

## **The Extreme Love of God**

**Hosea 1-3; John 3:16**

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John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” This is one of the most quoted verses in the Bible, and while we might all have different personal experiences with this verse, its common message remains: God loves us. He loves us so much that He willingly sacrificed His one and only Son to die for us and give us eternal life. Additionally, Jeremiah 31:3 says, “The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.’”

We see a demonstration of the very extreme nature of God’s love for us in the book of Hosea. Hosea was a prophet in the Northern kingdom of Israel. In the Old Testament, prophets were renowned because they were the only means for people—regardless of stature or status—to hear from God. During Hosea’s time, Israel was in the midst of an era of prosperity... and sin. They experienced blessing, but also had misplaced their loyalty to the gods of the land. In Hosea 1:2, the Lord tells Hosea to take a prostitute for a wife, and in obedience, He married one named Gomer. Although she conceived for Hosea a son, she also bore two more children out of adultery.

When Hosea discovered her treachery, he threatened to punish and humiliate her unless she put an end to her unfaithfulness, but instead of changing her ways, Gomer decided to leave her husband and children (Hosea 2:2-5). That decision led to hardships. She lost the comfortable life she had while she was married to Hosea, and though she tried chasing after her lovers, it led nowhere and she was left with nothing. In fact, life had gotten so bad for her that she ended up being sold as a sex slave (Hosea 2:6-8). Fortunately, this was not the end of Gomer’s story. In Hosea 3:1, “The Lord said to [Hosea], ‘Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans.’” In obedience, Hosea went out to look for Gomer, and took her back as his wife.

The book of Hosea teaches us what sin can do. It not only devalued Gomer to the point of her treatment as property, but it also destroyed her marriage and her family. But the book of Hosea also teaches us what God can do, and that no matter where we are in life, there is always hope. In this story, Hosea represents God, and even though Gomer here is likened to the people of Israel who were comfortable living in sin, she also represents us. WE are Gomer if we choose to remain faithless to God.

Thankfully, in God's grace, our story is not over until He says it is. Though we might choose the pleasures of this earth time and time again, the same way that Hosea cut off every path of escape for Gomer when she left him, God will do everything He can to bring us back to Him—even if it means allowing challenges in our lives. As John 3:16 says, He even allowed the shedding of the blood of His only Son, because that's what it took to get us back from the clutches of sin. God's love redeems and restores.

How, then, do we respond to this love? Just as Jesus laid down His life to pay for our sins, the only way to respond is by offering our own lives up to God, and allowing Him to be our Savior and our Lord. We must:

- A - admit and acknowledge that we are spiritually blind (John 15:5)
- B - believe in our hearts that it is only Jesus who can save us (Acts 4:12)
- C - confess our sins, for He is faithful and just to forgive us (1 John 1:9)