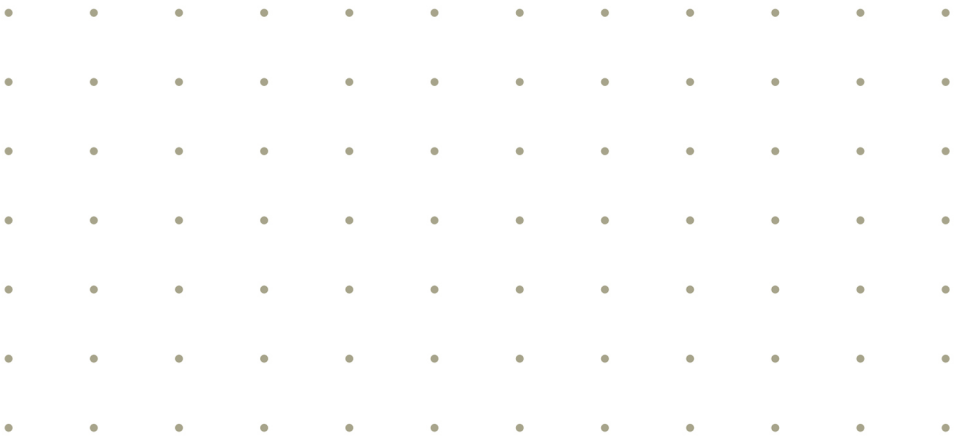




HOSEA

A 12-WEEK STUDY

Lydia Brownback



J. I. Packer

THEOLOGICAL EDITOR

Dane C. Ortlund

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“This series is a tremendous resource for those wanting to study and teach the Bible with an understanding of how the gospel is woven throughout Scripture. Here are gospel-minded pastors and scholars doing gospel business from all the Scriptures. This is a biblical and theological feast preparing God’s people to apply the entire Bible to all of life with heart and mind wholly committed to Christ’s priorities.”

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KNOWING THE BIBLE

J. I. Packer, Theological Editor
Dane C. Ortlund, Series Editor
Lane T. Dennis, Executive Editor

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|----------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| Genesis | Ecclesiastes | John | Colossians/ |
| Exodus | Isaiah | Acts | Philemon |
| Leviticus | Jeremiah | Romans | Hebrews |
| Joshua | Daniel | 1 Corinthians | James |
| Ruth, Esther | Hosea | 2 Corinthians | Revelation |
| Ezra, Nehemiah | Matthew | Galatians | |
| Psalms | Mark | Ephesians | |
| Proverbs | Luke | Philippians | |

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HOSEA

A 12-WEEK STUDY



Lydia Brownback

Knowing the Bible: Hosea, A 12-Week Study

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Published by Crossway
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover design: Simplicated Studio

First printing 2016

Printed in the United States of America

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Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-4849-9

EPub ISBN: 978-1-4335-4852-9

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-4850-5

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-4851-2

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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S E R I E S P R E F A C E

KNOWING THE BIBLE, as the series title indicates, was created to help readers know and understand the meaning, the message, and the God of the Bible. Each volume in the series consists of 12 units that progressively take the reader through a clear, concise study of that book of the Bible. In this way, any given volume can fruitfully be used in a 12-week format either in group study, such as in a church-based context, or in individual study. Of course, these 12 studies could be completed in fewer or more than 12 weeks, as convenient, depending on the context in which they are used.

Each study unit gives an overview of the text at hand before digging into it with a series of questions for reflection or discussion. The unit then concludes by highlighting the gospel of grace in each passage (“Gospel Glimpses”), identifying whole-Bible themes that occur in the passage (“Whole-Bible Connections”), and pinpointing Christian doctrines that are affirmed in the passage (“Theological Soundings”).

The final component to each unit is a section for reflecting on personal and practical implications from the passage at hand. The layout provides space for recording responses to the questions proposed, and we think readers need to do this to get the full benefit of the exercise. The series also includes definitions of key words. These definitions are indicated by a note number in the text and are found at the end of each chapter.

Lastly, for help in understanding the Bible in this deeper way, we would urge the reader to use the ESV Bible and the *ESV Study Bible*, which are available online at www.esvbible.org. The *Knowing the Bible* series is also available online. Additional 12-week studies covering each book of the Bible will be added as they become available.

May the Lord greatly bless your study as you seek to know him through knowing his Word.

J. I. Packer
Lane T. Dennis

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW



Getting Acquainted

Hosea is primarily a love story, specifically one of redemptive love. The pain Hosea has endured in his marriage to unfaithful Gomer uniquely qualifies him for his prophetic ministry to the Lord's unfaithful people. Failing to trust the Lord, Israel has sought security in foreign powers and false gods. Yet, as Hosea is eager to show, Israel's unfaithfulness has not diminished God's love for them. Hosea paints Israel's spiritual adultery with vivid images, calling God's people with both warnings and heartfelt appeals to turn back to the Lord. Failure to repent will result in punishment, but God takes no delight in that prospect. Rather, he desires them to turn from idols to him, their true husband and the only one who can provide for their needs.

