



# The G.E.M.

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## WALK WITH GOD

The new year has arrived, and with it comes many dreams, desires, and hopes for each one of us. Many of us want to forget the past year and focus on what lies ahead. And in doing this one must not lose focus on the One who guides us. Therefore this year in *The G.E.M.* we will be focussing on our walk with God. Beginning with getting our lives in order spiritually speaking, looking at returning to the Lord.

Our main article on page 3 looks at God's call to the sinful nation of Israel in the Old Testament prophetic book, Hosea, and seeing how it applies to us in the twenty-first century.

Continuing with the book of Hosea, *Bible Basics* on page 2 provides some interesting insight into the book and the historical background. *Heroes of the Faith* looks at the life of another great man from the time of the Reformation who is probably one of the most influential men after Jesus and Paul. *Bible Study 101* takes you through the second step of proper Bible study. The crossword puzzle on the back page will have you digging a little deeper into the story of Hosea.

During the year we are wanting to introduce some mini-workshops to equip you as ministers of the Gospel, such as helping you with Sunday School and family, as well as tools to effectively run your Bible Study Group. We are planning on running a Bible Survey course that will give you a bigger picture of what the Bible is all about and how to take that information and teach it to others of all ages.

Until next time, we hope and pray that you will all have a good year and that all your dreams will not only come to pass, but give God all the glory which is due to Him.

Glyn and Linda. †

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# COMING SOON

## Learn & Share Workshops



A time of fellowship & learning new skills

### Proposed Subjects:

- Bible Survey
- Small Group Leadership Resources
- Puppetry
- Crafts for Children's Ministry
- Marriage/Parenting

For more information on the above, contact us on 011-454-6045.



E&OE, Prices valid while stocks last.

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For every purchase you make you will be earning payback points (shekels) for yourself while at the same time making a contribution to a ministry in the area.

**Hosea**

*The Book of the Unfaithful Wife*

The book of Hosea is an interesting tale of a prophet called by God for a special mission – to share the anguish of God over the nation of Israel's unfaithfulness.

Hosea is commanded by God to marry a harlot, who inevitably deserts Hosea. Hosea is to pursue her and bring her back to him. In the process, she bears him children, but she is still unfaithful to him.

Learning from these experiences, God tells Hosea to show the nation that Israel has been unfaithful to God, yet He will still pursue them and seek to restore them unto Himself.

**The Minor Prophets:** The book of Hosea is the first book of the minor prophets of the Old Testament. They are referred to as minor due to the amount of material written by them, and is not an indication of the importance.

**Date and Authorship:** The author of the book of Hosea is Hosea himself. Written in the first person, it is traditionally accepted that the book was written between 753 and 723BC.

Little is known of Hosea's family or history other than that he lived in Israel, the Northern Kingdom, and ministered to the people during the later years of Jeroboam II's reign.

**Structure:** The book of Hosea is largely composed of sermons that Hosea preached to the nation at different times and locations of Israel. Spanning over thirty years, the sermons relate Hosea's own experiences with his unfaithful wife, Gomer.

The first three chapters are an introduction to the main message telling of his experiences, with the rest of the book explaining the imagery:

Chapters

Hosea's Unfaithful Wife	1-3
God's Unfaithful People	4-14
Israel Sin	4-8
Judgement Proclaimed	9-10
God's Love for Israel	11
God's Discipline	12-13
God's Blessings	14

**Did you Know?** Rome and Carthage were founded during the same time period that Hosea was written.

Also during this time, religious reformation was happening in India through Siddhartha Guatama, which later gave birth to Buddhism.

**Value for Today:** Too often as Christians we feel that there is no hope for us should we fall into sin and turn our backs on God. The promise of this book is that God still loves us and wants us to be reconciled to Him. In some ways it is an Old Testament parable that echoes the message of Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son. †

**STEP2: Read About the Book**

Now that you have read your selected book of the Bible a number of times, you now have to read about the book. For this purpose it is good to have a good study Bible (such as the *NIV Study Bible*, the *ESV Study Bible* or the *John MacArthur Study Bible*) and read the introductory material concerning the book.

You may be wondering why read it now as opposed to before you read the book itself, especially since the introductory material often lists the very same things that you searched for in the previous step. Well this is for two basic reasons: 1) to read the material first could influence your thinking about the book, and 2) to do it yourself enables you to remember it better than just taking what someone else has said about the book. After all, we are urged to study the Bible and not to just study about the Bible.

From the Introductory material in your study Bible you will often find some or all of the following information concerning the book:

- **A time-line** of the book detailing the order of events or its place in history.
- **Introduction** to the book that sums up the main subject, author and historical setting of the book.
- **Key aspects** of the book such as the key characters, locations, events, verses, themes, etc.

