

abba, father

by Ray Straub

Californians love to go to Lake Tahoe. It has been attractive to tourists for many years.

The lake's early appeal was its cool, clear water. The privileged who camped on its shores returned to their communities telling about how one could see through the crystal water to almost any depth.

Central California is a gigantic garden of vineyards, fruit and nut orchards, grain fields and pastures, acres of vegetables and lots of weeds. Gardens require work. It gets hot, dusty and itchy. When a worker is weary, sweaty and grimy from wind-blown dirt, his spirit is lifted when he thinks of the inviting, refreshing, cleansing water of Lake Tahoe.

Other parts of the country have their gorgeous retreats, too. The human spirit and body dream unendingly of soothing relaxation.

Thankfully, we can be refreshed even when we are unable to place our bodies beside a pleasant lake. The spirit can find rest and be renewed without travel or tents.

Life can get tiresome. Even the mention of some words make us feel empty. Unemployment. Recession. Agression. Taxes. Bills. Cancer. Divorce. Lost.

We can overcome the discouragement such words cause by thinking about two others: "Abba,

Father." Refreshment for the spirit can be enjoyed reflecting on these. Let's "camp" here for awhile. Soon we can feel renewed.

The home in which I grew up required that the children say a short memorized prayer before eating meals. My first prayer was the simple German statement, "*Abba, lieber Fater, Amen.*"

What did this little prayer mean? To me, it meant I could eat, little more. It pronounced acknowledgment of a loving Father Who supplied the food my mother made tasty.

The words, "Abba, Father," are taken from the Bible. "Abba" means "father." It has its beginnings in Aramaic, probably growing out of baby talk, like our word "daddy."

God was called "Father" in Old Testament times, but never with the word "abba." The use of this familiar household term in reference to God would have been disrespectful.

By the time Jesus came, the use of the word broadened. It no longer had a childish character. It developed a warm, intimate meaning such as "dear Father."

Mark 14:36 gives the first use of this term in the Bible. Praying under duress in Gethsemane, Jesus pled, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take

away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." He prayed alone. No one heard Him address God in this manner.

This gives insight into the relationship Jesus had with God. The warmth that existed between Jesus the Son and God the Father was shown by use of the words, "Abba, Father." We will examine that relationship and be renewed. It will be strengthening to see how we also are affected by the bond between God and Jesus, Father and Son.

The expression, "son of God" can be found throughout the Bible. It has a variety of applications.

Angels were called sons of God. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them" (Job 1:6). The New International Version reads, "One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord." A footnote acknowledges that "angels" is not a literal translation, but it indicates who these "sons of God" are thought to be.

Some kings were also called "sons of God." Speaking of David's kingdom God predicted, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (II Samuel 7:14). The kings who sought God's guidance were most consistently regarded to be God's sons.

The tribes of Israel were also called "sons" by God.

Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God (Hosea 1:10).

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

While sons of God were identified in pre-Christian times, the Sonship of Jesus gave an entirely new character and feeling to the Fatherhood of God. The Father seems different, and the Son certainly is. The contrast results

from Jesus' origin, His nature and His mission. God was previously the Father of a nation. Now He is the kind Parent of individuals. He is concerned about private lives on a day-to-day basis.

Jesus demonstrated sonship by His obedience. Philippians 2:5-11 describes Jesus' absolute submissiveness to His Father.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," begins

I had with you before the world began."

The Father and Son were together before this world existed. It is in this setting that Paul shows the Saviour's attitude. Though being in the form of God, Jesus gave no thought to grasping equality with God. The King James Version uses "robbery" instead of "grasping." The Greek word from which these are trans-

He said that God was His Father. The Jews sought to kill Jesus for that remark because it was "making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). Their thinking was right!

the passage. To adopt the mentality of God's Son will require change. We must stop thinking about ourselves so we may concentrate on God's Will. This requires dying to our wants and awakening to new responsibilities, values and priorities.

