

I Will Betroth Thee



Hosea 1–3 · This week: I Will Love Them Freely, Hosea 1–6; 10–14; Joel

In the manual: **Come, Follow Me lesson 47, “I Will Love Them Freely,” on Gospel Library**

START

The Lord told the prophet Hosea to marry a woman named Gomer, and their marriage became a picture of the Lord's covenant with Israel (Hosea 1:2–3).

READ TOGETHER

Gomer broke her marriage promises and went after other men. Israel had done the same to the Lord by worshipping idols (Hosea 2:5; 2:13). The Lord's covenant with his people was meant to be as close and faithful as a marriage.

HOSEA 2:14–15

¹⁴Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. ¹⁵And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

HOSEA 2:19–20

¹⁹And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. ²⁰I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

WHAT IT TEACHES

After everything Israel had done, the Lord said, “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her” (Hosea 2:14). To allure is to win someone back with love. He promised to turn the valley of Achor, a name that means trouble, into “a door of hope” (verse 15; Joshua 7:26).

In verses 19 and 20, the Lord says “I will betroth thee unto me” three times. He promises to be faithful “for ever,” in righteousness, lovingkindness, and mercy. The covenants we make with him carry that same promise.

Then the Lord told Hosea to go and love his wife again. Hosea bought her back for fifteen pieces of silver and some barley (Hosea 3:1–2). That is what a redeemer does. Peter wrote that we are bought back at a far higher price, “with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18–19).

Hosea 3:5 looks ahead to “the latter days,” when Israel would “return, and seek the Lord their God.” The gathering of Israel in our day is part of that return.

TALK ABOUT IT

Why do you think the Lord compares his covenant with us to a marriage? What does a faithful marriage need that a covenant with the Lord also needs?

TAKE TO CHURCH

Hosea brought his wife home with silver and barley. The Lord bought us back at a far greater price, and he keeps his covenant with us even when we stray.

As a Morning Cloud

Hosea 6:1–7 · This week: I Will Love Them Freely, Hosea 1–6; 10–14; Joel

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START

On a summer morning, dew can cover every blade of grass. By the time the sun is high, it has disappeared. The Lord said Israel's goodness was like that (Hosea 6:4).

READ TOGETHER

Israel still offered sacrifices at the altar. At the same time, the people were breaking the covenant and hurting one another (Hosea 6:7–9).

HOSEA 6:1

¹Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

HOSEA 6:4

⁴O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

HOSEA 6:6

⁶For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

WHAT IT TEACHES

“Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us” (Hosea 6:1). The people knew the right words. Verse 4 shows the problem. Their goodness was “as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.” It showed up and then disappeared.

“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6). The Lord had commanded the sacrifices. He wanted them to come from people who were kind to each other and who knew him.

Jesus quoted this verse twice. When Pharisees complained that he ate with sinners, he told them to go and learn what it means (Matthew 9:10–13). When they condemned his hungry disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath, he said they would have judged differently if they had understood it (Matthew 12:1–7).

TALK ABOUT IT

**What is one good habit that tends to disappear on us like morning dew?
What would help it last all day?**

TAKE TO CHURCH

Hosea said Israel's goodness vanished like morning dew. The Lord asks for mercy and for real knowledge of him, the kind of goodness that is still there at noon.

Break Up Your Ground



Hosea 10:12–13 · This week: I Will Love Them Freely, Hosea 1–6; 10–14; Joel

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START

The King James Bible calls a field left unplowed fallow ground. Its soil turns hard, and a farmer breaks it up with a plow before he plants.

READ TOGETHER

Hosea preached in the northern kingdom of Israel in the years before Assyria conquered it (Hosea 1:1). The people trusted their armies more than the Lord (Hosea 10:13).

HOSEA 10:12–13

12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. **13** Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.

WHAT IT TEACHES

“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy” (Hosea 10:12). What we plant is what comes up. Verse 13 describes the other harvest. “Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies.”

“Break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord.” A hard heart is like hard

ground. Prayer, repentance, and time in the scriptures break it up so the word of God can take root (Alma 32:28).

The last promise belongs to the Lord. He will “come and rain righteousness upon you.” We plow and plant, and the rain comes from him. Paul said the same about missionary work. One person plants and another waters, and God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).

TALK ABOUT IT

What does seeking the Lord look like in the morning, at school or work, and at bedtime? What is one seed of righteousness you could plant this week?

TAKE TO CHURCH

Hosea told Israel to break up their hard ground because it was time to seek the Lord. We do the plowing and planting, and the Lord sends the rain.

Cords of Love



Hosea 11:1–9 · This week: I Will Love Them Freely, Hosea 1–6; 10–14; Joel

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START

“When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt” (Hosea 11:1).

READ TOGETHER

In this chapter the Lord speaks like a parent remembering a child who has grown up and gone away. Israel had turned to other gods, and the Lord had to decide what to do (Hosea 11:2; 11:7).

HOSEA 11:3–4

³I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. ⁴I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

HOSEA 11:8

⁸How 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.

WHAT IT TEACHES

“I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms” (verse 3). It is a picture of a parent teaching a toddler to walk. Israel never even knew who had been holding them up and healing them.

He led them “with cords of a man, with bands of love,” the way a parent holds a child’s hand (verse

4). He lifted the yoke off their jaws and set food in front of them.

In verse 8, the Lord asks, “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?” He says his heart is turned within him. Israel had earned destruction, and the Lord would not give them up. “For I am God, and not man,” he says (verse 9). His mercy is greater than any human patience.

