

# A Broken Heart

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala's sermon explores the theme of a broken heart through the story of Hosea, illustrating God's relentless love for His people despite their unfaithfulness.*

**Duration:** 30:03

**Topics:** "Sorrow"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that God knows how to get our attention, especially when we forget about Him during good times. He highlights a poignant part of the Old Testament where God expresses His love for His people. Despite their unfaithfulness and idolatry, God chooses to draw them into the wilderness to bring them back to Him. The preacher also discusses the story of Hosea, where the prophet's heartache over his unfaithful wife serves as a metaphor for God's own heartache over His people's unfaithfulness. The sermon concludes with the reminder that God has given us everything we have, and if we fail to acknowledge this, we may find ourselves living in an inner desert despite external circumstances.

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## Transcript

I didn't know how to name this message I want to speak on, this subject, because it could be a lot of different angles, but I thought the best way was something we all could relate to, which is a broken heart. No matter what our background is, what our race is, color, ethnicity, where we come from, no matter how old we are, we've all, at one time or another, had our hearts broken. We've been damaged emotionally.

And to have your heart broken, it has to be from someone who you really care about. A stranger can't break your heart. You've got to really care about someone for them to affect you.

Am I right or wrong? How many have ever had your heart broken by a son, a daughter, or someone you really care about? Now, when you think of broken heart, I've had my heart broken, I've been hurt, you have too. And when you hear the word broken heart, you think immediately of some human experience that you go through, where someone just says something or does something, and it just devastates you. But this broken heart I want to talk about comes from one of the most difficult books in the whole Bible, because it's the only book where a prophet of God is told to marry a prostitute.

Some of you didn't know that book was in the Bible, did you? Anybody know the name of that book? Hosea. Hosea, as we're going to see, was a man of God. And because of the broken heart that God had,

God said to Hosea, I want you to do something and go through something because it's going to prophetically symbolize what I'm going through.

So he's told to marry in the NIV a promiscuous woman, but we know now about his wife that she slept around. She had other lovers, and yet Hosea loved her. So here's the story.

There's a fairly long book called Hosea, but we're going to just get the nub of the story right here. Let's look. Hosea 1, chapter 1, verse 1. The word of the Lord that came to Hosea, son of Berai, during the reigns, notice how long he prophesied, during four kings in the south and Judah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam, son of Jehoash, king of Israel.

That's the northern kingdom. And 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 Diblaine, and she conceived and bore him a son.

Then later on in chapter 2, Now rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife and I am not her husband. Let her remove the adulterous look from her face and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts. Otherwise I will strip her naked and make her as bare as on the day she was born.

I will make her like a desert. I will turn her into a parched land and I will slay her with thirst, God is saying. I will not show my love to her children because they are the children of adultery.

Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said, I will go after my lovers who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink. Therefore I will block her path with thorn bushes.

I will wall her in so she cannot find her way. She will chase after her lovers but not catch them. She will look for them but not find them.

Then she will say, I will go back to my husband as at first for then I was better off than now. She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold which she then turned around and used for bail, which was an idol. I will punish her for the day she burned incense to the bales.

She decked herself with rings and jewelry and went after her lovers but me, she forgot, declares the Lord. Therefore I am now going to allure her. I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her.

There I will give her back her vineyards and will make the valley of Acre, the word Acre means trouble, I will make the valley of Acre, the valley of trouble, a door of hope. We're not only gonna learn a lot about God here in these next few moments, but we're gonna learn a lot about the way he deals with people that he loves because it's not as some of us have been taught when we were growing up in and around church. The story of Hosea is complex because there's two stories happening at once.

There's Hosea the prophet with his wife Gomer who's sleeping around and at times bearing illegitimate children then some with him it seems and she's running around after her lovers and there's that part of the book, the human side of Hosea's heartache because he loves Gomer but she's just around. She's with this one and that one and the next one and he's doing all he can to provide for her and to show his love but it doesn't matter what Hosea does. She's out there.

Then of course that's a symbol, it's a picture, it's a metaphor of what God is going through. God to help Hosea be a prophet who speaks from his heart, let him go through things so that when he spoke about them, he would feel them deeply because he was living through it. This is the danger of being a minister, of being a preacher because if you really wanna do it right, God will let you go through things so that when you speak, it won't just come from your head and the Bible, it'll come from the Bible through your head, through your heart and then the people know, wow, that person, that preacher, that man, that woman, they really feel what they're preaching about.

