

HOSEA

Chapters Eleven through Fourteen

Introduction

One of the great joys of parenthood is watching your children learning to walk. They're shaky at first; they stumble and stumble; but eventually they take their monumental "first step."

Once they can walk, they begin to take off. Suddenly things get very interesting. The freedom of walking takes them in many new directions – *and can get them into a lot of trouble*. You begin to wish they were still crawling!

God is a Father teaching His sons and daughters to walk:

Hosea 11:1 "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son..."

Hosea 11:3 "... I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms..."

"Walking" becomes an illustration of your relationship with God. At the very end of Hosea you read,

Hosea 14:9 *Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.*

God's sons and daughters can get into a lot of trouble as they walk. These chapters in Hosea describe in some detail the stumbling of God's people in their walk.

What does God do as a Father when His children stumble? He does two things: #1 Your Father Is There To Lift You Up Stumble After Stumble, and #2 Your Father Is There To Lavish His Love Upon You Step By Step.

#1 Your Father Is There To Lift You Up
Stumble After Stumble
(Chapters 11,12 & 13)

The Jews God was addressing in the northern kingdom of Israel were stumbling. When His people stumble, God is still there as Father to lift them up.

Hosea 11:1 “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.

Hosea 11:2 As they called them, so they went from them; they sacrificed to the Baals, and burned incense to carved images.

Hosea 11:3 “I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them.

Hosea 11:4 I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped *and* fed them.”

God delivered the Jews from the yoke of slavery in Egypt. He wanted to be as a Father to them, teaching them to walk **and** walking with them in love. But His children used their freedom to go after “the Baals and... carved images.” Their Father would therefore need to **discipline** them.

Reading these chapters is like listening to a father who has come home to find that he needs to discipline his child. He wants to come home and enjoy his kid; but there is a problem, a transgression, that cannot be ignored. So he sends the child to his or her room and then comes in with the paddle. There he will chasten and correct his child with compassion.

God’s discipline of Israel involves *chastening*, *correction*, and *compassion*. The remaining verses of chapter eleven are a good example of this process.

The Father chastens His children:

Hosea 11:5 “He shall not return to the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to repent.

Hosea 11:6 And the sword shall slash in his cities, devour his districts, and consume *them*, because of their own counsels.

God has decided to spank them. In their case, He would allow the Assyrians to carry them away captive. It would be severe – a severe mercy.

God corrects His children:

Hosea 11:7 “My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt *Him*.”

God gives a clear and concise statement of why He is going to swat them.

God's compassion for His children:

Hosea 11:8 "How can I give you up, Ephraim? *How* can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? *How* can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred.

Hosea 11:9 I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I *am* God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst; and I will not come with terror."

Admah and Zeboiim are cities that were destroyed when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. God is explaining to Israel, here called "Ephraim" after the largest tribe in the northern kingdom, that He loves them. He is disciplining them because He loves them!

The goal of discipline was to restore their relationship:

Hosea 11:10 "They shall walk after the LORD. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, then *His* sons shall come trembling from the west;

Hosea 11:11 They shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses," says the LORD."

These verses look forward to the restoration of Israel in the Last Days of human history. God will be like a "lion" Who walks ahead of its cubs to protect them. God will deliver them through the "trembling" of the Great Tribulation. They will "dwell in their houses" means that God's discipline will restore their walk with Him and they will once again enjoy having Him as their Father.

The last verse of chapter eleven belongs more thematically with chapter twelve. Chapters twelve and thirteen are additional pictures of God sitting as a Father with His children and explaining the disciplinary process. The verses don't always follow this neat order of *chastening, correction, and compassion*.... But then, disciplining children is not always so neat and orderly. Those elements, though, should always be there.

Hosea 11:12 "Ephraim has encircled Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah still walks with God, even with the Holy One *who is* faithful."

"Ephraim" is the northern kingdom of Israel; "Judah" is the southern kingdom. God deals with them as two different children. It's as if

Ephraim is complaining that Judah isn't getting spanked! Every parent with more than one child knows the drill.

Hosea 12:1 "Ephraim feeds on the wind, and pursues the east wind; he daily increases lies and desolation. Also they make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried to Egypt.
Hosea 12:2 "The LORD also *brings* a charge against Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his deeds He will recompense him."

God carefully explains to Ephraim why he is being disciplined. He lets Ephraim know that He is not showing any favoritism to Judah. Sound familiar to you parents?

God reminds Ephraim of His past dealings to show His consistency:

Hosea 12:3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and in his strength he struggled with God.
Hosea 12:4 Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him *in* Bethel, and there He spoke to us –
Hosea 12:5 That is, the LORD God of hosts. The LORD *is* His memorable name.

