

Discussion Questions: Hosea 4

1. In Amos 5.21-24 we have a summary statement of Amos' concerns. It is clear that Amos' main theme is to call the people to justice and righteousness. We have a similar summary statement in Hosea 6.6. Using this passage, what might we say is Hosea's major theme?
2. Another way to reach clarity about Hosea's main theme is to ask what is the opposite of "spiritual harlotry."
3. Read the fourth chapter of Hosea and see how the theme of love and attachment to God is uniquely expressed by Hosea using the Hebrew word translated "knowledge." The expression *daath Elohim* (knowledge of God) is particular to Hosea but picks up on a sweeping biblical theme, namely that God seeks a loving, emotional, caring relationship with his people.
4. Scan the text of Hosea chapter 4 once again, this time remembering that these words were composed by a man whose wife had abandoned him and humiliated him by becoming the talk of the entire village. How does Hosea's bad marriage prepare him to "know" God better than anyone else?
5. How important is it for a prophet or criticizer to have personal experiences which condition them to be sensitive to the injustices around them. Moses, for example, experienced in his early life the kinds of things that became important in his adult leadership of his people (He was rescued out of the water, he grieved over his people's bondage, he unsuccessfully attempted to mediate justice between disputants, he encountered God in a wilderness place, he grew up in the Royal household.) What personal experiences conditioned Bonhoeffer, Romero, Paul Farmer, etc to see and object to the problems around them?
6. In what ways do people hold a faulty understanding of God's nature today?
7. What experiences in our own private histories put us in a position to have a unique insight into God's nature and regard for his people and creation. What prophetic criticizing might we undertake? (Example: several years ago I accompanied a friend who had illegally driven on a suspended license. The judge was a parishioner. I came to understand vividly after that experience the idea that Jesus stands with us at the bar of God's judgment.)