

GLENKIRK CHURCH



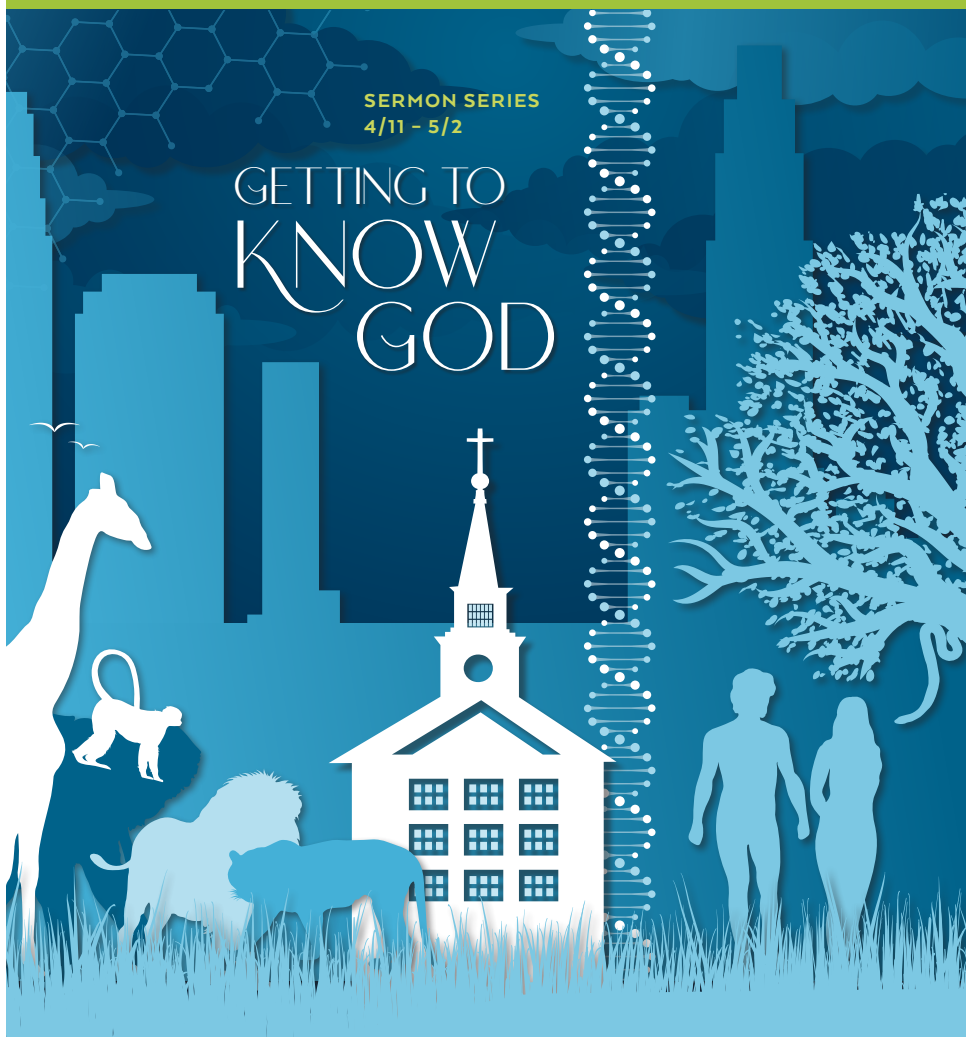
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

MAY 3 - 7, 2021

SERMON SERIES  
4/11 - 5/2

## GETTING TO KNOW GOD



# MONDAY

**Hosea 9:1-3; Isaiah 1:16-21; 2 Kings 17:6-13**

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The Prodigal Son story is well-known, particularly in depicting the eagerness of the loving father (portraying God) to forgive and welcome the wayward son (representing repentant sinners turning to God) who had foolishly squandered his inheritance. As we anticipate Mother's Day, Hosea's story might resonate with mothers who have sacrificed for an errant family member, lovingly enduring amidst continuing disappointments. "[Hosea depicts] the loving God, the faithless human heart, and the deceptive attractiveness of the world." (Ray Stedman)