The hardest part of preaching is not getting three points and a conclusion after you do this for a while. You set me in a corner and give me a passage, I probably will come up with something but that's just a sermon, a real message from the Lord engages your whole heart and that's the hardest part of preaching, that God has to deal with me about something before I can preach it to you effectively. So then there's this whole picture of God and the one that he loves, which is Israel, his people.

So Hosea has Gomer, God has his people. Gomer is running around on Hosea and God says, I want you to feel that because my people are running around on me. I love them but they don't love me.

I wanna be married to them but they got other lovers, they're sleeping around. Now there's the element of adultery and fornication immorality. Remember, immorality is sleeping with anyone who's not your spouse.

Marriage is between a husband and a wife and when you're unfaithful to the husband or wife, that is the definition of adultery. God has designed that sexual intimacy is only between a husband and a wife. When you break that, you just don't break God's law, we break ourself on God's law because what a man sows, they'll also reap.

But thank God he's redemptive and can take messes and turn them into blessings. Can we just thank God for that, that he can take messes and turn them into blessing. Now there's the element then of physical immorality but that's not what this is all about.

What this is about is something called spiritual adultery. Spiritual adultery is when you cheat on God and then how God reacts. This book is hard for me to read without weeping because God who has all power is also love.

That's what the sign says above the choir rises. God is love and when love is rejected, when you love someone and they hurt you, that's a very, very deep pain. A stranger can't get to me.

Somebody on Fulton Street who I don't know or Livingston Street, you can't get to me. You can insult me, you could make me feel bad like for a second but it takes someone who you really love to do it to you. And God is now in the position of a jilted lover, a jilted husband, God is with his people Israel.

And he says, Hosea, you're gonna live through this and I want you to go through it with all the pain and all the tears so that you can really represent me in a proper way. I'm telling you, it wasn't easy to be a prophet back in those days, my goodness. So now what does God do? You would think that God would say, hey, you don't love me, then it's on you.

I'll find somebody else. I don't need you, I'm God. But this is the mysterious thing about God's heart and once he makes us his people, things aren't so easily just cut asunder.

So now God is going after the people who don't want him. They don't want him but he wants them. Hosea wants Gomer but Gomer says, hey, I'm running around but Hosea doesn't say, well then I'm done with you, I'm gonna divorce you, no, he goes after her.

And now God is going after his people and this is gonna explain to us a lot of things that happen in our life when our hearts begin to wander from the Lord. So God says, okay, what am I gonna do? Well, I'm gonna make her a desert. I'm gonna make her die of thirst.

I'm gonna set her in a dry, arid place and of course this is spiritual symbolism. When God sees our hearts drifting away from him instead of just letting us go, he loves us so much, he's not gonna let us go, he's gonna come after us. He's relentless.

Like a father who loves the daughter, someone who you love close, even if they hurt you, you don't say, well, then enough for you. You wanna be like that daughter? You wanna be like that spiritual daughter? Spiritual son, cousin, whatever, husband, wife? No, you don't do that when you love someone. You go after them.

Do you not go after them? Come on, here, do I get an amen? You go after them. Part of you wants to say, no, I don't need this heartache. But when you're in love with somebody, you have to go after them.

You have to, you're driven. So now God says, I'll make them a desert. So what does he do when he sees us drifting away? He turns us into a desert and everything becomes dry and hot and arid.

And no matter what you're doing and who's laughing around you, there's a dryness in your bones, in your soul. You're thirsty for something, but you don't even know what will quench your thirst. And it's all God.

God trying to get us back to him. God trying to get us to say, what am I doing? What is this, what am I going through this for? Why don't I go back to the one who really loves me? The one I was married to. So God says, I'll make them like a desert.

I'll let them live a parched life. And they'll be just troubled by this thirstiness in them. Haven't we all experienced that? I won't speak for any of you.

I'll speak for myself. It's called backsliding. We backslide away from the Lord.

Instead of being true in our love to the Lord, instead of keeping them at the center of our lives, we begin to run around. Not physically, necessarily, sexually, but loving in our love, in our emotions. We begin to have something else come between us and God, and God sees it happening, and it breaks his heart.

And instead of destroying us on the spot, he says, no, I'll make them like a desert. Some of you may be here today. You're like a desert inside.

Doesn't matter what raise you get on the job, what clothes somebody gives you, what promotion you get. It doesn't matter because that won't satisfy. Like the old song says, only Jesus can satisfy your soul.

Something in us, our souls are made for eternity. Look at me, everyone. Your soul has eternity in it, so nothing of time can satisfy it.

Your soul is made for invisible things. No career, nothing, no money, no house, nothing can satisfy the longing of your soul. It was made for God.

