

LIVE YOUR LOVE STORY

Many couples have a song, the one that reminds them of their beginning or some significant happening. Do you have that with Jesus? Is there a song that plays and reminds you of a time when your relationship with Him grew deeper? Mine is “Oh, How He Loves Us.” That song never ceases to move me when I hear it or remind me of how He just kept pouring His love upon me until I was finally convinced.

Though I now have many songs that remind me of something new He taught me or how He delivered me through a trial, I still hear the same words resound with every tune: You. Are. Loved. That’s always the overarching theme no matter the melody of the song. It’s a reminder of my Love story.

His Reckless Love

Every heart longs for its own love story; that’s especially true of women. It begins at an early age as we follow the story of our favorite Disney princess and her journey to find her prince. We begin our own story by waiting and watching for our prince to come. Our expectation is that when we find that man, *the* man, we will be satisfied and fulfilled and our life-long waiting will be over. That’s the stuff of daydreams but not how it works in reality. Would you agree?

We took an early look at this concept in Live Your Hearts Desire, so I won’t repeat those same ideas. What we will do instead is look at this from God’s perspective based on the lyrics He gave us.

I love when I find a “so that” in Scripture. I watch for them. They are places where God’s Word shows a pattern of how He will do one thing “so that” something else can or will happen.

Isaiah 61 has a “so that” that has become significant to me and my journey with Him. Verses one, two, and part of three tell us what Jesus will do: preach, heal, liberate, free prisoners, comfort, console, give beauty for ashes, trade joy for mourning, and replace a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Then a shift comes at the end of verse three. Jesus will do all those things so that: “They may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” Verse four goes on to tell all they (we) will do in rebuilding, raising up, and repairing.

He does mighty work within me so that I can do mighty things for Him. I’m a doer. You may be too. The doing isn’t the point, though. Why can’t I ever get that? Yes, He does all those things, and because He does, I am able to, in turn, serve and meet the needs of others. But His point, His first intention, is to make and keep me His.

His Reckless Example

I use Bible Gateway, an online resource for scripture and commentary. It’s my one-stop-shop for when I’m working and don’t have my Bible nearby. One morning I used it to pull up the first chapter in the book of Hosea and the header said: “Hosea’s Unfaithful Wife.” It doesn’t say that in my Bible, so it made me pause.

I’ve never much considered things from Hosea’s standpoint, but that header sure evoked imagery of what must have been his pain. I’ve heard preachers point out how rare and humiliating it was in Hosea’s day for him to have chosen such a wife. What I noticed with a new perspective was much deeper than the rarity or humiliation of choosing a wayward wife; I saw heartbreak. It’s a sad beginning to their story.

“Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing

from the LORD.” (Hosea 1:2)

Hosea didn't get a great shot at his love story. Sure, he was a prophet and servant of God, but he was still a man. What man would want to devote his life to a woman who would keep running off and running around on him?

Because I'm a student of women, it is interesting to me that Gomer, who lived thousands of years ago, seems no different than modern-day women: She was likely a broken woman looking for that elusive thing that might fill her empty heart. We are surrounded by women like that. That may be you. It's sure been me in the past. I'm not judging Gomer or any other woman who continually seeks to fill her empty spaces through relationships with men. To me it's just another heartbreaking layer within a painful story.

Don't you wonder why God would do that to the poor guy, put Hosea through so much just to make a point? Do we even get the point on a personal level?

The final line of our verse from above is an open window that allows us to view God's heartbreak, "... for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD." The people whom God loved, the ones He called His own, had left Him. He compared their departure to that of a husband abandoned by the woman He loved. That's what He wants us to see: His love is so personal and deeply intimate for each of us that our turning away from Him is as wounding as marital betrayal.

We, the church, are no different today than the Israelites in Hosea's day. And just to be clear, I'm talking about His people, believers, not the lost world. I've played the harlot. You've played the harlot. We may not be building physical altars to Baal here, but we are sure building altars in our lives, putting any number of things or people before our relationship with Jesus. In pursuit of our own love story, we are looking in every wrong direction, taking every wrong path to get there.

This is the really heart-wrenching part to me: Jesus doesn't give up on me when I abandon Him. He doesn't give up on you. Even when we keep turning *from* Him and *to* others, He keeps pursuing. Just like Hosea kept going after Gomer, God still comes after you.

