

Hosea 4-5: "D.I.V.O.R.C.E." (31-May-2017) God charges his people, and particularly his people's leaders, with breaking their relationship with him.

Opening Question:

What would a job description look like for a Christian leader/pastor/minister? *note down what people say:*
Faithful to god. Know god
Truthful true to god
Trustworthy
Caring
Patient
Compassionate
Bible based
Maturity through suffering - helps empathy

Background:

In the first study, God told Hosea, his prophet, to marry an unfaithful woman, Gomer. This was a dramatic way of illustrating to Israel that sin is spiritual adultery. Gomer bore Hosea a son, and then another daughter and son who it seems may have been fathered by someone else.

Last time we read a passage which at one level could be read as Hosea talking to his unfaithful wife, but at another level represents how God feels about the Israelites being unfaithful to Him. So we had

- "Rebuke your mother ... for she is not my wife and I am not her husband"
- "She has not acknowledged that I was the one who ... lavished on her silver and gold"
- "she decked herself with rings and jewelry... but me she forgot"
- "Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens"
- "I will stop all her celebrations"
- "I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals"

As well distress at his wife's unfaithfulness, what else did we read?

- "I am now going to allure her...and speak tenderly to her"
- "In that day...you will call me 'my husband'"
- "I will make a covenant...I will betroth you to me forever"
- "I will betroth you in faithfulness and you will acknowledge the Lord"

So God, speaking through Hosea, expresses

- How Israel's unfaithfulness hurts him
- How he will discipline Israel
- How he plans for Israel to be reconciled to Him

In last week's study, we were trying to read the passage on two levels. That's not what's happening this time.

Someone Read Hosea 4:

The Charge Against Israel

- 1 Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites,
because the Lord has a charge to bring
against you who live in the land:
"There is no faithfulness, no love,
no acknowledgment of God in the land.
- 2 There is only cursing,[a] lying and murder,
stealing and adultery;
they break all bounds,
and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

3 Because of this the land dries up,
and all who live in it waste away;
the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky
and the fish in the sea are swept away.
4 "But let no one bring a charge,
let no one accuse another,
for your people are like those
who bring charges against a priest.
5 You stumble day and night,
and the prophets stumble with you.
So I will destroy your mother—
6 my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.
"Because you have rejected knowledge,
I also reject you as my priests;
because you have ignored the law of your God,
I also will ignore your children.
7 The more priests there were,
the more they sinned against me;
they exchanged their glorious God[b] for something disgraceful.
8 They feed on the sins of my people
and relish their wickedness.
9 And it will be: Like people, like priests.
I will punish both of them for their ways
and repay them for their deeds.
10 "They will eat but not have enough;
they will engage in prostitution but not flourish,
because they have deserted the Lord
to give themselves 11 to prostitution;
old wine and new wine
take away their understanding.
12 My people consult a wooden idol,
and a diviner's rod speaks to them.
A spirit of prostitution leads them astray;
they are unfaithful to their God.
13 They sacrifice on the mountaintops
and burn offerings on the hills,
under oak, poplar and terebinth,
where the shade is pleasant.
Therefore your daughters turn to prostitution
and your daughters-in-law to adultery.
14 "I will not punish your daughters
when they turn to prostitution,
nor your daughters-in-law
when they commit adultery,
because the men themselves consort with harlots
and sacrifice with shrine prostitutes—
a people without understanding will come to ruin!
15 "Though you, Israel, commit adultery,
do not let Judah become guilty.
"Do not go to Gilgal;
do not go up to Beth Aven.
And do not swear, 'As surely as the Lord lives!'
16 The Israelites are stubborn,
like a stubborn heifer.
How then can the Lord pasture them
like lambs in a meadow?
17 Ephraim is joined to idols;
leave him alone!
18 Even when their drinks are gone,
they continue their prostitution;

their rulers dearly love shameful ways.
19 A whirlwind will sweep them away,
and their sacrifices will bring them shame.

Nicks notes: sounds like a direct message to Israelites, no longer allegorical language.

Wikipedia: In this chapter he reproves the people and priests for their sins in the interregnum which followed Jeroboam's death; hence there is no mention of the king or his family

Chapter 4 begins with God bringing charges against his own people: he is using the language of lawsuits here.

Q: What has broken the relationship between God and his people? what are some of the charges he makes?

A: *lying, murder, stealing, adultery, violence, no acknowledgement of God in the land*

Q: What is the root cause of this ungodly behaviour?

A: *lack of knowledge (v6). Without knowing God and his ways, people go astray. God's people have broken their relationship with him because they failed to know God and his ways.*

Q: What effect to the actions of God's people have on God's land?

