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CHURCH**
EDINBURGH

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Hosea: Lessons in Faithfulness

Hosea 1:2-9; 2:14-23

Prophetic proclamations about Israel can sometimes directly be transposed onto the church today. The challenge with the prophets is unpacking their original contexts then working it out in a modern context.

Hosea was prophesying in a time when Israel had abandoned monotheism in favour of a mixture of gods from religions around the world. They had totally abandoned their half of the Mosaic covenant. To God, this was the equivalent of adultery – which is why Hosea has to marry an adulterous woman and give terrible names to his children. The covenant was broken, so God was going to scatter Israel and they would no longer be his people.

At the end of it all, however, we see that God remains faithful to Israel and this bleakness is not the end of the story. He promises a restoration of his people and their relationship, showing that he has been faithful the whole time.

We all have the capacity for idolatry, something which God compares to adultery. Our idols could be sex, money, comfort, career, academic success. But ultimately it's a heart condition, where we don't give ourselves fully to God. Idolatry is whatever takes up space in your heart away from God.

In *Matthew 22*, Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind. That's what covenantal love looks like. We respond to God wholeheartedly by letting our priorities determine our actions, not vice versa. We need changed hearts, however, something which God promised to Israel in Ezekiel. A new heart, of flesh, not stone, helps us to love God more wholeheartedly.

Ultimately, the best way we develop wholeheartedness is by looking at Jesus who

loved us and gave everything for us. He took on the separation that was due to all covenant breakers, he loved us faithfully even when our heart wavered, he restored our relationship with God.

Questions

- Do you find reading the old testament prophets difficult? How do you approach them?
- Are there any similarities between the context of Hosea and 21 st century Edinburgh?
- What does it look like to be wholehearted for God? How do we live out 'the greatest command'?
- What can we do to nurture wholeheartedness, especially when we don't feel like we are giving everything?
- How does Jesus' example help us to tackle idolatry in our lives?



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