



# Enter the Story

## ***Undying Love***

A narrative about how God's response to His peoples' infidelity.

## ***THE BIBLE***

Hosea 1-3

*Prepare for the Story*

## **ICEBREAKER**

If you could go back in time and give any and all relationship advice, what would you tell your younger self?

*Rewind the Story*

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- Elijah – Ahab, Jezebel, and the contest on Mt. Carmel
- Passing the Torch – Elisha's Ministry
- Jonah – A big fish story
- Amos – A Farmer and a Plumb Line

*Hear the Story*

### **Scene One: Dysfunctional Family**

The word of the LORD came to Hosea during the reign of Jeroboam, king of Israel. The first time God spoke to Hosea, he said: *"Find a promiscuous woman and marry her.*

*Make her the mother of your children. Do this because the people of Israel have become like her; they have been unfaithful to me."*

Hosea did what the LORD instructed, and he married a woman named Gomer. Not long after, she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. God told Hosea, *"Name the boy Jezreel. (Jezreel was a physical place, but the word means 'God sows'). Because I have not forgotten the massacre that happened there. I'm going to make Israel pay, and the end of the kingdom is in sight. I'm going to turn Israel's bows into kindling in the valley of Jezreel. They are going to reap what they have sown."*

Hosea continued to preach and encourage the wayward nation to turn from their sin and trust God for deliverance from the threat of the surrounding nations. "Return to the Lord!" was the theme of his messages; he preached with power, but the people were not interested.

The same could be said of Gomer; over time, she grew less and less interested in his ministry. It was after the birth of Jezreel that Hosea noticed a change in Gomer. She became restless and unhappy. She began to find other interests to occupy herself and spent more and more time away from home.

### **Scene Two: Wandering Hearts**

Hosea and Gomer's desires were not aligned. It's hard to say what happened exactly, but like many marriages, they drifted apart. Gomer's absences grew more frequent and prolonged. Hosea was concerned and had his suspicions about her faithfulness to him. During the day, he preached with a heavy heart, and at night, he wrestled with his fears and insecurities.

One day, his fears were all but confirmed when they discovered Gomer was pregnant. It was a girl this time, and Hosea was convinced that the child was not his. God told Hosea, *"Name your daughter 'No Mercy' – because I've had enough. I'm fed up with Israel. I've run out of mercy and forgiveness. Judah is another story. They will have mercy, and I will save them. I will be the one to deliver them, not their armies or their own strength."*

This name was a symbol of Israel's wandering from God's love and the discipline that the nation was about to experience.

### **Scene Three: Other Lovers**

No sooner had their daughter been weaned than Gomer was pregnant again. This time, it was another boy. God spoke to Hosea again and said, *“Name this son, ‘Nobody,’ because the people of Israel have become nobodies to me - the people don’t treat me like their God; they treat me like a nobody.”*

This name symbolized Israel’s alienation from God, but it also exposed Gomer’s sinful escapades. It was clear that the child born in Hosea’s house was not his. With this name, it was all out in the open now. Everyone knew about Gomer’s affairs.

Hosea and Gomer’s story was put on display for the people around them – mirroring the relationship between God and His people.

Hosea pleaded with his wife to change her ways. He warned her of the consequences of her choices. But in the end, she chose to run off to be with another lover. She was convinced that this other man could provide her with a better life. The life she always dreamed of. So she left Hosea and the children behind and turned her back on the promises and vows she made to her husband.

Just like Gomer, the people had been unfaithful to God by worshipping false gods and following the ways of the nations around them. Israel was like a wife who leaves her loving husband and looks for comfort in the arms of another lover.

God had a right to be angry; he had been betrayed. The people had broken their vows and had no right to continue in a relationship with God. But what God was doing through Hosea and Gomer’s relationship was reminding the people of God’s undying love for them.

