

group Bible Study – January 16, 2008

Read Hosea Chapter 2

Reflection: Bob Zurinsky, Center for Worship, bob@spu.edu

Let me give you a little glimpse into the inner life of the group staff.

We are a team of 10 friends. We meet together most of the days of the week, for one reason or another. We read scripture together, and we listen to freaky music. We explore the complexities of theology, and we eat at Taco Bell. We help each other plan weddings. We help each other play pranks on each other (mostly me). We go to church together. We get the flu from each other (and we blame Patrick for that).

And after some time with all of the above, we can cry together. We can confess the longings of our heart. We reveal our insecurities and sadness and confusion and hope, tentatively at first. But then boldly, because we know that we are safe. And we are alive. And we realize that we're all going through this thing together.

These nine friends have taught me a lot this year; they have shaped my very soul. And, remarkably, their openness has helped me better understand the horrible beauty of the book of Hosea.

If you read chapter two you are confronted with absolute passion from the maker of the universe. This is no cold God. This God is burning inside. Burning with anger, with love, with hope. But God is burning for one reason: the people. The relationship. The risk and betrayal. Vulnerability and rejection.

In Exodus, we learned about God's purpose for forming a people, and the special mission they were given to serve as God's blessing for the whole world. But now in Hosea we're taking this thing to a whole new level. God has given us a mission—and also his very soul. God has laid himself open to pain. Because God has loved and has desired love. Like a lover. Like a husband.

This year as I have journeyed through life with members of the group staff, as I've read Hosea, I've begun to pray differently. I go to a place all alone and I open up my heart and my mouth. And I pour out. And I confess. And I beg for the Spirit of God to fill new corners of my being. And I know that I am heard, because the Spirit is begging me too.

May our journey into Hosea awaken a new honesty and vulnerability and pain and passion in us, and may it spill over into every relationship we find ourselves in. Because that is what it means to be alive.

Discussion Questions (for individuals or small groups):

- Do you remember our study of Exodus last quarter? It was the beginning of God's nation. And it was in this book that we discovered the covenant kind of relationship that was formed between God and the people. Now we're in Hosea, and this relationship is described in a shocking and very different way. Compare and contrast: what did we learn about God's heart and mission for the people in Exodus, and what do we learn in Hosea, 500 years later?
- This is a very emotional book. How would you describe God's emotions based on the images we find in chapter two? In what specific life situations have you felt similar emotions?
- It might be the case that we cannot grasp the kind of relationship God desires to have with us until we learn how to do relationships in general. Spend some time this week pondering the status of the various relationships in your life. What masks do you wear? What barriers do you sense between yourself and other? What would it look like to become truly vulnerable with another person? Why do we all fear this kind of honesty so much?