

Break Free...

*A Thought for the Week From Patrick Kemper at
No Strongholds Ministries*

Week 11

Who Needs This?

Hosea 3:1-3 (TLB)

{1} Then the Lord said to me, "Go, and get your wife again and bring her back to you and love her, even though she loves adultery. For the Lord still loves Israel though she has turned to other gods and offered them choice gifts." {2} So I bought her [back from her slavery] for a couple of dollars and eight bushels of barley, {3} and I said to her, "You must live alone for many days; do not go out with other men nor be a prostitute, and I will wait for you."

If you are familiar with the story of Hosea and Gomer, you know that Hosea was a prophet of God who was given an assignment of most difficult proportions. As I was reading there today, something hit me pretty hard. In chapter 3, God is instructing Hosea to go get Gomer – again. She had wandered off and spent her time sleeping with whoever was available. If that fact alone isn't heartbreaking enough, an appreciation for Hosea's obedience and his heart is only fitting when you understand - this wasn't the first time she had chosen to leave and act this way.

Once again, Hosea finds her having messed up, epically, and for reasons we do not understand, she had become a bond slave. At the bidding of the Lord, Hosea was to pay off her contract, bring her home, and continue to treat her as his beloved wife. At some point, I believe Hosea had to ask himself, "Who needs this?"

My mind began to wander, and then wonder, about a few things.

She had run off before and been completely reckless with her life (and her body) but this time, her choices had gone beyond selfish, disrespectful self-gratification. This time her choice to return to that which she desired (and indulged) had produced a much more serious situation – one that she could not choose to walk away from; one that had now overtaken her life and, the only way she could be freed, was if the one who loved her would come and rescue her.

Does that sound like someone you know?

It has been suggested that Gomer had become a temple prostitute, but it was more likely she was just being pimped out by the one to whom she was indebted.

I wondered what her attitude was when Hosea showed up to rescue her... was she desperate this time? I mean, yeah, she was doing what she always chose to do, but this time it was involuntary. Had this changed the way she viewed her once extra-marital activities, now that it was on-demand?

During the other times Hosea brought her home, she was still out "having fun." All

the other times she had been brought back to safety before her choices had the opportunity to destroy her.

But what about this time?

What do you think was going through her mind when she got back to their home, unpacked, and let it all sink in? Was she grateful to have been rescued from the consequences that had become her life? Was she determining in her mind how she would never make those same choices again now that she was free? Was she finally finished running away, chasing the ridiculous in life that can never produce anything but pain? Had the restlessness of her heart (which drives a person to act the way she did) finally run its course?

Was she even affected by the monstrous, selfless act of love it took for Hosea to come and get her?

If Hosea had ever stopped to ask that question, “Who needs this?” it should be answered from Gomer’s perspective, not Hosea’s.

Gomer needed it.

In spite of Hosea’s brokenhearted condition, against all the feelings of betrayal and embarrassment he must have been experiencing, he went anyway and retrieved what was his from those who did not treasure or respect her. No matter how difficult it was, Hosea did what only he could do. It was an obedient act of grace and mercy. He came and rescued her from the circumstances and consequences that her choices had produced.

So I wonder, again, what was her attitude now that her errors had been rectified; her debt had been paid? Was she really grasping, this time, what she had been doing with her life... and to the one who loved her? Had maturity finally found the environment in which to grow, revealing the truth about how she was living her life... and breaking the heart of the one who loves her?

What was she thinking now that the one who loved her had restored her to that place of honor again? Was there humility? What was her attitude now?

Application

I can’t help but see the parallel between Gomer’s situation and how God has rescued me from the perilous consequences of my stupid choices of the past. I also can’t help but think about the way I saw things; having been taken out of the darkness and relieved of the oppression that my sins had brought upon my life.

Once you find yourself where you cannot escape, receive liberation from chains you cannot unlock on your own, your perspective *has* to change.

Authentic gratitude produces an authentic change in future behavior.

Steven Curtis Chapman, in his song, *Remember Your Chains*, said it this way:

“There’s no one more thankful, to sit at the table, than the one who best remembers hunger’s pain. No heart loves greater, than the one that is able to recall the time when all he knew was shame.”

Who needs this? Gomer did... and we do.

Eternal separation from God and eternal agony are what we deserve because of what we are. But Jesus came to us and rescued us from a fate we cannot truly begin to grasp in its entirety. Some of us continue to run away and chase after the things we think are going to make us happy and fulfill our desires. Somehow, God continues to love us and chase after us.

Like Gomer, we go back to that thing we think we want – the indulgence we know is wrong. The heart wants what the heart wants... and then the heart experiences a new definition of empty when it is all over.

It doesn't take much to begin wondering if God ever gets to a place where He asks, "Who needs this?" Thank You, Father, that You never quit loving us or seeking after us when we stray.

Where are you? Have you run off, again, and are you in need of a rescue that will return you home... to where you belong? Are you currently sulking in the darkness of your choices, believing that you don't deserve to be rescued... again?

God is *longing* for you to come home.

Isaiah 30:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

Will you allow Him to rise and show you compassion, to bring you home? He already purchased your freedom, but he leaves the decision of coming home to you. Unlike Hosea (or any of us if we were in such a place), God desires to make the trip to bring you home and restore your connection with Him. Will you choose to follow Him home, or sit, voluntarily, in the environment that holds you prisoner?

As you contemplate your answer, I want you to think about something else, too. What do you want your attitude to be the next time you can either remain obedient to your Father (where you are valued and loved) or run off to chase selfish things?

Come back home... where you are treasured and belong.

If you have never experienced that rescue, submit your life to Christ today. He already paid the price to buy out your contract and wants to take you home, away from all that seeks to bind you and abuse you.

Accept the invitation to come home where it is safe and you are treasured. Submit your life – your word and your obedience – to whatever God asks of you. Allow Him to bring out the creation He designed you to be, no matter what your choices have been in the past.

Who needs this?

We all do.

Homework for the Week...

1.) Are you Hosea or Gomer? What is it you need? Is your heart suffering with a new definition of *empty* because you chase after the thing your heart believes it wants? Do you need to run after your Gomer and restore what used to be? Ask God to humble your heart, whichever of these currently describes you, and accept the love and mercy He longs to pour out on you if you will just be obedient. What needs work, and what methods will you use to begin accomplishing this? Who can you contact to help you? Be specific.

2.) Mid-week check. List the opportunities you have had and how you responded (this is your obedience indicator). If you are still posting a doughnut, more than likely you weren't all that truthful when you asked God for chances to respond and improve. Check your heart; be authentic. Ask God to show you the way through what is blocking you from submitting in obedience.

3.) How are you doing compared to the way you started the week? If you still need improvement, refuse to move on to the next session. Stay here, submit, and choose to be obedient no matter what it takes. Explain how you have improved, or make a commitment to continue working. When you are operating in obedience in this area of your life... turn the page and move to the next session.
