

God's Healing for Broken People

Hosea 4:1-6:3

10 November 2019 | Grace Bible Church Corinda | Ben Shannon

Big Question: How can the brokenness of humanity be fixed?

Big Idea: Broken people need to know God.

Introduction

How important are your religious beliefs to who you are?

Are your religious beliefs an important part of your identity?

Do the people you know think of themselves as a Christian, an atheist, a Muslim, a Sikh, a Buddhist or something else?

What about you?

Does what you believe about God define who you are as a person?

It seems Australians don't think our religious beliefs are very important to who we are.

Earlier this year, the ABC asked 55,000 people almost 500 questions about their attitudes, behaviours and experiences.

They called this the Australia Talks National Survey.¹

It's basically market research for the ABC.

They want to know what makes people tick and they've shared the results publicly.

One of the questions they asked was, "How important would you say each of the following are to your sense of who you are?"

Out of the eight attributes people could choose from, religious beliefs came last by a long way.

Australians find their identity in their political beliefs, nationality, gender and language they speak.

Their religious beliefs? Not so much.

I'm really not all that surprised.

More and more Australians consider themselves to be atheists or agnostics.

Aussies think that they're secular – that their religious beliefs don't really come into their decision making.

The ABC's survey doesn't tell us what's actually true, but it does tell us what people think is true.

It tells us what they believe, if you'll excuse the pun.

How many people have you heard say something like, "I'm really glad that faith works for you, but it's not for me."

You can only say that if you think that your religious beliefs don't really matter, that they're just a preference.

What does the Bible tell us about our religious beliefs though?

Something quite different.

The Bible tells us that we're rebels without a cause.

We'll do anything we can dethrone him.

We pursue just about anything to avoid God as much as possible.

Rather than not mattering, our religious beliefs make a big difference to our lives.

God made us to be worshipping beings.

Yes, even those of us who think that we don't worship anything.

We all worship something.

So, if we're not worshipping God, we'll find something, anything to worship.

A quote commonly attributed to G.K. Chesterton sums this up:

"When we cease to worship God, we do not worship nothing, we worship anything."

The question isn't WHETHER we worship, the question is WHO or WHAT we worship.

Will you worship the Living God of the Bible or will you worship another god?

Will you worship your job, money, sex, power, position.

If nothing else, we worship ourselves.

Why does it matter?

You don't have to look far to see that the world is broken.

There's injustice all around us and in us.

People hurt one another as we fight to feed whoever or whatever it is that we worship.

What can we do about it?

Some people just throw their arms in the air, defeated.

Others accept that our best is good enough.

Still others dream of fixing the problems we face.

To do that, we need to know why we're broken if we're going to have any chance of fixing it.

If greed is the problem, it can be fixed by making sure that everyone has enough.

If poverty is the problem, then if only we could break the cycle.

If ignorance is the problem, then it can be fixed with education.

The Bible tells us that not knowing God is the problem and the only solution is for him to heal us.

Sure, we can find other things that help – there are techniques, policies and governments that help to restrain evil in this world.

They're God's common grace to all of humanity.

But to really fix our brokenness, it's going to take something far more radical.

The only solution that will really work, which will satisfy our souls comes from God himself.

Our passage this morning probably isn't going to sound very popular.

But it's important for us to hear.

It challenges this idea that what we worship doesn't really matter, that our religious beliefs aren't that important.

For the world to work, we need to know the God of the Bible and worship him.

This message isn't very popular because it challenges what's widely believed – that our religious beliefs don't matter.

This message wasn't very popular in Hosea's day either.

But God sent his prophets to call people out and these words from thousands of years ago continue to call us out today.

Outline

Over the last few weeks, we've been listening to the words of God through the prophet Hosea.

Hosea lived about two-and-a-half thousand years ago.

God sent him to minister to the people of the northern kingdom of Israel.

His job was to remind them of God's faithful love.

The book of Hosea falls into two main sections.

Part I: Living out God's faithful love (Chapters 1-3)

The first section is about a faithful husband and his unfaithful wife.

Hosea's wife left him for other men, however God wanted him to buy her back and love her.

This remarkable act of love was founded on God's own love for his unfaithful people Israel, who'd rejected him and gone to pursue other gods.

Part II: Proclaiming God's faithful love (Chapters 4-14)

The second half of the book is a series of messages that God gave through Hosea.

These are often called oracles and they're arguments that God makes against Israel.

A bit like poetry, they often use lots of picture language to make their point.

