

# CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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## THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Joey Davis

**H**osea was a prophet from the Northern Kingdom who was commissioned by God to prophesy to said kingdom (Hos. 4:17; 6:4). Hosea’s work is peculiar in many ways, but perhaps the feature that stands out the most is the comparative use of Hosea’s personal life as it typifies God’s relationship with the nation of Israel. Some have called Hosea the prophet with the broken heart. Consider God’s words through the prophet: “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? ... My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred” (Hos. 11:8). Hosea 1:2 records God’s instructions to Hosea, “when the Lord began to speak by Hosea,” that the prophet was to “Go, take for yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry.” The verse explains the reason for this unusual instruction: “For the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord.” Given the instruction and the motivation for the instruction, we will divide the book into two sections: The metaphoric use of Hosea’s marriage (Chapters 1-3), and Israel’s similar unfaithfulness to God (Chapters 4-14).

The very personal details of Hosea’s life are presented in the first three chapters as an object lesson of the message that he was to proclaim against Israel. It would be easy to dwell on the perplexing nature of this marriage arrangement. However, it must be remembered that the recounting of the details of this marriage is for the express purpose of showing the unfaithfulness of Israel to God. The text says that God instructed Hosea to take a wife and children of harlotry. While it could be the case that Gomer, Hosea’s wife, was already involved in harlotry, it could very likely be the case that she was simply from a background that involved harlotry. It could also be the case that this description

anticipates what would happen after they are married. The fact that the children are called “children of harlotry” when they have not even been born lends credence to these anticipatory descriptions. Again, the marriage, the children, the unfaithfulness of Gomer, and the persistent loving hope of Hosea toward his wife are highlighted to show Israel how she had dealt treacherously with God. The birth of and naming of each child demonstrates the overriding point of giving the personal details. The first child, a son, was named Jezreel, meaning God will scatter, which was to serve as a promise of God’s judgment against the ruling house in Israel (Hos. 1:4-5). The second child, a daughter, was named

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# FROM THE EDITOR:

## THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Cody Westbrook

**H**ow does one remain faithful to God when surrounded by people and practices who could not possibly be more opposed to Him? What comfort is there to be found when wicked men hold positions of high authority? Such are good and relevant questions for Christians in the 21st century. Would it surprise you to learn that those questions are answered in the 12 chapter book of Daniel?

### About the Book

The name “Daniel” means “God is my judge.” He was born into Jewish royalty (Dan. 1:3) and carried away in his youth to Babylon, in the 1st deportation in 605 BC. He occupied a position of prominence in the courts of 3 kings, and was known for his ability to interpret dreams (Dan. 5:11-12). His book was written in approximately 530 BC covers a span of roughly 70 years. God’s Sovereignty is the primary emphasis of the book. Jehovah is referred to as the “Most High” 14 times, and the purpose statement is “that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men” (Dan. 4:17; 25; 32). The first half of the book provides narratives which illustrate God’s Sovereignty (ch. 1-6) and the second half contains prophetic utterances illustrating God’s Sovereignty (ch. 7-12). As we study Daniel we are reminded that God indeed rules all. No nation, no era of history, no government, no ruler, and no individual life is outside the bounds of His ruling power.

### Lessons to Learn

First, consider the Sovereignty of God in the kingdom’s of men. God’s power is on display in the first verse of the book. Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians did not conquer Israel because of their power, but because of God’s. Nebuchadnezzar was Jehovah’s servant (Jer. 25:9) and his victory over God’s people was permitted because He used him as a tool to carry out punishment on His people for their sin. The great Babylonian king thought he was in charge but he was not. He would learn that lesson in Daniel 2 when Jehovah announced

how history would unfold, and again in Daniel 3 the Lord saved His servants from a fiery furnace, and finally in Daniel 4 when his pride found him on all fours eating grass in the field like an ox. Indeed, “The Most High rules in the kingdom of men.”

