



3

God Loves Israel

Key Theme

- God reveals His character in the Bible.

Key Passages

- Hosea 4:1–3, 11:1, 11:7–9

Objective

Students will be able to:

- Describe God's love for the people of Israel despite their rebellion.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will fill in the missing letters from the memory verse. Then, they will say the verse to each other and/or the teacher.



Activity 1: God Loves Israel Class Notes

Students will fill out the God Loves Israel Class Notes as you study the lesson. Pass out the class notes before you begin to teach.



Studying God's Word

The book of Hosea is a unique account of the prophet Hosea, his wife Gomer, and her unfaithfulness. This love story of Gomer and Hosea is compared to God's faithful love for Israel. In spite of the people's rebellion and turning to false gods, God loved them and was willing to forgive them. God's love for His people will not end, but He will not share His glory with another.



Activity 2: Hosea's Four Corners

Students will review the lesson by playing a game where they match the questions to the names of the people discussed in the book of Hosea.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO



COME ON IN

- Print the Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



GOD LOVES ISRAEL CLASS NOTES

- Print one God Loves Israel Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



HOSEA'S FOUR CORNERS

- Print out one Hosea's Four Corners Questions and Hosea's Four Corners Signs from the Resource DVD-ROM.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student
- Pencils

- God Loves Israel Class Notes for each student
- God Loves Israel Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

- Student Take Home Sheets

- Hosea's Four Corners Signs
- Hosea's Four Corners Questions
- Tape



Memory Verse

Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

Hosea described one of the most shocking portrayals of God's relationship with His children. God compared His relationship with His children to a marriage with a prostitute who would not remain faithful. These are strong and bitter words through the mouth and actions of a prophet. They must have rung sharply in the ears of the people of Israel. And as the people witnessed Hosea take Gomer as his wife, observed Gomer leave Hosea for other men, and then watched as Hosea tenderly took Gomer back in love and forgiveness, the message that God meant to convey to His people became even clearer. Just as Gomer had abandoned her husband for other lovers, so had Israel turned from the one true God to false gods and idols (Hosea 2:2–13). And just as Gomer's husband bought her back from slavery, so God brings His children back in mercy and love.

The mercy and love of God is put on display in the book of Hosea in a way that is glorious. It is easy to love the lovable or to offer gifts to those who will return the favor, but it can be oh so difficult to offer forgiveness to those who have stolen from you or violated your trust in the most intimate of ways. That is the very thing God called Hosea to do when he was told to buy Gomer back from the slave market where she had landed and to love her (Hosea 3:1–3). In this act, God portrayed His relationship with the adulterous Israelites. God was willing to show mercy; God was willing to take them back again.

Israel surely deserved God's wrath for their constant violations of His commands. God would have been just in wiping out the nation for their sins, but He had made promises to Abraham and David to bring the Messiah from the nation of Israel. His mercy was shown in withholding punishment—He didn't give them what they deserved (though later He would). In fact, His love was demonstrated as He restored them in spite of their sin and their rejection of His authority.

God spoke of Israel as a child He had raised (Hosea 11:1), lovingly guiding Israel from their bondage in Egypt into the Promised Land where He lavished His child with blessings and care. As a loving father, God would administer discipline to His child as Assyria brought destruction and captivity, but it grieved God to have to do it (Hosea 11:5–8). However, God would not utterly destroy Israel forever, and He promised His

people the hope of restoration in the future. If they would again walk after the Lord, the Lord would take them back and let them dwell again in their houses (Hosea 11:9–11).

God offered a call of repentance from seeking after idols and trusting in the gods and kings of other nations. However, Israel did not respond to His call. He promised to heal their backsliding and love them freely. He wanted them to turn from their gods and trust in the His mercy (Hosea 14:1–4). In the end, if His children would return, they would be revived and grow in the Lord (Hosea 14:8). The wise would recognize that He is a merciful God and the only God worthy of their worship. The future restoration of Israel (see section below) would demonstrate God's love for those who are truly His children.

