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HOSEA

A 6-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

WEEK 1 OF 6 • GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

Not My People; You Are My People — Hosea 1:1–3:5

Scripture Scope: Hosea 1:1–3:5 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

PARTICIPANT STUDY EDITION

Synchronized Section-by-Section with the Leader Guide Edition · Includes Group Reflection Workspace

Hosea — 6-Week Group Bible Study (Participant Study Edition)

Week 1: Not My People; You Are My People (Hosea 1:1–3:5)

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- **The title:** "The word of the LORD that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri" (1:1). Hosea preached in the northern kingdom of Israel (often called Ephraim) in its last generations, from the prosperous days of Jeroboam II to the years just before Samaria fell to Assyria in 722 BC.
- **The voices:** The LORD speaks through Hosea, often in the first person, as a wounded husband and a grieving father. Israel is the unfaithful people; Judah is addressed at times as well.
- **Its form:** Prophetic poetry and a prophetic sign. Chapters 1–3 tell of Hosea's marriage as a living picture of the LORD and Israel; chapters 4–14 unfold the LORD's case against his people and his unrelenting compassion.
- **The structure:**
  - The sign of the marriage and the children's names (1:1–3:5).
  - No knowledge of God in the land (4:1–5:15).
  - "Come, let us return" and Ephraim's heat (6:1–7:16).
  - Sowing the wind (8:1–9:17).
  - A vine, a plowed field, and a father's love (10:1–11:12).
  - Jacob's story, Ephraim's death, and the call to return (12:1–14:9).
- **Why it matters:** Hosea shows sin as more than broken rules; it is broken love. Yet the God who says "not my people" also says "you are my people," and he betroths his people to himself in steadfast love. Paul and Peter hear in Hosea the gospel of a people gathered in Christ.

How This 6-Week Study Works

You may notice this study is shorter than our usual eight weeks. Even though we are 8weekbiblestudy.com, stretching Hosea to eight weeks would have left it thin on content, and we never want to trade quality for quantity.

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, this study is six weeks rather than the series' usual eight. Hosea has 197 verses in fourteen chapters. The sign of the marriage (chapters 1–3) is one unit and deserves one careful week, and the short closing chapter belongs with the two before it, so six weeks follow the book's own turns without padding. Each week invites you to listen to the LORD's broken-hearted love and his call to return together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's passage inside the structure of Hosea and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.

- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV.

Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through Hosea:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

The 6-Week Hosea Study at a Glance

Week	Title & Passage	Movement 1 / Movement 2	Canonical Horizon
1	**Not My People; You Are My People** (1:1–3:5)	The Marriage and the Names (1:1–2:1) / Allure, Betroth, and Buy Back (2:2–3:5)	"You are my people"; the faithful Husband who buys back
2	**No Knowledge of God in the Land** (4:1–5:15)	The LORD's Case against the Land (4:1–19) / A Spirit of Whoredom and a Sick Wound (5:1–15)	The knowledge of God in Christ; a people who know him
3	**Come, Let Us Return** (6:1–7:16)	A Love Like the Morning Mist (6:1–11) / Ephraim's Heat (7:1–16)	Raised on the third day; a love that does not vanish
4	**They Sow the Wind** (8:1–9:17)	The Calf and the Broken Covenant (8:1–14) / The Days of Retribution (9:1–17)	Christ the true vine, who keeps the covenant
5	**When Israel Was a Child** (10:1–11:12)	A Luxuriant Vine, a Plowed Field (10:1–15) / I Loved Him (11:1–12)	"Out of Egypt I called my son"; compassion that will not let go
6	**Return to the LORD** (12:1–14:9)	Jacob and the Death of Ephraim (12:1–13:16) / I Will Heal Their Apostasy (14:1–9)	Healing for the faithless; death, where is your sting?

WEEK 1 OF 6

WEEK 1 SESSION GUIDE · HOSEA 1:1–3:5

Week 1: Not My People; You Are My People

Scripture Scope: Hosea 1:1–3:5 (ESV) • Focal Passages: Hosea 1:1; 1:10–2:1; 2:14–20; 3:4–5 • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

Opening: Not My People; You Are My People (Hosea 1:1–3:5)

Passage **Hosea 1:1–3:5**

Opening

Hosea's book opens with one of the most startling commands in Scripture. The LORD tells his prophet to marry a woman who will prove unfaithful, so that Hosea's own home becomes a living picture of what Israel has done to the LORD. Children are born and given names that sound like a verdict: a name of bloodshed, then "No Mercy," then "Not My People." Yet the chapter does not end there.