This kind of image language is very hard to translate from the Hebrew into English.

So, you might notice that different English translations sound very different.

At points, they sound like they're saying completely different things.

So you might find it helpful to compare a few different translations as you read this second part of Hosea.

Our big idea today is that **broken people need to know God**.

- Our brokenness comes from not knowing God (4:1-19)
- Our brokenness can only be healed by knowing God (5:1-6:3)

Our brokenness comes from not knowing God (4:1-19)

In chapter four, Hosea stops talking about his own story and begins talking more like prophets usually do – speaking the very words of God to his people.

This second part opens with what seems like a court scene.

God is the judge and he's bringing a charge against the people living in the land of Israel.

How could they get Yahweh and Baal mixed, up as we know they were doing?

They were worshipping the Baals as if they were Yahweh.

They could only do that if they didn't really know God.

Hosea calls all the Israelites need to listen to the voice of God – by that, he means all the true and faithful Israelites.

But he's bringing this charge against a much bigger group – all the people who live in the Land.

God throws the book at them:

Hosea 4:1b (NIV11) "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land.

They're charged with completely disregarding Yahewh.

They aren't committed to God, they don't love God and they don't acknowledge God.

They weren't necessarily intending to be malicious towards God any more than most people today.

They just didn't think that he mattered and that it wasn't really a big deal.

That really doesn't sound all that different to most of the people who filled out the ABC's survey!

These are people like us.

The problem is that they didn't KNOW Yahweh

I think that Hosea's being clever here.

They need to listen to the word of the Lord... because they're not listening to the word of the Lord.

Interest in what God says was at an all-time low.

And he dares to say that this has consequences.

When you don't listen to God, you stop living the way he says.

When you stop loving God, you stop loving the things that he loves.

If you don't know the truth, you're not going to live by it.

They lacked *hesed* – faithful and enduring love which means to go beyond the basic requirements.

Their failure to know God has implications for the whole world.

Not knowing him means that people break the good boundaries that God has set up for them.

There is going to be social mayhem, with people doing all kinds of nasty stuff to each other.

I'd go as far as to assert that the first effect of not believing in God that you lose your common sense.

Most atheists – functional or self-proclaimed are offended that anyone would dare suggest that they don't live morally.

I can understand why. You don't need to believe in God to do good things.

But what is their basis for the things they do being good?

"We just know," they say.

If it's that clear and obvious, why can't we agree on what those things are?

Without knowing the Lord who made the world telling us how to live, then we all just go with what works for us.

And that might not work for others.

And this doesn't just affect people.

It will even affect the very creation that we live in, verse three.

The land dries up and living things waste away.

Beasts, birds and fish – the land animals, animals of the air and animals of the sea – the three areas of creation human beings were meant to rule over are affected by our sin.

In light of this brokenness from a lack of knowledge of God, people need to know about three things.

Each one begins with 'W'.

[Wolves](#)

How did they get to this point?

The first people who he blames are the failed priests.

They're poor shepherds or wolves in sheep's clothing to use images from elsewhere in the Bible.

They're the leaders who aren't teaching the right things to God's people.

An important part of a priest's role is to be a teacher.

Given the privilege of teaching the things of God, they've blown it.

They're walking disasters – a danger to themselves and others.

Instead of leading God's people to know him, they'd led them away.

For these blind guides, it doesn't really matter whether it's day or night, they're still stumbling around.

And their so-called prophets aren't much better.

So, God's going to destroy their mother.

Remember that in Hosea, that the mother describes the people of Israel as a whole and especially their leaders.

They're going to face God's judgment.

The priests have rejected knowledge of God.

And so God will reject them.

They've ignored God's law and so they'll be cut-off.

Their problem, put simply is that they don't know God, verse six:

Hosea 4:6 (NIV11) ⁶ my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.

The more priests there were, the worse things got.

They were like wolves – feeding on the people's sins.

Quite literally.

Under the sacrificial system in Israel, the priests were allowed to eat the offerings.

It was in the priests' best interests for people to sin.

The more sinned and needed to make offerings, the better they dined.

So keep it rolling in!

Be careful of your leaders – people like me and anyone else who teaches you the Bible.

Are we pointing you towards Jesus or leading you away?

Shepherds feed the sheep, wolves eat them.

God wants spiritual leaders to help us know him better.

[Worship](#)

A lack of knowledge on the part of the priests results in failed worship.

Even worse, it was perverted worship amongst all of God's people.

This has implications, not just for the priests, but for everyone.

We have the saying, "Like father, like son."