Matthew saw verse 1 fulfilled in Jesus. Joseph took Mary and the young child to Egypt to escape King Herod, and they came home after Herod died. Matthew wrote that this fulfilled the words “Out of Egypt have I called my son” (Matthew 2:13–15). Israel was the child who wandered. Jesus is the Son who came out of Egypt and stayed true.

TALK ABOUT IT

**What have you learned to do because someone patiently held your hand?
How is the Lord like that with us?**

TAKE TO CHURCH

The Lord taught Israel to walk and led them with bands of love. When they wandered, he asked, “How shall I give thee up?” He feels that way about each of us.

Love Them Freely



Hosea 13:4–14; 14 · This week: I Will Love Them Freely, Hosea 1–6; 10–14; Joel

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START

Hosea ends his book with an invitation. “O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity” (Hosea 14:1).

READ TOGETHER

Just before this, the Lord reminded Israel that “there is no saviour beside me” (Hosea 13:4). Israel had tried idols and foreign armies, and none of them could save (Hosea 14:3).

HOSEA 13:14

¹⁴I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

HOSEA 14:4–5

⁴I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. ⁵I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

WHAT IT TEACHES

Hosea 14:2 tells Israel how to come back. “Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.” The Lord even gives them the prayer to say. “Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.”

His answer comes in verse 4. “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.” To love freely is to give love as a gift, before anyone earns it. Then he promises to be like dew, so that Israel will “grow as the lily” (verse 5).

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf described that kind of love. “Though we are incomplete, God loves us completely. Though we are imperfect, He loves us perfectly. Though we may feel lost and without compass, God’s love encompasses us completely.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Love of God,” General conference, October 2009

Hosea 13:14 promises even more. “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death.” Paul echoed it when he testified of the Resurrection, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55). Jesus Christ paid that ransom.

TALK ABOUT IT

Hosea 14:2 says, “Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.” What words could you take to the Lord in prayer tonight?

TAKE TO CHURCH

Hosea ends with the Lord’s promise to heal backsliding and love freely. The Savior ransomed us from the grave, and his love comes before we have earned it.

Rend Your Heart

Joel 1:1–12; 2:1–27 · This week: I Will Love Them Freely, Hosea 1–6; 10–14; Joel

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START

A swarm of locusts can strip a whole field in a day. Joel describes wave after wave of them eating everything in the land (Joel 1:4).

READ TOGETHER

Joel told parents to tell the story to their children and grandchildren (Joel 1:3). The locusts were a warning of “the day of the Lord” and a call to turn back to him (Joel 2:1; 2:11–12).

JOEL 2:12–13

¹²Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: ¹³And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

JOEL 2:25–26

²⁵And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. ²⁶And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

WHAT IT TEACHES

The Lord said, “Turn ye even to me with all your heart” (Joel 2:12). Then he added, “rend your heart, and not your garments.” People tore their clothes to show grief or sorrow for sin. The Lord wanted the tearing to happen inside, where real change begins.

Joel gives the reason to turn. The Lord “is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness” (Joel 2:13). The Lord described himself to Moses on Mount Sinai in almost the same words (Exodus 34:6), and next week Jonah will use them too.

Joel called everyone to a fast, including elders, children, babies, and even a bride and groom on their wedding day (Joel 2:15–16). Turning back to the Lord was something the whole family did together.

The Lord promised, “I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten” (Joel 2:25). Years lost to sin cannot be lived over, and the Lord can still make up for them. Through Jesus Christ, what was wasted can be restored.

TALK ABOUT IT

What is the difference between looking sorry and being sorry? How can we tell which one is happening in us?

TAKE TO CHURCH

Joel told Israel to rend their hearts, and he promised that the Lord would restore the years the locusts had eaten. The Savior can make up for lost time.

Pour Out My Spirit

Joel 2:28–32 · This week: I Will Love Them Freely, Hosea 1–6; 10–14; Joel

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START

When the angel Moroni visited Joseph Smith in 1823, he quoted the end of Joel 2 and said it would soon be fulfilled (his account).

READ TOGETHER

Joel had just promised to restore what the locusts ate. Then he looked further ahead, to a day when the Lord would give something greater than food (Joel 2:26–28).

JOEL 2:28–29

²⁸ And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: ²⁹ And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

JOEL 2:32

³² And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

WHAT IT TEACHES

“I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28). Pouring is generous, more than a drip or a trickle. The Lord says his Spirit will come that way to sons and daughters, old men and young men, and servants too (verse 29).

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost came upon the Savior’s disciples, and Peter stood up and said, “this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16–18). Moroni told Joseph Smith that the fulfillment was still to come, and soon (his account). It

is being fulfilled now, in homes and wards across the world.

Elder Gary E. Stevenson taught what the Spirit does in an ordinary life. “As we listen and act on spiritual promptings, the Holy Ghost magnifies our abilities and capacities to far exceed what we can do on our own. These precious spiritual gifts will help us in every aspect of our lives.”

Elder Gary E. Stevenson, “Promptings of the Spirit,” General conference, October 2023

Verse 32 ends the promise. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” Each week the sacrament prayer promises that if we always remember the Savior and keep his commandments, we may always have his Spirit to be with us (Moroni 4:3).

TALK ABOUT IT

Joel said sons and daughters would prophesy. When have you felt the Holy Ghost help you know something or do something?

TAKE TO CHURCH

Joel promised the Lord would pour out his Spirit on young and old. Today’s sacrament prayer promises that same Spirit to each of us who always remembers the Savior and keeps his commandments.