His Reckless Heart

If you listen to Christian radio, you've heard "Reckless Love" by Cory Asbury. That song slays me. It's not new anymore, but recently it's resurfaced in my mind, ever stirring in my heart. I woke one morning at 3:00 a.m. with the chorus ringing in my head:

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God.
Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine.
I couldn't earn it, and I don't deserve it, still, You give Yourself away.
Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God.

It's no surprise the chorus is penetrating my soul. For three mornings in a row it was the first song that played when I listened to music. That wasn't by chance, and it got my attention. The next day, I told everyone in my meeting what had been happening. When I got in my car to leave, it was the first song that came on! Not by chance. Not by accident. Not by some random shuffle of music. Jesus, through that song, is chasing me down *again* to make a point. The point? He is the point!

In Hosea we see a portrait of God's devotion to His people that's overwhelming and never-ending and, to some, may seem reckless.

From our human standpoint, if we were to see a man pursuing a woman who just isn't that into him, if we watched him chase after her time and again and continually show her signs of affection and never-ending love with no affection in return from her, we would at

first feel sorry for him. After a while, however, most of us would just think it reckless behavior on his part. I mean, come on, he should just give up and get over her, right?

If you ask me, it's never made a lick of sense how Jesus has pursued me over the years. Why didn't He just give up?

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary online defines the word reckless as: *marked by lack of proper caution; careless of consequences*. Regardless of the consequence of heartbreak, reckless love maintains the pursuit. That means no matter what we do to Jesus, no matter how we run, no matter how we place Him on the sidelines of our lives, His love never changes; it continually pursues and never gives up. That's what Love does. Girl, that's the Love story your heart is longing for.

In my quiet time, I wrote this note in my Bible above Hosea 2: *What You were willing to do to make me Yours*. The verses in this chapter are a long narrative of all the ways God tried to get his people's attention in order to turn their hearts back to Him. The passage is also an accurate portrayal of all the means He's used to get my attention and turn my heart back to Him when I've gotten off course over the years. He stripped me and exposed me to myself (v. 3). He slayed me with thirst so that nothing would satisfy (v. 3). He hedged up my way, blocked my every direction, and walled me in (v. 6) until I said, "I will go and return to my first husband for then it was better for me than now" (v. 7). He uncovered my lewdness (v. 10). He refused to allow anyone to deliver me from His hand (v. 10).

In view of all He has done to pursue me (and you), this is where the bridge of the "Reckless Love" song comes in:

There's no shadow You won't light up,
Mountain You won't climb up,
Coming after me.
There's no wall You won't kick down,
Lie You won't tear down,
Coming after me.

Jesus has been relentless in His pursuit of me. Verses 14-16 in Hosea 2 speak of God alluring (powerfully attracting) her (Israel) into the wilderness so that He could speak comfort over her. That's exactly what He did to me. In a time of my greatest weakness after a disastrous season of my life, He lit up every dark place, climbed up every mountain, and kicked down every wall in His pursuit of me. He drew me away to the wilderness, to a place where I could finally hear and see and know Him. He showed me that He is and will always be my Love story.

"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you."
(Jeremiah 31:3)

Only Love would so recklessly pursue a woman like me, one filled with harlotry.

That's not you, though, right? I mean, you're a good church girl. You're not *out* playing the harlot. But have you ever considered maybe you're *in* playing the harlot? Anything that takes away your sincere devotion to Jesus is what the Bible calls harlotry. Anything you put in first place is an idol. Idol worship is harlotry. Your husband, kids, home, job, school, boyfriend, friends, social schedule, social media presence are all good things, but when they are in the wrong place in your heart you slip from devoted "wife" to harlot, just like Gomer.

That's hard to hear, huh? Maybe He will use the book of Hosea and this topic to allure you into the wilderness so that He can speak comfort over you. Is this your time to come away with Him and journey to your own Love story?

His Reckless Pursuit

I have always fixated on the “so that” in Isaiah 61, believing He will fix me up to put me to work. But the “so that” in Hosea is now glaringly obvious: The reason He has gone to so much trouble to chase me down is to make me His!

Jesus and my relationship to Him is the point!

I've known that. I've acknowledged it. I've taught it. But only now do I own it in a way that shakes the very foundation of who I am.

I have personally experienced what the verses in Hosea talks about. He was willing to: strip me and expose me, slay me with thirst, hedge, block, and wall me in. Ultimately, He refused to allow anyone to deliver me from His hand.

