

*She will pursue her lovers but not catch them; she will seek them but not find them. She will think: 'I will go back to my former husband, for then it was better for me than now.'* Hosea 2:7

God called me Gomer last week. Yes, that Gomer; the promiscuous wife of the prophet Hosea. The metaphor for an unfaithful Israel.

OUCH.

It didn't go down *exactly* like that... it all happened because I was having an emotional breakdown over the loss of a friendship. Like most believers, when I am having a rough time, I pray, and cry, and generally whine at God about how I am having a rough time. *Why, God, WHY?* Ad nauseam. Haven't we all been there a time or two?

During this whine fest at God, I heard a quiet urging, "Why don't you start a new Bible reading plan?"

I didn't really understand the point of this urging at first, because it seemed so totally *unrelated* to my present dilemma, but I did it anyway. While browsing new plans, I found one on minor prophets that tugged at me, again with a gentle urging. "Choose this one." I don't know about you, but I haven't really spent much time with Hosea, Amos, and Obadiah. I think I am probably not alone in that, either. Habakkuk, anyone?

I began reading the first chapter of Hosea, thinking it was heavily allegorical, and also pretty intense. There is strong language used in almost every verse regarding Gomer's (Israel's) unfaithfulness. I decided to dig deeper into this and found some commentary about Hosea. By the time I got to chapter 2, I felt God was telling me, very clearly, that I am Gomer...that I am unfaithful to Him.

Initially, I thought, "NO WAY!" I am not unfaithful to you, Lord. I go to church (I am in the choir!) and I don't worship pagan gods or idols. But, He broke it down for me.

I may not worship little carved statues, but I have idols. I have MANY idols. In terms of God's ranking of importance in my life, He wasn't even breaking into the top 10. This was a heartbreaking realization for me, but it was the truth. My idols might not be immediately obvious, so I will run through them for you.

During my dilemma (that previously mentioned whine fest), I had removed several social media apps from my phone. More than that, I deleted the accounts, so that adding the app back on would be pointless. In the days following this decision, I became surprised by how much I think about those stupid accounts; Foursquare being one of them. EVERY TIME I went somewhere, I was thinking about checking in on Foursquare. Two weeks after I deleted the app, I was still think about checking in! So while the catalyst for removing those accounts had nothing to do with my spiritual life (or so I thought), I realized God was in the midst, and that social media was one of my idols.

I felt he was said to me, "You literally don't go a single day without checking Facebook, but when was the last time you read my Word?"

"You check in on Foursquare, even when you get gas in the car, how but how often do you check in with me in prayer?"

“You spend hours planning and cooking meals, even photographing them on Instagram, but when was the last time you fasted to draw closer to me?”

“You watch TV every day, hours a day, but how much time do you spend on being the hands and the feet of my son, Jesus?”

Those are just things I do, not even touching on the *people* I place in importance before God. There are many - my kids, my husband, my friends - they all get more time than God does.

There are days when my Bible was never opened at all. Not even for five minutes.

God was so low on my list of priorities that I realized He wasn't one AT ALL.

The dilemma I was drowning in when all this began was really about being worried about the approval and acceptance of others, yet I was spending almost no time worried about God's approval and acceptance of me.

God had harsh words for Israel in Hosea, and I deserved them, too. I am grateful, because I know I have been adrift. It happened slowly, inch-by-inch, until I looked back and realized that where I had once been close to God, I was now miles and miles from where I should be.

It started with little choices, little idols, little altars. They don't stay little, though, do they? Soon they had taken over. Soon, I looked just like the rest of the world.

However, God had a plan for me, just like he had a plan for Israel. He promised to pursue Israel and woo her again, and He did. He is doing the same for me. He ends several chapters of Hosea with the promise of Israel's restoration, and therefore, mine.

*Therefore, I am going to persuade her, lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her vineyards back to her and make the Valley of Achor into a gateway of hope. There she will respond as she did in the days of her youth, as in the day she came out of the land of Egypt.* Hosea 2:14-15

I feel like I am in the early stages of a renewed love affair. I want to stay in the flow, where the joy is boundless and life is beautiful, regardless of circumstances. That means destroying idols and resurrecting a different altar in my heart. I'm ready. I'm thirsty for living waters.

*Come, let us return to the Lord. For He has torn us, and He will heal us; He has wounded us, and He will bind our wounds. He will revive us after two days, and on the third day He will raise us up so we can live in His presence. Let us strive to know the Lord. His appearance is as sure as the dawn. He will come to us like the rain, like the spring showers that water the land.* Hosea 6: 1-3