In the very place where it was said, "You are not my people," it will be said, "Children of the living God." Chapter 2 moves from a lawsuit to a love song: the LORD will allure his people into the wilderness, speak tenderly to them, and betroth them to himself forever. Chapter 3 closes with Hosea told to love again, a costly picture of a God who buys back what is his.

Week 1 At a Glance

Scripture Scope	Hosea 1:1–3:5 (the title, the sign of Hosea's marriage, the children's names, the great reversal, the LORD's lawsuit and wilderness allure, the betrothal forever, and the buying back that looks toward David their king)
Focal Passages	Hosea 1:1; 1:10–2:1; 2:14–20; 3:4–5
Literary & Structural Anchor	Chapters 1–3 are one prophetic sign that interprets the whole book. The children's names (Jezreel, No Mercy, Not My People) are not erased; they are answered (1:10; 2:1, 23). In 2:14 "therefore" introduces not a final blow but tender speech. The sign looks ahead to the latter days and to David their king (3:5).
Big Idea	The LORD names a faithless people "not my people," and then, in steadfast love, betroths them to himself and calls them children of the living God.

Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	**Know the Sign:** Learn how Hosea's marriage and the children's names picture the LORD and Israel, and how the names are reversed.
HEART	**Receive the Betrothal:** See that the LORD pursues his people in steadfast love, and that in Christ those who were "not my people" are called his own.
HANDS	**Answer His Tender Word:** Take one step to turn from a rival love and to answer the LORD who speaks tenderly to you.

Opening Frame: Not My People; You Are My People

Daniel showed God's people living faithfully in exile, trusting the God who rules over kingdoms and keeps his promises. Hosea takes us back to an earlier generation, before the exiles, and lets us hear why exile came: a people who forgot the LORD while enjoying his gifts. Hosea is the first of the twelve shorter prophetic books, often called the Minor Prophets because of their length, not their importance. This is a 6–week study. We begin with chapters 1–3, where Hosea's own marriage becomes a living picture of the LORD and Israel, and then spend five weeks hearing the LORD's case against his people and his love that will not let them go. Hosea's marriage is a prophetic sign, not marriage advice. The question for this week: what does it mean that the God who says "Not my people" also says "You are my people"? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question): What is a name or nickname someone gave you that changed how you saw yourself, for better or worse?

Section 1.2

Historical & Literary Context: A Marriage That Preaches (Hosea 1:1–3:5)

Passage Hosea 1:1–3:5

Entering the World of a Marriage That Preaches

1. Historical Background

Hosea prophesied "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel" (1:1). Jeroboam II's reign was prosperous, but after his death Israel had six kings in roughly twenty-five to thirty years (c. 753–722 BC), four of them assassinated, until Assyria destroyed Samaria in 722 BC (2 Kings 14–17).

2. Cultural Setting

Baal was the Canaanite storm-and-fertility god, believed to send rain, grain, and wine. Israel credited Baal with the LORD's gifts. The Hebrew word baal also means "master" or "husband," which makes 2:16 especially pointed.

3. Literary Structure of Hosea 1:1–3:5

- **Title** (1:1)
- **The sign of the marriage and the names** (1:2–9)
- **The great reversal** (1:10–2:1)
- **The lawsuit** (2:2–13)
- **The wilderness and the door of hope** (2:14–15)
- **The betrothal** (2:16–23)
- **Love again and the return** (3:1–5)

4. Key Themes

Covenant love and unfaithfulness; names given and reversed; the LORD's gifts misattributed to rivals; the knowledge of the LORD; return.

5. Theological Considerations

Prophets sometimes acted out God's word as well as speaking it. Hosea's marriage is the most personal of these signs. Its purpose is to show the LORD's grief and faithfulness, not to invite curiosity about Hosea's household or to be repeated as a pattern for marriage.

6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

Interpreters debate whether Gomer was unfaithful before the marriage or became so afterward. The text's focus is not Gomer's biography but the land's forsaking of the LORD (1:2) and the LORD's love that will not quit (3:1).

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

1.2 Q1: Hosea's marriage was a living sermon about God and his people. Why do you think God chose a marriage, rather than a law court or a kingdom, as the picture of his relationship with Israel?

1.2 Q2: Israel credited the rain, grain, and wine to Baal rather than to the LORD. Where are people today tempted to credit God's gifts to something else?

1.2 Q3: Hosea's book follows the stories of God's people in exile. How does hearing why exile came help us read the warnings and promises of the prophets?

