

Unit III: Called to God's Work of Justice

Measure Up!

DEVOTIONAL READING: Deuteronomy 8:11-20

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hosea 11-12

PRINT PASSAGE: Hosea 11:1-2, 7-10; 12:1-2, 6-14

Key Verse— Turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment and wait on thy God continually.
(Hosea 12:6, KJV)

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You must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always. (Hosea 12:6, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Compare prosperity as a worldly goal with the godly virtues of love and justice.
- Regret occasions when one has adopted prosperity as a key goal.
- Practice love and justice as key virtues.

*Key Terms

Baals (11:2)—Hebrew: *Ba'al* (bah'-al): a Phoenician deity; a heathen god; plural: "Baalim" (KJV).

Burned Incense (11:2)—Hebrew: *Qatar* (kaw-tar'): made sacrifices upon; turned into a fragrance by fire, especially as an act of worship.

Ephraim (11:8)—Hebrew: *Ephrayim* (ef-rah'-yim): a son of Joseph's; also, his descendants and their territory.

Love (11:4 [Background Scripture])—Hebrew: *ahabah* (a-hab-aw): love; lovesick; lovingly.

Return (11:5 [Background Scripture])—Hebrew: *shub* (shoob): to turn back; "repent" (NIV).

Wealth (12:8)—Hebrew: *hon* (hone): sufficiency; "substance" (KJV).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Life Happens

Talia and Herbert have been married for ten years. Their journey in marriage has been beautiful and ugly, smooth and rocky. During these times, their love for each other has never wavered. They are committed and in it for the long haul.

The ways they used to stay connected were through morning devotions, exercise, and communication. They also like going on adventures together, such as hiking, rafting, and skydiving.



Overview

Hosea was a prophet from the Northern Kingdom; he prophesied to the Israelites during the reign of Jeroboam II (783–743 BC). Hosea's marriage is a vital topic in this book. It contains drama related to a symbol of love, separation, and reunion between God and Israel. It also represents the marriage between the covenant of God and Israel. However, Hosea accuses the Israelites of not trusting God by breaking the covenant and taking matters into their own hands. God speaks through Hosea, warning His children (Ephraim) of their unfaithfulness and prideful behavior. Hosea preached love and justice to an unfaithful and boastful nation in hopes that they would repent and turn back to God.

Their adrenaline keeps the love flames burning, and they are glad to have compatibility and similar interests.

Talia and Herbert hope to have more crazy years filled with love and twists. Both come from families whose parents were married for more than fifty years. They are striving for the same goal. They want to measure up to the standard their parents set in their marriages.

Questions

1. In what ways are you trying to “measure up”? Is it marriage, career, civic duty, faith, etc.?
2. Do you feel that it is important to level up? Why or why not?
3. How can faith keep you accountable to where you stand and whose you are?

COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Fatherly Love (*Hosea 11:1-2, 7-10*)

KJV

WHEN ISRAEL was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

2 As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto *Baalim*, and *burned incense to graven images*.

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7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.

8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

10 They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.

NIV

“**WHEN ISRAEL** was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

2 “But the more they were called, the more they went away from me. They sacrificed to the *Baals* and they *burned incense* to images.”


.....

7 “My people are determined to turn from me. Even though they call me God Most High, I will by no means exalt them.

8 “How can I give you up, *Ephraim*? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboyim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused.
9 “I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man—the Holy One among you. I will not come against their cities.
10 “They will follow the LORD; he will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children will come trembling from the west.”

