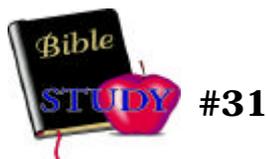


## Journey Into God's Word



II Chronicles 12, 13

Hosea 1-14

I Timothy 1-6

Dear Co-workers,

It is so easy to drift away from God in this materialistic world. Just as Hosea's wife Gomer was unfaithful to him, even so, many today are unfaithful to God. Paul states in I Timothy 6:6 that "godliness with contentment is great gain." Then in verse 10, he goes on to declare that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." It is so important that daily we strive to remain close to the Lord. As the Book of Hosea points out, the idolatry of adultery involves loving other things more than God. Even as this takes place, God in His love pursues those who have left Him just as Hosea sought the return of his adulterous wife Gomer. What steps are you taking daily to live in the awareness of God's presence?

Daily the reality of God's love is everywhere. Like firecrackers dropped at our feet, He places the wonders of His creation all around us. Yet many see these wonders only as natural resources to be consumed for personal satisfaction. The most beautiful flower can bloom before them, yet they never notice. Life becomes the pursuit of more and more and more. Creation has lost its sense of awe and the God of creation is no longer acknowledged. To such a people the Creator would say, "The Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: There is no faithfulness, no love, and no acknowledgement of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying."(Hosea 4:1-3) "A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God."(Hosea 4:12) This desire for more and more is a desire to consume at all costs. Why do you think it is referred to as "a spirit of prostitution in Hosea 4:12 and Hosea 5:4? "For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many

foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.”(I Tim. 6:7-9) As Hosea 4:14 says, “a people without understanding will come to ruin!”

Real contentment lies in the fact that God loves us and has a purpose for our lives. Paul puts it this way. “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.” (I Tim. 1:15-17) Wow, we are talking about more than contentment. We are talking about a calling! God has redeemed you and me from sin and now He has called us to “display His unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life.” Now we must “fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.” (I Tim. 1:18,19)

God has called you and entrusted you with a very important work. As an overseer of that work that He has entrusted you with, scripture says you must be “temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.” (I Tim. 3:2,3) What other directives are given in I Timothy 3 for those who are involved in the work of the Lord? As you desire to be all that God has called you to be, remember you are not alone. “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all.” (I Timothy 2:5,6)

As we are reminded that Jesus is our mediator, we are also told to pray for those in authority. As we study II Chronicles 12,13 we see examples of the problems that are brought upon a nation because of ungodly leaders. King Rehoboam was an example of such. II Chron. 12:14 says, “He did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord.” What impact did this have on the nation of Israel according to II Chronicles 10-12? According to II Chronicles 13, how did God deliver King Abijah and the nation of Judah when they cried out to the Lord? “I urge, then first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.”(I Tim. 2:1-4) Paul was not asking believers to agree with those in authority. After all, he spoke these words when the notoriously cruel emperor Nero was in control. Paul

was telling believers to pray for those in authority in order that they may be saved. Why do you believe it is important for believers to do that at this time in our nation's history?

“Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity...devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.”(I Tim. 4:12-14) What gift or gifts do you believe that God has given you?

Now it is urgent that we “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called. (I Tim. 6:11,12) “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”(I Tim.6: 17-19) God desires for His people to pursue that which really matters. That is why He is telling us now to “sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until He comes and showers righteousness on you.” (Hosea 10:12) Here Hosea is showing us why we must let the word of God be planted in our lives. The unplowed ground of our hearts is broken up as we acknowledge our sins and let God's forgiveness and grace direct us. In every area of our lives we “must return to God; maintain love and justice and wait for God always.”(Hosea 12:6) Love and justice are the very foundation of God's character and must be the central focus of our lives.

As we desire to seek and serve the Lord, we can be assured He will be with us both now and for all eternity. God is faithful and He has promised He will never leave us nor forsake us. As we trust “God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light,”(I Tim 6:15,16) we can be assured He will keep us both now and for all eternity. “For He has promised, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave is your destruction?”(Hosea 13:14) What assurance do you find in this promise which Paul explains further in I Corinthians 15:50-57?

This week let us continue our study of God's word as we read together II Chronicles 14-24, Joel 1-3, II Timothy 1-4. Now the Word of God declares, "Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them." (Hosea 14:9) Let us continue to live in the ways of the Lord, striving to be the righteous people He is calling forth at this time.

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice