

HOSEA

HIS REDEEMING LOVE

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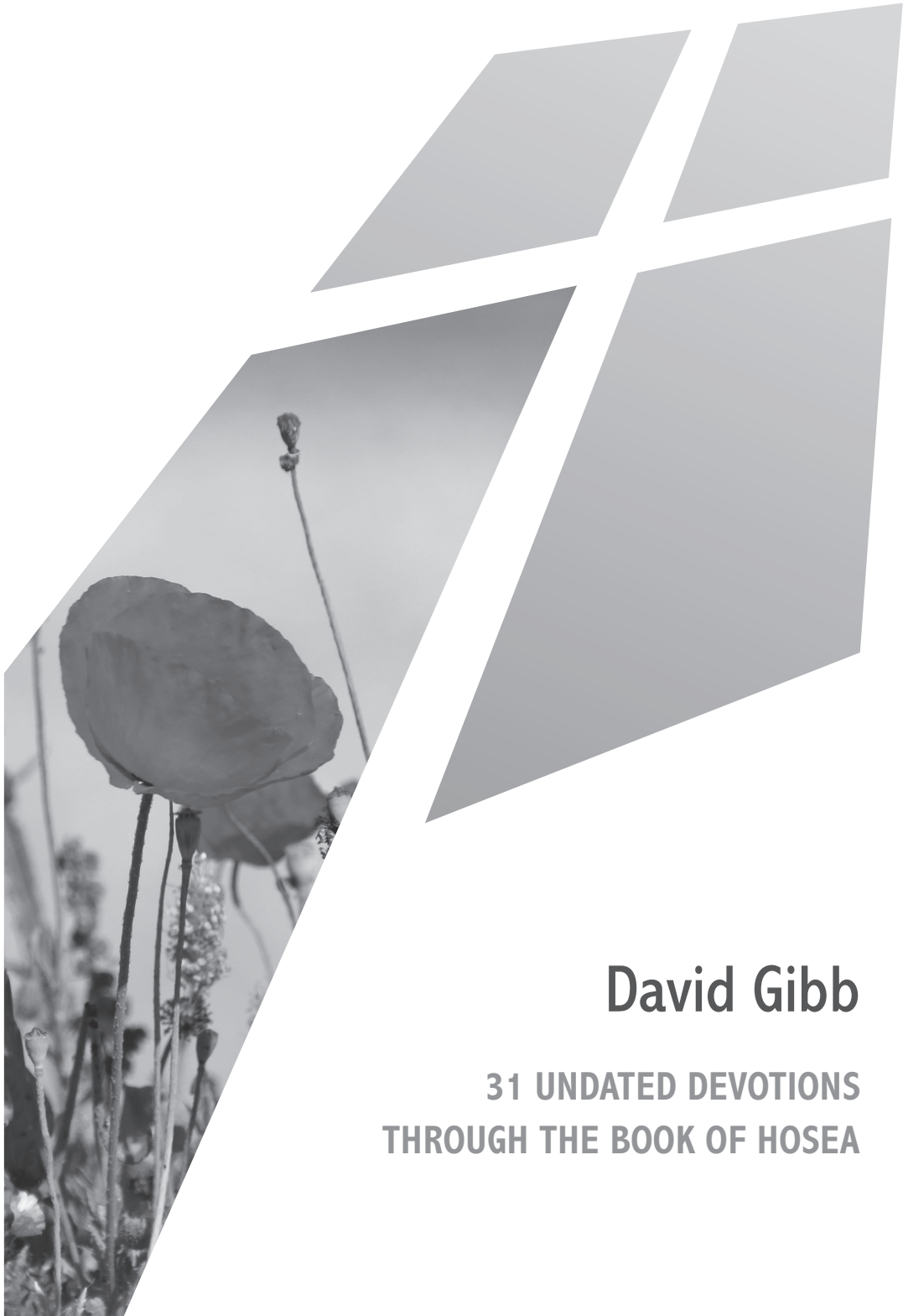
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**31 UNDATED DEVOTIONS
THROUGH THE BOOK OF HOSEA**

AN OVERVIEW

1:1 tells us when Hosea ministered: ‘during the reigns of [kings] Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel’. So this is the middle of the eighth century BC. Israel had been torn into two kingdoms (Israel and Judah). While Amos ministers to the southern kingdom of Judah, Hosea chiefly speaks to the northern kingdom of Israel. Israel is at peace and prosperous but the mighty Assyria, over in the east, is gathering strength and beginning to move ever closer to them. As we read the book we discover all is not right within Israel either. The people have forgotten God and have gone after Baal, a local fertility god who promised bumper harvests. So Hosea is sent by God to warn his people and to woo them back to him.