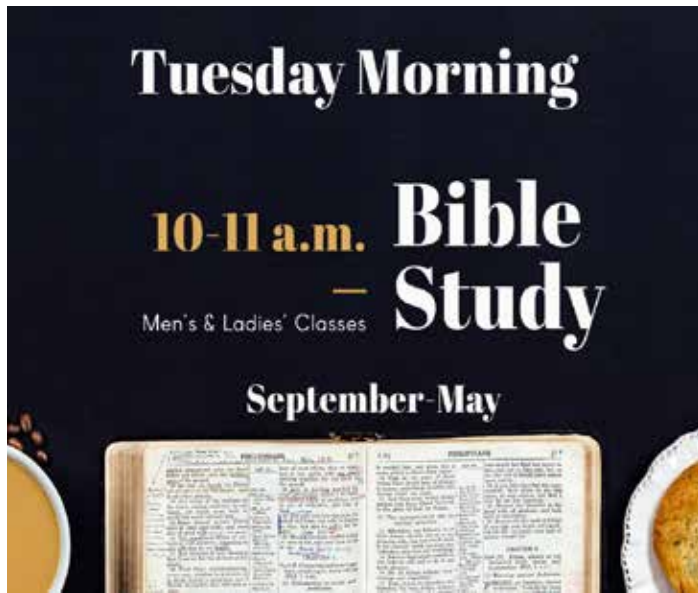
Second, consider the Sovereignty of God in history. The second half Daniel contains prophecy which primarily covers the 400 year period between the Testaments. As a whole it represents some of the most comprehensive history of that time period in existence. It is, in fact, so specific and indisputable, that skeptics insist it had to have been written after the fact, in around 165 BC. To acknowledge that Daniel wrote with such pin-point accuracy about people and events that would take place several hundred years in the future, would force one to acknowledge divine inspiration. Sadly, a bridge too far for many. Regardless, 6 chapters of inspired prophecy were not written without reason. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2 provides a glimpse of what is coming in Daniel 7-12. The figure the kind saw represented 4 major world empires, the last of which was the Romans. During their time in history “shall he God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed” (Dan. 2:44). The 6 chapter preview of the Intertestamental period is a reminder that God was working out eternal purpose to save man through Christ (Eph. 3:9-11) throughout the pages of history. From the Babylonians to the Romans, the return home to the Maccabean revolt, the rebuilding of the temple to the entrance of Pompey, and everything in between, God was working out His purpose in History.

Third, consider what Daniel teaches us about “civil disobedience.” Though dwelling in a “strange land” neither Daniel, nor his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah ever bowed their knee to ungodliness. They retained their faithfulness while also showing respect and honor. Take note of the firm but respectful tone in passages like Daniel 1:12, 3:16-18, and 6:21. Daniel is

a textbook on how to “honor all people” and “honor the king” (1 Pet. 2:17) while also obeying God, rather than men (Acts 5:29).

Finally, note the importance of a purposed heart. The foundation for Daniel’s faithfulness throughout his life in Babylon is recorded for us in Daniel 1:8: “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat...” A purposed heart is one with settled conviction. Daniel decided long beforehand that no matter what happened, regardless of the threat or punishment, he would be true to His God. We would do well to learn and apply that lesson.

CW



## THE BOOK OF JOEL

Randy Robinson

**T**he prophet Joel (Jehovah is God) is, in some ways, typical of other Old Testament prophets and yet is unique among the prophets as well. We know nothing of him personally other than he was the son of Pethuel (sincerity of God), of whom we likewise know nothing.

The 73-verse prophecy of Joel is divided neatly in half. In Joel 1:1-2:17 (37 verses) it is the prophet who speaks and

from Joel 2:18-3:21 (36 verses) it is Jehovah who does the speaking. The theme of this book is “the day of the Lord,” a phrase which appears five times (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31, 3:14). This phrase is used throughout the Bible to signify God’s judgment and punishment of the wicked. The apostle Peter spoke of the last “day of the Lord” at the end of the world where the final judgment will take place with everlasting results (2 Pet. 3:10-13).

The occasion of Joel’s prophecy is a devastating infestation of locusts that had decimated the vegetation of Judah. Joel used this devastating plague to warn against an even greater invasion. A foreign army would one day invade their country and exercise the judgment of God against His rebellious people and subjugate them unless they repented of their wickedness and rebellion.

In Joel’s prophecy, we find one of the most eloquent entreaties in all of scripture as the prophet implored his countrymen to “...rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God...” (Joel 2:13). The rending (tearing) of one’s garments was an outward display of sorrow and grief in ancient times (Gen. 37:34; Job 1:20). However, God was not interested in a superficial display but rather a genuine sign of true repentance (cf. Matt. 3:8)

In Peter’s great sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the apostle invoked the names of two Old Testament characters. One was the great King David, who was also the sweet psalmist of Israel. Peter would add “prophet” to the list of the great king’s credentials (Acts 2:30). The other was Joel. Peter declared that the amazing thing they were witnessing that day, which was that everyone was able to hear “the wonderful works of God” proclaimed in their own language was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2:8, 16; cf. Joel 2:28-32). From there Peter recited this prophecy, which was actually the words that Jehovah spoke, but that Joel recorded. In the last days, Jehovah would pour out His Spirit upon “all flesh” (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). The people on Pentecost witnessed the result of the Spirit being poured out as the apostles “...began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). Not everyone would receive this literal “pouring out” of the Spirit, but “all flesh” would be beneficiaries of it.

Joel also records Jehovah’s judgment of the nations (Joel 3:1-16). Jehovah speaks of these nations being ripe with wickedness and that multitudes would be gathered “in the valley of decision” to receive divine judgment (v.14). The Lord Jesus would refer to His second coming as a judgment of the nations where He, as King, will gather all nations and then separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from

the goats with the sheep on the right hand and the goats on the left (Matt. 25:31-46).

The prophecy of Joel ends with Jehovah's pronouncement of His dwelling in Zion. Jehovah's reference to His "holy mountain" (3:17) is assuredly a reference to spiritual Zion—the church of Christ established in Jerusalem. Isaiah and Micah also referred to the future church as being the mountain of the LORD's house (Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1).

We make one final observation concerning the use of the word "afterward" (Joel 2:28). In recounting this portion of Joel's prophecy where Jehovah Himself promised to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, Peter rather used the phrase, "in the last days" (Acts 2:17). Although many today are looking for signs of "the last days" or "the end times," Peter made it clear that as he was speaking "the last days" had begun. The institution of the church of Christ on the Day of Pentecost constituted the beginning of the last days. This was confirmed by the writer of Hebrews who stated, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2—emph. RR). Despite its relative brevity, Joel's prophecy had particular significance for the people of his own time and continues to have ramifications for all of mankind until the end of the world.

CW

## THE BOOK OF AMOS

Josh Walker

"Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12). This powerful phrase, delivered by the herdsman (Amos 1:1, 7:14, 15), is a stark warning to Israel. It signifies God's fervent attentiveness to justice and His impending judgment. Amos, a herdsman who became a fearless prophet, delivered this message during the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam. His divine message, which took him from Tekoa to Bethel (Amos 7:10-17), put him at odds with Amaziah, the priest of Bethel. Yet, Amos remained steadfast, proclaiming the message God commanded him to preach – a message of punishment and eventual restoration. This overview is structured on the outline provided by M. F. Unger .

### INDICTMENT OF GENTILES AND JEWS (Amos 1-2)

The Almighty levied charges against six Gentile nations and both Hebrew nations. Damascus was condemned for their cruelty in warfare (Amos 1:3-5); Gaza (the Philistines) and Tyre were guilty of selling slaves to Edom (Amos 1:6-10); Edom was guilty of holding a grudge ("his anger tore perpetually) against Israel (Amos 1:11-12); Ammon was guilty of war crimes, which included the killing of unborn children (Amos 1:13-15); Moab burnt the bones of an Edomite king (likely to prevent him for taking part in the resurrection – at least symbolically) (Amos 2:1-3); Judah committed apostasy against their God (Amos 2:4-5); and Israel was condemned because they acted like the nations God condemned (Amos 2:6-16). Israel sold the righteous and needy into slavery and abused the helpless through perversion, manipulation, and debauchery.

