

RETURN TO LOVE AND JUSTICE

LESSON SCRIPTURE: HOSEA 11-12

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: HOSEA 11:1-2, 7-10; 12:1-2, 6-14

Key Verse: But as for you, return to your God. Hosea 12:6a

Hosea 11:1-2, 7-10; 12:1-2, 6-14 (NRSV)

HOSEA 11:1-2

1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

2 The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols.

7-10

7 My people are bent on turning away from me. To the Most High they call, but he does not raise them up at all.

8 How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.

9 I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your

midst, and I will not come in wrath.

10 They shall go after the Lord, who roars like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west.

12:1-2

1 Ephraim herds the wind, and pursues the east wind all day long; they multiply falsehood and violence; they make a treaty with Assyria, and oil is carried to Egypt.

2 The Lord has an indictment against Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways, and repay him according to his deeds.

6-14

6 But as for you, return to your God, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.

7 A trader, in whose hands

are false balances, he loves to oppress.

8 Ephraim has said, “Ah, I am rich, I have gained wealth for myself; in all of my gain no offense has been found in me that would be sin.”

9 I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again, as in the days of the appointed festival.

10 I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets I will bring destruction.

11 In Gilead there is iniquity,

they shall surely come to nothing. In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls, so their altars shall be like stone heaps on the furrows of the field.

12 Jacob fled to the land of Aram, there Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he guarded sheep.

13 By a prophet the Lord brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded.

14 Ephraim has given bitter offense, so his Lord will bring his crimes down on him and pay him back for his insults.

VOCABULARY

- **Indictment** – A formal charge of a crime.
- **Compassion** – Feeling of concern, brotherly/sisterly love.
- **Ephraim** – One of the ten lost tribes of Israel.
- **Recoils** – Springs back in fear.

INTRODUCTION

There was a cute television commercial I fell in love with. In the commercial, a young boy enters a classroom for the first time as the teacher announces that they have a new student. During recess, the little boy watched as the other boys

played basketball. Yearning to join, he types on his tablet three little words that when translated, transforms the atmosphere. The three words were, “Can I play?” When another student reads his message, immediately he responds by showing him how to play. Later in the classroom, you see the new student engaging the entire class with his tablet. Just then, the teacher announces another new student. When the new student enters the room, quite reserved, the boy turns his tablet around so that she sees the word, “Hello.”

From this commercial clip, the treatment that the new boy received from his classmates was positive and contagious. In other words, the young man paid it forward. He was kind and welcoming and treated his new classmate just as he was treated.

This lesson sweetly expresses how God wants us to act with others — not just strangers, but to those who are a part of our everyday life. Positive treatment of each other helps to create a sense of security in unchartered spaces. Imagine moving to a new city, a new country, or a new school and not knowing anybody. How would you feel if you were treated the way these kids were treated?

Activity #1: “Do Unto Others.” Watch the commercial clip (<https://www.ispot.tv/ad/odcR/xfinity-mobile-new-student#>). After viewing, roleplay different scenarios of how this kindness could play out in your youth group.

THE BIBLE STORY

Just as some children reject their parents, the Israelites have turned away from God who has loved them, provided for them, protected them, and rescued them from captivity in Egypt. God is brokenhearted over the way they have acted through their disobedience. The more God called the Israelites, the more they pulled away. After all that God had done for them, they now have turned their loyalty to that of idol gods instead. But they still call on God. As a result of their duplicity, God can no longer exalt them; God's heart towards them has changed.

The Israelites were determined to turn away from God, but God could not turn God's back on them. God has an incredible amount of compassion for Israel, and even though God had fleeting thoughts of making God's anger burn against them, God just couldn't do it. All God wanted was for the children of Israel to come back to him.

Activity #2: Come Back to Me! Listen to the song, "Come Back to Me" by Janet Jackson while reading the lyrics provided (at the end of this lesson). Ms. Jackson sounds very sad and anguished about a lost love. This is similar to how God feels when we turn away from God. Imagine that God was the writer of this song. What would your response be? Take some time, as the song plays again, to write your response down to share at a later time.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-5ecZWwO_hQ "Come Back to Me" by Janet Jackson

LIFE APPLICATION

Most parents/guardians will do anything for their children, regardless of how the parents/guardians are treated. Also, most households have rules that must be obeyed, responsibilities that must be taken care of, and relationships that must be nurtured. Imagine being a rebellious child who breaks the rules continually, refuses to listen to parents/guardians and runs away, despite the love and compassion the family tries to show over and over again. Imagine how a parent might feel when their child is gone, not knowing where they are, if they are all right or hurt. Imagine the tears and worry. Most parents never stop loving their children, and most would never stop looking for them. Some would never dream of giving up on their children.

Now imagine that after months away from home, the runaway child is alone, without friends, food, money, and is sick. The only place they think to turn to is home...so they do. Now imagine that after all of that, their parents welcome them back with open arms, nursing them back to health, and making sure they are well fed. Even though the parents/guardians welcomed the child back, trust has been broken. It will take time to repair the relationship, but love prevails.

Activity #3: Real Love Imagined. The child in the “Imagine” segment experienced real love. It is like the love expressed by God towards the Israelites. Discuss the undeniable mandate to demonstrate God’s love based on the story above.

SUMMARY

We are all children of God. And as children we tend to rebel and not do what we ought to do. That does not mean that we don't love God or reverence God, but it shows that we are still guided by our human nature. God knows that we have those tendencies and that is why God extends us grace and mercy. Just as God shows us grace and mercy, so should we when we encounter someone who is struggling. We should be the hands and feet of God when we approach different people with different circumstances. We should be the hands and feet of God when we approach justice issues of every kind. God depends on us to act rather than react. We can do more to benefit the world if we are in the will of God.

CLOSING DEVOTION

Repeat this together:

Dear Lord,

I admit that I am a sinner. I have done many things that don't please you. I have lived my life for myself only. I am sorry, and I repent. I ask you to forgive me. I believe that you died on the cross for me to save me. You did what I could not do for myself. I come to you now and ask you to take control of my life; I give it to you. From this day forward, help me to live every day for you and in a way that pleases you. I love you, Lord, and I thank you that I will spend all eternity with you. Amen.

“Come Back to Me”

Looking through my old drawer	Come back to me
Came across the letter you	I'm beggin' you please
wrote	Come back to me
Said you needed time away	I want you to
That was so long ago	Come back to me
All my life I've waited	I'm beggin' you please
To see your smile again	Come back to me
In my mind I hated	I want you to
Not able to let go	Come back to me (come back
	to me)
Come back to me	Come back
I'm beggin' you please	I want you to
Come back to me	Come back to me
I want you to	Come back
Come back to me	
I'm beggin' you please	Please come back to me
Come back to me	I miss you so much
	Wherever you are I love you
Lord knows that I have tried	All my life I've waited
To live my life as one	To see your smile again
Friends tell me to hold on	In my mind I hated
Tough times don't last for long	Not able to let go
My abandoned heart	Not able to let go
Just doesn't understand	Hooh, huh, I won't let you go
My undying love for you	No no no
Won't let me wait	

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