The later verse from Hosea 2 says it all:

“And it shall be, in that day,” says the LORD, “That you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer call Me ‘My Master.’”

(Hosea 2:16)

He wanted to create between us, as implied by the husband imagery, the most intimate of all relationships. First and foremost He wants my heart, for me to be absolutely and irrevocably His.

Chasing me: Like Hosea with Gomer, Jesus keeps coming after me time after time. His reckless love, not concerned with the consequences of how I still break His heart, patiently and persistently pursues me to keep me continually surrendering to and focusing only on my Love story.

Chasing you: Like Hosea with Gomer, Jesus keeps coming after you time after time. His reckless love, not concerned with the consequences of how you still break His heart, patiently and persistently pursues you to keep you continually surrendering to and focusing on your own Love story.

Want to know why He keeps doing that? Because His love for you is so completing and so perfectly able to fulfill the longing of a woman's heart. He knows being intimate with Him is your ultimate good, and He will do whatever it takes to get you there.

I hope you take some time to allow the truth of this to settle in and make the impact it should. This should rock your world and shift your way of thinking in such a way that you just stop—stop running, stop chasing after the empty things of this world. Let Him catch you.

Your Reckless Response

Through the “Reckless Love” song playing repeatedly, Jesus wanted to remind me how all of His pursuing me over the years was done so that He could make me His, and not just so that I could be busy doing His work. He was warning me that I was focusing so much on my business and ministry that it would be easy to become caught up in the work and forget the relationship.

After all the effort He's put into chasing me down, He's not going to stand idly by and allow me to slip away. Remember Hosea 2:10 said, “And no one shall deliver her from My hand.” Even good things like ministry can't come between me and Jesus. I have to remember the “my Husband” relationship trumps the “my Master” relationship; the being is more important than the doing. Without the being, the doing will always be off balance.

Jesus illustrated this in Luke 10:38-42 when Martha, the epitome of a doer, got frustrated with her sister Mary, who was content to just be with Jesus. He admonished Martha by saying, “Mary has chosen what is better” (v. 42 NIV).

Consider with me a woman with both traits, one with the heart to *be* like Mary and the hands to *do* like Martha. Now that's a force to be reckoned with, a woman after God's own heart who can love and serve with reckless abandon. I wanna be her. Do you?

LIVE YOUR LOVE SONG TAKEAWAY

LOOK WITHIN:

Do you have what you would consider a love story with Jesus, a time when His love became real to you? Do you have “your song” with Him?

Do you seek human love as your ultimate love story?

How does the idea of God loving you recklessly, meaning no matter the consequences to His heart, make you feel?

In what ways has God had to chase you down? Your answer may be an external or internal chase.

KEY POINTS:

- Every human heart longs for its own Love story.
- We, the Church, still practice harlotry and set up idols.
- God never gives up in His pursuit of you.
- The point of the chase is for Him to make you His.

PRACTICE THE DANCE:

How can you apply the Key Points of this chapter to your day-to-day life and to your day today?

LEARN THE LYRICS:

Read Isaiah 61. The early verses are the ones that speak of Jesus' healing and freedom over your life. Verses 3b-11 contain all the "so that" statements. Consider all the good God has planned for those who know His freedom. Note your observations or key passages here:

Read Hosea 2:1-16. The imagery may be difficult for you to relate to, but as you pray and seek guidance from the Spirit, allow your mind to view yourself in these passages and how they might apply to you. Note phrases that speak of how God has dealt with you in order to make you His.

In what ways have you set up idols for yourself (even good things)?

Recall a time when you've turned back to God after a time away.

What does verse 10 tell you about God's relentlessness?

Can you recall a wilderness season when God removed distractions in order to get your attention focused on Him?

NEXT STEPS:

- If you don't have one, find your own love song with Jesus.
- Dissect the lyrics of the song you find. How does it tell your Love story?
- I challenge you to set aside time each day when you only listen to praise and worship music.

STRIKES A CHORD:

What have you learned through this topic that requires further reflection?

OUT OF TUNE

Are there areas of your life that are out of balance with God's Word? These may be actions, attitudes, or areas of yourself you are withholding from His touch. If so, will you commit to pray and allow His truth to dispel any lies you are holding onto?

SING YOUR OWN SONG:

The beginning line of "Reckless Love" is: "Before I spoke a word, You were singing over me." Use this as the beginning line of your own love song back to Jesus. Begin here and continue in your journal.