The parallels between the book of Hosea and the lives of Christians today are not difficult to see. We are born in sin, and God is dishonored by our disobedience, rebellion, and idolatry. Yet God has purchased us with the price of His Son from the slave market of sin (Ephesians 2:1–10). We have been brought from pursuing our own selfish interests to pursuing the righteousness of Christ. And when we backslide, God uses discipline to bring us back to Himself (Hebrews 12:5–14). This book demonstrates God's unconditional mercy and love to His children as Hosea reunites with his wife and reconciliation occurs.

And the account reminds us of the unconditional love of God offered to us through Jesus Christ. We have rebelled and deserve only His wrath and justice because of that rebellion. But God is faithful and merciful to forgive, through Jesus Christ, those who humbly repent and turn from their sins. What a glorious God we serve, what an amazing message we have to share, and what a responsibility and privilege God has given us to convey this message to the next generation.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Hosea was a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos, Nahum, and Micah. He prophesied in the Northern Kingdom of Israel through the reigns of four kings of Judah (Hosea 1:1). Though he prophesied for more than 60 years, Hosea is still considered one of the minor prophets for his relatively short book. In his writing, Hosea refers to Israel as Ephraim and Jacob interchangeably. Ephraim was one of the tribes that had settled in the north after the conquest. When the

Northern tribes had wholly abandoned the worship of the true God, they fell under the control of the Assyrians. This was what God warned His people of through Hosea (Hosea 11:5). And it was only about 75 years after Hosea began prophesying that Samaria (the capital of Israel) fell to the Assyrian king and God's chastening began for the Northern Kingdom.

Within Hosea's prophecies are clear references to the future restoration of Israel. Exactly when that restoration will occur is a point of debate among sincere believers. Some see the promises made to Israel as unfulfilled and pointing to a period when the nation will be restored to the Promised Land. Particularly, this is often connected to the millennial reign depicted in Revelation as a period of peace (Hosea 2:16–20). In general, those who hold a premillennial view of Christ's Second Coming would understand these passages as looking to the future restoration of Israel as a nation. Those who take an amillennial view typically see these passages as prophetic imagery and not as actual events that will take place. Amillennialists believe the events will be fulfilled as Christ returns to initiate the eternal state, but not in a distinct 1000-year period. While these are important ideas to seek answers to, we must be charitable to those who come to different conclusions than ours, providing those conclusions are based on Scripture alone. Regardless of our view on

this particular subject, we know that God is faithful to His promises, and we can trust that the warnings present in Hosea's writings are still relevant today. We are to worship God alone, trust in Him alone, and put our faith in Christ alone.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord of heaven and earth, honestly, I cringe when I think of Gomer's occupation. How can I be compared to her? Yet it's true. I have betrayed you at times. My heart is prone to wander. So I find your love for me almost impossible to grasp. How honored we are that you have given us the book of Hosea to help us understand your remarkable ability to love us—even when we've been unfaithful. Maybe there is one in my class who feels unlovable. Help me to reach out with the message in this lesson to show him or her the depth and breadth of your love. Draw each one to you with your beautiful redeeming love and mercy.

➤ Because of the age and ability of 1st and 2nd graders to read and comprehend, we encourage you to read the Scriptures to the students. However, if you have strong readers, by all means have them participate by reading God's Word.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet by filling in the blanks.
- They will say the verse to each other and/or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



God Loves Israel Class Notes

MATERIALS

- God Loves Israel Class Notes for each student
- God Loves Israel Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students complete the notes as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible passages. Do not work ahead. I'll let you know when to answer.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

When we finish our class notes, we will know that the Lord used Hosea to show His love and mercy to Israel in a very unusual way.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to History of Israel Poster and Lesson 2 Lesson Theme Poster. We talked about the prophet Amos. He was a shepherd—a simple man. God used him to warn the nation of Israel that God would judge the people because of their sin. This week, we will learn about another prophet. His name is Hosea. He wrote the book of Hosea in the Bible. God sent Hosea to Israel after Amos. And, like Amos, Hosea's message was to call Israel back to God. God wanted Israel to stop sinning against Him and worship Him alone. The people were worshipping false gods, idols, and carved images. They

- Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

were not obedient to God. Hosea gave his message in a different way from Amos. In fact, the account of Hosea is a love story about a man and his wife AND about God and His people! You see, God used Hosea's marriage to his wife, Gomer, as a symbol of God's love for His people, Israel. *Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. Refer to the poster during the lesson.*

God told His prophet Hosea to marry Gomer. Hosea and Gomer had three children. But then Gomer left Hosea. She didn't love him anymore and thought she would be happier with other men. This was terrible for Hosea. His heart was broken. She had treated him so badly. She had sinned against him. And even though Hosea could have been very angry, God told him he must take his wife back. And Hosea did! He forgave Gomer for leaving him and going to other men. He loved his wife. He took her back and took care of her again. When the people in Israel watched Hosea, God's prophet, take his wife back after she had been so mean to him, they began to see what God wanted them to see.

God wanted to teach His people a lesson through Hosea and Gomer's life. So, how are Hosea and Gomer similar to God and His chosen people, the Israelites? We'll read some verses and see if we can figure it out! Remember, God loved His people, Israel, like Hosea loved his wife, Gomer!

► After completing the class notes, have the students re-read the statement(s) together or call on individual students to read it.

? Look at your class notes. You'll see two columns. We'll be comparing Hosea and his wife with God and the people of Israel. Find the two hearts on the class notes. Someone read what each heart says. *Hosea loved his wife. The Lord loved His people.* Great! Now connect the two hearts together by drawing a line from one heart to the other.

Now let's find the book of Hosea in our Bibles. It's in the Old Testament and right after the book of Daniel. I'm going to read from Hosea 4. I'm starting with Hosea 4:1. *Read the verse.*

Hosea 4:1

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Whose word was this? *The Word of the Lord.*
- ? Good. Who was this Word for? Who was to hear the message? *The children of Israel.*
- ? What did the Lord have against the children of Israel? What did He bring against them? *There was no truth or mercy or knowledge of God.*

How sad! There was no truth or mercy or knowledge of God. It sounds like the people had forgotten about God. Well, that wasn't all. Listen to this in Hosea 4:2. *Read Hosea 4:2.*

- ? What else were the people doing against God? *Swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery.*

Hosea 4:2

Their sins were very serious against God. And God was going to tell them what would happen to them. Listen now to Hosea 4:3. *Read Hosea 4:3.*

- ? **What was going to happen?** *The land will mourn. Everyone will waste away. Everything will be taken away.*

Yes, the Bible says God's judgment would make the people mourn or be sad and cry for long periods of time; they would die, and all of their things would be taken away. All of this because they continued to turn away from God. Sin against God is a very serious matter.

Refer to the Roles of the Prophets Poster. Hosea was a prophet of God. He was speaking for God. He was warning the people that they must turn back to Him and away from their sins.

Discover the Truth

The people of Israel were sinning against God by disobeying Him. And Gomer had sinned against her husband, Hosea, by leaving him to be with other men. God did not like the sin of the people; just like Hosea did not like his wife leaving him. Sin had separated Gomer from her husband. And sin had separated God's people from God. Hosea was warning the people that if they didn't turn back to God, God's judgment would certainly come on them.

- ? This brings us to #2 on your class notes. It is the shape of a rectangle. Can someone read what the two rectangles say? *Gomer left Hosea and sinned against Hosea. The people left the Lord and sinned against the Lord.* **Great.** Now draw a line from one rectangle to the other.

- ? And how about #3? Will someone read the two triangles? *Gomer's sin brought Hosea pain and sorrow. The people's sin brought the Lord pain and sorrow.* **Good.** Now draw a line from one triangle to the other.

- ? And look at #4—the circles. Who can read that? What does sin do? Someone read them for me. *Gomer's sin separated her from Hosea. The people's sin separated them from the Lord.*

Very good! You can draw a line to connect the two circles together. Do you see how these two accounts are alike? God used His prophet Hosea to teach the Israelites about His love and forgiveness for them.



