

Faith, Hope and Love- The Greatest Is Love

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The comparative language here must not be misunderstood as love being the best. Love is the greatest here because love is the motivator for our faith and hope. Love is the backbone of faith and hope. Faith and hope are twins; where there is faith, there is hope. The Bible says that God loved the world that He had faith and hope that the world will be saved. Similarly, a man who marries begins with love. His love gives him faith to believe that he can win his beloved. This gives him hope to pursue his love for her.

There is a beautiful story in the Old Testament about a man who loved a woman even though she was unworthy of his love. This is a rather uncommon story. Hosea is a prophet because God called him not only to prophesy but also to live out His messages. Hosea was living at a time when Israel was backslidden. Israel once knew God, loved Him and followed Him but because of the influence of the surrounding nations, she turned away from Him. God told Hosea, whose name means "salvation" or "deliverance," that he was to live out God's message to Israel.

The Lord told Hosea to marry an adulterous woman. He therefore went and took Gomer to be his wife. After a while, they had a child and God told Hosea to call his son "Jezreel" which means, "I will bring judgment if Israel continues to sin" (Hosea 1:2-4). God used Hosea's life to depict His message to Israel. As Christians, we too are to live out God's message to the world. We cannot separate our words and our lifestyles. This is a powerful way to see our loved ones come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Let your life demonstrate what you believe. The Bible tells us that we are all sinners, unworthy and unfit, but God, in His great love, reached out and redeemed us. In one sense, the moment we receive Jesus Christ and become children of God, we have entered into a marriage covenant with God, but if we turn our backs on God and choose our gods, we are committing spiritual adultery. Therefore Gomer, Hosea's adulterous wife, was God's reminder to Israel that she had turned her back on God. Gomer, after marrying Hosea the prophet, soon fell back into her old habit of adultery, conceiving children through her adulterous relationship (Hosea 1:6, 8).

God told Hosea to name the daughter "Lo-Ruhamah" which means "I will no longer show love" (Hosea 1:6). After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son and the Lord said to call him "Lo-Ammi" which means "You are not mine" (Hosea 1:9). Here, "Lo" means "no" or "not". Gomer left Hosea and went after her lovers (Hosea 2:5). One may encourage Hosea to give up on his unfaithful wife but he did not do that because of his love for her.

How do we win a backslider, the ungrateful, the unworthy and the prodigal family member or friend? Through faith, hope and love; and the greatest is love. Evangelism must be done with the love of God. Paul said, "For Christ's love compels me to preach the gospel." Evangelism must be done with God's power and strength, and it is the love of God in us that will touch the sinner and draw him back to God. This was what had been missing in the prophets Jonah's life. He was lacking in God's love for the lost in Nineveh.

How can we have God's love? Romans 5:5 tells us that "hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given to us." This is why it is so important that you be full of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who will help you live the Christ-like life. He will enable you to go to the world and reach out to the sinners.

What did Hosea do to win back Gomer? God said to him, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin-cakes" (Hosea 3:1). Hosea allowed the love of God to work in his life. He used the chords of love to teach Gomer. He allured her and spoke tenderly to her. When her lovers sold her, Hosea bought her back (Hosea 3:2). He then called the children "Ruhamah" meaning "I will have mercy" and "Ammi" meaning "You are my people." When the love of God was shown to Gomer, the adulterous woman, two things happened to her. She left her lovers and was reconciled with her husband, Hosea (Hosea 3:2). Faith, hope and love; the greatest is love. If we desire to see sinners come into the Kingdom of God, we need to hold out the chords of love like Hosea did. When the love of God works in our lives, sinners will be convicted and come back to Him.

Is love the motivation? Seek for the fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit on your life. Jesus says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes to you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

(All the above quotations are from the New International Version)