

LifeGroup Study

Date: June 25, 2023
Text: Hosea 5:15-6:6; Psalm 50:7-15
Theme: Alignment...with the God of Our Hearts

Belong Do you ever catch yourself singing or hum-ming a song either out loud or in your head as you go about your daily routine? Whether it's in the shower, doing chores around the house, or driving in the car, there seems to be music going on in our heads. The music can be happy or sad, seeming to sing what is on our hearts and seems to be something that we do without thinking—as if the music were part of our very being.

God has placed passions deep within us that are part of our very being and longs for us to discover them and, in a sense, sing them at the top of our lungs. However, we aren't always in alignment with those passions as naturally as the songs we catch ourselves humming. The stress of daily life can get in the way of our sens-ing, let alone connecting with and following, the passions God has given us. It may even be a matter of not believing God would care that much to give us something to sing that is truly, uniquely us.

This week's text gives us a glimpse of God's love for us and God's desire for us to align our hearts with God's, so that we may fully experience the life God intended for us—a life that calls us to respond to the world through the love and compassion God has placed within us.

Pray... Heavenly Father, we long to sing the song you've placed on our hearts but have difficulty knowing what that song is or how to sing it. We've gotten so busy and distracted in our daily lives that we've lost the music and need you to teach us. We are eager to learn and connect to the song on our hearts so that we may sing it loudly and come to know you more deeply. Amen.

Believe Read Hosea 5:15-6:6. The name Hosea in the Hebrew language means salvation and the prophet Hosea lived during a very turbulent time in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The book bearing his name records events from around 750 BC to about 715 BC and is generally broken into two parts. The first part focuses on the condemnation of Israel for worshipping idols and the second part contains Hosea's warnings to Israel and the promise of God's love and forgiveness.

This passage opens in the middle of God speaking to Israel in the midst of border conflicts between Israel and Judah as well as Israel's alliances with Assyria. God seems to be telling the people that "I've been trying to warn you about the path you are on but you aren't listening so I'm going to let you continue down this path of wor-shiping idols and fighting with each other. You will realize that this is not working and will come back."

•*Have you ever felt that you were going down the wrong path? Did you*

wonder what God was thinking about you at that time?

God knows us so well that God patiently waits for us to come back and sing a song of penitence. God knows that we will reach out when we realize we've strayed from God's path.

•*Have you ever apologized for something knowing your heart really wasn't in it? How did that feel afterward?*

God wants our hearts singing not only a song of penitence but the heart song God has placed within us. We are reassured of God's intentions through Hosea's words, "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."

•*What comes to mind when you hear the words "For I desire mercy"? How can we give God mercy?*

Read Psalm 50:7-15.

•*What are your initial thoughts about this text? How do you think it relates to the text from Hosea?*

This text opens with God trying to get Israel to understand what God truly wants from them. God is not looking for the sacrifice but rather what is in the Israelites' hearts when they are making the sacrifice. If all they are going to do is offer up the sacrifice but have no feeling of thankfulness or gratefulness then it isn't aligned with what God intended. God doesn't want us to go through the motions of any ritual for the sake of doing it but would rather capture our hearts and align what's inside each of us with God's heart. God wants us to connect to the song God has placed on our hearts so that when we come to God in good times and bad, we will come with a heart aligned with God's, ready to sing.

•*Can you think of a time when you just went through the motions on something? What was the result? How do you think we can prevent going through the motions with our relationship with God?*

Become God places a song on our hearts that is totally unique to us, a song that represents the very essence of God's creation that is us. God longs for us to sing that song each and every day but knows that there is so much that gets in the way and prevents us from allowing our song to shine through. Fear, anger, frustration, being so overwhelmed with life that we can't even see beyond the moment or simply just going through the motions of daily life can lead us to stifle the song God has placed within us.

It's because of God's profound love for us that God pursues us to teach and encourage us to sing the song God has put within us. When we listen, we can hear God's gentle whisper urging us to find our voice and sing. As we start to sing, we find ourselves moving closer to God, developing a deeper relationship.

Pray... Lord God, there are times we can feel the song you've placed within us just under the surface. Help us find the courage to sing the song you have placed within us—a song that reflects the love that only comes from you, that uniquely fires the passions you've placed deep within us. Help us realize and sing that song from the very depths of our souls. Amen.

