

EXTRAVAGANT LOVE

Hosea 3:1-2 IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS!

You're about to hear a salacious story of a **unique** and **twisted** love. It's a story about an extremely **unlikely** couple, an **unusual** marriage between a **PROPHET** and a **PROSTITUTE**! Most **importantly**, it's a story with a "**double entendre**." It's about an **adulterous** marriage between a man and wife, and the **idolatrous** marriage between God and Israel.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote "the entire world **loves** a lover." I think the world also loves a love **story**. If the world only **knew**, they would **all** love the **Bible**, because the **Bible** is the **GREATEST** love story ever **TOLD**! And **Hosea** is a unique **love** story in the Old Testament.

In many ways Hosea is the same as **millions** of stories from New York to Los Angeles; Seattle to Houston; St. Louis to Kansas City; Springfield to Joplin. Frankly, we've largely **ignored** Hosea, because it's so **RAW** and so **REAL**. We've **shunned** it in our **small** groups and **pulpits** because the **TRUTH** is so **painful**!

However, today we will see how God has **chosen** the **sad**, sordid story of this **broken-hearted prophet** to take your breath away. The story overflows with **heartbreak**, **failure**, **selfishness**, and **despair**. It's the story of broken **vows**, broken trust, broken **relationships**, broken **homes**, broken **hearts**, and broken **lives**. But it's **also** a story filled with **love**, **hope**, **forgiveness**, **redemption**, and **restoration**. Hosea experienced **betrayal** and **anguish** because of his **wife's** adulterous relationships. Hosea's broken **human** relationship reveals God's **agony** and **brokenness** at **our** sin. Hosea shows us the very **heart** of God. Hosea's **love** for Gomer and his **commitment** to **redeem** her at **any** cost, **DEMONSTRATES** God's **love** and **commitment** to us.

THESIS: God yearns for your **total** commitment to **Him** so He can **reveal** His extravagant, faithful, sacrificial **LOVE** to you.

1. God's love is EXTRAVAGANT.

Hosea is **unique** and ranks as one of the most **amazing** love stories in **literature**. Hosea is both **beautiful** and **confusing**. The story of Hosea and his wife will **shock** you and then **warm** your heart. The story of **Israel** and **God** in Hosea will **frustrate** you then **fill** you with **hope**. It's the story of **Hosea** and **Gomer**, **God** and **Israel**, and **ultimately** ... it's the story of **you** and **Jesus**. This is **your** love story. But how can I explain contrasts like **hope** and **judgment**, or **loyalty** and **betrayal**, or **love** and **rebellion**? Let's try this:

I wear **trifocal** glasses. They give me **three** distinct fields of **view**. I would suggest that as you read and study Hosea, you need trifocals to see the book clearly.

DISTANCE: The top lens is for distance viewing. I use it to drive so I can see the road ahead. Hosea from a **distance** shows the historical landscape of Israel during King Jeroboam 2's reign when Israel was **prosperous** but **unfaithful**. Hosea preaches sermons filled with both **judgment** and **hope** for God's rebellious people. King **Jeroboam 2's** military exploits had extended the nation's borders the farthest since Solomon's glorious kingdom. **Tribute** money was **pouring** into the capitol treasury at Samaria, and Israel was experiencing a period of **unprecedented** prosperity and **unsurpassed** idolatry.

INTERMEDIATE: The **middle** lens helps me see at **arm's** length. It's for working on my **computer**. At arm's length we see Hosea, his wife Gomer, and their family. Hosea's **life** is the **metaphor** for the book. His **love** for his **unfaithful** wife reflects **God's** redemptive love for **Israel**. God saw Israel as His bride, and He viewed the worship of **idols** or other **gods** as spiritual **adultery**. The **first Commandment** told Israel that Jehovah would not **share** her with **other** gods. But she **persisted** in her **prostitution**, and by the time of **Jeroboam 2** the situation was **intolerable**. God was **speaking** decisively. **First** He sent a former **herdsman** from Tekoa named **Amos**, who **THUNDERED** God's **warning** of imminent **judgment**, but he was largely **ignored**. So God spoke **again**, this time through **Hosea** whose **name** means "Jehovah is **salvation**."

