

# Lifegroup notes from Sunday 18 September 2022

Reading: Hosea 6

A new series: Twelve Ripples, taking a look at the Minor Prophets. Just as a pebble dropped in a pond creates ripples that go on beyond the original drop, so too prophetic words, which have an immediate significance and application to their original hearers, have ripples that go on through history. The aim of this series is not to give an overview of all the Minor Prophets and their main message, but to find the ripple that travels through thousands of years and comes upon the shore of WBC in 2022.



Hosea: Writing through a large part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, writing mainly to the northern kingdom of Israel. This was after the division of Israel after Solomon (a breakup over taxation). The southern kingdom of Judah was made up of the tribes of Benjamin and Judah, while Israel was the other ten tribes, soon to be taken into captivity, becoming what is often referred to as the “Lost Tribes”.

At the time of Hosea Israel had been in a season of financial and political power and prosperity which led to compromises. They had sinned in a way that seems a repeated pattern: they had begun to follow the local customs instead of God’s law and had been worshipping false gods.

Into this situation Hosea is told to marry a promiscuous woman, Gomer. Perhaps he felt that this was so that her immediate repentance might be a testimony, but instead, following bearing three children (given sad and prophetic names) she returns to her life of sexual promiscuity, even going so far as to sell herself to a pimp in order to finance her sexual appetite.

The law of Moses is clear, Hosea would be justified in divorcing her, and she herself had brought upon herself the harshest of penalties, a death sentence.

But, Hosea is told to bring her back and redeem her. And now, as he prophesies about Israel’s unfaithfulness to God, his tears reveal the broken heart of one who wants to love and live in exclusive relationship, but who has been scorned, mistreated, made a byword for disgrace by the behaviour of the one He loves.

God’s word comes, He does not desire their sacrifices, and their empty religious obligations. The system of sacrifice was meant to be costly and to draw them back to God. Instead it had become a way of life, and empty ritual, treating the one true God the same as a false idol.

Hos 8:1 Though Ephraim built many altars for sin offerings,  
these have become altars for sinning.

God wants to win His people’s hearts, not just receive their sacrifice. In sending Jesus He ends the system of sacrifice once and for all, and Hosea prophesies this when he says “After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.” (Hos 6:2)

## Some questions

- What encouraged or challenged you in this message?
- How familiar are you with the Minor Prophets? Have you read Hosea before?
- What parts of the Minor Prophets messages have stood out to you?
- What do you think causes the Israelites to keep turning to other Gods?
- Which is easier: to follow religious activity and obligations, or to have a heart that seeks to follow God?
- How can we ensure we too avoid the empty religious life?