This is a summary of God's dealings with Jacob. Jacob had a deceitful nature from birth. It continued throughout his life, getting him into trouble, until God disciplined Him. In the famous incident where he wrestled with God, Jacob was finally humbled. Though God seemed to let Jacob get away with things, He exercised discipline all along and eventually Jacob was humbled to walk with the Lord. The application is verse six:

Hosea 12:6 So you, by *the help* of your God, return; observe mercy and justice, and wait on your God continually."

God is a consistent Father. Worry about yourself and not your brother!

Hosea 12:7 "A cunning Canaanite! Deceitful scales *are* in his hand; he loves to oppress.
Hosea 12:8 And Ephraim said, 'Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; *in* all my labors they shall find in me no iniquity that *is* sin.'"

God calls Ephraim "a cunning Canaanite." Another translation is "a merchantman." This is perhaps the beginning of the ethnic stereotype that Jews are cunning business people. They were trusting in wealth and prosperity and willing to compromise honesty to acquire it. They even defended their practices.

Hosea 12:9 “But I *am* the LORD your God, ever since the land of Egypt; I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast.

Hosea 12:10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets.”

God must punish them; but He would restore them. “Dwell in tents” refers to the Feast of Tabernacles. God will return and restore them to their feasts. It is promised in the “symbols” of their prophets.

Hosea 12:11 “Though Gilead *has* idols - surely they are vanity - though they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal, indeed their altars *shall be* heaps in the furrows of the field.”

“Gilead” and “Gilgal” were places Ephraim was worshipping idols. God must chasten them. But His discipline is always corrective and compassionate. God gives two more historical examples of His care for the Jews:

Hosea 12:12 “Jacob fled to the country of Syria; Israel served for a spouse, and for a wife he tended *sheep*.

Hosea 12:13 By a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was preserved.”

Even though Jacob had deceived his father and brother and was forced to flee, God was with him. Later the family God granted Jacob was enslaved by Egypt – but God delivered them. This is God saying to Ephraim, “The spanking is for your own good!”

Hosea 12:14 “Ephraim provoked *Him* to anger most bitterly; therefore his Lord will leave the guilt of his bloodshed upon him, and return his reproach upon him.”

They were guilty of sin. God could not overlook it, but He would work to restore them.

Hosea 13:1 “When Ephraim spoke, trembling, he exalted *himself* in Israel; but when he offended through Baal *worship*, he died.

Hosea 13:2 Now they sin more and more, and have made for themselves molded images, idols of their silver, according to their skill; all of it *is* the work of craftsmen. They say of them, “Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!”

Hosea 13:3 Therefore they shall be like the morning cloud and like the early dew that passes away, like chaff blown off from a threshing floor and like smoke from a chimney.”

As a tribe in the northern kingdom, Ephraim was very powerful and exalted. They also were first in idol worship. “Kiss the calves” indicates a practice of kissing their idols in addition to offering them gifts. Verse three presents four stunning pictures of how God’s discipline would affect them.

Hosea 13:4 "Yet I *am* the LORD your God ever since the land of Egypt, and you shall know no God but Me; for *there is* no savior besides Me.
Hosea 13:5 I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.
Hosea 13:6 When they had pasture, they were filled; they were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore they forgot Me.
Hosea 13:7 "So I will be to them like a lion; like a leopard by the road I will lurk;
Hosea 13:8 I will meet them like a bear deprived of *her cubs*; I will tear open their rib cage, and there I will devour them like a lion. The wild beast shall tear them.
Hosea 13:9 "O Israel, you are destroyed, but your help *is* from Me."

God led them out from Egypt and cared for them in the wilderness. They pastured in the Promised Land. When they sinned, God disciplined them. He had restored them; but now Ephraim was again sinning. God would prove consistent in discipline.

Hosea 13:10 "I will be your King; where *is any other*, that he may save you in all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'?"
Hosea 13:11 I gave you a king in My anger, and took *him* away in My wrath."

At the time Hosea was recording this prophecy Israel was seeking to *ally* with foreign kings rather than to *rely* on the Lord. God reminds them of a time in the past when their ancestors asked for a king and God gave them Saul. It was a disaster! God wanted to be their king. They didn't need to be like the other nations.

Does this sound familiar to you parents? "All my friends are doing it... Or going there..." Your kids so much want to be like others! Hold fast; keep steady.

Hosea 13:12 "The iniquity of Ephraim *is* bound up; his sin *is* stored up.
Hosea 13:13 The sorrows of a woman in childbirth shall come upon him. He *is* an unwise son, for he should not stay long where children are born."

Ephraim's sins being "stored up" literally means *kept on record*. God often delays His discipline; but His delays are deliberate. Should you delay your discipline? Only if you want more trouble than you can handle!

