



## WELCOME TO MY WORLD STUDY GUIDE

WEEK 1: JANUARY 13 - 19, 2019

A NEW APPROACH TO LIVING

SCRIPTURE: HOSEA 6:4-6

**Reflections:** In this week's sermon, we heard the story of Jesus confronting the religious leaders of His day, who criticized Him for eating with "tax collectors and sinners" (Matthew 9:11). In response to this criticism, He says:

*"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Matthew 9:12b-13 (NIV)*

Jesus refers here to words written by the prophet, Hosea. From this prophet, the religious leaders were to learn something about God's character, and about His expectations for those who claim to follow Him.

Hosea lived some 750 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. At that time, God was in the process of disciplining His people. His Kingdom was then divided in two: a Northern Kingdom called, "Israel" or "Ephraim", and a Southern Kingdom, called "Judah". The Northern Kingdom had largely forsaken their worship of God, to chase other foreign gods, and the Southern Kingdom was rapidly declining as well.

God called Hosea to speak His message into this rebellious and declining culture. In fact, he was called to do more than speak. Hosea was called to model God's character toward His rebellious people:

*"When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD*

said to him, 'Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD.'" Hosea 1:2 (NIV)

Hosea obeys the command, and Gomer becomes his wife. She bears three children, but then abandons Hosea to live with another man. God, however, calls Hosea to bring her back, to love her again:

*"Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."* Hosea 3:1 (NIV)

Despite her unfaithfulness, God will still pursue His rebellious people.

It is within this life context that Hosea speaks the words which Jesus quotes to the religious leaders of His day. In Hosea, chapter 6, we read:

*"What can I do with you, Ephraim [the Northern Kingdom]? What can I do with you, Judah [the Southern Kingdom]? Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears. Therefore I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth— then my judgments go forth like the sun. For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."* (Hosea 6:4-6)

Outwardly, His people were going through their religious motions, but they were not really changing. They continued to chase immoral passions and other gods, but God sees through their religious pretense. To return to His house, His lost people must admit that they need help. They themselves are as broken as Gomer, as the tax collectors and sinners with whom Jesus eats. As God's people, as Christ-followers, we cannot fail to connect

with the truly broken in our world. They are the ones for whom God comes. And, by the way, we too are just as broken as they are, which is why Jesus came for us.

**Prayer Thought:** Father, make me aware of my own brokenness, to keep me from judging the brokenness of others, and teach me to love those whom I have judged, because You have come for them too.

**Application Question:** How do the words of Jesus help us to view others differently?

### Group Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways did Hosea model the character of God?
2. What did Jesus want the religious leaders of His day to learn from the example and words of Hosea?

### Suggestions for Further Research:

For a free, online commentary on the Book of Hosea: visit this web page: [www.studylight.org/commentaries/bbc/hosea.html](http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bbc/hosea.html)