# NEW HOPE FOR A NEW YEAR

**Hosea 2:14-23**

# OUTLINE

As you conclude another year, what does God want from you?

1. God wants to have an **encounter** with you. (v.14)
2. God wants to **transform** you. (v.15-17)
3. God wants to **bless** you. (v.18-23)
   1. God brings **peace** (v.18)
   2. God brings His **covenant** relationship. (v.19-20)
   3. God brings **mercy** and **forgiveness** (v 23)

# INTRODUCTION

Good morning! I hope you had a wonderful Christmas yesterday morning! I’m not sure what Christmas is like in your home, but in my home it begins early! Every family has a different preference for what time they like to get things rolling. Some like to sleep in; others like a nice breakfast to start the day; others embrace the quiet before extended family arrives and gifts begin to be opened. But in my house, we get right to opening gifts early.

And by “early,” I mean 5:30am. Yes, every kid in my home was awake by 5:30am! Now before you become concerned for Emma and I’s sanity, understand that we both are usually already awake by that time on any given day. Them waking up at 5:30am is just a half hour earlier than the time they usually awake, which is 6:00am. Coming over to our house at 6:00am is like walking into an airport at the same time: it’s bustling!

But we did enjoy opening gifts. We also read the Christmas story, we prayed, and we sang Christmas hymns together. It was a relaxing day. I hope the same was true for you.

But here we are now the day after Christmas. For some this is a day of relief. For others it’s a reminder that life moves on. We can come out of the limelight of Christmas much like we come out of a movie theater on a sunny day - disoriented and struck by the sudden transition back to

ordinary life. Many of us have no concrete plans for the day, the week, the month, and certainly not the year ahead! Has anyone here already planned out their entire month of January? All our planning brought us up to Christmas Day!...But now that’s past us. It’s in the rearview mirror.

What’s before us now is a New Year. New year’s typically bring hopes of new habits, new disciplines, new practices, letting go of past bad ways of living and embracing new, good ways of living. Of course, the older you get, the more you reject the notion of writing out New Year’s Resolutions.

Unless you’re superman or superwomen, you’ve learned that making new, audacious and lofty goals rarely pans out the way you’d like.

***Yet I think the reason we as a culture are so drawn to drawing new lines in the sand is because of a deep conviction that next year has to be better than last year.*** This morning I want to talk specifically to the person in this room who is disappointed by the way they lived in 2021. For clarity's sake, I want to talk to the person who’s disappointed by their walk with God this past year. You may feel no closer to Him than last year; you may even feel further away. You may have allowed a sin to fester, slowly deadening your passion for your Savior. You may sense that much of the year was in Christian-cruise-control, no new faith ventures and little new ground taken for the Lord. You may simply feel like you let God down; you know He wanted more commitment and obedience, but you just weren’t able to show up.

***The first reaction of the flesh when we feel this way is to hastily say we’re going to get our act together and make things right!*** So we make resolutions; we draw those lines in the sand, and say, “No more!” But we all know that such impulsive reactions and superficial repentance rarely leads to true change.

If we want true and lasting change in 2021, we need to come to God and ask Him what He wants. That’s what I want us to do with our remaining time. Let’s go to God together and ask Him where we go from here - ***let’s ask Him what He wants.***

This morning we are opening to my favorite book of the Bible - the book of Hosea. Hosea is the first of the twelve minor prophets, following Ezekiel and Daniel. He prophesied during the 8th Century B.C, during the tragic fall of Israel’s Northern Kingdom. Hosea doesn’t beat around the bush regarding Israel’s apostasy and idol worship. He blatantly calls out their evil.

But what makes his ministry especially unique is that God called him to marry a prostitute! Why you might ask? He does this in order to represent the reality of God’s relationship with corrupt Israel. The picture is meant to depict a rebellious and contrary people, fickle in heart, and quick to break their marriage bond with God. Yet the resounding theme of the book is that of God’s steadfast love for His people. When they were quick to leave Him, He maintained His covenant love like that found in marriage. And in that He maintains His promise of redemption and restoration.

# BODY

This is what God wants, and I want us to see it in Hosea 2:14-23. As you conclude another year, what does God want? Let’s get our first answer from studying v.14. *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.”* God is the one speaking, and He’s referring to Israel. He’s speaking of Israel as the rebellious woman to whom He’s married.