If however, should you not have a study Bible, you can search for other relevant books or resources that contain this information. Bible Handbooks, Bible Dictionaries, Bible Encyclopedias and Commentaries are valuable resources that will help. There is also much information to be found on the Internet or on Bible Software.

After you have finished a general read of this information, read it again and compare what they have to say against the notes you have made during your reading of the book itself. Add to your notes any additional information that will be helpful in gaining a fuller understanding of the text.

It is a good idea to read your selected book again. Having an understanding now of the background information it will help to clarify some things that may have been unclear during the first few readings. As you go through, make more notes.

At this point your notes will look a little jumbled, but remember to keep your notes as you will eventually properly categorise and put them in order to form a clear and full picture of the book you are studying.

So, over the next month read about your selected book, make the necessary notes as detailed above, and then read your book again and make any amendments to your notes. Next time we will move on to step 3 where these initial steps will begin to take shape. †

**John Calvin  
(1509-1564)**

John Calvin was probably the most influential leader of the Reformation era. He put much stress on education. His catechetical system for the young has been carried all over the world. And at the school in Geneva men were trained who spread Presbyterianism all over Western Europe. In part his influence rose from the fact that Geneva generously welcomed refugees from almost every country in Europe. Often they returned home to spread the variety of Christianity they had come to know in Geneva. It was Calvin's theology and form of church government that triumphed in the Protestant church of France, the Reformed church of Germany, the Church of Scotland, the Reformed church in Hungary, the Reformed church in Holland, and in Puritanism in England and New England.

Calvin's biblical and theological writings also have been very influential. He wrote commentaries on every book of the Bible except the Song of Solomon and Revelation. His *Institutes of the Christian Religion* became the dominant systematic theology of the Reformation in all except Lutheran lands. And he wrote numerous pamphlets on current issues. His literary output was so prodigious that he influenced the development of modern French; he has been credited along with Rabelais as being co-founder of modern French prose. And Calvin is often called the father of the historical-grammatical method of biblical study – a method that attempts to discover what the Scripture meant to those who wrote it, and what it means according to the common definition of its words and its grammatical intent. Contemporary evangelical students have so taken this method for granted that they have little realization of the part that Calvin had in its development and of the fact that it was virtually nonexistent in the church before the Reformation.

Quoted from Vos, H. F. *Exploring Church History* (1996). †

**CUT OUT & COLLECT**

**PSALMS**

19

**Key Idea:** Prayer and Praise

**Summary:** Prayers of praise, thanks and requests

**Key People:** David, Asaph, Moses

**Key Places:** Jerusalem, Mount Zion, Temple

**Strange but True:** A man so thin you could count all his bones (22:17)

A man who asked God to collect his tears in a bottle (56:8)

A man with so many enemies they outnumber the hairs on his head (69:4)

Trees that sing (96:12)

Psalms contains both the shortest (117) and longest (119) chapters in the Bible

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## RETURN TO THE LORD

*“Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but He will heal us; He has injured us but He will bind up our wounds. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will restore us, that we may live in His presence.”*

(Hosea 6:1-2)

Throughout the book of Hosea, the prophet is calling out to the people of Israel who had wandered away from God to worship idols, to repent and turn back to the one true God.

Although written over 2,500 years ago, the message is still as relevant to us today as it was then. Just like ancient Israel, South Africa needs a revival. Our nation has drifted away from the Christian ethics and morals it once held dear. People have given themselves over to sin and evil desires. Crime, abortion, pornography, hatred and greed have impacted the lives of many a family throughout the nation.

As a nation, we need a revival, but before that can happen, in fact, even before it can happen in our churches, there first needs to be a revival in our hearts. This passage from Hosea is a call that still echoes today, a call for repentance.

### God's Plea to the Wayward

The phrase *“let us return”* in verse 1 implies that at one time a closer relationship with God had previously existed. That the nation of Israel had at some time earlier had walked with God the way they should have. They followed His law, worshipped Him only, and sought His face and counsel in all matters. But that was in the past. At this point they are far away from Him and had become wayward. In chapters 6 and 7 we see a number of descriptions of their state.

- They were like *“morning mist”* and *“early dew”* (6:4-11). Israel's devotion to God was like the early morning mist and dew in that it was there in the beginning and looked good, but soon disappeared. Their devotion was shallow and temporary.
- They were *“burning like an oven”* (7:1-7). The context here is that they loved their sin far more than they loved God. Like an oven heated to its maximum temperature so that it would be ready for the baker, Israel's passion for sin burned within them. They should have had a passion for God, but they loved their sin more.
- Israel is called *“a flat cake not turned over”* (7:8). At this point in history, people cooked their bread on heated rocks. If it was not turned over it would burn on one side and be raw on the other. Israel burned for the things of the world, but were cold towards the things of God.
- Israel is described as a man who has lost his strength and is unaware of the effects of time and age (7:9-10). Israel had lost their power of the Lord in their nation and they were not even aware of it.
- Israel is compared to a *“dove”* that is easily deceived (7:11-12). Instead of looking to

God and trusting Him, Israel flew to Egypt and Assyria for help. They disobeyed God by making covenants with pagan nations.