Verse 6 informs us that Jesus was in the form of God. This acknowledges what Jesus had told His angered countrymen. He said that God was His Father. The Jews sought to kill Jesus for that remark because it was "making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). Their thinking was right!

The Son prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5).

The interesting wording in this request needs attention, "glorify me *with thine own self*." It seems odd. The "glory" mentioned here refers to God's face. Exodus 33:12-23 mentions God's glory and His face synonymously. The two are the same. Other passages, such as John 1:14 and Hebrews 1:3, give a similar meaning.

Some versions of the Bible translate John 17:5 thus, "Glorify me *in your presence* with the glory

lated speaks of snatching, like one animal will do when taking another's food. This does not describe the clandestine act of a thief.

God's Son was in a position where He could have considered taking some of God's authority for Himself. At least the devil thought that to be tempting, because his approach to Jesus was, "If thou be the Son of God . . ." (see Matthew 4:3ff). The Son's other choice was to submit to the Father's Will, even if this meant descending to the sphere of mankind to endure misunderstanding, rejection, persecution and disgraceful death. Jesus chose obedience regardless of consequences. The centurion, looking at the crucified Saviour, observed correctly, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

"I can of mine own self do nothing," said Jesus, "as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).

Taking on the form of a servant did not mean that Jesus abandoned His divinity. We can have confidence in Jesus' claims to have accurately represented the

Will of His Father. In bringing life and judgment, the Son was in complete unity with the Father. His offer of reconciliation is valid. No wonder Jesus told Philip that seeing Him was like seeing God. Complete unity, established on perfect obedience, provided a way for mankind to see and find God's presence.

While the Son was human, He had needs. These earthly limita-

pochondriac. There is strength and a future in a kinship supported by love.

The divine Father-Son relationship was supported by the Father's abiding presence and reassurance. Love is at work when a parent is available to help.

Just before bringing Lazarus back from the dead, Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that

of people crowding this planet, and even though chemicals, gadgets and mental disciplines seek to control human moods, loneliness increasingly plagues mankind. An ever-present Father Who provides only the right gifts offers reassurance beyond compare.

The Son's looking forward to restoration also strengthened His relationship with the Father. Human language cannot adequately describe the glorious privilege of being in the very presence of God. Jesus was willing to leave it, and He demonstrated perfect obedience through that which He suffered. Now He has been received back into glory, taking His place at the Father's right hand. The Son was sure it would happen.

He was raised from the dead to be seated at the Father's right hand in the heavenly realms, "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come" (Ephesians 1:21, NIV).

Nearly every son has spent time in his dad's car traveling to a place that promised good times. Some have gone to a vacation spot, a fishing hole, a ski slope, an amusement park, an ocean beach, or the home of a favorite relative. The child sensed little about the means to get there. Young ones are not concerned about the routes to chart, the vehicle to service, the funds to be managed, the schedules to maintain, the emergencies to prepare for. They travel securely, knowing the father will complete the journey. Traveling gets tiresome, but the arrival makes it worthwhile.

The Son of God traveled through His earthly journey confidently because His Father guided flawlessly. What awaited the end of the journey made the ordeal tolerable. The Father-Son relationship was supported by the rewards gained at the journey's end.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,

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The Son's other choice was to submit to the Father's Will, even if this meant descending to the sphere of mankind to endure misunderstanding, rejection, persecution and disgraceful death. Jesus chose obedience regardless of consequences.

tions required Jesus to seek support from His Father, as does every offspring in a good parent-child relationship. The Bible tells us that Jesus wanted and received His Father's concern and help.

Jesus was supported by His Father's love. He advised His disciples that they should remain in His love, just as He had continued in His Father's love by subjecting Himself to the Father's commands.

Nothing supports the father-son relationship like love does. This emotion seeks to get together, to keep in contact, to be sensitive to the needs and desires of each other. It protects from threat, believes the best, forgives the mistakes, and strengthens every bond. Love gives and outlasts. Love provides the right spirit with which to discipline the maturing son and gratefully returns rewards to a father.