You will notice the sentence begins with “therefore.” This is referring back to the previous verses regarding Israel’s apostasy. Chapter 2 up to this point specifies Israel’s sin and coming punishment. God makes it very clear that significant disciplining is coming for the nation. They will be exiled from their land. But v.14 reveals the purpose of this exile: ***To draw Israel back to God in love.***

Look at what God is doing in this verse: He is “alluring” Israel. In other words, He is wooing her. Guys, can you remember back to the early days of your relationship with your wife, when you were trying to win her love?

Remember the things you would do to get her to notice you, to take an interest in you? You would act informally and nonchalant around everyone else, but when that special girl walked into the room, you immediately began giving special attention to her. (Now hopefully you are still doing that today!)

But that is the kind of way God is speaking here to Israel! He’s sweetly getting her attention and calling her to join Him in the wilderness. Why? So that He can speak tenderly to her. This is profound! Normally, when you pull someone aside, you do so to speak critically and harshly. That’s the natural reaction of the flesh.

Dads, when your son is having a bad baseball game, you take an opportunity to pull him aside. Usually in that moment what we want to do in our frustration is communicate what they’ve done wrong and what they need to change! Yet, our Heavenly Father is different! He wants to pull us aside to speak kind and compassionate words. He knows our hearts are already well aware of our sin and quite marred because of it. It’s true though, that if anyone did deserve a lecture, it was Israel! And you may feel the same way today. If God were to pull you aside, He’d want to give you a lecture of all your failings. But that is not what God is after. That’s not the spirit with which God wants to come to us.

***What is God wanting? God is wanting an encounter with you.*** Yes, this isn’t just for Israel. Paul tells us you’ve been grafted into God’s people through faith in Christ, and therefore God’s love for you is the same as His love for Israel. God is calling Israel away from what is normal in order to have a special encounter with her. In the same way, God wants to call you away from what’s normal in order to have a special encounter with Him.

Why do you have to get away from what’s normal? Because God has a hard time getting your attention there. We are far too distracted by life’s daily occurrences to truly hear the voice of God not only speaking but bringing conviction to our hearts. If you had something important and challenging to say to a friend, you wouldn’t do it while over the phone or

while shopping at the mall. No, you would take them out to a restaurant or on a long car ride. God knows that if He’s really going to get Israel’s attention, He has to take them out of what’s normal.

If you feel this past year was a spiritual disappointment for you, I believe God wants to take you away from what is normal to have an encounter with Him. What’s so incredible and attractive about God is He does this by wooing us with kind words of love. ***When there is strife or disappointment in a relationship, kind words have a way of melting the walls of separation.***

I can remember back to my childhood when my Dad really wanted me to give a travel baseball team a try. I was apprehensive about playing with other great baseball players, most of which were older than me, but I decided I would go for it. The first game I played right field. I had two errors, one of which was a routine fly ball I dropped. I also went 0-4 and struck out 3 of 4 times. I remember the players looking at me as if I didn’t belong. I assumed my Dad felt the same. As he approached me after the game, I was ready to hear the disapproval, but to my surprise he said, “Don’t let a silly game like that get you down. No single game defines who you are, and I’ll always love you the same no matter what. C’mon, let’s go grab an ice cream cone.” I immediately let that game go and happily went off with my Dad.

***Such grace and unbroken approval is an invitation.*** This is what God’s grace is to us after a disappointing year - it warmly invites us away with Him! He doesn’t judge us; He speaks tenderly to us! He doesn’t criticize us; He welcomes us. Psalm 103:10 says, *“He doesn’t deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.”* It’s the reason Hebrews 4:16 says we can with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” He graciously invites you, He allures you, at the close of this year to come to Him. He wants an encounter with you, just as you are.

## God wants to transform you. (v.15-17)

But of course an encounter with Jesus never leaves us walking away the same. God’s desire for us to encounter Him doesn’t end with an experience. ***It’s supposed to end with transformation.*** Jesus’ transfiguration on the mountain before Peter, James, and John wasn’t meant mainly for identification of Jesus, but mainly for transformation that makes them like Jesus! Yes, God wants an encounter, but the encounter makes way for the second thing God wants: transformation. ***God wants to transform you.***

One of the main ways Jesus begins to transform us is to show us a better way than the way we had been going. He says in v.15 that He will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. “Achor” literally means “trouble” in Hebrew, and it appears in just one other place in the Scriptures: Joshua 7:26. For those who can remember, Joshua 7 is about the sin of Achan. Following the victory at Jericho, God made it very clear to devote the entire city to destruction. Israel was to take nothing from the city, but one man, Achan, took and hid several valuables he found in the city.

