

Going Further Questions

10 Values That Strengthen Your Family

7. Commit to Faithfulness

July 19-20, 2008

1. In Exodus 20:14, God gives us the commandment that we are not to commit adultery. “Adultery” means a married person having sexual relations with someone who is not their spouse. The broader term for sexual relations outside of marriage is “fornication,” a word that is not common in today’s language, but is used in the King James version of the Bible. Read this verse in Exodus, followed by Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:27-28. Why is sexual purity so important to God? If it helps, think about the fact that God uses marriage terms to describe his relationship with Israel and the church. Also look at the model set up for us in the Creation story, before there was any sin in the world (Genesis 2:7-24).
2. Throughout the Bible, God speaks about his relationship with his chosen people in terms of marriage. His covenant with Israel is one that is as binding as a marriage covenant. Because of this analogy, adultery is often used as an image of God’s people being spiritually unfaithful, either by not keeping their covenant with him or by actively worshipping other gods. In the book of Hosea, God tells Hosea, a prophet, to live out a metaphor of God’s relationship with his people: since the Israelites have been unfaithful to God, Hosea is to marry a woman who will be unfaithful to him. The first 3 chapters of the book tell this story. As you read these chapters, ask yourself some questions:
 - What do the names of each of the children in 1:3-9 represent?
 - In chapter 2 we see description alternating between Gomer’s behavior and that of the Israelites—think about how these stories are related.
 - Even as we hear the words of punishment, we see God’s faithful love for Israel (and Hosea’s for Gomer). What is the end result of the times of punishment? Gomer’s time of isolation (3:3) corresponds to the time Israel will spend in exile, taken out of their own land to serve in other countries. But that is not the end of the story: God brings them back.
 - Read some of the amazing verses of hope in these chapters: 1:10, 3:1-2, 2:21-23 (compare this to 1:3-9). What other hopeful verses do you find?
3. Read Hosea chapters 4-7. Some of Hosea’s charges probably do not apply to you, but what do you hear in these chapters that convicts you? Allow the Lord to speak to you as you read this. Focus on 6:1-3; what in here speaks forward in time to the life of Jesus (since Hosea is in the Old Testament, this was written before Jesus’ birth)? Take a minute to thank God for the hope we have in Jesus!

4. Read chapters 8-11. Notice that in chapter 11 God amplifies the husband-wife analogy with that of father-child. Focus on 11:1-11, and hear God's mercy and tenderness for his people. How have you seen God's mercy in your life this week? Has he been faithful to you, even when you have not been to him?
5. Finish the book, reading chapters 12-14. Again, we hear the grace of God in chapter 14. Read 14:2-3 aloud, making the words your prayer to God. Stop for a moment and add your own prayers of repentance to the Lord. Then read verses 4-9 and receive them as God's promise to you.