

What Type of Relationship Do You Have With the Lord?

by Zac Poonen

God teaches people through suffering, and He wants to have a loving relationship with us as our Husband, not just our Master.

Scripture: Hosea 2:7-8, Hosea 2:14, Hosea 2:16, Hosea 2:20, Hosea 3:2, 2 Corinthians 1:4

Topics: "Suffering And Ministry", "Godly Relationships"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the necessity of undergoing deep personal suffering to effectively minister for God, emphasizing that the methods of teaching vary for each individual. Using examples from Hosea, Jeremiah, and Paul, he highlights the principle that suffering is essential for a fruitful ministry. Through the story of Hosea and his unfaithful wife, Gomer, he illustrates how God pursues His people despite their unfaithfulness, transforming judgment into hope and offering a loving relationship akin to a husband and wife.

Transcript

Hosea teaches us that the only way to effectively minister is by going through deep suffering in one's personal life. God does this by different methods for different people. He does not have a standard syllabus for all of God's children. He taught Hosea through a difficult wife, but He taught Jeremiah without a wife, by putting him in deep pits. And He taught Paul without a wife too. So the procedure is not the same for everyone. But the principle remains the same: You have to suffer if you want to have a ministry from God. Paul said, "I have gone through many trials - and the strength I received from God in that suffering is what I can now pass on to other people" (2 Cor.1:4). Without such experiences, we will only pass on dead knowledge to people.

Hosea married Gomer, but some of her children were born through others. Her first son was Hosea's. The next two were perhaps not his. The names of those children indicated how God was punishing His people. God says, "This is the way of Israel; when she runs after her lovers she won't be able to catch up with them. She will search for them but won't find them. And then she will say, 'I might as well return to my husband because I was better off with him than I am now' " (Hos. 2:7). Hosea's wife went away from him in the same way that Israel went away from God. But when Israel was in trouble, she sought God again. Most people seek God only when they are in trouble. When they find that money doesn't solve their

problems and that the people of the world let them down, then they turn back to God and seek His help. And God helps them. So God told Hosea, "Take your wife back even when she returns to you only as a last resort."

The Lord said, "She does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine and the oil, and lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal" (Hos. 2:8). This verse can apply to us too. Do you realise that everything you have has come from God? Do you realise that your health is God's gift? The money you have is God's gift. The intelligence you have is God's gift. Israel used their gold and silver to make idols to Baal. Do you use what God has given you for this world and its pleasures?

Remember the parable of the prodigal son. He took money from his father, and he didn't use it for his father's business. He spent it all on himself. This is the mark of God's backslidden people. They get so many gifts from God, and what do they do with it? They think, "This body is mine. I can use it as I like. This intelligence is mine. I must use it as much as possible for my own profit. This money is mine. I earned it all myself. I can use it as I like" That is what it means to take the gold and silver that God gives us and to make an idol for Baal through them. God says, "They do not realise that everything they have is what I gave them." How is it with you? If you recognise that everything is God's, then you will give it all back to Him and say, "Lord, You gave me all these gifts and I want to use them all for your kingdom."

But in spite of Israel being so unfaithful, the Lord says, "I will win her back. I will lead her into the desert. I will make things dry and barren in her life. And when everything is dry and barren she will turn to Me. Then I will speak tenderly to her there" (Hos. 2:14). No husband will speak so tenderly to someone who has been so totally unfaithful to him. But the Lord says, "I will speak tenderly and I will continue to give her gifts. I will return her vineyards to her. I will transform the valley of Achor into a gateway of hope" (Hos. 2:15). Achor was the place where Achan had been put to death for his sin of stealing what was the Lord's in Jericho (Josh.7). It was a place of judgment for sin. And now the Lord says, "I am going to make the place of judgment a door of hope for you. Even though you have failed, and judgment and chastening have come upon you because of that, yet now because you have confessed your sin, I will open a door of hope for you in this very place so that something beautiful will come forth from your life in the coming days."

That is a wonderful message for those who have backslidden and gone away from God, and for those who have wasted many years of their life. Many are discouraged because they have wasted so many years of their life and done so many wrong things. They wish they had known these truths when they were younger. You have been chastened. You have suffered. Now the Lord says to you, "Don't get discouraged. I will make the valley of Achor a gateway of hope for you."

Then the Lord goes on to say "In that coming day, you will call Me, 'My Husband' and not 'My Master'" (Hos. 2:16). In the old covenant they could not know the type of relationship that we can have with the Lord today as husband and wife. This relationship is what the Holy Spirit brings into our lives. Just as Abraham's servant brought Rebecca to Isaac, the Holy Spirit brings us to Jesus so that we can be married to Him. In the Old Testament they knew Him as Master. Now He says, "You won't call Me 'Master' any more. You will call Me 'Husband.'"

What type of relationship do you have with the Lord? Do you know that today He does not want to be your Master primarily, but your Husband. For many people their service for the Lord is boring and heavy because it is like a servant serving his master. It is like working for a difficult boss just for the sake of the

salary. But a wife does not serve her husband for a salary. A boss will not share his personal wealth with his employee, but a husband does. A husband even takes care of his wife. But the wife doesn't serve her husband for all that. She serves him out of love. The Lord says, "Even if you are unfaithful, I will be faithful to you and make you Mine" (Hos. 2:20). See the tremendous love of God here pursuing relentlessly after someone who has gone away from Him. That is how the Lord cares for each of us.

Hosea's wife sold herself as a slave. But Hosea "bought her back for fifteen pieces of silver and five bushels of barley and a measure of wine"(Hos. 3:2) and told her, "You must live in my house for many days and stop your prostitution."

This is a picture of God's love.

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