God let Joshua know that Israel had sinned. In fact God even goes to say, *“I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.”* This one man’s sin created an impasse, a wall, that prevented Israel from moving forward in the presence and blessing of the Lord. This is what sin does, right? It removes our intimacy with God. It’s like a stiff-arm that keeps God at a distance from actively ruling and transforming our lives.

Thankfully God was able to lead the nation to uncover Achan as the one responsible for the sin. So they took him out to a valley, called the Valley of Achor in v.24, where, quite sadly, they stoned him and his family to death. This was the way at this time for Israel to purge the sin from their presence. It enabled God to move forward with them!

In Hosea 2:15, ***God says He wants to transform our valleys of trouble into doors of hope.*** God shows us a better way, a way of hope, a way in which He promises to move forward with us! But it comes with a cost. ***That cost is purging the evil within us.*** The picture of stoning Achan is a

picture for us of stoning our own sin in our lives. This is what Jesus calls us to do, right? He calls us to crucify, or mortify, our own flesh - that part of us that is of this world and leads us into sin. Galatians 5:24 says, *“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* This is a call for us to forsake the sins in our lives.

In the time of Hosea, Israel was caught up in Baal worship. Hosea 2:8 says, *“Israel did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.”* And in v.13, *“And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals…”* Baal was a Cannanite deity who was a god of fertility. More than any other idol, Israel struggled most with worship of this one. Yet the first commandment says in Exodus 20, *“You shall have no other gods before me!”*

How do we experience transformation? We must forsake the gods in our lives. This is anything that we give our hearts affections to instead of God. These are sinful things that prevent our worship and love for God.

Forsaking these things is what God wants!

Thankfully, according to our text, this is something God helps us with. V.17 says, *“For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more.”* This is something that God wants to do! This is a transformation inside the heart, something only God can truly affect.

But let’s be sure we get the order right. We do not first forsake our idols. We first come to Jesus. We first need an encounter. ***The encounter is what enables our forsaking of the idols. Here’s the truth: You will never let go of what you love unless you first find a greater love.*** Your encounter with God is what deepens your love for Him. Until this love is rekindled, you will never find Christ’s power within you to forsake your idols.

***This shows that at the very core of true transformation is one word: LOVE.*** This is why spiritual transformation is somewhat a mystery because only God can deepen your love for Him. And He does it by calling you away with Him! This is why personal encounters with Him are so important. This is why quiet times are so important.

You cannot manufacture or force God’s arm to be transformed. The picture is much more like holding out your arms with a bucket in your hands. You can’t fill the bucket; only God can. But everyday He invites you to put out the bucket under the waterfall of His grace. You can’t be filled unless you put your bucket out. And God promises that when we do, He will fill us. This is the Holy Spirit’s job. Romans 5:5 promises us, *“...and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”*

Do you see the progression in this verse? God leads us away with Him. He shows us a better way: He wants to take away the valley of trouble and make it a door of hope. Romans 5:5 says this hope does not put us to shame. Why? Because God’s goal in this moment is to fill us with His love through the Holy Spirit.

This is what the New Covenant in Christ is meant to do: Change us from the core of our beings - our hearts. In fact, Hosea 2 is prophesying this very fulfillment. God can take away our idols and give us a greater love for Him because Jesus has broken down the wall caused by our sin. God can now live in our hearts and change us through and through. This is the door of hope in Christ. God wants to transform you, and it comes by way of encountering Him.

## God wants to bless you. (v.18-23)

But there is one last thing from this passage that God wants. It’s found in v.18-23, and it’s the result of the transformation God wants to bring. God wants to bless you. His blessing is three-fold in this passage. It starts with the **perfect peace** of v.18 - *“And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping*

*things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety.”*

This verse has a now and not yet fulfillment. With the coming of Christ, this perfect peace was inaugurated with the Spirit’s peace coming to reside in us. Galatians 5:23 tells us one of the fruits of the Spirit is peace. But this verse also speaks of a peace still to come at Christ’s second coming. ***Now we have internal peace no matter the external chaos, but in the latter days God will also bring a perfect external peace.*** *Now* our world is at war. Bitterness and anger rule the day. Injustice grieves the heart and oppression wounds the soul. But there will come a future day when Christ promises to make all things new. This verse says there will be no killing of any kind in Christ’s eternal Kingdom.

When we choose to respond to Christ’s voice, seek after encounters with Him, and be filled with His love, we get to live in light of this coming perfect peace. We won’t be searching for a worldly peace now; we will be longing for a perfect peace with Christ. Knowing that this is coming, we will face our tragedies differently. We will endure hardship differently. We won’t be overcome with frustration when things don’t go our way now. Why?

