

Dr. John Oswalt, Hosea, Session 3, Hosea 4

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Hosea, Session 3, Hosea 4, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. John Oswalt's lecture analyzes Hosea 4, exploring the prophet's message regarding Israel's infidelity to God. **Oswalt highlights textual challenges** in Hosea, comparing Hebrew and Septuagint versions, and discusses the implications of Israel's lack of knowledge, faithfulness, and hesed (loving devotion). He connects this spiritual failure to ethical consequences affecting both individuals and society. **The lecture emphasizes the priestly role** in guiding the people toward God, contrasting genuine worship with ritualistic practices. Finally, **Oswalt applies Hosea's message to contemporary life**, examining the concept of a "spirit of prostitution" and its manifestation in modern society.

**2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Oswalt, Hosea, Session 3 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →
Minor Prophets → Hosea).**



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3. Oswalt, Hosea, Session 3, Hosea 4

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Hosea, Session 3, Hosea 4:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Hosea 4

I. Introduction and Context

- **Background on Dr. Oswalt & BiblicalTraining.org:** Dr. Oswalt is recording lectures for BiblicalTraining.org, an organization aiming to provide free biblical seminary education globally. This context emphasizes a commitment to accessible and in-depth biblical teaching.
- **Historical Setting of Hosea's Prophecies:** Hosea's prophecies are situated between roughly 755 BC and 715 BC, a period of significant turmoil in Israel.
- Initially, under Jeroboam II, Israel enjoyed prosperity, but this was followed by political instability, marked by numerous short-lived dynasties and violence.
- Assyria rose to power, conquering much of Israel's territory, culminating in the fall of Samaria in 722 BC and the exile of many Israelites.
- This period of crisis in the Northern Kingdom is the backdrop for Hosea's messages, with the potential for Judah to face a similar fate.
- **Central Metaphor:** The book of Hosea uses the metaphor of Yahweh as a husband and Israel as an unfaithful wife (Gomer) to illustrate God's covenantal love and Israel's infidelity. Even in the face of Israel's sin, God affirms his commitment, stating, *"I'm going to buy you back" and "I'm going to take you into the desert and woo you there."*

II. Textual Issues and Divisions of Hosea

- **Textual Challenges:** Dr. Oswalt highlights the textual difficulties in Hosea, where the traditional Hebrew text may be flawed. He notes that the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) often provides a superior reading.
- The Bible was in flux in 586 BC during the fall of Jerusalem; and it appears there were three groups of biblical texts: Palestinian texts, Egyptian texts, and Babylonian texts. The Babylonian texts are generally the most reliable, but Hosea and Samuel are an exception where the Septuagint is more accurate.

- **Divisions of Hosea (4-14):** Dr. Oswalt identifies three divisions:
 1. Chapters 4-6: Focused on the problem – *“No knowledge of God, no hesed for God, no faithfulness to God”*.
 2. Chapters 6-11: God's declaration that *“I can't give you up”*.
 3. Chapters 12-14: God's promise of restoration.

III. Hosea 4: Key Themes and Concepts

- **The Problem: Absence of Truth, Hesed, and Knowledge of God (v. 1): Truth (Emunah):** Not just factual, but relational truth—dependability, being true to one's promises and covenant. *“So, God's truth is not, first of all, factual. His truth is, first of all, you can depend on Him to the end of everything. He's true.”*
- **Hesed:** Passionate, undying devotion of a superior to an inferior, especially when undeserved. This is exemplified in the story of Boaz and Ruth. It is the quality where *“you are doing something for someone they do not deserve.”*
- **Knowledge of God:** Not merely intellectual understanding, but intimate, personal relationship with Him. It includes surrender to God's love and being willing to trust His character. As Oswalt states, *“They had no personal relationship with him. Why not? They never followed the commandments.”*
- **Cause and Effect: Ethical Breakdown (v. 2):** The absence of truth, hesed, and knowledge of God leads directly to ethical and societal decay: *“cursing, lying, murder, stealing, or bloodshed.”* This illustrates the direct connection between one's relationship with God and their behavior towards others.
- Oswalt makes the point that *“if indeed, indeed, I know the God who lays down his life for others, that's going to change how I treat you. And if it doesn't change, then I don't know God.”* He notes that religion and ethics are not separate spheres.
- **Consequences: Creation Suffers (v. 3):** Due to the lack of a relationship with God, not just society but creation itself suffers: *“The land mourns. The beasts of the field. The birds of the heaven. Even the fish of the sea.”* Oswalt quotes his father saying *“it's not our land. It's God's land, and we're holding it in trust. And you better leave it better when you leave than you found it.”*
- **The Priests' Failure (v. 4-10):** The primary problem is rooted in the failings of the priests, who are meant to be windows to God.