Love between father and son nurtures a lifestyle. It determines whether other family members will be considerate or self-serving, patient or intolerant, understanding or hateful, complimenting or gossiping, happy or bitter, pleasant or angry, healthy or hy-

thou hearest me always" (John 11:41, 42). This expression of praise comes from ongoing experience. The word "always" tells of One Who is unailing.

As His time to suffer approached, Jesus acknowledged, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27). The conflicting forces were at work in One Who had good reason to be apprehensive.

Jesus prayed, "Father, glorify thy name." The Father, ever present and helpful, answered in a voice that to bystanders seemed like thunder, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (cf. John 12:28, 29).

Reassurance was not new to the Son of God. At His baptism the heavenly Father announced, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." On the mountain, during the transfiguration were heard the same words, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." In his second letter (1:17), Peter later described it as a voice from the excellent glory.

Despite the increasing number

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that we should be called the sons of God" (I John 3:1). Does this mean that we may use the intimate, endearing expression, "Abba, Father"?

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father (Romans 8:14, 15).

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Galatians 4:6).

The same love, concern and hope which supported the relationship existing between God and Jesus maintains our membership in God's family. We haven't experienced previous glory in a pre-existent state, and we are not divine. It matters not. God has demonstrated His ability to love fallen, undesirable mankind. He sent His Son. In obedience, the Saviour accepted punishment for our sins so that we may be adopted into the divine Family. That having been done, we have the privilege to pray, "Abba, Father."

Jesus was obedient. He behaved like His Father's Son. Our obligation is similar.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said, "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 4:14-18, NIV).

The command in this passage has a demanding tone. In the real world we wonder if these ideals can be reached. Obedience is not always easy, but it's always expected.

This world can be tiring and discouraging. Where shall we find rest and refreshment? It can be found in the privilege of saying, "Abba, Father." Here we receive love and help and hope. **BA**

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what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

We may not know what we should pray for. We may not know what our greatest need is. But God knows, and the Spirit, which testifies that we are the children of God, will intercede for us.

Paul asks in Romans 8:35, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Who or what shall it be? Paul names just about every dimension one can think of: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things future, height, depth, or anything else in creation. Which of these is great enough to separate us from the love of Christ? Paul answers by saying, "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Indeed, the answer is, *nothing!*

There is no power which has the ability to separate us from the love of God manifested through Jesus Christ. If we want to cling to Him, God gives us the ability and tenacity to do so. We need not start the Christian life only to be cast away midway through the experience of living for God. The Almighty will keep us until we fall asleep in Jesus Christ or until He appears in the clouds of glory to claim us for His own. We are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us.

Let us affirm with apostle Paul, "My God shall meet all your need according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ." Can we believe that this afternoon? May God bless you. **BA**

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HOSEA - Commanded by God to Marry an Adulteress

by Ray Straub

When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord." So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim (Hosea 1:2, 3a, NIV) .

In the beginning God determined that a man must leave his parents, be united to his wife, and that they should become one flesh. Jesus further confirmed, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." God wants marriages to last as long as both partners live. This has always been His wish.

Isn't it strange, then, that God would order one of His prophets, Hosea, to marry an adulteress? Why would God insist that His servant marry a harlot, when it seems most unlikely that such a marriage would last?

Before we answer that question, I have another question, in a different vein, which I feel deserves some thought. While it may be just a matter of curiosity with you, it represents a meaningful challenge to me and my colleagues in the ministry. The question is this: How often do we preach about God? I refer to the kind of sermon that teaches directly about Him — His character, His nature.

There are many sermons which seek to confirm the accuracy of our doctrinal statements. Others discuss human nature, ethics and failings. Some messages deal with current events, and still others motivate us to improve our servanthood. But how many describe God?

This morning we are going to talk about God. His instructions to Hosea to marry an adulterous woman are unusual. Our examination of this command will give us some valuable insight into the personality of our heavenly Parent. To know more about Him is to love Him more. We would not mind that kind of an experience, would we?