Despite their unfaithfulness, this was God’s promise to his people, *“In the future, the people of Israel will grow exponentially, more numerous than the sand on the shore, so great a number that it can’t even be counted. Right now, you are not my people. But later, you will once again be called my children. One day, Israel and Judah will come back together united under one leader, and there will be no stopping them.”*

God was not done with Israel ... and Hosea had not given up on Gomer.

## **Scene Four: Redeemed and Restored**

One day, word came to Hosea that Gomer had been deserted by her lover, and because she had hit rock bottom, she had sold herself into slavery. There was part of Hosea that felt vindicated, seeing Gomer finally suffer the consequences of her choices.

But God spoke to Hosea again and said, *“Go and love your wife again. Even though she has turned her back on you and cheated on you. Do this to show the people the kind of love I have for Israel. Even though the people have turned to other gods, I will not turn my back on them.”*

So Hosea went to the auction block and paid fifty pieces of silver, five bushels of barley, and one wineskin full of wine. It was no small expense to free her from her circumstances. Then Hosea said to his Gomer, *“From now on, you will stay with me. No more sleeping around. You’re with me, and I’m with you.”*

It wasn’t smooth sailing for Hosea and Gomer after this point. It was hard work putting their lives back together. The same was true for Israel. God wasn’t going to remove the consequences of their choices ... they would go a long time without a king. Because of their “promiscuous behavior,” it would be years of rebuilding their lives with God. But although they were the ones who had run away. God would be the one to buy them back and bring them home.

### *Retell the Story*

- Who was Hosea, and what did God ask him to do?
- What was significant about Gomer?
- What name did God tell Hosea to give his first son, and why?
- How would you describe Hosea & Gomer’s relationship?
- What name did God tell Hosea to give to their daughter, and why?
- What name did God tell Hosea to give to their second son, and why?
- What did Gomer choose to do? How did things turn out for her?
- What did God ask Hosea to do for Gomer?
- What did God want his people to see through Hosea & Gomer's relationship?

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?
- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?
- Why do you think God asked Hosea to marry Gomer?
- How were God's people and Gomer alike? What did they both deserve because of their sin?
- Why do you think of God's decision to let the Israelites suffer the consequences of their sin? Should God have prevented them from enduring pain and hardship?
- Why do you think the people of Israel were so willing to turn their back on God? Why would they worship other 'gods' instead?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of **other** stories?

- From this story, what did you notice about humans?
- What do you notice from this story about God's character or qualities?

## *Join the Story*

### **1) Old Faithful**

The story of Hosea and Gomer centers around faithfulness. What does it mean "to be faithful?" Why do you think that God wants His people to remain faithful to Him? How do you reconcile someone in your life who claims to be a Christian, but when you see their life, all you can see is 'unfaithfulness'? Where do we draw the line between someone who is faithful or unfaithful to God?

### **2) What's Love Got to Do With It?**

Hosea has often been called the prophet of love. But the love story that's found inside its pages is not what most people would expect. In fact, Hosea speaks more about sin, wrath, and God's judgment than he does God's love. How do you see God's love demonstrated in Hosea & Gomer's story? And is it possible that God's love can also be found in His judgment? If so, how does that work, and how do you best understand it?

### **3) The Price Paid**

The culmination of Gomer's story happens when Hosea pays a significant price to bring her home. Read Ephesians 2:1-10. How does Paul describe the price that God paid? What is your response that Paul thinks should take place in our lives due to the price that God paid? How are you "God's masterpiece," and how are you living out the kingdom work He's prepared for you?

God,

*When we consider the story of Hosea and Gomer, we realize that You experience profound pain each time we turn from you. Your love for us spans the depths; we confess that all too often, our love for you is more like a shallow pond than anything else. We have chased after other gods and other thrills and all sorts of other things to fill the hole in our hearts. Yet even when we didn't realize how much we needed you, you came and rescued us anyway. Thank you for your Son Jesus – who paid a costly price to bring us back. Help our love for you to grow deeper than our attention or affection for anything or anyone else. Amen.*