

## HOSEA'S MESSAGE FOR US

# Understanding God's Love

**H**ow complex and yet how wonderful is the love of God for His people! The prophet Hosea revealed to us very much about this love. In chapters 1-3 of his book we see that God's love is knowing, holy, longsuffering, merciful, and self-sacrificing. In chapters 4-6, we find His love to be sensitive, especially to pride, treachery, repentance, and hypocrisy. In chapters 7 and 8, we find that His love makes Him desirous to bless us. In chapters 9 and 10, we learn that His love calls us to repentance. Now, in chapter 11, we will begin to see the human-like side of His love. Really, it is incorrect to call the love of God human-like because our love is, at its best, merely the image of His love. But, clearly, in many ways the love of God is like the love of man. Look over chapters 11 and 12 and see how tender and "human" is the love of God for us.

### **It Is Like a Father's Love** (11:1-3)

Here the Lord calls Israel His son. He did this also in Exodus 4:22. Matthew 2:15 says that Hosea 11:1 has reference to the Lord Jesus as well as to Israel. Just as God called Israel out of Egypt, He also brought Jesus out of Egypt during His infancy. The Father-Son relationship is one God has with Christ, with Israel, and with Christians. John 1:12 says that those who have received Christ are the sons of God, and this doctrine is repeated in Romans 8:14-25, Galatians 3:24-26, and I John 3:1-2. Every time the Bible calls believers "*brethren*" it is echoing this truth. When Christ taught Christians to pray to God as their Father, this truth was taught again.

A father-son relationship is a permanent relationship. Birth makes us our father's child forever. Nothing "*shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 8:39). Notice now four things the prophet Hosea tells us about God's fatherly love to His children.

1. It motivates Him to rescue us in trouble (11:1);
2. It makes Him longsuffering in our waywardness (11:2);
3. It causes Him to spend time teaching us how to walk (11:3); and
4. It gives Him the desire to heal our hurts (11:3).
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### **It Is Like a Master's Love** (v. 11:4)

Like the master of an animal, God leads and feeds His people. A shepherd assumes this role, and the Lord is our Shepherd (See Psalm 23).

### **It Makes It So He Cannot Give Us Up** (11:5-12)

A songwriter put it this way:

“Oh Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in Thee;  
I give Thee back the life I owe,  
That in Thine ocean-depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.”

(Page #67, Living Hymns)

Hosea quotes the Lord as saying, “*How shall I give thee up, Ephriam? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?*” (11:8) Even though Israel was “*bent to backsliding*” (11:7), God just couldn’t give her up forever. He would chastise her and judge her sins, but He would not give her up. As you will remember, this was also true of Hosea in his love for his unfaithful wife. He was willing to forgive her, if she would repent (See Chapter 2). He never gave her up (See Chapter 3).

### **It Keeps Him Dealing With Us** (Chapter 12)

If you quit loving somebody, you will quit “fooling” with him. Why bother with anybody you don’t care about? But God keeps dealing with us. When we turn down His offers, He keeps coming back (Revelation 3:20). When we go into sin, He hounds us to repent. When we won’t listen to His voice, He brings hardship into our lives. When we repent, He assures us of His forgiveness. When we read His Word, He speaks to our hearts. When we go astray, He sends someone to point us back to the right path. God is dealing with us! That’s because He loves us.

In Chapter 12, God reminds the people of His dealing with their nation, way back to when their mutual father Jacob was on earth. Jacob’s story is found in Genesis 25 through 50. Hosea refers to God’s dealing with Jacob in verses 3 (Look at Genesis 25), 4 (Genesis 32), and 12 (Genesis 28-29). God dealt with this man from his birth. God reminds us of the way He endued Jacob with His power, and the way He watched over him and protected him. In verse 13, God tells them how He rescued and preserved the nation by Moses, whom He calls “*a prophet*” (Notice Deuteronomy 18:15). Back in verse 10, He says that He often dealt with Israel through prophets. God was always there, throughout their history, saving them, leading them, empowering them, rebuking them, protecting them. When they were right, He blessed them. When they were wrong, He whipped them. But He was always there.

**Think about it.** He loves us as a father. We will always be His children. Therefore He leads us and feeds us. Therefore also He cannot let us go. Because He cannot let us go, He is always dealing with us! Thank God for these things! If the Lord quit dealing with us, we would never stay on the right track—and where would we be? Paul wrote, *“If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful”* (II Timothy 2:13)!

**Weekly Verse to Memorize:**

*“When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.”*  
(Hosea 11:1)