### JUDGMENT ON THE TWELVE TRIBES (Amos 3-8)

The prophet turned his attention to his primary audience, Israel. God chose Israel when He promised that the families of the earth would be blessed through the Seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:3); thus, behaving as the heathen nations would have a more severe consequence. God took food (cleanness of teeth, Amos 4:6), withheld rain (Amos 4:7), killed vegetation (Amos 4:9), sent pestilence and war (Amos 4:10), and suffered destruction (Sodom and Gomorrah was often used as an analogy for destruction – Amos 4:11) – but the Lord notes five times, "yet you did not return to me" (Amos 4:6-11). What a dreadful statement, to be in such a state of apostasy and rebellion, to hear, "prepare to meet your God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12).

Amos 5 begins a lamentation of Israel's fate, but the benevolent God offers a glimmer of hope – a proverbial lifeline. Amos conveys a message of redemption three times – Seek Him and live (Amos 5:4, 6, 14). The stubbornness of Israel is epitomized in the prophet's exchange with the wicked priest, Amaziah (Amos 7:10-17). While the original language is ambiguous, Amos is likely claiming he has no financial reason to prophesy in Bethel; thus, a desire to obey God drove him to deliver His message of judgment. This message of hope and redemption should inspire us to seek God and live.

### RESTORATION OF ALL ISRAEL (Amos 9)

The sovereignty of God shines through this final chapter. Though Israel may attempt to flee the judgment of God, the Supreme Ruler will keep His promise, and Israel will meet judgment. However, the other side of the coin is just as certain – God will restore the house of Jacob. No better place

to see the dominance of the Almighty than in the captivities of Israel and Judah. God's punishment transpires with no meaningful opposition, and His promise to restore is met with the same obstruction – none at all. This inevitability of God's sovereignty should inspire us to accept and trust in His plan.

### LESSON TAKEAWAY

No nation is too big for the Almighty God, nor is any nation too big to fall due to its disobedience to God's commands. One should look no further than his own nation to find the atrocities and upheavals the sheep-herding prophet mentioned thousands of years ago. The slaying of innocent children under the banner of human rights, the perversion of marriage, and the mistreatment and ridicule of those seeking to live righteously according to God's Word run parallel to the sins committed in the day of Amos. Thus, men like Amos are needed to proclaim the Gospel message, as God would have it proclaimed, not men (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

CW

## THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

Anthony Scherffius

**E**sau was born to his father Isaac and his mother Rebecca (Gen. 25:19-34) around 1900-1800 B.C. Through Esau would come the great nation of Edom. In fact, the Edomites would grow rapidly, developing kings and chiefs long before the Israelites (Gen. 36:31-39). As they gained power over hundreds of years, they would grow in wealth, power, military strength, and most of all, pride. Obadiah, who prophesied around (848-841 B.C.) during the reign of Jehoram, king of Israel, speaks about the Edomites.

Although the book of Obadiah is the shortest of the minor prophets, it contains a great message that applies to our world today. Obadiah records through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit how Edom received a report from the Lord, making Edom greatly despised in the eyes of the surrounding nations due to their puffed-up and arrogant attitude (vs. 1-3). Through this woeful report, God would humble the Edomites in three aspects of their life. God would remove their wealth, their wisdom, and their way of defense.

Obadiah first warns the people of Edom of the great fall they will face. "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord" (Ob. 4). The Edomites were known for their great fortresses built into the mountains, taking the hill country of Seir, south of the Dead Sea (Gen. 36:8). Because of their location, it was near impossible to defeat them, but not for God.

