

# **LifeWay Bible Studies for Life Series for February 13: God loves for his people to be loyal to him**

February 2, 2011

One of the things that quickly jumps out about Hosea 6:1-7:2 is the phrase Hosea uses, “let us.” It really is a beautiful thought, one of encouragement, and we’re all in this together. You don’t get the idea that he is leaving everyone else behind with an “every-man-for-himself” attitude. No, let us return to God and seek him.

What an amazing challenge and encouragement for the church today. Perhaps it’s time we, as God’s children, stand next to one another with our arms across each other’s shoulders and say with the resolve and commitment that God wants from his children that we will follow after our Father.

The attitude goes back to Cain and Abel. You know the story, Cain kills Abel and when questioned by God about where Abel is Cain replies, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Yes, Cain you are. And yes, church we are our brothers and sisters keepers.

We’d like to think the people of Amos’ time responded positively to his encouragement, and they all jumped on board and chased after God with all they had. However, God knows his people all too well and knows they are very shallow in their commitment to him.

Yes, they know God is faithful, but they find themselves taking advantage of God’s grace and mercy—not that any of us know what that’s like.

Essentially the people's attitude was one of "Oops. Sorry, God, you just fix us." And there is no change in their lives yet they fully expect God to just love them while they do what they want to do.

Much of it is like the proverbial band-aid analogy. The people just wanted God to put a band-aid on their wound and cover it up, but God wanted to heal them completely from within. One is what it means to be truly healed, the other remains a source of discomfort and continued infection.

However, Hosea knows the faithfulness of their God. In the first three verses we see "let us" and "he will." The resolve of "when we do this, we know God will do this."

What would our individual lives look like if we had this resolve? If, in faithfulness, you attempt something knowing full well that God will show up in a big way.

Is this part of the reason why you don't attempt more things—or anything—for God? What is it that you're afraid of? Hasn't God told you to not be afraid and that he is with you always? So what's stopping you?

Let's take this into the context of your church. What would your church attempt or go after if it knew and believed that it would not fail? Community outreach? Missions? So what's keeping it from moving on these?

Typically, the answer is one of two things: We don't know how, and/or we don't have the money. Perhaps you and your church need to spend some time praying with "let us, he will." I know I could sure use some more time in this area of my own life.

Through Hosea, God is calling them to repentance. Repent is simply a word that means you are walking in one direction and you stop, turn around and go the other direction. Repentance is not walking in one direction stopping,

saying you're sorry, then continue walking in the same direction you were headed.

Think about this in our lives with one another. Many times when we say we're sorry, we really don't mean it. Why? Because when you say you're sorry it means—or should mean—you feel bad for something you've done, and you will make the effort to not do it again. When you say you're sorry but then don't make the effort to change, what you are really saying is you just feel bad and nothing more.

What does this look like in the context of our work environments? More importantly, what about our marriages? And certainly, in our relationship with God?

He wants us to change and continually be changed into what he wants us to be. This means as we are walking, God will point out to us at times that we are going in the wrong direction. The choice is then up to you whether or not you keep walking in the same direction.

Verse 6 is a great reminder that God doesn't want us to merely jump through the hoops of following him. He doesn't need a bunch of dead animals. The people believed they could appease him by offering a sacrifice to him and that would be enough.

Some people today think they can appease God by dropping some money in the offering plate and make things right between themselves and God. In doing so, all they do is try and ease their own conscience.

We have to remember that it's all God's money anyway, and when we give to him, we are actually giving back to him what's already his. God isn't sitting at his accounting table in heaven thinking, "If I just had more money I could put on a great Vacation Bible School or send a missionary to Africa." What he wants are his children to trust him and believe in him and in so doing be kind and loving to those around us.