And when we go after these other lovers, like they were going after Bel, and Asherah, and Molech, and these other false gods, it broke God's heart, so he says, I'll make them like a desert. So they'll start saying, I can't take this anymore. Then later, God says, as I bring this to a close, God says, well, then I'm gonna hem them in with stickers, thornbriars, with thorns.

I'm gonna hem them in, and I'm gonna frustrate what they're trying to do. Imagine how much God loves us. God loves us so much that instead of just letting us go and say, fine, then go, you don't love me, you don't want me, after all I've done for you, then get out of here.

No, God says, no, then I'm gonna hem them in. I'm gonna frustrate them so that everywhere they turn to try to get where they wanna go, I'll hem them in and block them in, and they're gonna feel unfulfilled, they're gonna feel frustrated. Haven't we all gone through that at times? When we drift away from the Lord, we get this feeling of frustration, there's this churning inside of us, and everything we wanna do somehow seems blocked, and some of us foolishly blame it on Satan.

It's not Satan at all sometimes, it's God. God's saying, I wanna show them how hard it is when they leave me. I wanna show them what frustration there is when they get away from my plan for their life.

If you're here today and you're frustrated and you can't break loose, and there's just a hemmed in feeling, just you're bound by some situation, that's one of the ways God wants to get his lover's attention. He says, I love you so much, I'll make you like a desert, then what I'll do is if that doesn't work, I'll block you in, I'll hem you in. And what of course broke God's heart about this whole thing was that all the blessings he had given his people Israel, they didn't acknowledge that it came from him.

And they took what God had given them and they spent it on one of their lovers. Can you imagine? A guy gives something to a girl, and instead of spending it for herself, expression of his love, she takes the money and spends it on her boyfriend, another boyfriend. Is there anything deeper than that? Is there any hurt deeper than that? And God says through the prophet, all the things I supplied for them, they didn't acknowledge.

If you're here today and you're not acknowledging that God has given you everything, he wants you to know he has given you everything you have. Ladies and gentlemen, has he not given us everything we have? Can we put our hands together and say God has given us everything we have? Come on, God has given us everything we have. So God says, everything I gave them, they went and spent it on Baal.

But I'll do one more thing. Listen as I close, I'll just do one more thing. First, I'll make them as a desert.

If you're here today living in an inner desert, look, you can be at the beach swimming, but you can be in a desert inside. Your whole life is inside. Where you are outside has nothing to do with peace and joy.

You could be in the lap of luxury and be a pauper inside. And you could be just about in a shelter and full of joy and peace if God is doing something new in your life. I'll make them then like a desert.

I'll make them, I'll block them in, I'll hem them in. Oh, have I gone through that in my life. In a moment of discouragement a lot of years ago, I couldn't take the ministry.

And I really wasn't seeking the Lord and loving him like I should. Sometimes the work becomes more important than him. That's a danger for preachers.

The work and sermon preaching and doing it actually becomes a wedge between your heart and God. It's odd, but it can happen. And I got dry, so dry that I said, I'm gonna quit the ministry.

I never told my wife. And I made two plans, two phone calls in the space of a couple months that I could exit because it was so frustrating. It was just so hard, so discouraging what the situation we inherited and that little building that we came to on Atlantic Avenue with a handful of people, which was then the Brooklyn Tabernacle.

Both times the appointments I had set were canceled on me. Not me, I didn't have the sense. I was too discouraged.

How many have ever been in a place where you were going to go do something really stupid and God blocked you? Anybody here ever have that? Come on, lift your hand high and say, I'm not the only person here that he works with that way. He blocked it twice, Jason, if you would come. He blocked it twice.

Hemmed me in, hemmed me in. That's why I can't stand up here proud of anything because I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for God. I would have exited.

How about the same for you? Can we all put our hands together? One last thing. God says, okay, if it really gets extreme, I'm gonna draw them into a wilderness. A howling, dangerous wilderness full of trouble.

I will draw them into a wilderness full of trouble. The Valley of Acre, the Valley of Trouble. Oh boy, does God know how to get our attention.

A lot of us forget God when the sun is shining, right? But then you have a stormy day and the lightning starts to crash above you and you start to say, help me, Jesus, real quick. Am I right? God says, because of my love. Listen to this.

This is the most poignant part to me of the whole entire Old Testament. There are parts of Isaiah and certainly the Psalms where God reveals his heart in a beautiful way, but I find nothing more poignant than this. I will draw them into the wilderness.