Ephraim is compared to a baby who will not be born despite the mother's strenuous effort. It is a serious condition requiring intervention for the good of both mother and child.

Hosea 13:14 "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes."

This sounds hopeful, but it should read, “Shall I ransom them... Shall I redeem them...?” The answer is “No,” because they needed discipline. God describes the discipline:

Hosea 13:15 Though he is fruitful among *his* brethren, an east wind shall come; the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness. Then his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up. He shall plunder the treasury of every desirable prize.

Hosea 13:16 Samaria is held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God. They shall fall by the sword, Their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child ripped open.”

Pretty severe discipline! It sounds abusive. Think of it this way: Sometimes parents must go the distance and give their kids over to their sin. They kick them out; and “out” is a terrible place to be. You get torn-up and abused “out” there, when you could be loved and cared for at home.

God is a Father, and He’s a good one! Stumble after stumble, He is there to lift you up. He does it through discipline - chastening, correcting, but always with compassion and caring. Wouldn’t it be better to simply walk with Him?

It sure would! And that is what you learn as this remarkable book ends.

#2 Your Father Is There To Lavish His Love Upon You Step By Step (Chapter 14)

You stumble; God is there to lift you up. He does it through discipline. You should yield to His discipline:

Hosea 14:1 O Israel, return to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity;

Hosea 14:2 Take words with you, and return to the LORD. Say to Him, “Take away all iniquity; receive *us* graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.

Hosea 14:3 Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride on horses, nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, ‘*You are our gods.*’ For in You the fatherless finds mercy.”

This is Hosea speaking, urging his people to respond. They should *recognize* their sin, *repent* of it, and *return* to the Lord. This is the ideal response to loving parental discipline.

The verses that follow look beyond our own time to Israel’s future restoration in their Promised Land.

Hosea 14:4 "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him.

Hosea 14:5 I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall grow like the lily, and lengthen his roots like Lebanon.

Hosea 14:6 His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon."

The "lily," the cedar of "Lebanon," and the "olive tree" describe Israel's future. The lily is a picture of delicate beauty; the cedar, of strength and stability. The cedar was also a picture of blessing others as its fragrance was much desired. The olive tree is a picture of usefulness and fruitfulness. In fact, there are many more things in each of the pictures. Together they are a wonderful promise of restoration.

Hosea 14:7 Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall be revived *like* grain, and grow like a vine. Their scent *shall be* like the wine of Lebanon.

Hosea 14:8 "Ephraim *shall say*, 'What have I to do anymore with idols?' I have heard and observed him. I *am* like a green cypress tree; your fruit is found in Me."

"Dwell under His shadow" means under Israel's shadow! It's a prophecy that God will restore Israel to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. They will lead the nations in the worship of God. They will find at last true fruitfulness in the Lord their God.

Hosea 14:9 Who *is* wise? Let him understand these things. Who *is* prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD *are* right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.

This verse could be in the Proverbs. It sounds just like the many verses that urge the son (or daughter) to *hear* and *heed* the wisdom of their father. If you do, it will go well with you; if you don't, you will stumble and fall. Some of those falls are pretty disastrous, pretty devastating.

We've pursued two levels of application in these chapters. God is your heavenly Father, and you are earthly parents to your children. You can't always make direct comparisons between God's dealings with you and your dealings with your kids. For example, as I mentioned earlier, God sometimes waits a long time before administering His discipline on men and nations. You should **not** wait to administer discipline to your children.

Let these verse encourage you in both areas:

1. In your walk with the Lord, you will stumble and fall. God is there to stumble after stumble to lift you up.
2. In your work for the Lord as a parent, your kids will stumble and fall. Lift them up. Be there to chasten and correct them with compassion.

Conclusion

You may have recognized verse one of chapter eleven as the verse quoted by Matthew and applied to Jesus Christ. As a baby He was taken down to the safety of Egypt, but the time came when God called Him out of the place of safety back to the place of danger within the land. He moved into the arena of life where He was to demonstrate the love of God by dying upon the cross - to furnish a redemption that man might have a righteous basis on which his sins could be forgiven. He identified with His people; He identified with humanity; He identified with you and me. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

God said He drew Israel with "bands of love." God will not force you. The only band He will put on you is the band of love. He says, "I won't bridle you, I won't push you, the only appeal I make to you is that I love you." My friend, that is the appeal that God makes to you and to me today. He moved heaven and hell to get to the door of your heart, but He stopped there and politely knocks on the door and says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock ..." (Revelation 3:20). That is where He is - He has never crashed the door; He is not going to push Himself in. You will have to respond to His love.