

Session 1: The Prophet Hosea

Activity 1.1

Read Hosea 1 - 3 and answer the following questions:

- what strikes you as interesting about this passage?
- what are you able to gather from the text about the story that lies behind it?
- what questions arising from this passage do you want answered in this session?
- make a note of all the words, phrases and ideas that you don't (yet) understand

A. The Word of the Lord

Hosea 1.1

The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri, in the days of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel

In our Bibles the TITLE of the book is "Hosea". This is not its original title. In the Hebrew scroll of the book, there was no separate title. In effect, chapter 1, verse 1 is the title of the book: "The word of the Lord that came to Hosea ..."

Thus the emphasis right from the start is not on Hosea but on the word of the Lord. These words and actions of Hosea were remembered and eventually written down because the community recognized that God was speaking through them: that this was a genuine "word of the Lord." This was not recognized in Hosea's lifetime, except probably by a few of his close followers. It was only in hindsight that Hosea's life and message were seen to convey "the word of the Lord".

There are a lot of things we would like to know about Hosea. What exactly is going on in chapters 1 and 3? Who was Gomer? What did the people of Hosea's time think of what he was doing? And especially, in this twenty-first century when we are so much more aware of the psychological realm, how did Hosea feel about it all? But we are not told. We have to work it out from the few clues available to us and imagine the rest.

Why? Because the early editors, the people who collected Hosea's words and wrote them down, were not interested in this. They were interested in the word of the Lord – what the Lord had been saying through Hosea to the people of his time, and what he might be saying to them in their day through these same words.