

judging our family members, friends, co-workers, and leaders? It is so very easy to be distracted every moment of our waking hours. We fail to listen, heed, or answer God's call.

Distracted, preoccupied, presumptive, judgmental, disobedient, arrogant, carousing – all these terms were used by Hosea to describe the priests, and people of Israel. When I was reading this, I couldn't help but compare ancient Israel's actions to my own in the past and today. I don't want my relationship with God to languish. I want to shine in the light of His grace and direction. I want to live up to God's expectations of the possibilities he presents to me and to better serve those in need. That's what I explained to my friend. That's why I became a Methodist.

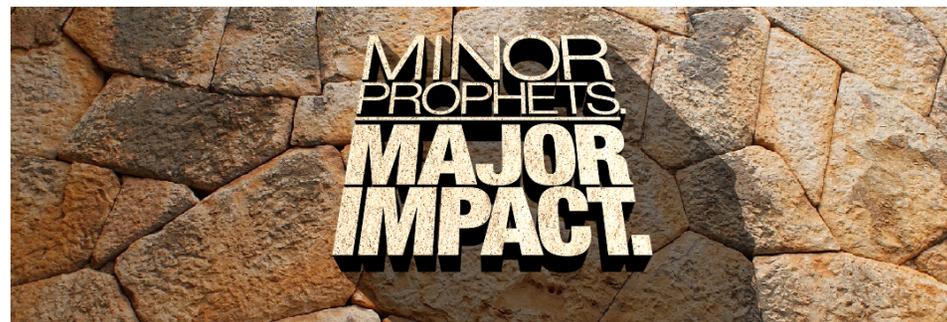
Patty VerDouw

Day 5: Hosea 6-7

“Worshiping foreign gods has sapped their strength, but they don't even know it. Their hair is gray, but they don't realize they're old and weak.” Hosea 7:9 (NLT)

Worshiping foreign gods may be a strange concept because we're believers. But we all have things that sap our energy, that consume our focus and our time. Sometimes we don't notice what gets the majority of our energy, or maybe it's incredibly obvious. It could be the family event schedule, a laundry list of things that must be done around the house, or...fill in your own blank. We can shove so many things into one day – good things, rewarding things, busy things – without realizing that we're wearing ourselves down. We're weak. This is not what God intends for us. He wants us to live full and purposeful lives, but He wants it to be with and in Him. This summer, remember to make time in the craziness for what's important so God can replenish your strength.

Bethany Whitworth



HOSEA

Day 1: Hosea 1

God has showed humankind a pattern since the beginning. When we serve Him, with humble honesty and obedience in our spirits, life is good. When we do not, God turns away.

This is what was happening in the time of Hosea. The Israelites had turned against God, so God sent them a message through Hosea's life. God directed Hosea to marry a prostitute, symbolic of the peoples' unfaithfulness, and named her children “Not loved” and “Not my people”. Could it be similar today? Does our society reject God in favor of our selves or other powers? Do I choose contrary to His will or rely on my own power?

Fortunately, God is forgiving and continues to take us back, individually and collectively. He desires relationship with us. To be authentic, this relationship requires us to recognize the kind and wonderful Creator of the Universe for who He is. When we do this, then we also choose to serve and obey Him. We want to out of love. Then, as in the time of Hosea, God will say, **“In that day you will call your brothers Ammi – ‘My people’. And you will call your sisters Ruhamah – ‘The ones I love.’” Hosea 1:12 (NLT)**

How wonderful to hear God call us “My people” ...” the ones I love”. Something to think on.

Colette Leingang

Day 2: Hosea 2

“Assuredly, I will speak coaxingly to her. And lead her through the wilderness. And speak to her tenderly.” Hosea 2:16 (HEB)

Reading the Old Testament is hard sometimes. It seems to portray an angry, unforgiving God, one who punishes more than uplifts, sometimes destroying an entire people for their collective sins.

One of my favorite books is Hosea, because it shows not only God’s judgement, but his unending and depthless love for his people — as the passage above demonstrates. A far cry from an angry, unforgiving God. Quite the opposite, in fact.

There are times when I feel undeserved of God’s mercy and love. Certainly my adulterous actions by allowing the world to tempt me away from him make me unworthy.

I am unworthy.

But that’s not the point. If God is love, he can’t help but love me, regardless of how many times I stray away from him. He will always run after me, no matter how deep into the wilderness I try to hide. While he may convict me of my sins, he will always do so with tenderness. Not for his sake, but for mine.

You’ve heard the old saying, “Never look a gift horse in the mouth.” Meaning we should never question, hinder or scrutinize a gift. Doing so insults the giver.

To turn down or run away from God’s gift of both conviction and grace insults him. It’s ultimately a rejection of his love, and most of us know how painful rejection can be.

Sin is another form of rejection, which is why it hurts and angers God so much. But because of his love, he will always give us an opportunity to return to him, even if he has to chase us down to get us to accept it.

Andra Marquardt

Day 3: Hosea 3

Then the Lord said to me, “Go again; show love to a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, just as the LORD loves the Israelites though they turn to other gods and love raisin

cakes.” Hosea 3:1 (Holman Bible)

Notice what God did not tell Hosea to do. God didn’t say, “Go show judgement” or “Go show disdain to your wife.” God told Hosea to show love. Love! Gomer had not only been loved by “another,” she had likely been loved by many others.

He must have felt betrayed, like it wasn’t fair, or right, that he should have to do such a thing. It had to be incredibly humbling.

At that moment, maybe Hosea needed to love God more than he loved Gomer in order to obey. We can’t forget that Hosea was no super-husband. He was human-husband. He had to feel hurt and disgust. He was certainly humiliated in front of men in town. We cannot overestimate what this must have been like for him and how he must have felt. But he was called by God and he followed God. I can only imagine that his willingness to obey gave him the strength to obey. But deep down, either way, it took sheer humility and strength to go get her back.

Then he asks her to live with him as his wife in faithfulness. He tells her there will be a short time of probation and he will be faithful to her too. But he does not say that her role is forever altered. No more wife, now just the house keeper. No more wife, now just the concubine. The beauty of redemption is that it includes restoration. So does your redemption. It includes restoration.

God does not redeem without restoring. What was lost in the garden was redeemed on the cross. What sin destroyed in Eden, God restored through Calvary!

Diane Schneider

Day 4: Hosea 4-5

“...There is no fidelity, no mercy, no knowledge of God in the land. False swearing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery! In their lawlessness, bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore, the land mourns and everything that dwells in it languishes...” Hosea 4:1-3 (CNAB)

I had a friend call me and ask me what had propelled me to join the Methodist Church. I told her I wanted to fully embrace what God has been calling me to be from the very creation of man.

How many of us are too busy to set aside even a few minutes throughout the day to praise and thank God. How many of us are