

Minor Prophets' Major Gripes, I

Hosea on Infidelity

May 25, 2003

TICKING OFF GOD

Q: Have you done anything lately to tick God off?

You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time; but you can't fool God anytime; and it's what God knows that has us so worried. - *Anonymous*

There are two aspects of God's character that can be troubling:

1. He is holy, which sets the bar for behavior rather high.
2. He is all-knowing, which means that we can't fool him with moral behavior that masks immoral thoughts and attitudes.

The 12 books at the tail end of the OT deal with the topics that anger and offend God.

These books are called the Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

- This isn't God's "Minor League" or "Second String".
- *Minor* sets them apart from longer (*major*) prophets.

The Minor Prophets played a major role in proclaiming to God's people the sins that He hates and the faith that He honors. But they weren't a well-liked group of men:

Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired man a maniac. – Hosea 9:7 NIV

For the most part, they were ignored, dismissed, and ridiculed. But unlike the long-winded prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, the Minor Prophets were brief and blunt.

Over the next twelve times we're together, we'll examine:

1. The problem each prophet was pointing out.
2. Ourselves to see if we are guilty as well.
3. The solutions and the steps of resolution.

ISRAEL'S STATE OF AFFAIRS

Q: Would you be hurt, offended, or outraged if your spouse cheated on you? What if they said, "I'm not abandoning you; I'm just *adding to you*"?

This was Israel's condition at the time of Hosea (800 years before Christ). They began adopting pagan gods from the Canaanites and other neighbors.

They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood. A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God. – Hosea 4:12 NIV

This "spirit of prostitution" is not what you might think. The Canaanites believed the fertility of the land was determined by the sexual activity of the god Baal and Baal's wife Astarte. To encourage Baal's lust, and consequently a fertile crop, they performed deviant temple sex rituals. This is one of the falsehoods the Israelites bought into.

I will ruin her vines and her fig trees, which she said were her pay from her lovers ... - Hosea 2:12 NIV

God was as willing to share His people (His bride) as an average husband would be to willingly share his wife with other men.

- And this is the very point that God wanted Hosea to make.

Israel's idolatry is likened to adultery, not because they were worshipping other gods *instead* of God, but *in addition* to Him.

WHAT A GOMER!

To ensure that he understood God's pain, anger, and grief over Israel's infidelity, Hosea was to marry a promiscuous woman:

... the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD." So he married Gomer ... – Hosea 1:2-3 NIV

Gomer had a promiscuous reputation of sex for favors. But Hosea loved her in spite of this. Perhaps he thought that it would be through his love and affection that God would restore Gomer.

Q: Wouldn't that be Incredible?

- Hosea: the prophet who redeemed the prostitute!

And all of Israel will take notice and marvel and repent as they identify with Gomer and comprehend God's great love for them! But they didn't; and when Hosea and Gomer had

children, the rumors started swirling about whether Hosea was their father. And the Lord asked Hosea to name his children:

1. Jezreel: a shameful term for “Castaway”.
2. Lo-ruhamah: which means “Not loved.”
3. Lo-ammi: meaning, “Not My people.”

Gomer was running around with other men, and a different tale of “The Prophet and the Prostitute” was being told in Israel.

This is my wife, Gomer. Oh, you know her? You know her too? Well, these are the kids: Castaway, Not-Loved, and Not-My-People!

With each affair, Gomer’s beauty faded. She hit bottom when one of her partners put her up for sale; likely on the slave market.

Q: But, who do you think showed up to outbid everyone?

So [Hosea] bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley.
– Hosea 3:2 NIV

She didn’t go for much. But, Hosea continued to love Gomer, and refused to give up his hope for her restoration.

HOSEA’S MESSAGE

Hosea’s actions gave him incredible empathy for God, and great passion for the message that was assigned to him.

1. He is a jealous God who demands spiritual fidelity.
2. He is a faithful God, even while we are unfaithful.

Just as you would demand a faithful spouse, God requires His people to be faithful to Him. Sadly, Israel ignored the warnings of Hosea and ended up exiled and deported by the Assyrians.

Q: How about you? Are you aware of the warnings?

We commit the same harlotries Hosea’s people committed whenever we compromise ourselves and adopt any of our culture’s beliefs, values, practices, or rituals that are unworthy of His name.

Spiritual adultery begins innocently enough:

1. Our attention is distracted from God

We know we shouldn't let the Lord slip in our priorities, but it seems harmless to put Him on hold ... for just a tiny while.

- The spirit is willing, but the flesh wants to partay!
- And let's face it; He can be such an old fuddy-duddy!

2. And then: Our energy is diverted from God

- Talk radio becomes more important than prayer.
- The newspaper becomes more vital than the Bible.
- Recreation and sports are more crucial than church.

And the farther we drift, the more calloused our hearts become, and the more our neglect becomes routine.

Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. – Hosea 5:4 NIV

Each slight, each snub, each sin becomes easier to commit as we compromise God's principles; until we get to the point at which we're completely unfaithful.

3. And: Our actions reveal we've deserted God

- Our schedules allot little occasion for quiet times.
- Our finances leave just the leftovers for offerings.
- Our calendars make only slight space for fellowship.

Hosea's message is pretty simple: Don't be a Gomer! Don't allow yourself to get so caught up in the culture that you lose any of your appreciation, respect, and devotion to God.

- We all wander at times; every last one of us.
- We must be aware of the warnings and ready to repent.

... return to the Lord. Say to him, "Forgive all our sins and graciously receive us, so that we may offer you the sacrifice of praise. – Hosea 14:2 NLT

And rather temporarily diverted or in all-out desertion; when we turn and come back to the one who truly loves us, He says:

I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. – Hosea 14:4 NIV

And if you're saying to yourself, I've strayed too far; there's no way He could love me after the things I've done; my name should be Castaway, or Not-Loved, or Not-My-People. The Lord would say to you:

I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' "You are my people"; and they will say, "You are my God." – Hosea 2:23 NIV