Section 1.3

Movement 1: The Marriage and the Names (Hosea 1:1–2:1)

Passage **Hosea 1:1–2:1**

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: Hosea 1:1** (focal passage) — The word of the LORD comes to Hosea son of Beeri in the days of the kings of Judah and of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel.
- **Summary of Hosea 1:2–9** — The LORD tells Hosea to take a wife who will be unfaithful, because the land has forsaken the LORD; Hosea marries Gomer; their children are named Jezreel (for the bloodshed at Jezreel), No Mercy, and Not My People, as a word to the house of Israel; yet the LORD will have mercy on Judah and save them himself, not by weapons or war.
- **Reader 2: Hosea 1:10–2:1** (focal passage) — Yet Israel's children will be as many as the sand of the sea; where it was said "You are not my people," it will be said "Children of the living God"; Judah and Israel will be gathered under one head; and brothers and sisters will be told, "You are my people" and "You have received mercy."

Anchor Verses (ESV)

Hosea 1:1: The word of the LORD that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

Hosea 1:7: But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen."

> **Hosea 1:10:** Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Children of the living God.”

Teaching Narrative: The Marriage and the Names

1. The Word of the LORD (Hosea 1:1)

The book's authority and its moment in history.

2. A Marriage as a Sign (Hosea 1:2–3)

Retold briefly. The land has forsaken the LORD. Hosea's marriage is a prophetic sign of the LORD's love for an unfaithful people. It is never marriage advice, and it never means that anyone should stay with an unfaithful or abusive spouse.

3. Names That Sound Like a Verdict (Hosea 1:4–9)

Retold briefly. Jezreel, No Mercy, Not My People.

4. Mercy on Judah (Hosea 1:7)

Salvation by the LORD himself, not by bow or horse.

5. The Great Reversal (Hosea 1:10–2:1)

Sand of the sea, children of the living God, one head, "You are my people" and "You have received mercy."

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

> **1.3 Q1:** The book opens, "The word of the LORD that came to Hosea" (1:1). Why does it matter that Hosea's message, including his marriage, came from the LORD and not from his own ideas?

> **1.3 Q2:** The LORD explained that the sign was given because the land had forsaken him (1:2). Why does the Bible so often describe turning from God as unfaithfulness in a relationship rather than only as breaking a rule?

> **1.3 Q3:** God promises to save Judah, "I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen" (1:7). What "bows and horses" are people tempted to trust instead of the LORD?

1.3 Q4: "In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' it shall be said to them, 'Children of the living God'" (1:10). Why is it significant that the new name is spoken in the same place as the old sentence?

1.3 Q5: The names No Mercy and Not My People are answered with "You are my people" and "You have received mercy" (2:1). How does knowing that God has the last word change the way you hear his hard words?

Section 1.4

Movement 2: Allure, Betroth, and Buy Back (Hosea 2:2–3:5)

Passage **Hosea 2:2–3:5**

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Summary of Hosea 2:2–13** — The LORD brings a case against his unfaithful people: she has run after lovers and credited them with her bread, wool, wine, and oil, not knowing that the LORD gave the grain, the wine, and the oil; so he will hedge up her way and take back his gifts until she says she will return.
- **Reader 1: Hosea 2:14–20** (focal passage) — Therefore the LORD will allure her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her; he will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope; she will call him "My Husband" and no longer "My Baal"; he will betroth her to himself forever in righteousness, justice, steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness, and she will know the LORD.
- **Summary of Hosea 2:21–23** — The heavens and the earth will answer with grain, wine, and oil; the LORD will sow his people in the land, have mercy on No Mercy, and say to Not My People, "You are my people," and they will say, "You are my God."
- **Summary of Hosea 3:1–3** — The LORD tells Hosea to love his wife again, as the LORD loves Israel though they turn to other gods; Hosea buys her back and tells her to wait many days in faithfulness.
- **Reader 2: Hosea 3:4–5** (focal passage) — Israel will live many days without king, prince, or sacrifice; afterward they will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king, and come in fear to the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

Hosea 2:14–15: “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

> **Hosea 2:16:** “And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’
>
> **Hosea 2:19–20:** And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.
>
> **Hosea 3:5:** Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

Teaching Narrative: Allure, Betroth, and Buy Back

1. The Lawsuit (Hosea 2:2–13)

Retold briefly. Gifts credited to the wrong giver.

2. A Door of Hope (Hosea 2:14–15)

The wilderness becomes a place of tender speech; Achor, once a valley of trouble, becomes a doorway.

3. My Husband, Not My Baal (Hosea 2:16–17)

The rival's name removed from her mouth.

4. Betrothed Forever (Hosea 2:19–20)

Five gifts the LORD brings, and the knowledge of the LORD.

5. You Are My People (Hosea 2:21–23)

Retold briefly. The names reversed.