Because a perfect peace will one day overcome all sadness and bring rest to our souls.

***The other blessing here is that of Christ’s covenant relationship.*** V.19 speaks of the unique relationship God has with His people. Indeed, there are many relationships God has with us revealed throughout Scripture. He is our Father. He is our brother. He is our friend. He is our King. He is our Lord. But perhaps none confound the soul like what is shared here. ***He is our husband.*** There is no more intimate relationship than that of a husband and a wife. There is no greater expression of love than that of a husband and wife. There is no greater sacrifice willing to be offered than that of a husband for a wife or a wife for a husband. And yet here Christ says, *“I will betroth you to me forever.”*

God is literally saying, “I promise to forever and unconditionally commit myself to you in love, intimacy, and care.” ***The result of this relationship at the end of v.20 is that “you shall know the Lord.”*** You’re going to know the heart of God, the mind of God, the wisdom of God, the ways of God better than you ever did before! When God covenants Himself to you, He opens everything to you!

Your connection to God is so intimate that He comes to live inside you! What happens here is that it’s no longer you who lives, but Christ lives in you! Galatians 2:20 says, “*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”* As you die and He lives, what happens is that you learn what it means to truly live.

***The last blessing mentioned here is the mercy of God.*** At the beginning of Hosea in chapter 1, God told Hosea to marry a prostitute named Gomer. Gomer had three sons, and God told Hosea what the names of these three children should be: The first is ***Jezreel***, which in the Hebrews means, “God will sow.” Here God intends to sow discord and discipline for Israel. The second child is ***No Mercy***, because God will have no mercy on the house of Israel. The last child’s name is ***Not My People,*** because God says, *“You are not my people, and I am not your God.”* From this passage alone, it seems that God intends to make a full end of His people and to totally disassociate Himself from them. It seems that God is saying that your sins have so separated you from me that there’s nothing else that can be done.

If God’s level of intervention with His people didn’t change, then this was very much true. Nothing could be done. Sin is such a serious offense that no matter how much Israel or you and I were disciplined by God, it would never be enough to finally get us back on track and in right standing with God. We would never be good enough.

***So God needed to further involve Himself in the affairs of humanity by doing the unthinkable: becoming one of them Himself.*** The miracle of the incarnation, which we celebrated yesterday on Christmas, is what was

necessary to begin to right the wrong of humanity’s sin problem. What we needed after the first Adam’s failure was a second Adam who would perfectly walk in all the ways of God. This would enable Him to be a perfect and worthy sacrifice on our behalf. Jesus could then rightly go to the cross and bear the sins of mankind. Jesus took our sins and then gave to us His perfect righteousness, the full result of His right-living and sinlessness for 33 years on earth.

He did what we could never do ourselves: He lived a perfect life and then died in our place. ***This perfect act of humility and sacrifice becomes our greatest blessing because it restores our broken relationship with God.*** Where Isaiah 59:2 says that our sins have made a separation between us and God, Jesus removed the sin and repaired that separation.

As a result, our relationship status changes. V.23, which is a prophecy of the New Covenant in Christ, tells of that status change: *“And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people;’ and he will say, ‘You are my God.’”* → Christ’s death and resurrection changes everything in our relationship with God.

It alone is the reason you get up to face another day. It alone is the reason you can find forgiveness for all your sins. ***In fact, your forgiveness in Christ is your freedom to be a different person tomorrow.*** You can strive in your strength to be a better person till you’re blue in the face but if you don't sense the weight of Christ’s forgiveness in your heart, you cannot fully be free. You will remain a slave of sin and a slave of good intentions that always go awry.

# CONCLUSION

This passage is ultimately about the grace of the Lord. It’s the greatest blessing that you need. ***And even if you’re a seasoned Christian, you have to live in forgiveness’ power.*** It’s the reason why God wants to continually have encounters with you, continually transform you, and continually bring blessing to your life.

The reality is our flesh is a constant force that wants to drive us away from God, away from His transformation, and away from His blessing. As you come into a new year, don’t let Satan and your own self have it’s way any longer. Hear the alluring call of the Savior. Go away with Him to seek an encounter. Let Him shower you with grace and forgiveness. Let Him remind you of what Christ accomplished! Let Him transform your valley of trouble into a door of hope. Let Him show you a better way! And may your peace flow like a river! May your intimacy with Jesus grow like never before, and may His forgiveness free you to be a changed person in 2022!

**CLOSING PRAYER BENEDICTION** - Hosea 14:4-7