The book, primarily poetry, is dominated by oracles of judgment. The first three chapters are autobiographical, recounting how Hosea responded to the unfaithfulness of his wife, Gomer, redeeming her from the slavery into which her unfaithfulness had led. In the remainder of the book, chapters 4–14, Hosea uses his experience as a parable¹ to depict the Lord's broken relationship with his covenant people and his intention to redeem them from their enslavement to sin. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 1619–1622; available online at www.esvbible.org.)

Placing It in the Larger Story

Hosea prophesied during a dark time in Israel's history. Worship of the Lord had been abandoned in favor of idol worship, which led to exile from the Promised Land. But in God's plan, exile became the means to eventual restoration. The book of Hosea shows the wickedness and folly of idol worship and points by contrast to the one true God, who not only can provide all that his people need but is willing to do so despite their rejection of him. Both Hosea's personal story and the overall historical context to which it points demonstrate God's way of salvation in Christ. God stands ready to forgive and restore those who turn to him, and he has provided the ransom² from slavery through Jesus Christ. The marriage theme in Hosea finds its fullest expression in Christ's love for the church (Eph. 5:25–27).

Key Verse

“I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them” (Hos. 14:4).

Date and Historical Background

Hosea, one of the Old Testament's 12 “minor prophets,” ministered during the latter half of the eighth century BC, prophesying primarily to Ephraim (the northern kingdom of Israel) in the decades leading up to the fall of Samaria to the Assyrian Empire. Israel's kingship had grown increasingly ineffective, while foreign powers, particularly Assyria, had grown in power and become a dominant threat. Worship of Baal, the weather and fertility god worshiped in Syria-Palestine, was rampant and involved God's people in open immorality at pagan shrines. Failure to repent of this apostasy resulted in Israel's downfall and captivity in 722 BC.

Outline

- I. **Biography: Hosea's Family (1:1–3:5)**
 - A. **Introduction (1:1)**
 - B. **Command to marry (1:2)**
 - C. **Birth of children (1:3–9)**
 - D. **Covenant renewal at Jezreel (1:10–11)**
 - E. **Legal proceedings against the wayward wife (2:1–13)**

- F. Covenant relationship reestablished (2:14–23)
- G. Command to remarry, with the expectation of a king like David (3:1–5)
- II. Hosea Spells Out His Parable with Accusations, Warnings, and Promises (4:1–14:9)
 - A. Legal proceedings continued (4:1–19)
 - B. Adultery in high places (5:1–14)
 - C. Appeal: return and be raised (5:15–6:3)
 - D. Transgressors of the covenant (6:4–7:3)
 - E. Four similes for unfaithful Israel: oven, cake, dove, treacherous bow (7:4–16)
 - F. Israel’s hypocrisy (8:1–14)
 - G. Warnings: no worship in a foreign land (9:1–9)
 - H. More similes for unfaithful Israel: grapes, vine, calf, toddler (9:10–11:11)
 - I. Dependence on alliances (11:12–12:1)
 - J. Further indictment based on historical review (12:2–14)
 - K. Worship of man-made gods (13:1–8)
 - L. Rejecting the only hope they have (13:9–16)
 - M. Closing appeals (14:1–9)

As You Get Started

What is your understanding of how Hosea advances the storyline of the Bible?

How does this book clarify our understanding of God’s love for us in Christ?

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

How does Hosea deepen our understanding of the nature and spiritual danger of idol worship?

As You Finish This Unit . . .

Take a few minutes as you begin this study of Hosea to ask God to humble your heart and open your eyes to comprehend more fully both the depth of your sinfulness and the extent of God's redeeming love for you.

Definitions

¹ **Parable** – A story that uses everyday imagery and activities to communicate a spiritual truth. Jesus often taught in parables (e.g., Matthew 13).

² **Ransom** – A price paid to redeem, or buy back, someone who had become enslaved or something that had been lost to someone else. Jesus described his ministry as serving others and giving his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

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KNOWING THE BIBLE STUDY GUIDE SERIES



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| Joshua | Jeremiah | Acts | Colossians and Philemon |
| Ruth and Esther | Daniel | Romans | Hebrews |
| Ezra and Nehemiah | Hosea | 1 Corinthians | James |
| Psalms | Matthew | 2 Corinthians | Revelation |



THE BOOK OF HOSEA powerfully illustrates God's relationship with covenant-breaking Israel, helping readers understand the extent of his redeeming love for his people.

This accessible study walks readers through the biographical and symbolic elements of the story of Hosea and Gomer, showcasing God's desire to lovingly restore his people to a right relationship with himself through Jesus Christ.

ABOUT THE *KNOWING THE BIBLE* SERIES

Over the course of 12 weeks, these studies explore books of the Bible and:

- Ask thoughtful questions to spur discussion
- Show how each passage unveils the gospel
- Tie the text in with the whole story of Scripture
- Illuminate the doctrines taught in each passage
- Invite you to discover practical implications
- Help you better understand and apply God's Word

"Knowing the Bible brings together a gifted team of Bible teachers to produce a high-quality series of study guides."

PHILIP G. RYKEN,
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author, *According to Plan*

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BIBLE STUDY

