

“Being A Little Weird”

Hosea 1:2-10

www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=hosia+1:2-10

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July 25, 2010

“Don’t compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is about.”

There is an incredible pressure to compare and to conform within our Twenty First Century American Culture. Everywhere we turn, whether in the field of economics, marine biology, agriculture, manufacturing, or even within the church a trend begins and everyone is expected to conform. We look around us, see what someone else is doing or something else that they have and we compare ourselves to them. In all of this comparison thinking we demonstrate plague of the “Simples Disease”.

The “Simples Disease” is evident in our media, our internet messages, and even in our talk of God. The gushing oil well in the Gulf of Mexico is a terrible disaster. Throughout this horrible ecological disaster, the media people have offered simple solutions to an exceedingly complex problem. We are into the political primary season and the “Simples Disease” is in full force! What is the “Simples Disease”? Try a few simple solutions to problems:

- If we are about to loose an extinct species, then we simply clone it.
- If we are having trouble with foreign trade, simply stop it.
- If we want to look like we are financially sound and really up to date, simply drive a new electric vehicle.
- If we are having trouble with families, simply tell the women to move back into the 19th century and be graciously submissive.
- If we are struggling with life, simply turn everything over to Jesus.

The “Simples Disease” infects all of us. We are encouraged by the media, by politicians, and by religious media personalities to find simple answers to complex problems by comparing our lives to some mythical simple standard, and then conforming our lives to that standard.

As a rebellion against the simplistic conformity pressure, the gothic movement was born. The gargoyle is the Gothic symbol. Persons into Gothic dress in black. The weird writing of Steven King and Anne Rice are often quoted. Gothic “humor” in movies like the “Ghostbusters” takes what we would just as soon not look at, or think about, or consider even in another lifetime and makes us laugh about it.

Through Gothic humor or Gothic horror, we are invited to take our fears and look at them. Although this modern reaction to our conformist culture seems radical, it is only harking back to a teaching of the medieval church. In a time before our modern consumerist culture, the church was the place where differences, death, and demons were discussed. Visit any cathedral in Europe and find gargoyles over every door and window. Look up to the corners of the building and find gargoyles watching you. Since the medieval person could not read, the stone masons provided visual pictures of all the different aspects of life. The grotesque and humorous gargoyles captured the imaginations of the people reminding them of vast differences of people, values, spiritual beings, and experiences available in the world. Let us take a clue from our medieval ancestors and accept the fact that we are, as the world is, a little bit weird.

Let us ask ourselves the question, “Are we being conformed by the world into the disease of the simples? Or, are we committed to transforming the world by our little bit of weirdness? Holy Scripture recommends you listen to God as God moves you beyond comparisons, beyond conformity, and into a really strange place of trusting in God even when God’s message is beyond the norm.

God asked Hosea to do a really weird thing.

Hosea faced one of life's most important and difficult decisions, getting married. Anyone who comes face to face with that most awesome of life choices knows the impact of choosing to spend the rest of your life with another person. All kinds of emotions come into play. In the midst of Hosea's decision-making comes God's directive to marry Gomer. What a surprise! I do not think God just reached out and bonked Hosea on the head and told him what to do. More than likely Hosea went through what many of us experience. At first Hosea experienced an unsettled awareness. Then, Hosea knew, but did not want to know. Finally, Hosea recognized that God was involved in his life and was giving him a direction.

Hosea had to choose. Trust God, or trust his own rational intellect. I am sure Hosea knew what kind of tendencies Gomer had in her lifestyle. People in small towns know each other's gifts and faults. I am sure Hosea's parents advised him against a marriage to a woman with the past history of Gomer. But, Hosea had that "God-knowing" down deep inside of his soul. Against all reason, in opposition to his parents, and the advice of the village elders, Hosea married Gomer. Hosea obeyed God.

But, we ask, what is God doing? This is not a simple story. There is no easy answer. Life is much more complex than we expect. There is a larger picture than Hosea's marriage that God is painting.

- In Hosea's marriage to Gomer, God demonstrates the pain of unfaithfulness that characterizes the relationship of the Israelites with God.
- Even deeper, God wants Hosea to publically live out on behalf of the citizens of the world, the hurt caused by the broken covenant between God and God's people.
- Deeper still, God lives through Hosea to let us all see the results of our human frailty, our missing the mark, our deep indebtedness to goodness and life. God is letting us know how faithful God truly is.

We might be weird. God's message might be strange. But, the truth from Hosea is for all of us!

- We can run away, but God will follow.
- We can reject, but God will not turn away.
- We can do our own thing, but God will only do one thing: stand by us all the way.

Hosea shows us something about God and ourselves. Hosea's message is not a simple formula. In and through the pain and the complexity of Hosea's life, one shining truth comes clear; God is with Hosea at all times and in all ways!