It’s Hosea, more than any other of the Old Testament books, which shows us that God loves his people as passionately and as jealously as a devoted husband loves his wife. And the prophet gets not only to say this but to live it, for in the tragedy of his own struggling marriage he learns how God feels towards his unfaithful people.

In the structure of the book we see the parallel story between Hosea’s marriage to Gomer and God’s marriage to his people:

- 1:1 – 3:5** ***Hosea and his bride:*** the heartbreaking story of Hosea and his wife, Gomer.
- 4:1 – 11:11** ***God and his bride (Part 1):*** Hosea’s story is seen to be a poor reflection of the story of God and his bride, Israel.
- 11:12 – 14:9** ***God and his bride (Part 2):*** God’s anger towards his unfaithful bride is highlighted, but so too are the early days of the relationship, when all was good. There is a plea to return and a promise of blessing.

KEY VERSE

“The LORD said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes”
(Hos. 3:1).

Like the other prophets, Hosea begins (v. 1) by telling us when he spoke God's Word to the nation. (Read 2 Kgs. 14 - 20 which tell you about the kings mentioned.)

Verse 2 comes as a huge shock! God commands Hosea to go and marry a prostitute, or literally 'a wife of whoredom'. Can God really be saying this? Adultery was listed in the Ten Commandments as a disgraceful act that demanded God's judgment (Ex. 20:14). Yet here is God's own messenger being told by him to marry an immoral woman. Why?

God gives the reason: 'because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD.' In other words, the pain that Hosea would feel as he tried to love a woman who was continually unfaithful was just a picture of the pain God felt in trying to love a people who continually went after other 'lovers' or 'gods'.

Have you ever thought about how God feels towards you? We say a lot about what God thinks and what he says, but Hosea is going to show us God's feelings. God feels passionately about his people. When the New Testament talks about Christ purchasing the church to be his bride (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25–27; Rev. 19:7–9), it is no accident. God loves us deeply, and every time we flirt with sin or substitute God for something or someone else, we hurt the One to whom we are bound.

So this is a love story. Verse 3 tells us that Hosea marries Gomer. He will not just preach God's message to the people; he will have to live it out within his own family. He will know the pain and heartache of loving but receiving no love in return.

A PRAYER

*Heavenly Father,
as I read this love
story please rekindle
my love for you and my
commitment to you. In
Christ, who loved and gave
himself for me. Amen.*

The footballer David Beckham called his daughter ‘Harper Seven’, the actress Gwyneth Paltrow called her daughter ‘Apple’, and the musician Frank Zappa named his daughter ‘Moon Unit’! Yet none of these is as shocking as the names God now tells Hosea to give his children. With each name we see how hurt God is by his people’s spiritual adultery, and that he will act in response to it.

Hosea’s first son will be called ‘Jezreel’ (v. 4) after the place where an entire royal house of Israel had been butchered (2 Kgs. 9:21 – 10:11). It was meant to shock and to warn Israel of what God was about to do!

Gomer again gives birth, this time to a daughter (v. 6). She will bear the terrible name ‘Lo-Ruhamah’, which means ‘not loved’ or (more literally) ‘no compassion’. (The same Hebrew word is translated as ‘compassion’ in Isaiah 49:15: ‘Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?’) That Lo-Ruhamah is given this shocking name shows how God felt about his people. Their sin had so hurt him that he would no longer love or forgive them.

Most devastating of all is the name of the last child, another son: ‘Lo-Ammi’ which means ‘not my people’ (v. 8).

Yet God had said to Moses, ‘I will take you as my own people and I will be your God’ (Ex. 6:7). Could this really be the end?

Yet, just when all seems lost, God speaks again. In verse 10 we discover the promise to Abraham of a vast people (Gen. 15:5) is *still* on track! In verse 11 the promise to King David of a united people with one king (2 Sam. 7) is *still* on track too! And God also promises: ‘great will be the day of Jezreel’. Yes, Jezreel stood for bloody massacre, but the word also means ‘God sows’. So Jezreel is *both* a warning of judgment *and* a promise of a future harvest.

Hosea didn’t know how God would hold those two declarations together, but one day God’s Son would hang on a cross and there God’s anger and faithfulness would meet. Jesus would be shown ‘no compassion’ and become a nobody, all so that we could become his people and receive his mercy. Look up 1 Peter 2:10 and marvel at God’s faithfulness!

A PRAYER

**Heavenly Father,
thank you that because
of Jesus I can be your child
and know mercy. Amen.**