NEAR: The **bottom** lens lets me **read** my **Bible** or do **close** up work in the shop or on a car. This lens lets you see **yourself** in Hosea. You can see **who** you are and how dearly **loved** you are. Hosea is **your** love

story. The **theme** of Hosea is this: Even when you've **betrayed His love**, God **still** pursues you. He continues loving you! That's how we look at the multiple **layers** in Hosea. In many ways the book of **Hosea** represents **life!**

In fact, when you peel back the **layers** of **interpersonal** relationships, it all boils **down** to this: we **want somebody to love us**. We just want to **love somebody and we want somebody to love us back**. All the world's **tragedy** and **comedy** boils down to **this** simple fact: **WE ALL JUST WANT TO BE LOVED!**

Hosea's marriage to Gomer is introduced in chapter one, revealing **their** relationship and their children's prophetic names. But **chapter 1** is told in third person—"this is what **happened** to Hosea." **Hosea 3:1** says "Then the Lord said to **me**, "Go and love your wife again, even though she commits adultery with another lover. This will illustrate that the Lord **still loves** Israel, even though the people have turned to other **gods** and love to worship them." Hosea turns to **first** person narrative in chapter 3. Hosea's telling us, "This is **MY** story."

When Israel **exploded** with **prosperity** in the mid 700's BC, they **imploded** with **moral** decay and **spiritual** degradation. **Secularism** and **materialism** captured the **hearts** of the people and **sin** was **rampant**. It looked much like **America** today – **moral** bankruptcy, **ethical** decay, **swearing**, **gossip**, **lying**, **stealing**, **abuse** of **every** kind, human **sacrifice**, including killing their **innocent** children, **prostitution** and **adultery**, **murder**, **rape**, **drunkenness**, and **perversions** of **every** kind known to man. **Today** people are **rushing** to invent **NEW** ways of **destroying** our **scriptural** roots! But what **grieved** God the most was the **sin** of **idolatry**. **Hosea 4:1-3a** says "There is no faithfulness, no kindness, no knowledge of God in your land. You make vows and break them; you kill and steal and commit adultery. There is violence everywhere-one murder after another." **Hosea 4:12** "They ask a piece of **wood** for advice! They think a **stick** can tell them the **future!** Longing after idols has made them **foolish.**" "**Hosea 5:11** "The people of Israel will be crushed and broken by judgment because they are determined to worship idols."

So God **revealed** His **heart to Hosea**, commanding him to enter into a **love** relationship he knew would be **one-sided** and **heart wrenching!** God wanted Hosea to **love** Gomer—**not just marry** her, but **love** her! Knowing full well she was a **prostitute** and his **love** would **not** be returned, just like **God's** love for **Israel!**

Have you ever **found** yourself **completely** in **love** with someone you knew wasn't **right** for you or didn't **love** you **back?** That's very **painful**, isn't it?

God's **EXTRAVAGANT LOVE** is **amazing** because **He** experiences this **same** thing in his own **heart**. Hosea's experience reveals God's **anguish** and **agony** over **OUR** sins. God's **justice** requires judgment, but in His **love**, He promises to **redeem** us. **God loves us knowing** we often won't love **him back**. God **created** us to **love** Him and be loved **by** Him, knowing we could **choose** to walk away. That's **extravagant love!**

The **metaphor** is **NOT** that Gomer will **love** Hosea after he **redeems** her from her faithlessness. **Gomer's** love isn't the **point**. **Hosea's** love is - which **means** it's **NOT** about **OUR** love, - it's about **God's** love. See, **our freedom** shows us the incredible **power** of God's **own love**. **God's** love is a "**even though**" love. What I mean is, God loves us "**even though**" we might **not** love Him. He loves us "**even though**" He is repeatedly **rejected**. He loves us "**even though**" we put other "gods" **ahead** of Him. He loves us "**even though**" we commit spiritual **adultery** and **prostitution** against Him. That's **EXTRAVAGANT** love! God's **love** always **pursues** us. God **relentlessly** chases us, **yearning** either to **draw** us **TO HIM** or **back** to Him. God wants us to **respond** to his **EXTRAVAGANT** love by loving **Him** in return. **Hosea 6:6** "I want you to show **love**, not offer sacrifices. I want you to **know** Me more than I want bunt offerings."