The book of Hosea is a lesson on love. In chapter 11, the metaphor changes; God is now a loving parent instead of a loving husband. God is referring to Israel as His child (**verse 1**). He expressed His love for them. In **verse 2**, Ephraim is being called by God to return to Him; however, they would not listen. The more their Father called them the further they strayed from Him, deeper into sin (**verse 2a**). They worshipped and made sacrifices to a wooden idol by the name of Baal. They also burned sweet-smelling fragrances to this idol god (**verse 2b**). Even though they acknowledged God as the Most High, they still did not appreciate what God had done and was doing for them as their Father. They were not doing what they were supposed to do. They were not serving God and giving Him all the praise and honor due Him (**verse 7**). So, in **verse 8**, the parent (God) is talking to His children (Ephraim), expressing His love for them. However, the children must be punished for their disobedience and unfaithfulness. God asks if they thought they should be punished like Admah and Zeboyim, which were two cities near Sodom and Gomorrah that were destroyed because of their wickedness (see Genesis 10:19). Nevertheless, God still did not want to destroy them as punishment, because He loved them as His own children. He did not want to kill them. It is important to know that God did not have a changed mind or heart; He had compassion for Ephraim (His child) because He was their father. And although He was their father, He is still God Almighty. God as their loving father decided not to condemn them to devastation by destruction (**verse 9**). In spite of their unfaithfulness, their Father was going to be with them and protect them like a father does a child. Hosea prophesied to Ephraim that God was not going to annihilate them but rebuild them with the believing remnant. Once He called them by name (roars like a lion) they would rejoice in hearing their Father’s voice and come running from the west (**verse 10**).

God is a God of second chances. He loves us just as we love our own children. However, as earthly children we sometimes lose focus and become disobedient. As faithful followers, we must stay focused with pure, just, and loving hearts, determined to please and not to disappoint our parents here on earth as well as our Father in heaven.

 **What Do You Think?** As a parent, guardian, or adult, have you ever had to punish children for disobeying, though you didn’t want to chastise them? They were wrong and you had warned them several times beforehand. How did you feel as a chastising parent/guardian/adult?

Polluted Prosperity (*Hosea 12:1-2, 6-8*)

KJV

EPHRAIM FEEDETH on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.

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6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment and wait on thy God continually.

7 He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.

8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out *substance*: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.

NIV

EPHRAIM FEEDS on the wind; he pursues the east wind all day and multiplies lies and violence. He makes a treaty with Assyria and sends olive oil to Egypt.

2 The LORD has a charge to bring against Judah; he will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds.

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6 But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.

7 The merchant uses dishonest scales and loves to defraud.

8 Ephraim boasts, "I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my *wealth* they will not find in me any iniquity or sin."

Now the Assyrians were out to the east but on their way to Israel to defeat them. The nation of Ephraim (Israel) was polluted with sin while they were making alliances with other nations. Their covenants with other nations did not include God because they were full of deceit and injustice. Their sins increased daily, and their relationship with God was nonexistent. They depended totally on foreign allies; such dependences were built on violence and lies. In addition to totally depending on others instead of God, they transported oil into Egypt in hopes of receiving help against the Assyrians (**verse 1**). **Verse 2** refers to Judah's judgment by the Lord, and that Jacob (who was renamed Israel) was going to reap what they sowed. Nevertheless, God is still being a good father and asked them to show Him by their actions that they had turned from their wickedness. He wanted to see if they would remain faithful to Him. God wanted to see if their attitudes and hearts were representing Him and if they were living and maintaining a loving and just lifestyle. He wanted to see if they were going to follow and put their faith totally in Him and not others (**verse 6**). There were merchants who were dishonest with their businesses and cheated the innocent as well (**verse 7**). However, Israel was still arrogant and prideful because they had become rich through religion and they were proclaiming to have obtained it justly and rightfully; however, this was not the case, and God was not in the midst of them (**verse 8**).

God is with us always; therefore, we do not have to boast or brag about being godly. The God in you will be seen by your lifestyle, your walk, and your talk. Surround yourself with godly friends and stay away from polluted areas and people. Read and study God's Word daily. As children of God, put into practice godly actions and attitudes. This will definitely make our Father in heaven proud to be our parent and our earthly parents overjoyed to see that our walk with God is stronger and increasing on a daily basis.

