

## Who was Gomer in the Bible?

Gomer in the Bible was the unfaithful wife of Hosea the prophet. The Lord used Hosea and Gomer's relationship as an object lesson to show how Israel had sinned against Him by following other gods and how God remains faithful even when His people don't.

God gave Hosea an unusual command: "Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord" (Hosea 1:2). Hosea obeyed by marrying Gomer, and the couple had two sons and a daughter (verses 3-8). Some commentators believe that Gomer was a prostitute or that she had been guilty of repeated sexual sin before she married Hosea. Others believe that God's description of Gomer as "promiscuous" is prophetic—that is, God's command anticipated her infidelity, and only later did she become an adulteress.

We do know that, after bearing three children, Gomer left Hosea to live with another man (or, if she was originally a prostitute, to return to her former lifestyle). God then gave Hosea another, even more amazing, command: "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods" (Hosea 3:1). Hosea obeyed, buying his wife back with fifteen shekels of silver and some barley (verse 2). This loyal love, undeterred by Gomer's unfaithfulness, God meant as a picture of His own love for His wayward, idolatrous people.

Hosea prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah and the last six kings in Israel. Isaiah was a contemporary prophet, and he used some very strong language to describe Judah's unfaithfulness. Through Isaiah, God calls Jerusalem "a whore" (Isaiah 1:21, ESV) because of her spiritual unfaithfulness. The people were

interested only in pleasure (Isaiah 5:11-12) and had forgotten things like justice and righteousness in favor of violence and chaos (Isaiah 5:7). Through Isaiah, God speaks passionately about His love for Judah, calling them a vineyard that should have yielded a beautiful crop but instead yielded only “wild grapes” (Isaiah 5:1-2), nothing of value.

God says through Hosea that Israel had left Him to cherish “prostitution, wine and new wine” (Hosea 4:11), and He makes it clear that both the men and the women were committing adultery with cultic prostitutes in worship of false gods (verse 12). Gomer was a fitting symbol of Israel because of the sexual nature of the idolatry that the people were practicing. Their spiritual adultery was resulting in actual, physical adultery. Such ritual prostitution was a common method of worshiping Baal.

Hosea says that God will remove the names of the Baals from Israel’s mouth and betroth her to Him forever, in righteousness and justice, in steadfast love and mercy (Hosea 2:17, 19). God will heal them by His own power (Hosea 14:4-7). These passages foreshadow the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit dwelling in us is who keeps us from following Israel’s bad example and straying from the Lord.

The metaphors of prostitution and adultery are used repeatedly throughout Scripture to describe unfaithfulness to the Lord. Many of the prophets used sexual immorality as a picture of spiritual unfaithfulness to the Lord to whom the people belonged (Ezekiel 16:32; 23:27; Jeremiah 13:27). In the New Testament, similar language is employed in James 4:4 and Revelation 17:2.

Gomer’s infidelity was a symbol of Israel’s spiritual unfaithfulness, but Hosea’s

marriage to and redemption of Gomer is an enduring symbol of God's faithfulness and provisional redemption of His unfaithful people, then and now, through Jesus Christ. God's words to ancient Israel should fill us with hope today: "I will betroth you to me forever; / I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, / in love and compassion. / I will betroth you in faithfulness, / and you will acknowledge the Lord" (Hosea 2:19-20).