

What is the problem with Israel in the time of the prophets?

PONDER

In what areas do you struggle to be faithful to God? What ought you do about this?

PRAYER IDEAS

Thank God for his amazing faithfulness to you.

Pray that you will be faithful to him and to others.

Pray that God will help you to do all you can to encourage faithfulness in the lives of others.

Wednesday

- Read Hosea 2:14-23

QUESTIONS

1. Why does the husband bring his wife into the wilderness? What is his purpose?
2. After Israel left Egypt, what did the people have to learn about God? (cf. Deut 1:19-33.)
3. Why is God's discipline necessary? (cf. Heb 12:5-11.)

PONDER

Why is it that you can trust God?

PRAYER IDEAS

Thank the Father that all good things are gifts from him.

Pray that you will remember God's goodness, faithfulness and greatness when you find it difficult to trust him.

Thursday

- Read Hosea 3

QUESTIONS

1. How is Hosea's love for his wife shown in this passage?
2. How is Hosea and Gomer's marriage like God's relationship with Israel?

PONDER

What does 'love' mean? What does it mean to love someone? How do you live your love for God?

PRAYER IDEAS

Pray that you will love God and others deeply.

Pray for the Lord's help in remembering that He is the model of love and that Hollywood's view of love is unrealistic.

Friday

- Read Hosea 11:1-12:1

QUESTIONS

1. How are God's emotions described in this chapter?
2. What elements of hope do you find in this chapter?

PONDER

How is God different to man (v. 9)?

PRAYER IDEAS

Thank God that he is not like man.

Pray that you will walk with him and be faithful to him.



15 Steps through the Bible

Prophets

Before, during, and after the exile, God

sent prophets. God spoke through these prophets to call Israel back to their special relationship with God. The prophets reminded Israel that God had made a pledge with them. They explained that God's people had treated their God badly, and warned the people that they were heading for exile. But the prophets also comforted the people, telling them that God would not forget his pledge to Abraham and his descendants. The prophets pointed forward to the ultimate fulfilment of this pledge.

THE NEW COVENANT

Jeremiah 31:31-34

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

More detail

God's messengers, the prophets, show us:

Who God is

God cares for his people, not wanting them to forget what he has done for them and how they ought to live in response. God hates sin and will not turn a blind eye to it—through the prophets he condemns it time and again. Yet God remains faithful to his pledges, despite the faithlessness of his people.

Jeremiah 31:37

This is what the Lord says: "Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done," declares the Lord.

What God does

God sends many messengers to remind, warn and comfort his people.

Hebrews 1:1-4

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

How God works

God is very patient, but calls the guilty to account. He is not silent; he graciously revealed his will through the prophets, so that Israel could know what was required of them, and why God was angry with their behaviour.

Isaiah 1:1-11

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

THE WICKEDNESS OF JUDAH

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." 4 Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged. 5 Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil. 7 Your country lies desolate; your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence foreigners devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.

8 And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. 9 If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah. 10 Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! 11 "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?" says the Lord; "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats."

The ultimate prophet was Jesus, for he was the living word of God to the world. He was God's warning of judgement and God's means of comfort. He called Israel to return to God and invited all to enter into God's kingdom.

QUESTIONS

1. What does this new covenant remind you of?
2. Read through the 'More detail' section. What's something that strikes you about what God reveals here?
3. In what way(s) was Jesus a prophet?

PONDER

The prophets both warned and comforted Israel. What warnings do you hear personally in these passages? What comforts?

PRAYER IDEAS

Thank God for how he has spoken and revealed himself throughout history. Pray that you will listen to his Son.

Daily Readings

HOSEA

In terms of our 15-step Bible Overview, Hosea is one of the *Prophets*, and speaks about the character of God, his people and his *Pledge* to them.

The book of Hosea is both a confronting and a wonderful story. It is confronting because human nature is revealed so graphically: Israel's utter selfishness and foolishness, and how that angered and hurt God, is set before us.

Yet it is also wonderful because in this story, we see the depths of God's character.

One evident trait is his extraordinary faithfulness to his people. Hosea is a book that makes us wonder why God didn't give up on Israel—and on us.

It is a book that helps us understand the God who would send his own son to die for us so we could have a relationship with him. It is a book that teaches us that ultimate reality is relationship with this God.

Monday

- Read Hosea 1:1-2:1

QUESTIONS

1. Read Psalm 46:9 and Hosea 2:18. How is the image of a bow used in these verses?
2. What do the names 'No Mercy', and 'Not My People' tell you about God?

We see the prophecy of Hosea 1:4 is fulfilled when we read 2 Kings 15-17.

You might like to read this when you have time.

1. How does 1:10-2:1 relate to 1:2-9? Why do you think these verses are here?
2. In what ways do these promises 'reverse' the judgement given before?
3. What does this passage tell you about God? (See also Gen 12:1-3 and 15:1-5.)

PONDER

What do you do when someone won't forgive you?

PRAYER IDEAS

Pray that you will come to a greater realization of the preciousness of your relationship with God.

Pray that God will give you a greater sense of your sin and how your sin hurts him.

Ask God to give you a greater understanding of his mercy.

Pray that this mercy you have been shown will be the basis of your relationships with others.

Tuesday

- Read Hosea 2:2-13

QUESTIONS

1. How does the husband treat his wife's unfaithfulness?
2. What evidence is there that the wife has little or no understanding about her husband's goodness and faithfulness?
3. Hosea's relationship with his wife is a parable of God's relationship with Israel.