Next, they are told all of their treasure will be ransacked. "If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough?" (Ob. 5). Edom enjoyed great riches through their copper mines and smelting industries. They also had access to the caravans that traveled through the King's Highway which stretched from the Red Sea all the way into the plateau of southern Damascus (Num. 20:17). Edom took great pride in these riches, and Jehovah said He would take it away.

God, through Obadiah, would also say Edom would lose all of their wisdom. "All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him." (Ob. 7) How could an unstoppable nation fall so fast and so hard? God said they would be destroyed from the inside out, through their own allies. If an army cannot get in through battle, God would turn their own armies and comrades against them.

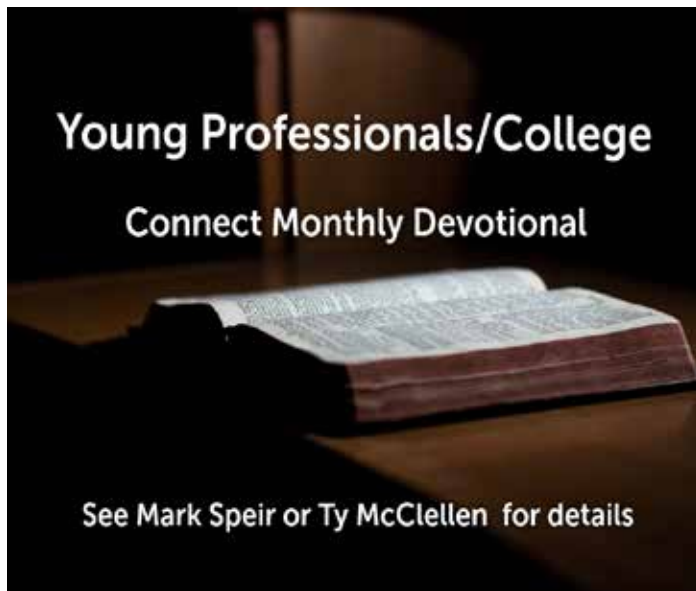
And finally, Edom is chastised for their behavior towards their family, the descendants of Jacob. "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever" (Ob. 10). Edom had a perpetual loathing for the Israelites (Eze. 35:1-15) because of Jacob's deception against Esau, the father of the Edomites. The descendants of Esau, when presented with an opportunity to either help or stop the Israelites, would choose violence against their brothers. After the exodus from Egypt, the Edomites would not allow access through their land (Num. 20:13-21). During the reign of Jehoram, king of Israel, the Edomites rebelled (2 Kings 8). In the books of poetry, we read of how the Edomites cheered on the Babylonians as they fought the Israelites (Ps. 137:7).

Edom's report concludes by Obadiah reassuring God's people. "But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions" (Ob. 17) In every message of judgement, there is always a conclusion of hope. In this case, it was not to the Edomites, but rather to the people of God. Jacob's

descendants will possess the land, but notice the very last statement of Obadiah: "...and the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (Ob. 21).

The book of Obadiah has a clear message. God hates a prideful attitude. Edom is a perfect example of what was said in Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before destruction..." In complete contrast to this, God makes a command for all those who desire to see Him, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up" (Jas. 4:10). If you are prideful, there will be a great fall. If you bring yourself low, you shall be lifted up. And in being lifted up by God, you shall be a part of the Kingdom, which is the Lord's.

CW



## THE BOOK OF JONAH

Ross Haffner

Jonah is likely the best-known of all the minor prophets because of the amazing verse at the end of chapter one of his book. "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jon. 1:17). Typically this book is looked at from an apologetics angle with questions like, "Was it a fish or a whale?" or "Could someone live in this sea creature for three days and survive?" Other times the book is used for big-picture applications like, "Do not run

from God and think you will not suffer the consequences." While these are valid and important points to make there is so much more you can gain from the book of Jonah.

Jonah wrote when the Assyrians were the major power in that part of the world, and certainly enemies of the Jews. We can understand why Jonah was not happy with his assignment to go to the Assyrians capital city (Jon. 1:3). As a prophet of God, however, his interests should have been more spiritual than patriotic.