 **What Do You Think?** As concerned parents, we know that our children are going to misbehave and sometimes make wrong decisions. As loving parents, we must chastise them. As a church family, how can we chastise them and encourage them to move forward?

God Working through Man (*Hosea 12:9-14*)

KJV

9 And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.

10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.

11 Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.

13 And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.

14 Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his LORD return unto him.

NIV

9 “I have been the LORD your God ever since you came out of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, as in the days of your appointed festivals.

10 “I spoke to the prophets, gave them many visions and told parables through them.”

11 Is Gilead wicked? Its people are worthless! Do they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal? Their altars will be like piles of stones on a plowed field.

12 Jacob fled to the country of Aram; Israel served to get a wife, and to pay for her he tended sheep.


13 The LORD used a prophet to bring Israel up from Egypt, by a prophet he cared for him.

14 But Ephraim has aroused his bitter anger; his Lord will leave on him the guilt of his bloodshed and will repay him for his contempt.

In this section, God reminded His people that He is almighty and that He is their father, the one who cares for them. Ephraim has not been converted, and God warned them that He would reduce them to live in tents as He once did in the days of Moses during the time of festivities (**verse 9**). God has always been there for His children. He has always loved them and warned them of their wrongdoings. Hosea, like the other prophets, was God’s mouthpiece. God used prophets to communicate to His people. Whether God talked to the prophets or communicated through visions, dreams, and parables, He has always been informative to His people (**verse 10**). In **verse 11**, God used Gilead as a parable. Gilead, meaning “a pile of stones,” was a rocky region on the east side of Jordan. The Gileadites had also been unfaithful to God by sacrificing bulls to phony idols at an altar. God came against them and made an example of the altar to the fake gods by reducing it to a heap or pile of rocks as a memorial for the nations to witness. In **verse 12**, God gave Hosea another parable to preach to His people. He referred to Jacob’s life in Aram as a comparison to Moses and the Israelites down in Egypt. Both were in bondage while seeking refuge in a foreign land. **Verse 13** follows with God’s using yet another parable explaining how He uses men to prophesy and speak to His people about His laws and His love for them. Nevertheless, Ephraim would not take heed to the prophets whom God sent. And although God had placed them above the other tribes, they were still

contemptuous of God's law. They disrespected and rejected God's Word that He sent through His prophets. And they could only be brought to justice by bloodshed (**verse 14**).

It is important that we take heed to God's Word in whatever way it comes. We must keep it close to our hearts and remain faithful to Him. When God wants to get our attention He most often sends someone to speak on His behalf. As Christians, we must have a discerning spirit to know when God is speaking and calling us to do His will.


 **What Do You Think?** The next time you are faced with a choice to do right or wrong, ask yourself how your parents or our heavenly Father will respond.

Your Life

As Christians living from day to day, we can never be flawless. However, as faithful followers we can set positive goals and strive to do our best through just and loving attitudes in every situation.

Your World!

In our world today, we must be careful not to idolize and worship things or people such as houses, cars, husbands, or wives. God is a jealous God and we should not put any others before Him.

 **Closing Prayer** O heavenly Father, thank You for loving us even when we did not measure up to Your Word. Please forgive us of our sins. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY , June 1	"Faith Community Discerns Path of Wisdom"	(Acts 6:1-7)
TUESDAY , June 2	"Parents Joyfully Pass On the Faith"	(2 Timothy 1:3-9a)
WEDNESDAY , June 3	"Learning the Fear of the Lord"	(Psalm 34:11-18)
THURSDAY , June 4	"Violence Is Not a Wise Choice"	(Matthew 26:47-52)
FRIDAY , June 5	"The Vast Scope of Solomon's Wisdom"	(1 Kings 4:29-34)
SATURDAY , June 6	"Prize Wisdom and Insight"	(Proverbs 4:1-9)
SUNDAY , June 7	"Godly Wisdom for Life's Decisions"	(Proverbs 1:1-4, 7-8, 10-11, 20-22, 32-33)