God's strange command to Hosea also tells us something about the human race — ourselves. We already know enough about God to suspect that when there is a revelation of both God and man in the same setting, humanity will come in a distant second in comparison to God's virtue and righteousness. There

seems to be no end to the goodness, concern and compassion of God. In contrast, there seems to be no limit to the forgetfulness, disobedience and depravity in the human species.

Specifically, we'll talk about how the goodness of God reacts to the continuing and serious shortcomings in us. We'll try not to give too much attention to man's weakness. That would be discouraging. We'll hope to focus on God's righteousness and mercy. That will be inspiring!

Let's begin by looking at Hosea's personal life. What happened after God commanded him to marry a "loose" woman?

As we might anticipate, Hosea followed God's command. He married an unfaithful woman, named Gomer. Whatever detail is available in the Bible about Hosea's life may be read in the first three chapters of the Book of Hosea.

God's prophet, with his unchaste wife, had three children. Their names have a bearing on our story.

The first offspring was a son, named *Jezeel*. He was named after a fertile valley.

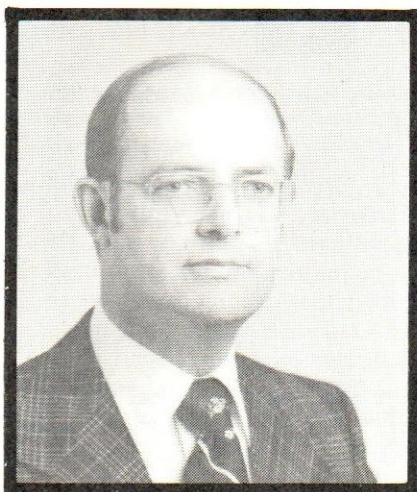
During the days of Hosea's unhappy marriage and his prophesying to Israel, Jeroboam II was king of the Northern Kingdom. He ruled during economically good times, quite different from the times we are experiencing in Oregon nowadays! The prosperity of Israel resembled that of the reigns of David and Solomon, and

that's a compliment to be sure!

Jeroboam II was of the family of Jehu. God had once used King Jehu to rid Israel of the vile and idolatrous rule of King Ahab. This purging consisted of bloody massacres of the king's princes and the priests of Baal. These killings took place in Jezreel. Hosea's son was named "Jezeel" because God determined to avenge the family of Jehu in the valley of Jezreel.

You probably wonder why God would punish the family of Jehu, if He earlier used this king to destroy Baal worshipers. It's true that Jehu inflicted crippling damage onto the worshipers of Baal. However, there was another serious problem Jehu did nothing about. If anything, he intensified it.

Remember, it was Jeroboam II who reigned during Hosea's time. Jeroboam I was the first king of the Northern Kingdom, Israel. It was made up of 10 tribes. Jeroboam I set up shrines to golden calves at ancient Bethel and Dan. Here he established a licentious, sensual form of worship, patterned after the ungodly fertility cults. He changed the dates of the Feast Days, and otherwise fashioned worship to suit himself. Jehu nor Jeroboam II did anything to turn the hearts of God's people from these sinful ways. Hosea named his son Jezeel to give indication that Jehu's house, of which Jeroboam II was a member, would suffer the same fate as Jehu's victims did decades earlier.



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Hosea's second child was a daughter. She was named *Lo-ruhamah*, which means "un-pitied." The naming of Hosea's daughter indicated that God was about to withdraw His mercy from Israel. They no longer could ex-

faithful mate. She would no longer be his wife. Who could blame him? The marriage was desecrated.

However, that's not the end of this short story. God had more for Hosea to do, still of a rather confusing nature. Hosea was told,

God assures Hosea that He will love those whose "name" declares them unworthy.

pect to receive divine patience and compassion. How could they survive without God's continuing longsuffering?

The third child, a son, was named *Lo-ammi*, directly interpreted, "not my people." Hosea now understood God's intentions to destroy the house of Jehu, withdraw His mercy from sin-loving, idol-worshipping, depraved Israel; then reject this nation with His declaration that the people were no longer His.