- Israel was like a *“faulty bow”* (7:13-16). They could not be trusted to remain on course to do the things God required, nor remain faithful to Him.

Israel was in a sorry state, yet there are many similarities with our own lives here. How many of the following questions can you answer “yes” to?

- Does your devotion to God sometimes seem shallow and non-existent?
- At times does your passion for things of the world override your passion for the things of God?
- Do you find yourself compromising with the world?
- Do you feel as though the Lord is distant from you and that you have lost His power in your life?
- Are you like a dove flitting here and there seeking help from other places other than from the Lord?
- Do you feel that you cannot be trusted to do the things of God or be devoted to Him the way the Bible tells you to be?

If you answered yes to any or all of the above questions, then you find yourself in a position much like that of the nation of Israel 2,500 years ago. You are not where God wants you to be. You may be going through the motions, but your heart is not filled with a passion for God. You are allowing your soul to drift away from Him and this call to the Israelites if going out to you too.

### God's Plan for the Wayward

There are a number of verses in Hosea that indicate how God had planned to deal with the nation. Sin had become a way of life for the people of Israel (4:1-2), therefore God was going to judge them (4:3-10). God is described as a lion that was going to come upon His people, tear them apart, punish them for their rebellion, then withdraw His presence until they earnestly sought Him again (5:12-15). It is clear that Israel was going to pay a high price.

In the same way, God is going to judge those who do not repent and walk in His ways. The New Testament is filled with warnings of the coming judgement and what it means for those who do not repent.

Sometimes aspects of the judgement will come about in our current lives in the same way that it did with David for his sin with Bathsheba (cf. 2 Samuel 11). We are told in Hebrews 12 that this is God disciplining His children in the same way a human father would discipline his child (vv 1-13).

We need to remember that no one ever gets away with sin! When we allow sin to grow in our hearts, we are, in a way, inviting God's judgement. Whether it be through discipline in this life, or judgement on the last day, we can expect to receive some form of punishment.

### God's Promise to the Wayward

Although God's plan is very negative and seems to offer little hope, there is in fact hope, and it is found in verse 2 of our text.

Israel had suffered as a result of their sin, however, if they repented and returned to the Lord with their whole heart, He would revive and restore them. But that is not all, this restoration would mean that they would be able to live in His presence.

In fact, verse 2 is referring to Jesus Himself. Through His death on the cross, those in Israel who believed in Him would be revived, and through His resurrection, sin would be conquered and they would be restored back to God. Though many did not believe in Him as the Messiah at the time, many today do believe in Him, both Jew and gentile, and that restoration is there for all.

### Conclusion

As we begin the new year, it is time to be honest about the condition of our hearts. He knows our hearts, and so do we, but we need to come to a point of confession and true repentance before Him. If we want to see our lives, families, churches, communities, or nation changed, we have to start with ourselves. His promise to restore our land if we repent and seek Him is clear (cf. 2 Chronicles 7:14). And He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (cf. 1 John 1:9).

Is the Lord speaking to you about your walk with Him? Are you tired of living a life that does not please God? Are you tired of living a life that feels as though God does not care and has given up on you?

Then *“return to the Lord!”* Let Him revive and restore you so that you can live in His presence.

Let us all join David in his prayer: *“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me,”* and *“Restore to me the joy of your salvation.”*

Amen! †

There is hope!

South Africa needs a revival!

## INSPIRING MOVIE

### *The Secrets of Jonathan Sperry*



Dustin and his two best friends are twelve year old looking forward to a summer of fun in 1970. when Dustin mows the lawn of seventy-five-year-old Jonathan Sperry, a man he has seen at church, a unique friendship develops. What happens the rest of the summer is something that Dustin and his friends will never forget, and will change their lives forever.

R 100

This is an excellent family movie that presents the Gospel in a clear way and shows its impact in real lives.

*“I recommend this inspiring film for everyone”* - Kirk Cameron from the Way of the Master.