- The priest's responsibilities are two-fold: sacrifice (providing access to God's presence) and teaching (revealing God's character).
- Oswalt points out how the priests have become focused on profit and have a vested interest in the people's sin.
- Oswalt compares the role of disciple making to that of the priests' teaching role, that it is not just telling the truth, but inculcating it so that it becomes part of the student's way of thinking. He shares the story of Jesus' method of discipleship with the twelve, three, and one as a model.
- **Ritualism and Lack of Understanding (v. 10-11):** The people are caught up in empty rituals, such as New Year's festivals with excessive drinking and sexual immorality (which are meant to ensure the sun and harvests return). They have forsaken the Lord in order to *"cherish whoredom, wine, and new wine which takes away the understanding."* People would use ritual to control the deities, and when it didn't work, they would rather embrace that than simply trusting God.
- **A Spirit of Prostitution (v. 11):** The "spirit of prostitution" is a metaphor for their unfaithfulness. It is about using and not knowing or being in a relationship with God.
- It is manifested in a lack of boundaries, no commitment, no faithfulness, no truth, no thankfulness, using others, and seeking to control and manipulate God.
- **Discipleship Begins at Home (v. 12 & Psalm 78):** Oswalt reminds listeners that discipleship begins at home, quoting Deuteronomy and Psalm 78. Parents are to teach their children to know God and to not follow the unfaithful ways of their ancestors. He comments that *"Your children are your first disciples."*
- **Corrupt Worship Practices: Gilgal and Bethel (v. 12-15):** The lecture discusses the significance of Gilgal and Bethel, both important locations in Israelite history, and how they have been corrupted by idolatry.
- Gilgal: A place of victory and renewal after the conquest, where the Israelites came back to regroup and weep after losses.
- Bethel: The place where Jacob first met God, but it has now become a place of idolatry with the golden calf.
- Oswalt notes that Bethel has become "Beth-Avon" or "the house of wrong".

- He warns against worshiping a place, pointing out that God is not limited to a physical space (e.g., Wilmore). He urges people to *“make a temple in your heart”*.

IV. Call to Action

- **Surrender and Trust:** Oswalt emphasizes the need for believers to surrender to God, allow Him to love them, and trust that He has their best interests at heart. This involves a shift from using God to knowing Him intimately.
- **Faithfulness:** The lecture calls for faithfulness in all relationships, beginning with God. He connects the quality of relationships to having the character and nature of God poured into people.
- **Rejection of Prostitution Spirit:** Dr. Oswalt challenges listeners to examine their hearts for a "spirit of prostitution," marked by a lack of faithfulness, boundaries, commitment, and thankfulness. He encourages a shift to a spirit of faithfulness.

V. Conclusion

Dr. Oswalt's lecture on Hosea 4 highlights the devastating consequences of a broken relationship with God, which manifests in societal decay, ethical violations, and a corrupted understanding of worship. The solution is not empty ritualism but a genuine relationship with God marked by truth, hesed, knowledge, trust, and surrender. He calls believers to recognize their roles as priests to others, being windows to God's character, and faithful disciples within the world. He ends the lecture with a prayer, asking that none have a spirit of prostitution, but instead have a spirit of faithfulness.

This briefing document provides a comprehensive overview of the main points covered by Dr. Oswalt, incorporating direct quotes and key concepts to illustrate the depth of his analysis.

4. Briefing Document, Oswalt, Hosea, Session 3, Hosea 4

Hosea Session 3 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. What time period does Oswalt suggest the prophecies of Hosea were given? Why was this time period significant in the history of Israel?
2. According to Oswalt, what is the central metaphor used in the first three chapters of Hosea and what does it illustrate?
3. What textual issue does Oswalt raise in regards to Hosea and how does the Septuagint play a role in understanding this issue?
4. What three divisions of the text does Oswalt suggest for chapters 4 through 14 of Hosea and what theme does each division focus on?
5. What are the three things that are missing from the relationship between the people of Israel and God in Hosea 4:1?
6. How does Oswalt define the Hebrew word *hesed*?
7. How does Oswalt connect the lack of "knowing God" with the ethical problems outlined in Hosea 4:2?
8. According to Oswalt, what were the two key responsibilities of priests in ancient Israel?
9. How does Oswalt relate the concept of the "priesthood of all believers" to the issues addressed in Hosea?
10. What is the significance of Gilgal and Bethel, and what does Hosea say about going to these places for worship?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Oswalt suggests the prophecies of Hosea were given roughly between 755 BC and 715 BC. This time period is significant because it was a time of great political instability in Israel, marked by frequent changes in leadership, territorial losses to Assyria, and ultimately the fall of Samaria.