Devotionals: Daily Walk on the Rock

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Day 1: Monday—Are Our Hearts Aligned with the Heart of God?

Last week we spoke of God's immeasurable love and of the Scriptures as God's love letter to us. At first glance, our new theme texts might seem to contradict the truths about God's love and love letter, so let's begin by praying that we will see God's heart and yearn for our hearts to be aligned with God's. Now read and meditate on Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. Does this prayer give us insight into what it means for our hearts to be aligned with God's? What happens when we break God's heart? How does God realign us and bring us back into right relationship? Listen for evidences of God's tender love as you read Psalm 36:5-9 and Isaiah 43:1-7.

Day 2: Tuesday—Relentless, Pursuing Love and Ineffable Holiness

Do we try to put God into the boxes of our understanding, defining God's love by the measure of ours and God's holiness by human standards? God spoke through the prophet Hosea at a time when God's people offered lip service to God, but their hearts were not tender to God's desire for deep and committed relationship. In the book of Hosea, God stretches our understanding of unconditional love and reminds us of the seriousness of spiritual adultery. Pray you will hear the yearning in God's heart as you read Exodus 20:1-3; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Isaiah 65:1-2; and Hosea 2:14-23; 11:1-11. Do you hear the same love and yearning in Jesus' words in Luke 13:34?

Day 3: Wednesday—God's Tenderness for the Weak

God's love is relentless, pure, and eternal. From Genesis to Revelation, we read the story of God's redemptive love and saving grace. Consider John 3:16; Romans 5:8; and 1 John 4:9-10, as you ponder how much God hates sin but loves sinners. Notice the gentle and tender love of God (perfectly manifest in Jesus) toward those who seek an honest relationship with God as you read Hosea 14:1-9 and Luke 7:36-50; 15:20-24; 18:9-14. Do these texts add insight to our theme of alignment with the God of our hearts? Talk to God about God's heart and yours.

Day 4: Thursday—No Half-Hearted Devotion

Yesterday, we pondered God's tender love toward those who come with open hearts and outstretched hands, seeking God's mercy. However, when people are self-sufficient, believe that "doing religion" is what God requires, and close their hearts to true relation-

ship with God, God sometimes uses "tough love" to remold hard hearts. Listen to God's words of indictment and Israel's response as you read Hosea 4:1; 5:1-5; 5:15-6:6. These are hard words; why does God imply that the repentance is not genuine (6:4)? Does Jesus speak similar messages in Mark 7:6-8; Luke 11:37-44 and Revelation 3:14-20? Pray you will have a heart that is tender and true.

Day 5: Friday—Judgment in History Read Romans 2:4 and 2 Peter 1:19-21. Reflect on what we have been reading in Hosea. Repeatedly and over generations, God, through the prophets, called God's people to return and repent. God's heart yearned for reconciliation and relationship, yet the people persisted in apostasy/spiritual adultery. Finally, when kindness, patience, and gentle pleading did not soften the people's hearts, God brought judgment in history through Assyria and later Babylon. Read 2 Chronicles 36:15-23; Ezekiel 36:24-27; and Daniel 9:1-19, listening for the grace, love, and promise, even in the discipline. God is still aligning hearts today; in prayer, offer yours to God.

Day 6: Saturday—Can We Trust God's Heart?

We've spoken of judgment, but it's important to remember that, for Israel, judgment was the road to restoration and renewed relationship with God. God's love is tender, but it is also relentless, and God will go to any measure to bring reconciliation. This is seen most clearly from the foot of the cross. Can we trust God's heart of love? How can we not trust such amazing love?! Read Psalm 50:7-15; Isaiah 1:15-17; and Hosea 6:1-6. As God's people today, do we understand the gravity of sin; do we truly repent and seek God; do we value more than God's material benefits; do we love God passionately? Run into your Father's arms and love him with abandon.

Day 7: Sunday—Redeeming Love Bask in God's promises of restoration and relationship as you read Isaiah 55:1-7; Jeremiah 29:10-14; Lamentations 3:21-26; Joel 2:12-13; Micah 7:18-19; Zephaniah 3:17; and Revelation 21:3-7. Does your heart become tender as you realize God rejoices over you with singing? Ask God to melt the hard places in your heart. Pray Stuenkel's lyrics: "O Christ, create new hearts in us that beat in time with yours, that joined by faith with your great heart, become loves' open doors" (*O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate,* 1982, GIA Publications, Inc.).