WATCH THIS: Not **only** does God want us to **accept** his **love** and **love** Him in **return**, God's **vision** is that we **join Him** in **loving the world**. **Jesus** commands us to **love** our **enemies**, because **that** is how **God** loves the **world**. He knows **His** love is **different** than the world's love—that's the **WHOLE** point! **Romans 8:7** says "For the sinful nature is always **hostile** to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will." Unlike **Gomer's** love, and unlike **our** love -

2. God's love is FAITHFUL.

We see the **unfaithfulness** of God's **children** as they turn their **backs** on Him and worship worthless **idols** beginning almost **immediately** after their **deliverance** from Egypt. We see it at Mt. **Sinai** and numerous times during the **wilderness** wanderings. We see it during the acquisition of the **promised** land in the next generation. We see it throughout the time of the **judges**. It becomes rampant during the period of the **kings**,

especially during the **divided** kingdom. We see it in the **prophets**. We see it in the teachings of **Jesus** and the **New Testament** writers.

LOOK AT ME: We are **STILL** worshipping **idols** today! **WAIT! WHAT?** That's **right!** Since 1962 we have been bowing at the **ALTAR** of US Supreme Court **rulings**. The socialist secular humanist's want to rid our nation of **anything** resembling **God**, so they took a ruling saying it was unconstitutional for states to **compose** prayers and **force** their recitation in schools, named it "separation of church and state" and they've **used** it with increasing frequency to **compel** schools to **reject** all things Christian, like **FCA** groups, voluntary **Prayer/Bible Study** clubs, Christmas Carols, Nativity Scenes, and even prayers for safety during athletics. The US also **worships** at the altar of **ABORTION**. Since 1973 over 63 **million** abortions have been **REPORTED**, with approximately 20-30 million **UNREPORTED**. We have 80 million "**Millennials**" in the US today. So we have **MURDERED** an entire **generation** of Americans in the past 46 years! In **Genesis 1**, "God said Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us...So God created human beings in His own image, In the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them and said, Be fruitful and multiply....Then God looked over all He had made, and He saw that it was **VERY GOOD.**" But God's **VERY GOOD** is **obviously** not good **enough** for America! We not **ONLY** bow to every **SEXUAL** Perversion ever **known** to man, we're now making up **NEW** perversions practically every day! It's **mind- boggling!**

NOW WATCH THIS: There's **GOOD NEWS!** Even when **we** are unfaithful and even **idolatrous** toward God, His **LOVE** is **ALWAYS FAITHFUL** to us. God loves us even when his love is unreturned, and Jesus calls us to learn to love exactly like He loves.

QUESTION: Do **we** have the **audacity** to mimic **God's** love in our own lives—can we **learn** to be **FAITHFUL** in **loving** those who simply **do** not or **will** not love us **back**? Long ago God called the prophet **Hosea** to put His love—**God's** love— on **display** by **loving** someone who would **not** love **him back**—now God calls the **church** to do the **same**. We are **called** to be "**Hosea's**" in **our** day! Despite the **knowledge** that it will **often** be **unreturned**, we must **love all** people, including our **enemies**. We do it in the **hope** that our **love** will **communicate** the **extravagant, faithful** love of **God**—so that even **THEY** might be **redeemed** by Jesus. While we **hope** and **pray** for their **redemption**, we are **called** to love them **regardless** of the **results**. We must **be like God** and break **away** from the **limitations** of our **natural** way of loving. We are to **love** with God's **own** love. We must love **FAITHFULLY**. Jesus said our two most important **missions** in life are to **LOVE GOD** with everything **in us** – **heart, mind, soul, and strength!** We must also **LOVE OTHERS** and **love** them **FAITHFULLY!** Finally, Hosea shows us that -