God's choice of a wife for Hosea didn't stay with him long. She disappeared, apparently to become a prostitute, or to live with another man on a services-offered basis.

A discouraged Hosea declared that he was through with his un-

"Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites."

I suppose if the voice of God presents a direct order, there is extra motive to obey. That may be why Hosea showed no reluctance to take money and other valuables and went searching for his wayward wife. Remember that God didn't only ask Hosea to find her. He told him to *love her*, as God did Israel. That was a tall order!

After Hosea brought his wife back home, he asked her to give up other men, and to live at home with him. He promised his continuing love and faithfulness to her.

Well, that's the story. Not too spectacular, is it? It's interesting, a bit shocking, but otherwise not too compelling. I shed no tears reading it, nor was there even a lump in my throat. In fact, I almost gave up this as sermon material until I read further into the book. There I found feelings expressed that were really moving!

There was good reason why God wanted Hosea to marry an adulteress. He asked that the prophet do this because this same prophet had to convey God's feelings to a nation which had prostituted herself. God had observed that "the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord" (1:2).

This situation found God and His prophet in similar circumstances. Neither Gomer nor Israel was inclined to play the part of a faithful helpmate. Both had wandering eyes. Both failed their "husbands." Both were disobedient and unloving. Both became depraved.

Having learned about the personal life of Hosea, let's move into our lesson a bit further. What insights may we gain through this strange arrangement orchestrated by God?

Let's take a few moments to look at Israel's spirituality. Israel's problems were manifold. There was unfaithfulness in the priesthood. "And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness" (6:9).

Corruption with the spiritual leadership is noted throughout Hosea's writings.

The Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: there is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying, and murder, stealing and adultery (4:1, 2, NIV).

"My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge," God laments. "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me" (4:6).

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It was the duty of the priests to teach God's law to His people. Failure to uphold this responsibility resulted in the most severe consequences. It was the duty of the priesthood to impart the knowledge of God's will. They failed in that task, and soon the people of God became uninformed and unattentive to the ways of God.

The political leaders also were devoid of any sensitivity toward God's desires and feelings. Following the reign of Jeroboam II, no less than six kings ruled in Israel in the next 20 years before that nation's fall to Assyria. Why were there so many? It was because four of the kings were assassinated, which is a tasteful word for the untasteful, cold blooded murder of one in high office.

When a kingdom becomes wealthy, it senses its vulnerability to other greedy eyes. The kings of Israel worried about this and felt a need to ally with stronger nations who would serve as their protectors. In their search for refuge, they looked to Egypt on one side and to Assyria on the other.

God resented Israel's casting glances either direction, because He jealously wanted to offer them all the security they needed. He felt rejected when Israel sought the help of pagan kings. "For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers" (8:9).

God, like Hosea, was the husband of an adulterous people. How would He react? It is at this point that we have opportunity to learn about our Creator. Isn't it interesting that we always learn most about ourselves and others in times of crisis, and we certainly have one here!

God's response to Israel's waywardness follows a sure pattern. We can always rely on the faithfulness of God.

First of all, the transgression against the will and ways of God are recognized and exposed. It's so easy to forget God, and in doing so, to go wandering into wickedness. Having turned from God, it's not easy to turn back.

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. But the more I called Israel, the further they went from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images (11:1, 2, NIV).

price for her. He intended to bring her home and to love her. This he did.

I see here a picture of the continuing loving attitude of God toward a wayward people. The price of our redemption had to be

Our name is Lo-ruhamah. Even though our name labels us accurately, God loves us persistently!

Second, in confronting sin, God must be concerned about justice and judgment. Sin must be vindicated. God's laws are righteous, and they cannot be ignored or brushed aside. Sin has its consequences, and the price for disobedience must be paid.

You have plowed in wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men (10:13).

If there is no punishment for sin, righteousness has no substantial nor enduring value. If God tolerated sinfulness, His characteristic righteousness would be blemished seriously.