In chapter one Jonah was told to preach to Nineveh about their wickedness. Instead, Jonah fled to Joppa and secured passage on a ship traveling to Tarshish. God brought a storm that even the professional sailors were terrified of to the point they tossed over their cargo and pleaded with everyone to call upon their god. When they cast lots the lot fell on Jonah revealing he was the cause of the storm. At Jonah's request, they cast him overboard, which ends the storm and leads to the moment for which Jonah is most famous.

Certainly this chapter teaches that there are consequences to disobeying God, but consider the signs that Jonah was depressed. He had allowed himself to get to the point that he would rather die than repent. We must be mindful of mental health challenges, particularly the danger that we might not make rational decisions in those times of darkness. Notice also the benefit of God's judgment. Not for Jonah, which is illuminated in the second chapter, but for the sailors. These men offer sacrifices and vows to Jehovah (Jon. 1:16), though they are assumed pagans (Jon. 1:6, 9). The natural consequences of sin might bring outsiders to the church in search of respite and we need to be ready to receive them with the gospel (Rev. 22:17).

In chapter two Jonah prayed to God, showing his faith and repentance. He spoke with assurance in God's ability to save, acceptance of the difficulty he brought on himself, understanding of the source of hope, and thanksgiving for the salvation of the Lord. Even if you cannot see a way out of sin, Heaven does (John 14:6; 1 Cor. 6:11).

In chapter three Jonah received the same command, but this time decided to fulfill his duty to the Lord. The preaching from the prophet convicted the hearts of the Assyrian people and even the king cried out in repentance and sat in sackcloth and ashes. God changed their sentence and saved the city. We learn from this chapter that salvation requires obedient faith and repentance (Jas. 2:17; Acts 3:19). Also, the preaching of God's word reveals the power of God to salvation (Rom. 1:16). Even very wicked

people can be saved by it. We should not limit the power God's word has by imagining that someone is too far gone to help or thinking that the best days of the church of Christ are behind us.

In the final chapter, Jonah's displeasure takes center stage. He was angry at God for saving the people of Nineveh. Jonah sat outside the city and pouted as God made efforts to get Jonah to see the folly of his attitude by providing shade from a gourd and then taking it away. Jonah clung to his supposed right to be angry about the people being spared and the gourd being removed. Jonah's cry is shocking: "I do well to be angry, even unto death" (Jon. 4:9). Jonah's prejudice had stolen his joy. A city full of converts should have elated him, instead, he watched to see what would happen, implying his thought that their repentance would not last long (Jon. 4:5). Jonah was happy when he received a small thing for himself in the gourd, but could not bring himself to be pleased when God gave a great thing to Nineveh. He had not worked for the plant and only appreciated what it could do for him. Treating people that way leads to misery too. God's salvation is available for all, not merely those we already love and appreciate.

Lo-Ruhamah, indicating God would show no mercy toward Israel. The third child, Lo-Ammi, indicating that Israel was not God's people and that He would not be their God. This, of course, stands in stark contrast to the exodus promise, "I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."

