; we lived in our "perfect" first home in the "right" neighborhood; and we had family and friends close by. What a charmed life I was living! I had all the "stuff." Why then did I sit at my kitchen table and ask myself what was missing? I felt imperfect with a void, an emptiness, and a loss of connection to anything meaningful. I believed there had to be more to my life.

A few days later I was invited to a seminar, "Inherit a Blessing." I attended but felt my mind and thoughts clouded by my confusion. I don't even remember what was said until the end when an invitation to accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior was offered. And only God knows why I made

the effort to accept Him! Days later as I shared this with a friend, she told me she had been praying for me. This earthly friend loved me enough to know I needed a Heavenly Father, full of unconditional love, who would be my contentment and joy for life. One by one, friends invited us to church, Bible studies, and fellowship groups. My life began to have a meaning and purpose.