6. Love Again; Afterward They Shall Return (Hosea 3:1–5)

The costly buying back, the waiting, and the return to the LORD and David their king. This is a prophetic sign, not marriage advice; it never means that anyone should stay with an unfaithful or abusive spouse, and anyone in danger at home should seek safety and help.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

> **1.4 Q1:** Israel did not know that the LORD "gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil" (2:8). How can we enjoy God's gifts and still forget the Giver?

> **1.4 Q2:** "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her" (2:14). What surprises you about the word "therefore" here, after all the accusations?

1.4 Q3: God promises to "make the Valley of Achor a door of hope" (2:15), recalling a place of trouble (Joshua 7). What does this promise reveal about God's grace—and how can believers trust him in hard seasons without assuming every trial is quickly reversed or corrective? (Personal stories may remain private, with full freedom to pass.)

1.4 Q4: "I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy" (2:19). What do these four covenant gifts reveal about the LORD's character—and which promise is especially reassuring to hold onto quietly this week? (Personal reflection may remain private.)

1.4 Q5: Hosea paid a price to bring his wife home, and "afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king" (3:5). What does Hosea's costly love teach you about the way God loves his people?

Section 1.5

Canonical Horizon: "You Are My People"; the Faithful Husband Who Buys Back

Passage **Hosea 2:19–20**

Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

The names "Not My People" and "No Mercy" are answered in Jesus, through whom those who were not a people are now God's people (1 Peter 2:10), and Christ is the faithful Husband who loved the church and gave himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25). Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

1. Not My People, Now God's People (Romans 9:24–26; 1 Peter 2:9–10)

Paul and Peter quote Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 to describe Jews and Gentiles gathered in Christ. The reversal of the names is the gospel.

2. The Faithful Husband (Ephesians 5:25–27; John 13:1)

Christ loves his church and gives himself up for her, to present her holy. He loves his own to the end.

3. Bought with a Price (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

Hosea's costly purchase is honored first as his prophetic obedience to a specific command, and then heard as a limited analogy to the price Christ paid to redeem his people—without equating every detail of Hosea's marriage with Christ's cross.

4. David Their King (Luke 1:32–33; Revelation 22:16)

Those who return seek the LORD and David their king; Jesus is the Son of David whose kingdom has no end.

Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **Hosea 2:19–20:** And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

1.5 Q1: Peter writes, "Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:10). How does Hosea's reversal of names describe what God has done for you in Christ?

1.5 Q2: Paul writes, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). How does Hosea help you see the depth of Christ's love for an unfaithful people?

1.5 Q3: Paul says, "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). How does knowing you were bought back shape the way you live?

Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	The LORD names a faithless people "not my people," then pursues, betroths, and buys them back in steadfast love.
HEART	In Christ, those who were not God's people are called children of the living God.
HANDS	Faith turns from rival loves, gives thanks to the true Giver, and answers the LORD who speaks tenderly.

Section 1.6

Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

1.6 Q1: Which of God's gifts have you been enjoying lately without thanking him for them?

1.6 Q2: In Hosea 2, Israel credited false gods for what the LORD gave (2:8). What modern substitutes commonly tempt believers to look elsewhere for security or satisfaction—and where might a person quietly re-center trust in the LORD this week? (Personal reflection may remain private.)

1.6 Q3: How does God's tender promise, "You are my people" (2:23), speak to someone who feels spiritually distant or discouraged—and how can you carry that assurance quietly into your week? (Personal reflection may remain private, with freedom to pass.)

Looking Ahead to Next Week

Recap: In Week 1, we saw Hosea's marriage as a sign, the children's names reversed, and the LORD's promise to betroth his people forever.

Transition: Next week the LORD brings his case against the land: there is no faithfulness, no steadfast love, and no knowledge of God.

Week 2 Overview — No Knowledge of God in the Land (Hosea 4:1–5:15): Movement 1, The LORD's Case against the Land (4:1–19), covers the charge against the people and the priests who failed them. Movement 2, A Spirit of Whoredom and a Sick Wound (5:1–15), covers leaders who trap the people and a nation that runs to Assyria for healing. The Canonical Horizon traces the knowledge of God fulfilled in Christ.

Focal Readings to Preview

- Hosea 4:1–3
- Hosea 4:6
- Hosea 5:6
- Hosea 5:13–15

My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

Closing Group Prayer

LORD, you speak tenderly to your people and betroth them to yourself forever in righteousness, justice, steadfast love, and mercy. We confess that we have credited your gifts to other things and let our hearts wander to rival loves. We pray for those who carry the pain of betrayal or a broken marriage; comfort them, and keep them safe. Thank you that in Christ those who were not your people are called children of the living God. Help us to know you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.