Hosea's personal story invites us to affirm at least two learning's from this portion of Holy Scripture.

1. We can trust God to be present in each and every decision we must make.
2. Decisions are never simple and there are no simple formulas for decision making.

God is present at all times

In **Romans 8** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=romans+8), the Apostle Paul affirms the reality of the difficulty of our lives in this present world. Paul especially knows the difficulty of making life decisions: marriage, career, retirement, educational, or others. Paul says that living and making daily decisions in this fallen, shadowed world is very much like all creation groaning as an expectant mother groans in childbirth. Now I only know the pain of childbirth second hand. I was there in the room when our daughters were both born. But, I did not really experience child birth. I can only guess at the pain a woman experiences. I think Paul's use of the word groaning is mild. Creation is groaning like a woman in the transition phase of hard labor. That is strong pain!

In the midst of that kind of hard pain, Paul writes:

“Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ’s love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture: None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I’m absolutely convinced that nothing---nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable---absolutely nothing can get between us and God’s love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.”

Romans 8:35-39 (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=romans+8:35-39) *The Message*

Paul is embracing the truth that Hosea revealed earlier: God is present with us at all times and places. We can trust that God is with us in the times of decision making.

Are facing a life decision? Do not compare yourself with others. First seek the Lord’s guidance.

- Reason will fail you.
- Your emotions will misdirect you.
- Your well-organized career path and your financial planning will not be sufficient for you.
- All the comparison thinking in the world will only bring you grief.

Jesus Christ, the only One who loves you enough to die for you is the only trustworthy person to be your guide. If you are facing a life decision right now do not let another moment go by without saying to the Lord Jesus that you want to listen to him. Ask Christ into your consciousness. Then listen for Christ’s leadership. Be aware of the “deep knowing” that will come from inside of you. Ask your close Christian friends to pray with you. If you are a member of a life group ask for their continuing prayer support that you will have the courage to discern the Lord’s leading and act upon it. I urge you to not be conformed to this world, but to partner with Jesus so that you can transform the world.

Life Decisions are never simple

The “Simple Disease” would have you believe that decisions which are right and in the Lord’s favor will be easily identified and very simple. We have all heard people make the comment, “O, I just turn it all over to the Lord.” Let me share with you that Hosea’s story makes a lie of that simple statement. Hosea struggled. Hosea sweated and wept over his life with his unfaithful wife Gomer. Hosea was never sure whether Gomer’s children were his or not. Hosea’s life was anything but simple. There were no simple answers, no simple solutions, and no simple choices. Hosea stayed faithful to God’s leading and took one day, one hour, and sometimes one minute at a time.

We do a grave injustice to people when we suggest that following God’s path is simply what we do everyday. Life is complex. Life decisions are difficult. And, God will not reveal what God sees ahead of time. Hosea tells us that we must not fall into the trap of conforming to what the world says is best for us. Hosea teaches us that we cannot simply guess that we know what God desires for us. Hosea teaches us that comparing ourselves to others will bring about failure. What we do know is that in the weirdness of life, God will be our guide.

- **God is not** a magician who will make everything come out just like a 30 minute television sit-com.
- **God is not** an indulgent grandfather who accepts whatever we do.
- **God is not** a policeman who will lock us up if we do not choose the right way.
- **God is not** an engineer who has the blue print for everything and everyone already worked out in advance and will manipulate you to fit into the plan.

God is the creator of the universe who is involved in all of life. The past, the present and the emerging future are all in God's hands. Whether life is ugly or beautiful, smells like expensive perfume or like a sewer, is within the light or the dark, is a gargoyle or a rose window, no matter what life is like, God is present. And if God is present we can place our trust in God.

- The "Simple Disease" would have you conform to a mythical pre-arranged plan.
- The "Simple Disease" tells you that there is only one right choice with every decision.
- The "Simple Disease" will suggest to you that life choices should be easy if you are completely in God's will.

Let me suggest to you that the "Simple Disease" is nothing other than a fantasy trip down guilt lane. Hosea struggled. Hosea felt real pain. Hosea wept real tears. And, through it all Hosea walked in trust with God. Do not be conformed to the simple answers that bring about nothing but negativity in this world. Rather be transformed by the daily renewal of your life through walking in trust with God. If you choose to be a transformed and transforming person, then you, along with Hosea, Paul, Peter, and others will be just a little weird in the sight of the world.

An anonymous poet wrote these words that could just as easily come from the mouth of Hosea. Be just a little weird and let your affirmation prayer be:

*"I cannot know why suddenly the storm
Should rage so fiercely round me in its wrath;
But this I know---God watches all my path,
And I can trust.*

*I may not draw aside the mystic veil
That hides the unknown future from my sight,
Nor know if for me waits the dark or light;
But I can trust.*

*I have no power to look across the tide,
To see while here the land beyond the river;
But this I know--I shall be God's forever;
So I can trust."*