2. The central metaphor is that Yahweh is the husband, and Israel is Gomer, the prostitute wife. This illustrates God's unwavering love for Israel despite their unfaithfulness and infidelity, as well as His promise to restore them.
3. Oswalt notes that the book of Hosea has many textual difficulties, where the Hebrew text seems wrong. He suggests that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, often has a better and more accurate reading of certain passages, suggesting the Septuagint was translated from more accurate source material.
4. Oswalt divides the text into three sections: 4 through 6, focusing on a lack of knowledge of God, hesed for God, and faithfulness; 6 through 11, where God proclaims that He cannot give up on His people, despite their behavior; and 12 through 14, which concludes with God's promise of restoration.
5. The three things missing from the relationship between the people of Israel and God are truth, hesed, and knowledge of God, or an intimate, personal relationship with Him, not just knowledge about Him.
6. Oswalt defines *hesed* as the passionate, undying devotion of a superior to an inferior, especially when that devotion is undeserved. He emphasizes that this love is not a mere feeling but a covenantal commitment to act in the best interests of the recipient, as demonstrated by Boaz toward Ruth.
7. Oswalt connects the lack of "knowing God" (an intimate, personal relationship with Him) with the ethical problems outlined in Hosea 4:2 by arguing that the absence of this intimate relationship results in a lack of faithfulness and love. He concludes that it is this deficit that leads to the societal breakdown demonstrated by "cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and bloodshed."
8. The two key responsibilities of priests in ancient Israel were to be "windows" through which God could shine on his people and through which the people could see God. These responsibilities involved offering sacrifices to atone for sins and teaching to reveal God's character and ways to the people.
9. Oswalt relates the concept of the "priesthood of all believers" to the issues in Hosea by arguing that every believer has a responsibility to be a "window" of God's love and character to the world. He challenges believers to examine their roles as "priests," and if their behavior seems to emulate the problems outlined in Hosea 4:2.

10. Gilgal was a place of historical significance where the tribes initially based their conquest, while Bethel was a place where Jacob had a profound encounter with God. Hosea criticizes the people for going to these places for worship, as Bethel had become religiously corrupt with the worship of a golden calf. The lesson being that God cannot be contained or manipulated by worship at a physical location.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Respond to each question in a well-structured essay format. Do not just repeat facts from the lecture, but analyze and synthesize the information to demonstrate comprehension and critical thinking.

1. Analyze the relationship between the historical context of Hosea's prophecies and the specific problems he addresses. How does the political and social instability of the time influence the nature of his message?
2. Discuss the significance of the *hesed* and its role in understanding God's character as revealed in Hosea. How does Oswalt's definition of *hesed* differ from modern conceptions of love, and why is this distinction important?
3. Explain the connection between a lack of true knowledge of God and the ethical breakdown described in Hosea. How does this concept challenge traditional views of religion and ethics, and what are the implications of this challenge for contemporary society?
4. Evaluate the role and responsibility of the priesthood in ancient Israel, as depicted by Hosea, and how it relates to the concept of the "priesthood of all believers" in the context of modern Christianity.
5. Critically analyze the concept of "a spirit of prostitution" as presented by Oswalt. How can this concept be applied to contemporary societal issues, and what are the implications for understanding our relationship with God and others?

Glossary of Key Terms

Assyria: A powerful ancient empire that rose to prominence in the 8th century BC and conquered Israel, leading to the exile of its people.

Bethel: A significant location in the Old Testament, known as the place where Jacob had a profound encounter with God. In Hosea's time, it had become a site of religious corruption through the worship of a golden calf.

Gilgal: A significant place in Israelite history, serving as the base for the tribes during the conquest of the Promised Land and associated with times of both victory and mourning.

Hesed: A Hebrew word often translated as "steadfast love," "lovingkindness," or "mercy," but which Oswalt defines as the passionate, undying devotion of a superior to an inferior, especially when undeserved. It is a key concept in understanding God's character and covenant relationship with His people.

Inculcate: To teach or instill an idea, attitude, or habit by persistent instruction.

Jeroboam II: A king of Israel during whose reign the northern kingdom experienced significant prosperity but did not follow God.

Knowledge of God: Not simply knowing facts about God, but having an intimate, personal, and transformative relationship with Him.

Priesthood of all believers: A Protestant Christian doctrine that all believers have direct access to God and the responsibility to be channels of God's love to the world.

Samaria: The capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel, which fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC.

Septuagint: The Greek translation of the Old Testament, often cited as having a more accurate reading in certain parts of the book of Hosea.

Spirit of prostitution: A state of spiritual unfaithfulness characterized by a lack of commitment, boundaries, faithfulness, thankfulness, and a desire to use rather than truly know God.