And then the natural conclusion would be, I will draw them into the wilderness because they have all these other boyfriends and they have all these other lovers and they're fornicating spiritually left and right. I will draw them into the wilderness and I will slam them dead. I will give them a beat down that they will never forget as long as they live.

But here's what God says. I will draw them into the Valley of Acre with trouble all over and I will speak tenderly to them. And I will say, I'm still here.

Don't you love me? I love you. And I will make the Valley of Acre a door of hope that in the trouble, they will open that door and I'm waiting there with my arms wide open and I'll bring them back to me. No wonder, no wonder the psalmist says, in the day of trouble, I called upon the Lord.

Haven't a lot of us forgotten to call on God when things were good? The very blessings that he gave us became a curse. He took us, I see this with couples over the years and with people, when they're in trouble, they don't have two nickels to rub together. Oh, they love God, they hold on to God, they're in the prayer meeting, they just wanna do anything for God and then God blesses them and rewards them and

the very blessing draws them away from God.

They're more in love with their sofa in the living room than they are the word of God. Is that potentially for all of us? The very blessings he gives us draws us away from the one who gave the blessings. But I will draw them into the wilderness and I will use the valley of acor, trouble, as a door of hope and I will say tender words to them.

At the worst I've ever been and I'm no bargain, ask my wife, ask the people who work with me, I'm no bargain, I've never had God yell at me once. You know what breaks me about him? Is he still keeps speaking tenderly to me. When I wanna shoot myself, he keeps saying, I love you, get up, we're gonna do this.

Come on, haven't you ever heard those words in your own life? He doesn't bury us like people would. So that's my sermon. Is there anybody here today, maybe it fits.

I've had it fit many times in my life. He's using the desert inside you to try to draw you back to him. Your own family can come between you and God.

Your job can come between you and God. Your career, your education, making money, your girlfriend, your boyfriend, your husband, your wife can come between you and God and God says, I love you so much, I gotta be the number one in your life because you're number one to me. I gave my own son for you.

After giving my own son, you're gonna run around with other boyfriends? And I gave my son for you? You could see how this would affect God. And God is an emotional being. He's God, but he has emotions, he loves, he hates, his heart is broken.

Oh, Jerusalem, Jesus cried. Oh, Jerusalem, before they crucified him there. Oh, Jerusalem, how many times I would have gathered you, but you wouldn't come to me.

And he didn't say, good for you, they're gonna punish you in about 40 years, the Romans are gonna surround you, they're gonna wipe you out, but good for you. Good for you, you're gonna crucify me, huh? Well, wait till it comes to be your turn. Every dog has their day, and bow, wow, wow to you.

Here comes your day. No. What did he say? He wept, he wept, like he's weeping over some of you here and some of us here, he's weeping over you now because where you're drifting is to nowheresville.

You might come to church on Sunday, but it's not about church on Sunday. There's no church on Sunday religion anywhere in the Bible. It's a walk with the Lord every day, it's loving him with all our heart.

Can we say amen, treasuring him? Every eye closed, every eye closed. Lord, we love you. Everything we have comes from you.

When we drift away from you, we are stupid. We are blind, we are proud. We're deceived.

No one could be a better boyfriend than you. No one could be a better husband than you. Search our hearts, Lord, because the heart is deceitful and wicked.

We hear you loud and clear today. For those of us living in an inner desert, Lord, help us to respond by reaching out to you and starting over again, reaffirming our love and our trust in you. For those who are

hemmed in and blocked and everything's frustrated and there's no doors open, it's you seeing our real need.

We don't need more money, we need you, because without you, more money means nothing, nada. For those of us who you permitted to come into the valley of trouble, thank you for making it a door of hope for us today. That in that trouble, we realize, where are my boyfriend, where are those idols, where are those things that I thought so important? They can't help me now.

I know there's only one who can help me. And we run back to you. Thank you for speaking tenderly to us, not yelling at us.

I know your word has found a good place in our hearts today, Lord. Thank you for Hosea. Thank you for the image of Hosea and Gomer.

Lord, thank you for loving us the way you do. Such love, such love. When we didn't even love ourselves, you love us.

We really love you today. We really love you today. Te amo, Señor.

Te amo mucho, Señor. We love you. Everyone, just lift your hands up and tell them out loud, I love you, Lord.

Just come on, everyone in the building. Come on, if you tell your wife or your boyfriend you love him, tell God, I love you, God, today. I love you.

We love you, Lord. They might curse you outside this building, but in this building, we love you, Lord. We that are gathered here, we love you, Lord.

We love you, Lord. We love you. We love you.

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