3. God's love is SACRIFICIAL.

The story of **Hosea** is a story of the **gospel**, that God **loves** us **SACRIFICIALLY**. But that **gospel** is never for us **alone**. As **soon** as we grasp its meaning for **ourselves**, we are called to live it **out** for the world **around** us. We **love** with God's **SACRIFICIAL** love, for the **sake** of God's **kingdom** and glory.

I want you to understand just what's happening in Hosea 3. Remember there's both a real life **physical** meaning and a **spiritual** meaning.

The **physical** meaning is about **sacrificial** love. Here's a man of God who loves the Lord and lives above reproach. Think of the personal **sacrifice** of Hosea's reputation and spiritual integrity to marry a **prostitute**. Scripture says she gave birth to 3 children, the second of which was a girl who God calls "your daughter." The other two **likely** were **not** Hosea's. Very likely they were conceived in prostitution and adultery. The first boy was named Jezreel, which means "**God plants.**" The baby girl was called "Lo-ruhama" which means "**not loved.**" The third child was named "Lo-ammi" meaning "**not my people.**" Lo-Ammi's name pronounced the **harshest** judgment of all. In Exodus God had told Israel "I will be your God and you will be My people." In **Exodus 3:14** God tells Moses "**I AM who I AM.** Say to the people of Israel; **I AM** has sent me to you." **Now** God is saying, **because** of your **unfaithfulness**, you will no **longer** be my **children** and I will no **longer** be your **God**. In the Hebrew it **literally** reads "**I AM not I AM for you!**" **WHOA!**

Gomer **abandons** her family to live a life of prostitution and degradation. Hosea's **commitment** is shown in caring for three children when 2 were probably not his. He had to be mom **and** dad while preaching "**gloom, despair, and agony, deep dark depression, excessive misery**" on Israel. Hosea **heard** the **gossip** in the town square. The children were **mocked** and **mistreated** by neighborhood kids **and** their parents.

Eventually God tells Hosea to go **redeem** his wife. The text indicates that Gomer had fallen **so far** into sin and degradation she had to **sell** herself into **slavery**. Imagine Hosea's struggle. He had obeyed God and not only **married** Gomer, but genuinely **LOVED** her. Hosea is another example of the **truth** that "you **CHOOSE** who you love." **Love** is a **CHOICE**. Jesus **CHOSE** to love **YOU** even though it cost **Him** His **life**!

So Hosea went to get his **wife** back. He had to **buy** her back from the slave block. As far as slaves go, Gomer wasn't **worth** much. Hosea bought her back for **half** the prescribed price of a female slave in Exodus. Gomer was nearly **worthless** to the world, but she was **priceless** to Hosea!

The **spiritual** meaning is clear. **Believers** are the **Bride** of Christ, but we have been **unfaithful** to Jesus.

God tells Israel in **Hosea 2:23** "I will **show** love to those I called "Not loved." I will say **now** you **are** My people. And they will reply, **You** are our God." In **John 15:9** Jesus says "I have also loved **you** even as the Father has loved **Me**. Remain in My love. **Vs. 12** reads "This is my commandment; **Love** each other in the same way I have loved **you**." **God** loves us **sacrificially**. **Jesus** loves us **sacrificially**. **Sacrificial Love**.

In the early morning hours of February 3, 1943, the US Army Transport **Dorchester**, was struck by German torpedoes 150 miles from Greenland. The ship capsized and sank in less than 20 minutes. Of the 920 **soldiers** and **merchant** marines aboard, only 229 survived.