So much of a what a parent believes and does is caught and not taught.

We get things from our parents – even the things we don't want to!

In verse nine, you get a similar idea – “Like people, like priests.”

It's not just the priests that are in trouble, but everyone.

Everyone had “exchanged their glorious God for something disgraceful”, to use the words of verse seven.

They started worshipping food and sex.

And it would be their undoing.

They won't be fulfilled by what they eat.

Haven't we all been there?

You might look forward to a meal all day – not necessarily something fancy, but something you'll enjoy.

You have the meal and rather than being satisfied, you're left feeling empty.

That's what their false worship was like.

They used prostitution as part of their worship and it only left them feeling empty inside.

They turn to substances as well – old wine and new wine – verse ten.

Instead of being able to forget, they were spiritually blinded and unable to understand.

Instead of consulting the Living God, they consulted wooden idols.

Just dumb pieces of wood that couldn't do anything.

It's a powerful image that he uses.

Can you imagine asking for your walking stick to tell you the way to go, for a word from the Lord?

You can stick it.

That's a pretty terrible picture.

Anyone who knows the holy God of the Bible couldn't possibly think that's the right way to worship him.

All of this behaviour was done in the name of worship.

But instead of drawing them towards godliness, it led them away.

And so they'll experience God's judgement, verse 9:

Hosea 4:9 (NIV11) ⁹ I will punish both of them for their ways and repay them for their deeds.

Because they didn't know God, they were none the wiser.

Who'll be held responsible for their prostitution?

Don't think it'll just be the women who are judged for their infidelity.

Verse fourteen is better translated as "I will not ONLY punish your daughters".

It'll be the blokes too.

They're the ones who are committing this sin in the name of religion.

Not knowing God results in perverted worship.

Warning

Israel's behaviour and the consequences were meant to be a warning for others.

Remember that Hosea was sent to the northern kingdom of Israel.

But his message wasn't just for them.

There also seems to be a warning for the people of the southern kingdom too.

The people of Judah need to watch out.

When the kingdoms were divided, there was a big split in worship too.

The people of the southern kingdom of Judah continued to worship in Jerusalem.

But the people of the northern kingdom – also known as Ephraim after the biggest tribe – worshipped in other places in their own territory.

God's telling the people of Judah not to go and worship with the Israelites who are worshipping in the wrong places.

Gilgal means "circle of standing stones" and was probably a place of worship.

Beth-el (House of God) was likely renamed to Beth Aven (House of Wickedness) because of all the false worship that happened there.

Ephraim's religion was syncretistic.

They took bits of the right worship of God and mixed it with the worship of Baal.

What came out was a combination of the two.

It looked legit if you looked at it the right way, but was actually far from the worship of God himself.

God warns the people of Judah about going the same way.

We get an email from school every time there's chicken pox because the virus can spread so easily.

The same is true of false worship.

Hosea's job is to sound the alarm so that others are warned of the danger and hopefully prevented from being infected.

It's a warning for us too.

We need to be careful of religion that's peddled as Christianity, but has other things mixed in.

The reason this mixture is so dangerous is that it's not always immediately obvious that it's wrong.

It looks Christian, it sounds Christians, it might even smell Christian.

They're going to even quote verses.

Be on guard of being led astray by it.

This is the problem with the ecumenical movement.

The ecumenical movement says, "Let's put aside our differences and all just worship God together.

"When we say that we worship 'god', we mean whoever he, she or it is."

The problem is that when you take little bit of the Bible and a big dose of the world you end up worshipping something other than the God of the Bible.

Be careful of that.

When anything other than the God of the Bible is at the heart of our worship, it's spiritual adultery.

Anyone who practices the kind of religion that tries to mix God with a bit of this and a bit of that is an enemy of God.

That might seem a little harsh, but listen to James 4:4:

James 4:4 (NIV11) ⁴ You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

The root cause of Israel's problems was that they didn't know God.

They didn't care about him.

They didn't love what he loved.

Their religious beliefs led them away from him so that they didn't really know God at all.

Our brokenness can only be healed by knowing God (5:1-6:3)

As we turn over to chapter five, we see that healing for our brokenness can only come from knowing God.

The Israelites were blaming their predicament on something, anything else, other than their own actions.

When something goes wrong, often our first thought is to wonder who we can blame.

God tells them that they shouldn't think that they can blame everyone else.

The priests, the Israelites – even the king – are a trap for themselves.

Mizpah and Mt Tabor were places that were remembered for people failing by walking into a trap.