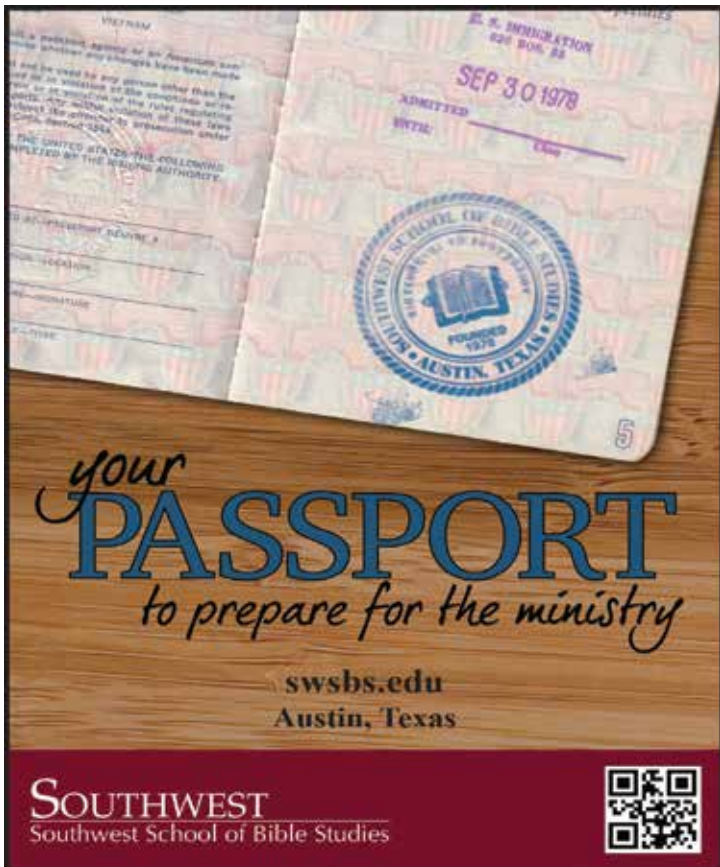
It seems important to point out the difference between the language describing the birth of the first child versus the language used regarding the subsequent children. Regarding the first child, the text says, "she conceived and bore him a son" whereas, for the second and third children the text just says "she conceived again and bore a daughter... she conceived and bore a son" without indicating that the last two children were Hosea's (Hos. 1:6, 8). Perhaps a relationship that was initially characterized by faithfulness later turned to infidelity. This certainly would fit the typification of Israel who started out as faithful to God but later turned to harlotry.

CW

In chapter two the unfaithfulness of Gomer and the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel are metaphorically interwoven to show the rejection of an unfaithful partner (Hosea 2:2, 7, 5, 13). In chapters two and three we see both brides, Israel and Gomer, being taken back in a demonstration of unflinching, merciful love (Hos. 2:14-23, 3:1-3). Of course, the exile of Israel would stand between her rejection and her return to God (Hos. 3:4-5).

The remaining eleven chapters highlight the particulars regarding Israel's unfaithfulness. One of the highlights is the glaring lack of knowledge among the people. God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). They were guilty of shallowness and insincerity: "... your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away" (Hos. 6:4). They were guilty of foolishly turning to other nations to defend against Divine judgment (Hos. 7:11). The prophet reminds that even in the face of deserved judgment and punishment, God's love and compassion never cease to amaze (Hos. 11:1-4; 11:8-11). However, God would not ignore Israel's infidelity, and He will not tolerate ours.

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## From the Director's desk

### The Case for the Local Church

One of our second-year students recently asked me how he or any other new graduate could be most useful in the Kingdom. I suppose that is a matter of opinion that demands awareness, wisdom, discernment, and consideration for each individual given their personal abilities and situation. However, I think the answer I gave him could be easily applied to any new preacher, old preacher, or non-preacher. I told him that I thought the best way for a recent (or prospective) graduate to make a difference in the body of Christ was to invest himself in the local church. An investment of time, prayer, thoughts, effort, and money into the local church (2 Cor. 2:15) will yield eternal dividends because it is the local church that God chose to communicate the gospel with their community (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15).

For the preacher, gospel meetings are grand, but if your face never graces a flier, you can still do great work in the local church. Lectureships are places of learning and fellowship and friendship, but if you are never invited to speak at one, you are still loved and appreciated by God. Facebook can be fun and useful, but for the preacher who desires fame and notoriety, it is a fiend, not your friend. The brotherhood is beautiful, but your focus should be in your community and in your congregation (cf. Acts 14:23; Phil. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 1:5).

When someone graduates from preaching school, they can serve God in many ways. Therefore, my advice to every young preacher, new preacher, and prospective preacher is the same advice I would give to non-preachers: invest yourself in the local church. Plan to live in the community and build relationships and plant roots. Learn names and families and hobbies. Go to games, officiate weddings, and preach funerals. Love God's people and the souls that surround you. Make this your priority. Invest in the local church because God will be glorified when you do (Eph. 3:20-21).



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