Hosea—meaning "Salvation"—opens our series in the minor prophets, "a collection of twelve Old Testament books ... The title 'minor' refers to length, not significance. Roughly in chronological order, each of these short books gives a glimpse into the spiritual landscape and history of Israel, challenging the status quo through prophets called to speak on God's behalf." (Zondervan Academic)

"Hosea commenced prophesying in Israel in the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II (c. 782-753 BC) ... The reign of Jeroboam II was one of continual success and prosperity for Israel ... Trade routes were reopened, industry was expanded, and tolls from caravans using trade routes through [Israel's] territory multiplied ... Assyria [was then preoccupied, which] ... boded well for Israel. ... [However,] empty

religious ritual combined with Baal [worship] abounded ... [as the Israelites] relaxed in the cocoon of a false sense of security. ...

“After the death of Jeroboam, things [declined] for Israel. [King Pekah, c. 735 BC, tried to force King] Ahaz of Judah into a coalition ... [opposing] resurgent Assyria. ... This would eventually result in [Assyria’s attack] ... and consequent exile for many ... Subsequent rebellion, which then resulted in further retaliation ... [prompted a] full-scale [Assyrian] invasion ... [and dispersion] of the people (2 Kings 17:4-6) ... Israel (the northern kingdom) as a nation [would disappear].” (Peter Pett)

“Hosea [prophesied] that God was going to raise up the Assyrian nation to punish [the northern kingdom] and that a fierce and ruthless army would sweep across the land like a scourge. ... God [used Hosea] and his family as an object lesson for His people.” (Stedman) Hosea’s ministry reveals God’s chastening holiness and steadfast love—contemporary America, take note!

## QUESTIONS

What is “minor” about the books of the “minor prophets”? What was happening in the northern kingdom of Israel that prompted Hosea’s ministry? What does God’s use of Assyria to punish wayward Israel tell us about His ways?

## PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWEN AND LIVING ROOM MINISTRIES (LRM)

Living Room Ministries’ vision is to create a community of compassion for Kenyans in need of hospice care. Please pray for their staff of 100+ Kenyans who daily show up to care for these patients and their families; pray for mercy and grace.

# TUESDAY

## Hosea 1:1-3; Ezekiel 23:22-30

Ancient Jewish prophets' lives were tough. Their messages—often regarding God's impending judgment—were generally unpopular, provoking persecution. Elijah was an “enemy of the state” and battled depression. Jonah fled God's call, swallowed by a giant fish to spur compliance. Isaiah's prophesies were ignored, as God had foretold. God had Ezekiel lie on his sides 430 days and eat food cooked over dung. And God commanded Hosea to marry a prostitute—but why?

God was using Hosea and his promiscuous wife, Gomer, to portray His relationship with Israel—Hosea's marriage modeled the Hebrews' broken, unfaithful bond with God. “God had taken the nation Israel as His bride, had blessed her, heaped His love upon her, and yet she turned from God.” (Chuck Smith) Israel was awash with idolatry and entangled in political intrigue. She had become the very definition of sin: dethroning God via rebellious, fleshly pursuits.

We like to think of the true Church, the Bride of Christ, as “[*clothed with fine linen, bright and pure*]” (Revelation 19:8), a suitable eternal partner for Jesus Himself. And through His continual refining—sanctification—God is fashioning us accordingly. But this is not how He found us, nor where we are presently. “The gospel is not the story of Christ loving a pure bride who loves Him; it's the story of His love for a whore (fallen sinners) who think He has nothing to offer and keeps giving herself to others.” (Ray Ortlund)

God's Self-description of being "jealous" (Exodus 34:14) is an expression of His love, not of insecurity. He does not wish to lose His beloved, particularly to something—sin—which destroys the objects of His affection. However, "love cannot compel; it can only persuade." (Source unknown)

Hosea faithfully responded to God's call to marry a prostitute. And "*while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). "The good news of the kingdom is ... the news of a Redeemer who has come to rescue me from myself." (Paul David Tripp) Unfortunately, each of us still has some "Gomer" in us; however, God won't leave us there—His "*love never fails*" (1 Corinthians 13:8).

## QUESTIONS

What were some of the extreme challenges faced by Israel's ancient prophets? Why did God command Hosea to marry the unfaithful harlot, Gomer? What's the relevance of the saying "love cannot compel; it can only persuade" in our relationship with God?

## PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWEN AND LIVING ROOM MINISTRIES

Living Room staff members believe every person is created in the image of God. More than treating a disease, they are committed to caring for a person holistically—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Pray for their patients, whom they refer to as *wageni* in Swahili (guests), to experience the love of Jesus in tangible ways.

# WEDNESDAY

**Hosea 2:19-20; Isaiah 54:5-8; Isaiah 61:10**

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“And in that day,’ declares the LORD, ‘you will call me “My Husband”” (Hosea 2:16). “There is nothing more poignant than this beautiful picture of God in His love seeing Israel as His wife, even though she has been unfaithful to Him, and determining that once she has learned her lesson, He will woo her back to Himself.” (Peter Pett)

Jesus is referred to as a “*bridegroom*” repeatedly in the Bible (Matthew 9:15, etc.). The wedding at Cana was His first public miracle, wherein the Lord turned water into wine (John 2). There are multiple references to the “*wedding feast*” (Matthew 22:2, etc.) and “*marriage supper of the Lamb*” (Revelation 19:9, etc.) within Scripture. These are not coincidences—God created us to be in close relationship, with intimacy typified in a married relationship. Despite Israel’s continual unfaithfulness (and, sadly, even ours), He has done all He can to enable loving relationship with Him.

Notice the twice-promised “*I will betroth you to Me*” in Hosea 2:19-20. God is the initiator, adorning His betrothed in righteousness, justice, love, mercy and faithfulness. Absent God’s compassion, initiative and devotion, each of us would be forever lost in sinful separation from Him. I am reminded of God covenanting with Abraham in Genesis 15:12-21 even as Abraham slept—fortunately, God’s fidelity and worthiness, not ours, prompts and sustains such bonds.

Monday opened with a reference to the longsuffering father of the Prodigal Son, a father hurried only when it comes to reconciling with and restoring the one whom he loves. This is the God of the Bible—ever-ready and “mighty to save” (Zephaniah 3:17)—“your husband [who] is your Maker ... and your Redeemer” (Isaiah 54:5). He is the One who “covered your nakedness ... and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine” (Ezekiel 16:8).

Do we regularly think of God as our enduring, devoted, affectionate Husband? Ponder this in your quiet, reflective time with Him today. Thank Him for His lovingkindness and unfathomable goodness. Then share this with another who appears to be far from Him—tell them about Jesus, “the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

## QUESTIONS

What’s the significance of all of the wedding and bridegroom imagery in the Bible? How are you able to relate to God as an enduring, devoted, loving Husband?

## PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWEN AND LIVING ROOM MINISTRIES

Living Room’s ministry extends quality physical, psychological, and spiritual care to patients and their families on two campuses in Western Kenya. Pray for LRM leaders as they continue to grow that they will have wisdom and favor as they seek to follow God’s lead.

# THURSDAY

**Hosea 11:1-4; Isaiah 66:13; Deuteronomy 7:6-9**

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Parents can appreciate the yearning of God's heart in Hosea 11:1-4: *"When Israel was a child, I loved him ... It was I who taught Ephraim to walk ... I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love ... I bent down to them and fed them."* "With these beautiful words God describes His relationship with His chosen people as one of sovereign love ... [In] Exodus 4:22-23 ... He described Israel as *'His firstborn'* and demanded that they be freed [by Pharaoh], and [in] Deuteronomy 14:1 ... [God] declares them to be His children." (Peter Pett)

And how did Israel respond to God's faithfulness and lovingkindness? *"They kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols"* (Hosea 11:2). "God called Israel out of Egypt, but the idolatry of the Baals (Canaan's local deities) called to Israel." (David Guzik)

If you're a parent, a child of yours has disappointed you at least once, perhaps even broken your heart. It's bad enough to be unappreciated, much less have your help ignored—"they did not know that I healed them" (Hosea 11:3). Still worse, however, is being rejected and supplanted by your child making destructive choices, such as an addiction or unhealthy relationship. "[The Hebrews] forsook the LORD and followed [false gods]." (Guzik) Lest we be too hard on the ancient Jews, however, remember that we are so much like them—with every sin, we act the same.



