Sunday School Commentary Lesson

By

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An Unfaithful Bride, Hosea 1: 1-10

I once received a phone call late at night from a friend who had been recently married. He came home early and his new bride was in the bed with his best friend. In rage he took out his iron and destroyed the windows of her car and then drove her car into the lake. After this outburst of anger over his wife's unfaithfulness, he called me. I listened and I grieved with him, but urged him to "be angry and sin not." That is easier said than done when you feel hurt and betrayed by someone you love. How would you respond if you caught your spouse in the act of being unfaithful?

Commentary Lesson

Hosea was one of the minor prophets. But his life and message offer to us a major opportunity to reflect upon the depth of God's love and mercy. Hosea served as prophet during the time of Amos. Hosea was influenced by Amos. His early prophesying carried a strong note of judgement. In time, Hosea learned to share a message of redeeming grace and compassionate, unconditional love.

Hosea served the Lord during the reign of Jeroboam II who ruled the region of Israel. It was a time of peace and affluence. Traveling caravans brought great wealth into the area for the rich. The idols people sold became not only valuable commodities but also homes for their misguided faith. The people were terribly guilty of becoming unfaithful to God and committing idolatry. God continued to love and forgive his wayward children in spite of their unfaithfulness.

Hosea meet Gomer in a neighboring village. She was the most beautiful woman in town. Hosea courted her and wonder of wonders, he won her to be his bride. Hosea was the happiest man alive! The whole village turned out for their wedding! They received congratulations and best wishes from everyone. Hosea loved her with a love that was deeper than he could have ever realized at that time.

Hosea took Gomer home to his stone cottage. In time, Gomer gave birth to their first child, a son, Jezreel, which means God sows. Long hours in the barley fields were no burden because Hosea could go home to lovely Gomer and little Jezreel.

One evening at dusk, Hosea was returning home from the barley field. He couldn't believe his eyes. He discovered Gomer in bed with another man. Gomer quickly gathered a few clothes and leaves with her lover. Jezreel is left crying. A woman can be a man's heaven or his hell. Gomer was laughing, not at a tavern but at a temple. She went to dedicate herself to their spring fertility worship of lord Baal. She was a so called holy woman. After the festival was
over, Gomer returned home, but there were no words of apology or regret. Hosea was surely furious. He no doubt exploded more than once. But it did no good. Gomer was apparently lacking a conscience. In time Gomer gave birth to another child. Hosea named her Lo-ruhamah (meaning no more mercy, Hosea 1:6). I imagined that Hosea would have no words to describe the agony and grief of those days. Perhaps Gomer had been lovely, pure and beautiful and now she was playing him for the fool. I believe that it would have been more than most people could have stood.

In time Gomer leaves as before and joins their spring fertility worship. Nine months later she gave birth to a son. Hosea named him Lo-ammi (meaning Not mine, Hosea 1:9). Inspite of Gomer's unfaithfulness, Hosea still loved her which must have only added to his agony. Hosea had to quit preaching, for who would listen to a prophet whose wife was a harlot and what message did he have to give? He must have brooded and wept over his wife's unfaithfulness. God enabled Hosea to gain a new perspective on his situation. In Gomer's unfaithfulness and in his continuing love for her, he caught a glimpse of God's continuing love for Israel in spite of her idolatry. God continued to love Israel even though she was unfaithful even as Hosea continued to love his unfaithful wife.

Years passed and, with the help of family and friends, Hosea raised the children. Then one day Hosea heard that the temple Baal was selling Gomer as a slave. With the passing of time, she was no longer needed or wanted. While Hosea was musing over this turn of events, the Word of the Lord came to him and instructed him to go and buy Gomer back. Perhaps, he raised a question at first, but God asked him if he still loved her, and he did. So Hosea, left the children with a neighbor and he traveled down the same road that Gomer had traveled with her lovers.

When Hosea reached the city gate, he must have seen his unfaithful wife Gomer for the first time in a long time. Hosea purchased Gomer for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer and half of barley (Hosea 3:2). Picture the people in the village coming up to Hosea and asking him, Why? Why would you buy back Gomer? I believe he responded, because he loved her, even as the Lord God continued to love his sinning children. Hosea's message suddenly had an authentic ring due to what he had endured.

Hosea took Gomer home, and he surely spoke to her firmly, but with compassion, insisting that she never again play the harlot. In time there was no doubt that progress in their relationship had been made because he changed the names of the younger children to Ruhamah which means beloved and Ammi which means my own. I believe that Hosea learned much through heartache; he learned something of God's great love and mercy for his sinning children. Hosea continued to love and forgive Gomer, his unfaithful wife. How much more will God forgive you and me? How much more does God expect you and me to be forgiving?

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