Mizpah was associated Jephthah who made the rash vow and Tabor with the victory of God's judge Deborah.

They themselves are the reason that they're worshipping in the high places and being wooed by false gods.

We think that what other people can't see doesn't really matter.

Our secret hope is that we'll get away with what's done in private or in secret.

There's that part of us that wants to justify that it's only wrong if you get caught.

We'd like to believe that we believe in right and wrong, but none of us are above bending the rules.

The missionary who visited the other week told us about their shame/honour culture.

If someone steals your shoes in their culture, it's okay.

It's only wrong if someone sees.

You see someone walking around in your shoes and say, "They're mine!" and they'll respond, "Did you see me take them?"

God sees everything; nothing's hidden from him.

You can't blame anyone else for the idolatry in your own heart because God knows exactly what's going on.

We try and pretend that the problem doesn't lie with us, but God sees everything.

He knew just how corrupt they were.

We do the same thing, don't we?

Our sin stops us from returning to God.

They weren't able to return to God because of what they'd done, verse four.

Hosea 5:4b (NIV11) ⁴ A spirit of prostitution is in their heart; they do not acknowledge the LORD.

Their arrogance shows what they're like, verse five.

Both Israel AND Judah stumble in their sin.

They don't know what they're doing, but it's clear that they're far from God.

But you can't just buy God off.

Going with all their flocks and herds, verse six, it's not just a matter of buying his favour.

Apparently, that's what other gods want.

Do you think you can buy God off with some good deeds?

You wouldn't be alone if you think that God should be impressed by giving a bit of money to charity.

Our God doesn't want our stuff, he doesn't need our money.

He wants our hearts.

Unfaithfulness is the source of the problem, verse seven.

If you try to buy God off, you won't find him.

He can't be bought.

God isn't impressed by what are ultimately your self-centred efforts and desires.

Our sin keeps us from him.

That's why God will judge his people.

He's basically saying, "Saddle up boys because my judgment is coming."

Sound the trumpet, raise a battle cry.

You're fighting a losing battle.

Israel are bad and Judah really aren't any better.

They think that because they're south of the border, they're going to escape God's judgment.

As the wave of God's judgment comes, they think they can just move the borders.

Like kid on the beach who thinks that they can protect their sandcastle by telling the waves that they're not allowed to come any closer.

It's a ludicrous suggestion, a futile attempt.

Judah needs their own sin to be atoned for.

Because they're intent on pursuing idolatry, God's judgment really is coming.

Like a moth nibbling at clothes or rot setting in, this's going to be slow.

You can't summarise what God's going to do any better than using the words of one of our former prime ministers, "I wanna do you slowly."

They might not see him, but they're going to hear from him.

I once had an employee whom I was forced to sack because he refused to do his job.

The fact that he returned his shredded uniforms by storming in and throwing them at me across the counter suggests that he was a little bit disgruntled.

His last words were that I'd never see him again, but I'd hear from him.

I wasn't surprised when a council food safety officer turned up a few days later after an anonymous complaint had been made.

The Israelites mightn't have seen God, but they'd still hear from him.

Sonner or later, they'll wake up to what's going on, just like I did.

It wasn't hard to make the connection between the sacking and the complaint.

When Ephraim and Judah see the yellow puss oozing from their weeping sores, they'll know they need help.

They'll realise they need healing.

At the national level, the government thought that security was their biggest problem.

If they just beefed up their defences, then they'd be right.

Backed into a corner, their hope was for a military leader.

All along though, the problem lay much closer to home.

*If there's something strange in your neighbourhood
If there's something weird and it don't look good
Who you gonna call?²*

They didn't call on the Baals – they'd already let them down.

Instead, they called on the King of Assyria.

Verse 13:

Hosea 5:13 (NIV11) ¹³“When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his sores, then Ephraim turned to Assyria, and sent to the great king for help. But he is not able to cure you, not able to heal your sores.

They misdiagnosed the problem.

In some ways, they would've been better off calling Ghost Busters.

Because it's a spiritual problem.

They were dealing with someone much more powerful than a ghost though.

They'd forgotten the Living God.

The issue wasn't their lack of military strength.

It was that they were fighting against the Lord of Hosts.

What are you putting your trust in?

Even if it's not right at the moment, what is it that you turn to when the pressure is on?

What is it that you hope will make life better?

Let me share some of mine: If I can only get through to Monday, if I just had 25 hours in the day, if we just moved house... then everything would be alright.

We turn to all kinds of things other than the Lord for help and often they lead us away from him.