# THE BACK PAGE

## BIBLE TRIVIA CHALLENGE

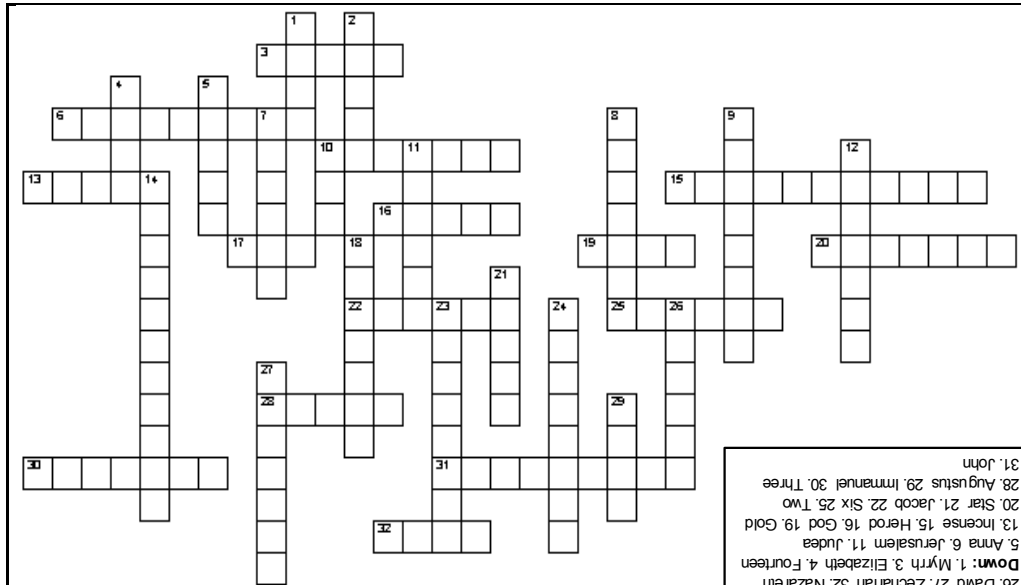
All answers found in the book of Hosea.  
Refer to the verses in brackets for help.

### ACROSS

- 3 What was Hosea's wife's name? (1:3)
- 6 God's people were destroyed for a lack of what? (4:6)
- 10 What was Hosea's mother in law's name? (1:3)
- 13 Complete: "The ways of the LORD are \_\_\_ \_." (14:9)
- 15 God called Israel to seek what from Him? (14:2)
- 16 God was going to punish Israel for burning incense to what? (2:13)
- 17 Israel was to be judged because the rebelled against God's what? (8:1)
- 19 Complete: "Ephraim is like a \_\_\_ \_ , easily deceived and senseless." (7:11)
- 20 Who, along with God is the watchman over Ephraim? (9:8)
- 22 What cakes did the Israelites love? (3:1)
- 25 The merchant who defrauds uses dishonest what? (12:7)
- 28 Israel called on Assyria and which other country for help? (7:11)
- 30 For how many shekels of silver did Homer buy his wife back for? (3:2)
- 31 God desires acknowledgment of Him rather than what? (6:6)
- 32 Israel's what are always before God? (7:2)

### DOWN

- 1 Hosea's daughter was called Lo-Ruhamah because God was no longer going to show what to Israel? (1:6)
- 2 Hosea was the son of \_\_\_ \_ ? (1:1)
- 4 God described himself to be like what insect to Ephraim (5:12)
- 5 What does God desire over sacrifice? (6:6)
- 7 God commanded that the trumpet be sounded where? (5:8)
- 8 God gave the prophets many what? (12:10)
- 9 God told many what through the prophets? (12:10)
- 10 Complete: "I will be like the \_\_\_ \_ to Israel." (14:5)
- 11 Hosea's second son was to be called what? (1:9)
- 12 Hosea was told to give his first son what name? (1:4)
- 14 God said He was going to block Israel's path with what? (2:6)
- 18 In Hosea 5:3 Israel is described as being what?
- 21 Israel's sin provoked God's what? (12:14)
- 23 God described the Israelites as " \_\_\_ \_ heifers." (4:16)
- 24 Part of Israel's judgement was that they would have no what? (9:11)
- 26 Israel's what were going to be demolished? (10:2)
- 27 Israel were told not to what because they had been unfaithful to God? (9:1)
- 29 The Israelites were described to be like what on the seashore? (1:10)



Answers in next edition

**Last Month's Answers:**  
 Across: 2. Manger 7. Ramah 8. Eighth  
 9. Galilee 10. Adijah 12. Gabriel  
 14. Shepherds 17. Egypt 18. Temple  
 20. Saviour 23. Simeon 24. Bethlehem  
 26. David 27. Zechariah 32. Nazareth  
**Down:** 1. Myrrh 3. Elizabeth 4. Fourscore  
 5. Anna 6. Jerusalem 11. Judea  
 13. Incense 15. Herod 16. God 19. Gold  
 20. Star 21. Jacob 22. Six 25. Two  
 28. Augustus 29. Immanuel 30. Three  
 31. John

## COLOUR ME IN

...they were like  
sheep without a  
shepherd.  
Mark 6:34



### CONTACT US

Tel.: 011-454-6045  
 Fax: 086-654-2996  
 shop@gracemedia.co.za

2 Bishopstone Ave,  
 Essexwold, Johannesburg  
 www.gracemedia.co.za

### SHOP TRADING HOURS:

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