**BCM Bible Study: March 20/21, 2019**

**Hosea 1: Introduction and Hosea’s Family**

Set the Tone (~15 minutes)

Start your time together by doing a few things to start building a relationship and setting expectations for the group:

* Start with introductions. You could ask for name, major, hometown, what they did over spring break, etc.
* Ask: What are you hoping to gain from our time together as a group? Which statement most connects with you:
	+ I need to grow in my faith
	+ I want to make connections and relationships with other Christians
	+ I want Scripture to speak into my life
	+ Not sure!

This will be good for three reasons. 1. You get to hear where people are as you begin your time together. 2. It is good for them to process their hopes and goals for being a part of a family group. 3. It will get them comfortable speaking!

* Once you’ve heard from everyone, take a minute to set the tone for the semester. Communicate your personal goals and hopes for them as a group and as individuals. This is a good opportunity to set the bar high for attendance and commitment. You can say something like “My hope is that everyone will prioritize this time together each week, because I think the more consistent everyone is, the better we get to know one another, and the more we will grow together.” Be excited – that is infectious!
* It is helpful to share that you don’t intend to teach a lesson every week. Rather, you are there as a discussion facilitator. Tell them that you will be asking questions and that you hope they will provide answers, unafraid of judgment or saying the wrong thing.
* Pray before you begin.

Don’t feel limited by these suggestions. Feel free to add anything that you think would be helpful for group bonding and setting the tone for a year of growing together.

Introduction to Hosea

**Historical Setting:** Hosea was God’s prophet primarily to the northern kingdom of Israel during the 700s BC. Hosea appears on the scene during a time of political prosperity for Israel under the reign of Jeroboam II. However, in 2 Kings 14, we learn that this prosperity was not a result of Jeroboam’s righteous; he was a wicked man and the prosperity is attributed to God’s mercy. During this time, Israel was lulled into spiritual **complacency**. Instead of maintaining **devotion** to the Lord, they worshipped the gods of their neighbors. After Jeroboam died, Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III came to power and Israel’s attitude shifted from complacency to desperation. Assyria was intent on defeating the surrounding nations and growing their empire, and they were more than capable of doing so. From the 750s to the 720s Israel had six kings – they were in a state of turmoil. In 722, Israel would fall to Tiglath-Pileser and the people would go into exile.

**God’s Message/Themes in Hosea:** It is during this time that Hosea brings a message of judgment on the people. He tells them that destruction is coming because of Israel’s **unfaithfulness** to Him. Though God had chosen them as his people and made a covenant with them, they had broken God’s law and would face God’s punishment. The controlling metaphor to convey this message is that of marriage unfaithfulness. God is the husband and Israel is an unfaithful wife. This unfaithfulness is expressed through worship of other gods (especially Baal) and trust in other countries for protection and help. Though rebellion and punishment is the dominating theme in Hosea, the prophet is not without hope. He calls God’s people to return to covenant faithfulness and promises that the Lord intends to restore his people. Even during Israel’s darkest days, God is pursuing his bride.

Hosea’s Family: **Read Hosea 1**

* Many have said that Hosea was told to marry a “prostitute” and that is one possible way to think of Gomer. While the Hebrew word describing her is complex, it at least refers to awoman of whom sexual misconduct is characteristic. It is not necessarily true that Gomer was already demonstrating sexual promiscuity; but it is clear that Hosea knew up front what would take place during the marriage.
	+ Why does God tell Hosea to marry Gomer? In what way is their marriage a picture of God’s “marriage” to Israel?
* We will now look at Hosea’s three children and consider why God has asked him to give them these odd names. In general, the names are meant to convey a message to Israel.
	+ **Jezreel**: Jehu was the current kingly dynasty in Israel (Jeroboam II is a king in Jehu’s line). The Valley of Jezreel had a sordid past – two major things have happened there:

**1.** In 1 Kings 21, Israeli king Ahab (a Baal-worshipper) permitted the death of Naboth (a God-worshipper) in order to seize Naboth’s property, the vineyard of Jezreel.

**2.** In 2 Kings 9, Jehu is called by God to assassinate the current kings in Ahab’s dynasty. The murder takes place in the vineyard of Jezreel. Jehu turned away from Baal, but did not completely turn away from idols: **Read 2 Kings 10:28-31**. Jeroboam II (the current king in Hosea) is the fourth king in Jehu’s dynasty. The fifth king (Jehu’s fourth generation of sons) is Zachariah; he will only survive 6 months on the throne.

* + - Why was Hosea called to name his son Jezreel? What statement of guilt was this meant to make?
	+ **No Mercy**: The people of Israel were constantly turning from God. Repeatedly, God offers mercy and compassion, but this time he does not. As Moses spoke to Israel before entering the Promised Land, he said this: **Read Deuteronomy 30:15-20, 31:16-18.**
		- Why is the Lord turning away from his people? (see 31:16)
	+ **Not My People**: This is perhaps the worst of the three statements of judgment. The relationship between God and his people rested on the words that God is using here. **Read Genesis 17:5-8, Exodus 6:2-7, Exodus 19:5-6**.
		- Why is the Lord ‘disowning’ his people?
	+ God brought the people of Israel into a relationship with him. He called them to be his own and dedicated himself to them, much like a husband commits to a wife. Israel has broken the terms of the covenant, especially the second commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me.” (Ex. 20:3)
		- How does the metaphor of a marriage help you understand the nature of a relationship with God and the seriousness of Israel’s sin?
		- Like the Israelites, we can become complacent, which leads to **unfaithfulness.** In what ways have you become **complacent** in your **devotion** to God?
* What is God’s promise of hope that ends the chapter?
	+ About 150 years later, Judah was also on the eve of exile and Jeremiah made statements similar to Hosea’s: **Read Jer. 30:18-22, 31:31-34.**
	+ How have these prophecies been fulfilled in Jesus?
	+ How has God been merciful and pursued you despite your **unfaithfulness** to him?
	+ In what ways do you want to re-focus your **devotion** to God this semester? What can you do to make that happen?