

# The Life Challenge

*"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10*

**Title: The God Who Is There and Lovingly Engaged**

**Speaker: Ron Voth**

**Text: Hosea 2**

**Date: June 3, 2018**



## WARM-UP

Which of the five descriptors below are most like you?

- A recruiter, a communicator
- An entrepreneur, an innovator
- An instructor, philosopher
- An agitator for change, a reformer
- A protector, a provider for the group

Which one of those types of people tend to make you the most uncomfortable around you?

## DISCUSSION

### Review of the Prophet Hosea:

#### Hosea's Background:

- A contemporary of Isaiah - prophesied against both Israel (King Jeroboam) and Judah (Uzziah, Hezekiah)
- This was time of prosperity since Egypt and Assyria were not at the time at war with each other
- Hosea used a number of images to demonstrate Israel and Judah's unfaithfulness to their God, Yahweh. In Hosea 1-3, the image of a promiscuous wife.
- Baal Worship:
  - ⇒ Baal was a weather god who had control over agriculture, fertility, rainfall and productivity. Sexual behaviour at their shrines with cult prostitutes was expected to magically cause the Baals to respond by producing fertile seeds and rain for a good crop.

**Israel is like an unfaithful wife** (Gomer) – who has departed the ways of the LORD (Yahweh) and followed the Baals (1:2)

- Examples of her unfaithfulness: Hosea 2:2, 4, 5, 7

#### God Responds to Israel and Judah's Unfaithfulness:

- 1) **Therefore #1:** (Hosea 2:6-12) God will block her way by building a hedge around her. All of her opportunities are not available to her, so she decides to go back to her husband. (Anything better than this current situation that is blocking her.)
- 2) **Therefore #2:** (Hosea 2:9-13) God will remove all of her support systems to cause her to suffer in hope that she will reconsider her ways
- 3) **Therefore #3:** (Hosea 2:14-15) God allures the adulterous woman by wooing her. He speaks tenderly to her and provides a sense of hope for her

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## DISCUSSION

**A Dramatic Change** in the relationship between God and his People – like a betrothal:

- God is an amazing God:
  - ⇒ He welcomes the adulterer back to Himself: Hosea 2:16,17
  - ⇒ Against all of that unfaithfulness, God is merciful and loving. He betroths Himself to his people in righteousness and justice. Hosea 2:18-19
  - ⇒ Where there was no mercy, there is now mercy. Hosea 2:23
  - ⇒ Where there was no relationship, now He says, "You are my people."

### Applications and Ponderings:

- How well did Jewish prophets fare in their relationships to their people? Why was that?
- Of the five descriptors in the Warm-Up, how many of you said you were most uncomfortable with the change agent, the reformer, i.e. the prophet?
- Why can prophets make us uncomfortable? Someone has said that the prophets role is "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable!"
- Have you ever said, "I don't understand those Israelites. Why were they so easily tempted by the culture around them? Didn't they know what God had done for them? **We wouldn't be like them, would we?** (See I Corinthians 10:6,11)
- Three "Therefore's" for us to wrestle with:
  - 1) **Therefore #1: The Wall** – Does God intentionally put us into a jam to get our attention? Has anyone in your group related to that experience?
  - 2) **Therefore #2: The Remover** – When it seems God is subtracting from our lives. Do we get mad or disappointed in God? Do we accuse God of being unfair?
  - 3) **Therefore #3: The "Woo-er"**
    - ⇒ Are we subject to idolatry today? How? What are the possible idols we must confront?
    - ⇒ Have you experienced the tender wooing of God to bring Himself back to you? Share with each other how God has been merciful and gracious where we don't deserve it.
- **Finish Strong:** In view of the challenges the Prophet Hosea put before us, let's review our **BIG Three Priorities:**
  - 1) **Prayer Engagement** How can we pray for each other as we wrestle with the temptations the culture throws at us every day?
  - 2) **Holy Spirit Empowerment:** Read II Corinthians 2:14-16. We don't have our personal resources to march in "triumphal procession."
  - 3) **Difference-Making Faith:** As we cast out our idols, we can live in a counter-cultural way before the world. When we do that right, we become the aroma of life to those who are perishing.