There were four **Army Chaplains** aboard the **Dorchester**. Lt. Clark V. Poling was Dutch Reformed; Lt. George L. Fox, Methodist; Lt. John P. Washington, Catholic; and Lt. Alexander D. Goode, Jewish. They loved God and country, so all four had volunteered and were trained as Army Chaplain during the height of WW2. They were journeying to their first assignments of the war. The **Dorchester** had pinged a German U-Boat on sonar and the Captain had ordered everyone to sleep in uniform with life jackets on. Unfortunately, many did not obey. The soldiers were nervous so Chaplains were still ministering at 2 a.m. when 3 torpedoes hit the **Dorchester** mid-ship and took out both electrical and communications. Pandemonium ensued as the word spread among the soldiers and merchant seamen to abandon ship. The four courageous chaplains preached calm and **courage** during the chaos. The chaplains spread out among the troops, helping them to the rails and giving comfort. In the midst of the panic, fear and terror, the chaplains mustered their **courage** and offered **hope** and **prayers**. They opened a closet and distributed life jackets to many soldiers who weren't wearing them.

Engineer Grady Clark witnessed what he called an **astounding** act of personal **sacrifice**. When all of the life jackets had been distributed, the four **chaplains** removed **theirs** and **insisted** on giving them to four other troops. John Ladd, another survivor, testified, "It was the finest thing I have ever seen or ever hope to see this side of heaven." In the nearby rafts, survivors recall watching the four chaplains as the ship slanted, sank, and disappeared. They were arm in arm singing hymns and offering prayers; four faiths united in petition to **one** God. **Every** witness was **struck** by the fierce **faith**, **heroism**, and **self-sacrifice** of these **brave** men.

The chaplains sacrificed their **lives**, **epitomizing** Jesus' words in **John 15:13** "No greater love has any man than to lay down his life for his friends." They were **certain** that **death** would not have the final say; they would **soon** be with God in heaven. Their **love** for God gave them **courage** to **die** for their brothers. They were all awarded the **Distinguished Service Cross** and the **Purple Heart** posthumously. Congress **couldn't** give them the **Medal of Honor** because of the requirement that their **heroism** be displayed **while** being fired **on** in combat, and their **sacrifice** was not until **after** the torpedoes struck the ship. So Congress unanimously approved a **one-time** award called "**The Four Chaplains Special Medal for Heroism**" which carried the same **weight** and **importance** as the **Medal of Honor**. **SELF SACRIFICE!**

Chad Arnold was **always** sickly, and in February 2010 he went into liver failure at 38. He was hoping for a cadaver transplant, but none were available, so Dr.'s decided a **live** donor was the only option to save him. Live liver donations are very rare, but Chad's younger brother Ryan didn't hesitate to offer part of his. Chad didn't want Ryan to **do** it because of the dangers involved, but Ryan was **adamant**. Chad consented but sadly, tragedy struck and Ryan died of complications shortly after the surgery. Chad **survived**, and the sacrificial loss of his brother brought his family of committed Christian's even **closer** to God. **SACRIFICIAL LOVE!**

Extravagant, faithful, sacrificial love. We've seen it in **Hosea** with **Gomer**, **God** with **Israel**, the **Four Chaplains** with **soldiers**, and **Ryan** with **Chad**. **Total, Life-giving commitment** on behalf of **someone** else.

God **yearns** for your **total** commitment to **Him** so He can **reveal** His extravagant, faithful, sacrificial **LOVE** to you. God's **ultimate** example of **LOVE** is Jesus Christ. His **love** for you made Him become the

sacrifice for **your** sin. He pursues you **relentlessly** because of His **love**. **Hosea 6:3** says “Oh, that we might **know** the Lord! Let us **PRESS ON** to **know** Him.” How **much** is Jesus’ **extravagant, faithful, sacrificial** love **worth** to **you**? Is it **worth** enough for **you** to give **Him your** extravagant, faithful, sacrificial love today? **Total** commitment to Jesus **no** matter what. **Extravagant faithful, sacrificial** love. **Make** that commitment today.