Israel's King David pondered, "What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" (Psalm 8:4). I formerly thought that Yahweh makes us parents so that we might appreciate the Father even more. I now see beyond this. Love is developed and deepened when we walk with our children through their growing pains, wrong choices, peaks and valleys. The Almighty desires children, not pets—"God wanted more than *innocent* [people]; His plan was to bring forth *redeemed* [people]." (Guzik)

"Love is costly. It always involves some kind of self-denial. It often demands suffering." (John Piper) Every parent understands this; moreover, God knows it well—Father and Son displayed it on Calvary's cross.

## QUESTIONS

How was God a Father to ancient Israel? How did Israel respond, corporately, and how was their response like ours when we forsake God's ways? What does "God wants children, not pets" mean?

## PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWEN AND LIVING ROOM MINISTRIES

Living Room's mission is to provide dignity and quality of life to people in Kenya living with advanced diseases through holistic care and education. During this COVID-19 pandemic, pray for protection over their team and wisdom as they continue to care for patients and families.

# FRIDAY

**Hosea 11:8-9; Numbers 23:19; Jeremiah 18:7-11**

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Reading Hosea 11:8-9 through my foggy, limited human lens, God seems conflicted. The Jews spurned His love and rejected His ways corporately; yet, He loved Israel, establishing her for His glory and meaningful relationship. “*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts*” (Isaiah 6:3); however, concurrently, “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8) and “*Love covers a multitude of sins*” (1 Peter 4:8). Did God battle indecision and compromise regarding His people?

God is holy, while not stony and emotionless—He is personal and relational in His eternal trinity. “This cry from the heart of God reveals God’s continual quandary. He longs to show mercy and forgive, but He cannot do so unless it is accompanied by [people] repenting and turning from their sin. The love of God does not exclude the judgment of God. ... God cannot lower His standards, however great His love.” (Pett)

Some see the Father (“the harsh, judging Old Testament God”) eager to condemn, while the Son (“the loving, forgiving New Testament God”) sought “to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10)—as if there was discord between Father and Son. The Bible teaches, however, that God is unchanging (Psalm 55:19) and Jesus stated that “*I and the Father are one*” (John 10:30) and “*I do nothing on My own authority*” (John 8:28). There is no conflict here.

He is “*God and not a man*” (Hosea 11:9)—what we see as a dilemma is merely the divine harmony between God’s righteous holiness and boundless love. “What passes for forgiveness among [humans] is nothing like the amazing forgiveness of God.” (Guzik)

“At Bethlehem God entered the slave market where the whole human race was putting itself up for auction, prostituting itself and its humanity to a cheapened life. But on the cross the Lord Jesus paid the price, the full price for our freedom, and bought us back. This is the story of God’s love and God’s heart—His loving desire to make ... His people ... [what] He intended them to be.” (Stedman) Each must choose, willingly, whether to receive Jesus Christ—accepting adoption into God’s eternal family—and the pardon He has secured already.

## QUESTIONS

What are the differences between the “God of the Old Testament” and “God of the New Testament”? How does God reconcile His holiness with His love? Why is it critical that our choice is either to accept or reject Christ, that His salvation is free and uncoerced?

## PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWEN AND LIVING ROOM MINISTRIES

Living Room’s dream is to extend their reach by constructing a home-away-from-home for families who travel far from home for the medical care their child needs. Please pray for provision and favor, for God to teach the LRM staff how to love these families well.

## Sources:

- Ray Stedman's quotes can be found at <https://www.raystedman.org/bible-overview/adventuring/hosea-the-prophet-and-the-prostitute>.
- Zondervan Academic's quote is from <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/minor-prophets>
- Peter Pett's quotes can be found at <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/pet/hosea-0.html>
- Chuck Smith's quote is from <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/csc/hosea-1.html>
- Ray Ortland's quote can be found at <https://jamedders.com/my-favorite-quotes-from-ortlunds-new-book-the-gospel/>
- Paul David Tripp's quote is from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/20592-the-good-news-of-the-kingdom-is-not-freedom-from>
- David Guzik's quotes can be found at [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Exd/Exd-19.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Exd/Exd-19.cfm) and [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/archives/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide\\_Gen/Gen\\_3.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/archives/guzik_david/StudyGuide_Gen/Gen_3.cfm)
- John Piper's quote is from <https://mattlacava.wordpress.com/tag/scriptures/>