Healing only comes from turning to God.

A king couldn't offer the right cure.

Even a powerful king, who ironically would be used by God to judge his people.

They're going to be carried off with no one to rescue them because God is like a lion, verse fourteen.

He'll tear them to pieces and carry them off.

God's the one who does the tearing... and so he's the only one who'll be able to heal.

The only solution to sin and rebellion against God is to acknowledge your guilt and seek him.

The only answer is to come to him and ask for mercy.

Hosea starts to speak to the people more directly at the start of chapter six.

He tells them that they need healing from God.

Hosea 6:1 (NIV11) ¹ “Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.

True healing is only going to come from knowing the Lord, verse three.

Not from a king.

He is the only security that you can turn to.

But knowing him will bring the blessed relief of rain on a parched land.

So much of our country is desperately looking for rain to come at the moment.

What a relief it'll be when God sends it.

Verse two really sticks out.

It seems kind of random.

Some people have thought the image being used is of a soldier who needs some time to recover after a battle.

Hosea 6:2 (NIV11) ² After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.

Where does that come from and what does it mean?

If you know what comes later in the story of the way that God deals with his people, you can't help but hear an allusion to Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 15:4, the apostle Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 15:4 (NIV11) ⁴ that [Jesus] was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

We don't know exactly which Scriptures he meant.

No doubt the Corinthians did because he spent a fair deal of time reasoning with them from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

My hunch is that Hosea 6:2 was probably one of them.

Jesus was crucified on the cross for sin.

He hadn't done anything wrong that meant that he deserved to be there.

In fact, he'd never done anything wrong at all and yet he was condemned to death.

Why?

Because we haven't got the ability to right our wrongs.

We can't heal the destruction that our sin's caused.

We can't save ourselves.

The only solution to our brokenness is to know God and what he's done for us.

Conclusion

If you give the wrong antivenin for a snake bite, it can actually be dangerous.

Most snakes either affect your blood or your nervous system.

In the 1940s, more and more people were dying from brown snake bites.

It didn't matter which antivenin they were given, a number of people still died.

None of the medical professionals knew why.

It wasn't until 1955 a bloke named Ram Chandra who had a snake show worked out what was going on.

The reason was that they were actually being bitten by coastal taipans which are so deadly because they have both kinds of toxins.

But according to the medical establishment, these snakes didn't live where these people lived.

Despite huge opposition, the unlearned snake charmer eventually proved that they were using the antivenin.

The cross is the only antidote for sin.

Anything else that we try to use to heal our brokenness won't work.

In fact, it can actually be deadly to us.

Let us acknowledge the Lord and what he's done in Christ.

Only he can heal.

We go looking for solutions in all kinds of places.

The only solution to our problem, the only true balm for the soul comes from the Lord.

Many Aussies aren't the least bit interested in the Lord.

They think that they can live life without any reference to him.

That their religious beliefs don't matter.

When that's actually the heart of the problem.

How many people know the God that they don't believe in?

They have a picture of who God is which often doesn't match with the God of the Bible.

When you apply for a passport, you have to have someone verify your picture – they need to say that it's you.

So, it's got to be someone who's known you for a certain period of time, not some random you just picked off the street.

Have you and God been properly introduced?

Perhaps you'd like to have someone who can verify what he is like and confirm him for you.

Who knows, maybe you'll like him.

But most importantly, we pray that you might discover that knowing him is the solution to your brokenness.

¹ Annabel Crabb, 'Australians Say to Shut up about Religion, but I'm Talking about It Anyway', Text, ABC News, 6 November 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-06/annabel-crabb-australia-talks-religion-insights/11674076>.

² Ray Parker Jr., *Ghostbusters*

God's Healing for Broken People

Hosea 4:1-6:3

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Big Question: How can the brokenness of humanity be fixed?

Big Idea: Broken people need to know God.

Discussion Questions

1. Do the results of the *Australia Talks National Survey* line up with your experience of how people view their religious beliefs?
2. Do you think that most Australians would say that humanity is broken?
3. Why is it important to correctly diagnose the cause of our brokenness?
4. What does Hosea reprimand the priests of Israel for?
5. What are some ways in which we worship wrongly? What causes our worship to go wrong?
6. Why is syncretism (blending Christianity with other religions or philosophies) so dangerous? What does that look like today?
7. Who did Ephraim and Judah turn to for help? Why didn't this work?
8. What are some things that you mistreat as the solutions you need in your life?
9. Where does Hosea say that healing can be found?