Stiff-necked: A metaphor referring to stubborn refusal to obey God, likened to an ox that resists being led.

Torah: The Hebrew word for "law" or "teaching," referring to the first five books of the Old Testament.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Hosea, Session 3, Hosea 4, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Hosea 4 and Related Themes

- **What is the historical context of Hosea's prophecies, and why is this time period significant?**
- Hosea prophesied roughly between 755 BC and 715 BC, a turbulent period for Israel. Initially, there was relative stability and prosperity under Jeroboam II. However, starting around 745 BC, Assyria began its expansion, leading to the Northern Kingdom of Israel experiencing a period of political instability, with multiple one-man dynasties and territorial losses. By 722 BC, Samaria, the capital of Israel, fell to Assyria, and the majority of its population was taken into exile. The prophecies of Hosea came during this time of national crisis and disintegration, questioning whether the Southern Kingdom, Judah, would suffer the same fate.
- **How does Hosea use the metaphor of marriage to describe the relationship between God and Israel?**
- Hosea portrays God as the husband and Israel as his unfaithful wife, Gomer, who is depicted as a prostitute who bears children that are not her husband's. Despite Israel's infidelity, God, like a devoted husband, continues to affirm His love and commitment to restore them. The book emphasizes that God will "buy back" Israel and take her into the wilderness to woo her, wanting a relationship of exclusive devotion. This highlights the covenantal nature of God's relationship with Israel and His relentless pursuit of their love and faithfulness.
- **Why is there a particular emphasis on the textual difficulties in the book of Hosea, and what does the Septuagint reveal?**
- The book of Hosea has several textual issues where the Hebrew text is thought to be incorrect or problematic. Interestingly, the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) often offers a better, more understandable reading. This difference can be attributed to the fact that the biblical texts were divided among different Jewish communities—one in Palestine, one in Egypt, and one in Babylon—during and after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. The texts that went to Babylon became the main source for the Hebrew Bible, while the Septuagint is based on those texts that went to Egypt. This emphasizes that textual

discrepancies can exist and that sometimes, other versions may clarify difficult passages.

- **What three primary problems does Hosea identify as the root cause of Israel's downfall?**
- Hosea identifies three core issues: lack of *truth* (relational fidelity), lack of *hesed* (passionate, undeserved, covenant love), and lack of *knowledge of God* (an intimate, personal relationship with God). The absence of these attributes in Israel's relationship with God leads to a breakdown in their ethical behavior toward one another and a decay in their society and natural world.
- **How are the ethical and moral issues discussed in Hosea connected to the people's relationship with God?**
- Hosea insists that ethics and religion are interconnected, unlike in many other cultures where they are seen as separate spheres. The lack of knowledge of God, of His *hesed*, and of covenant faithfulness, leads directly to societal breakdown evidenced by "cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and bloodshed" (Hosea 4:2). If people truly know God and have surrendered to His love, it will inevitably impact their relationships with others and bring ethical and moral behavior. True faith is demonstrated in ethical living and not just in religious rituals.
- **What is the role of the priests in Hosea, and how are they failing their responsibilities?**
- The priests are meant to serve as a window through whom God's people can see God, and through whom God can reach the people through teaching and sacrifice. However, the priests in Hosea's time are criticized for neglecting their teaching role, for being more interested in profiting from sin offerings than leading people to repentance. They failed to be the vehicle for the knowledge of God for the people. This neglect ultimately leads to the destruction of the nation.

- **What does Hosea mean when he discusses a "spirit of prostitution," and how can this concept be applied to contemporary life?**
- A "spirit of prostitution" as described in Hosea, extends beyond literal sexual promiscuity. It signifies a lack of faithfulness, commitment, and boundaries, and an unwillingness to truly surrender to God. In contemporary terms, it can manifest as a "use-oriented" mentality where people view others (or even God) as objects for personal gain, rather than valuing them in an intimate relationship. This spirit also includes a rejection of truth, an absence of thankfulness, and a general lack of dependability.
- **What is the significance of Gilgal and Bethel, and why does Hosea warn against pilgrimages to these places?**
- Gilgal and Bethel were both historically significant sites for the Israelites; Gilgal was where they set up camp after the conquest and Bethel was where Jacob met God. However, in Hosea's time, these sites had become places of religious corruption. Bethel was now associated with the worship of a golden calf instead of a true worship of God. Hosea warns against focusing on places as the source of God's blessing. God cannot be limited to specific places. True worship should come from an intimate relationship with God, wherever one is. Hosea encourages people to make a "temple in their hearts" where God can be found, emphasizing the importance of a personal and intimate relationship with Him over religious rituals.