It is during these desperate times that another picture of God surfaces. He finds Himself in an apparent dilemma, having to choose between the exercise of justice and the showing of mercy.

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel ... mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man (11:8, 9).

Now for some specific applications from our story.

Hosea went to get his wife who had left home to prostitute herself. He owed her nothing because of her shameful behavior, but he went to get her, paying a good

paid, and it was. Hosea saw a parallel here. "Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king" (3:5). Jesus is this "new" King David.

Following through with the names given to Hosea and Gomer's children, God declares, "I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.'" Remember that the name of Hosea's daughter, Lo-ruhamah, means "unpitied" and suggests that God would withdraw His love from Israel. That would be justice. But God assures Hosea that He will love those whose "name" declares them unworthy.

Do we deserve God's mercy, grace and compassion? How can we? Our name is *Lo-ruhamah*. Even though our name labels us accurately, God loves us persistently!

The prophet further writes, "I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God'" (2:23). Remember that the name of Hosea's third child, Lo-ammi, means "not my people." Again, our name labels us accurately, but God wills it differently!

Somehow God loves us even when we forget Him. Not only does He love, but He pays an enormous price to purchase us and to bring us back to His home. Our name says we deserve no pity or

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HOSEA — COMMANDED BY GOD TO MARRY AN ADULTERESS

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concern, but God doesn't worry about that. Our name says that we are not His, but He makes us part of His family.

How then should we react to God's love? The prophet Hosea gives a simple, poetic answer: "Break up your unplowed [fallow] ground (10:12)."

This counsel is not meaningless or unchallenging. It indicates a need for change. When unplowed fields are worked, they take on a whole new character. What has lain inactive now promises life and growth and beauty and fruit. The changes redirect our attention to a Father who waits to receive better from us. Our spiritual sensitivities come alive!

Before experiencing such spiritual changes, we may have been restless and bored with Bible study, *but no more*. The Bible is God's Word, and in it we find saving knowledge, God's mercy and love. It can save us from God's vengeance in the "valley of

Jezebel." We'll appreciate God's Word and love opportunities to study it.

In the past, our prayers may have become few, repetitious, without feeling or urgency, *but no more*. Now we're going to concentrate on the fact that our prayers are direct communication with the One whom we love dearly. It's our opportunity to visit together, walk together, express our joys, hopes and concerns.

Our collective worship may have been burdensome, and we may have fallen into the habit of being restless, awaiting for the benediction to release us mercifully back to life, *but no more*. Now we'll be aware that we are in church worship by God's invitation. He's here, too, and we'll joyfully honor Him who deserves praise and thanksgiving.

We may have been concerned about our finances, wanting to be assured that we live comfortably and can pay the most pressing creditors, leaving pennies to underwrite God's work, *but no more*. We'll understand now that even comfort and other possessions take from our devotion. We'll be financial partners with God. He wants us to trust Him for security,

rather than any present-day Egypt or Assyria.

Our beginnings in sin which are destined for destruction are not overlooked by God. Our names, revealing our lack of worthiness to receive pity or to be called God's family, are not inaccurate, and are not overlooked by God. We deserve to be unloved and unclaimed, and God agrees.

But, thank God, He does not overlook us. He purchases us, takes us home and cleans us up. By His love and mercy we are bought, cleansed and healed.

We'll close with the same good words with which Hosea closed his writings: "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them" (14:9).

That was the King James Version. May I reread this verse from the New International Version? It is worth hearing again.

Who is wise? He will realize these things.

Who is discerning? He will understand them.

The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them.

Let's wisely appreciate God, appreciate His invitation to repentance, appreciate His desire to save us and to use us. God will not give up on you and me, whether we are deserving or not. Let's go to Him!

BA

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LORD'S SUPPER

The annual celebration of the Lord's Supper by the Church of God (Seventh Day) will be observed on Tuesday evening, April 6. Anyone wishing to attend should contact the nearest local church for exact time and location.