READ THE WORD

Even though the people were sinning against God—and we know that God must punish sin—God was patient. He did not punish His people yet. In fact, He wanted to show them just how much He loved them. He

wanted them to come back to Him. Let's take another look in the Bible. This time we are going to read from Hosea, chapter 11. *Read Hosea 11:1.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? What did God call Israel in this verse? *A child. My son.*

God loved Israel like a son. He had brought the people safely out of Egypt and slavery to give them the Promised Land full of blessings. And how did Israel treat their loving heavenly Father? Let's read Hosea 11:7 to find out.

Read Hosea 11:7.

? What does this verse say the people were doing? *Backsliding.*

? Who knows what backsliding means? *Allow discussion.*

A backslider is someone who turns away from God. They are moving away from God instead of closer to Him. The Israelites were sinning. Sin separates us from God. God called the people backsliders because they were not loving and worshipping Him alone. God could have destroyed Israel right there and then. But He didn't. God loved His people like Hosea loved Gomer.

The Lord said He didn't want to give up on Israel. He looked at His people, and He loved them. He wanted them to turn back to Him. He wanted to forgive them for their sins.

God made the Israelites a promise. Listen as I read Hosea 11:8-9. *Read Hosea 11:8-9 with enthusiasm.*

God said He did not want to give them up. God's heart loved Israel. And He did not want His anger to destroy them. God said I will not come with terror. God hated their sin and their disobedience. But He loved the people. And He did not want to be separated from them. That is why God sent so many prophets to warn the people, to warn them to come back to Him.

Discover the Truth

Hosea loved his wife, Gomer. Even though she sinned against him, he took her back, forgave her, and promised to care for her. And the Lord loved His people even though they had sinned against Him.





Hosea's Four Corners

MATERIALS

- Hosea's Four Corners Signs
- Hosea's Four Corners Questions
- Tape

INSTRUCTIONS

Tape the signs to the four corners of the classroom. Read each one as you tape them up. This game is like Four Corners in that the students will be choosing their answers by moving to a corner of the room.

Read the questions from the Hosea's Four Corners Questions, one at a time, allowing the students to move where they think the correct answer is. Students will not be "out" for an incorrect guess. Everyone can continue to play. Discuss each answer briefly as a review.

Let's see if you were paying attention to the account of Hosea and his wife, Gomer, and God and His people, the Israelites. Today you'll be playing Hosea's Four Corners. When I ask a question, I want you to move to the corner of the classroom that shows your answer. *Begin game.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Great job! God used the life of His prophet Hosea to show Israel—and us—how great His love was for His people.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

God called the prophet Hosea to act in a different way from God's other prophets. God told Hosea to marry Gomer. God wanted Hosea's love and forgiveness to his wife to show the people of Israel that God loved them and would forgive their sins if they turned back to Him. God knew the Israelites were sinners with no truth, no mercy, and no knowledge of God. Yet God's love for them was like a father's love for his children, or a husband's for his wife. Just like Hosea took his wife back after she had sinned against him, God would take the Israelites back if they would ask for forgiveness.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

God told Hosea to write this book so that we would see that God is loving, kind, forgiving, and loyal to His children. Israel sinned over and over again. God showed His mercy and His love by taking them back, forgiving them, and promising them they would one day have their land back.

Hosea's love story is also about us! Just like Israel was separated from God because of sin, and Gomer was separated from Hosea because of sin—WE are separated from God because of our sin. But just like Hosea showed his wife love and forgiveness, and God showed Israel love and forgiveness—God shows us love and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.

Jesus Christ came to earth to save sinners. We sin and deserve God's punishment because of our sin. But God is faithful and merciful to forgive us through Jesus Christ. He took the punishment for sins on the Cross. God loved us so much that He sent Jesus so that whoever would believe in Him would have eternal life. If we humbly turn from our sins and put our trust in Jesus, God will lovingly forgive us and bring us back—like Hosea forgave his wife, Gomer, and brought her back to love and care for her.



MEMORY VERSE

Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God for His mercy toward sinful people like us.
- Thank Jesus for loving us so much that He forgives us and paid a great price to redeem us.
- Ask God to help us to be more like Him by showing mercy and love to others.