A: *"The land dries up...beasts..birds..fish...are swept away"*

Q: Why should the sin of the Israelites be associated with what happens to the land and animals? (Look at Gen 3:17-18)

A: *Creation was affected when sin entered the world, as we see in the curse in Genesis 3. A broken relationship with God also breaks the relationship with the world he has created.*

Someone Read Romans 1:28-32

28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. 32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Q: What does Paul say is God's response to people who sin?

A: *Romans 1:28 tells us that God actively gives people over to the effects of their sin.*

Q: What effect does our sin have on our world today?

A: *The effects of sin are not only on the sinners but also other people and the world generally. Maybe we don't blame drought and famine on the sins of people in such a direct way? But probably quite a lot of "natural" disasters can be traced back to actions of men*

Q: What reasons of people today give for the world being messed up?

A: *Lack of education corrupt politicians, financial inequality, greed...? **make a note of what people say extras***

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Q: What kind of solutions do people suggest for the above?

- *lack of education -> better education/schools?*
- *corrupt politicians -> revolution? political uprising?*
- *financial inequality -> protest marches, involvement in political system?*
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Q: What do Hosea 4 and Romans 1 tell us is the problem, and what solution do they suggest?

A: *Bible points to a more fundamental problem, that we have failed to acknowledge God as our Lord. There are plenty of good things we can do to alleviate immediate problems, more than anything else we need to turn back to God and ask for forgiveness*

Q: Who is God singling out for special criticism here?

A: *priests v6, v7*

Q: What were the priests supposed to be doing for God's people?

A: *They should have been the ones who guarded the knowledge of God's laws and taught others to obey them. They had the responsibility of leading the people in trusting God and walking in obedience to his commands*

Q: What are some of the bad things the priests have been doing instead?

A: *v7,12: Actively involved in leading people astray to worshiping idols.*

v8: Rather than calling Israel to repent, they relish the sins of the people

v6: ignored God's law instead of teaching it to the people

v10: sexual immorality

v11: drunkenness

Q: How will God punish the priests?

A: *They feed on sin (v8) but will never be full (v10); engage in prostitution but not flourish (v10); consult idols who cannot provide answers (v12)*

Hosea 4:9 says "Like people, like priests". God's priests lead and direct God's people

Q: What does the fact that God's people are like God's priests mean for God's people today?

A: *Who leads our churches matters greatly Over time, the worship, theology and ethics of a church will come to reflect its leaders'.*

Someone Read Hebrews 7:23-27

23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office;

24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

26 Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Q: Who is God's high (chief) priest today?

A: *Jesus*

Q: Why is Jesus a wonderful priest to have?

A: *The priests in Hosea's time were weak and sinful, and unable to lead the people as they should have.*

Hebrews 7 reminds us that we have a perfect, sinless high priest. He does not fail in the way that Hosea's priests did.

Q: We need church leaders today who are the opposite of the priests in Hosea's day. Read through Hosea 4 again and work out what a good church leader would look like

Maybe make notes as people shout out suggestions?

- *teach the truth clearly*
- *encouraging people to live in obedience to God*
- *build up God's people in knowledge of God*
- *care about people they lead*
- *be willing to challenge people about their sin*
- *watch out for sin in their own lives*
- *not necessarily charismatic, dynamic, eloquent, but faithful*
- *Faithful to god*
- *Don't ignore rule of god*
- *Pure of heart*
- *Don't consult false idols*
- *Impart knowledge of God and encourage people to seek it*
- *Practise what they preach*
- *"My peoples greatest need is my holiness"*

Q: What would the mistake the priests were making in Hosea's day look like in our culture?

- 4:6 *not holding to clear teaching of the bible*
- 4:8 *allowing/encouraging sins church members most enjoy*
- 4:10 *sexual immorality (in body or in the mind)*
- 4:12 *idolatry (idolising money, careers, possessions)*
- v14 *"shrine prostitutes" aka accepting practices of other religions or seeking to suggest that all religions are the same*
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Takes us back to opening question: what did we say would be a job description for a leader/pastor - did we get that right (re-read what people said)? Did we miss anything?

Takeaway

God's people were supposed to be a people marked by knowledge of God, but had not acknowledged him and has not maintained knowledge of him. This led to disastrous consequences for themselves and the world around them.

It was the priests who were charged with guarding God's law, and teaching and encouraging people. But they rejected God's law and actively encouraged the people to worship idols instead.

God's judgement falls on both priests and people - as they have rejected him, so he rejects them.

We need a good priest, and we have a great High Priest in Jesus. Our church leaders today need to point us to him, and seek to be like him.

BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the book of Hosea fit into the whole story of God's word?



HOSEA 793-722BC

