



Pastor's Francis Update

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Imagine God as a jilted lover or a distraught father. Not the typical symbols we think of when we think of our Heavenly Father, but we find these illustrated in the book of Hosea.

Years back I read a book by Philip Yancey called *Disappointment with God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud*, which dealt with these analogies, and I found them fascinating. Here are some scattered thoughts.

The book of Hosea is about spiritual adultery. You cannot escape the fact that this Old Testament book is about Israel's constant love affair with other gods! God gives humanity His gift of love and we constantly throw it back in His face, whoring after other pleasures and distractions.

Mysteriously, three-quarters through the book we find a remarkable passage about parenting. For ten chapters, God talks about being a spurned and jilted lover, jealous for our affections, and then in chapter eleven (vv. 1-4) God begins to reminisce: *"When Israel was a child, I loved him... taught them to walk."* (CEV)

Like a doting parent, the Lord remembers when He taught His children to walk. Is there ever a more exciting time for a parent than watching their child take their first steps?

But in chapter 11, vv.7-8, God says, *"My people are determined to reject me for a god they think is stronger.... I can't let you go. I can't give you up."* (CEV)

After ten chapters of an R-rated story of prostitution and betrayal, God now uses the metaphor of a child who thumbs his nose at his dad. His dad just can't give up on him.

God wants us to feel what He feels when His love is not returned. Two of the most profound relationships humans can experience are marriage and parenthood. When your child turns his back on you and you're waiting for him to return home but it's past 3 am, that's how God feels. Or your spouse cheats on you and it's the third time despite your forgiveness on each occasion, that's how God feels.

God likens His love, in the book of Hosea, to the love between two lovers or between a father and son. He wants us to understand how He feels when we act like a serial adulterer or a rebellious teen.

In these metaphors, God is teaching us about dependence and submission. What defines a child-parent relationship better than dependence? An infant is completely dependent on her mother for her every need. On the other hand, two lovers reverse this relationship dynamic. Two lovers are completely free, but choose to give that freedom away by submitting to one another. A healthy marriage is one of submission to one another, voluntarily, out of love. In an unhealthy marriage, submission really becomes a power struggle.

God uses these two metaphors to underscore the necessary balance we must possess in our relationship with God: it's a balance of dependence and submission. And when we get unbalanced, the result is pain, distance, and loneliness.

The prophet Hosea chased after his unfaithful wife, Gomer, because his love was true. Her serial adulteries didn't stop him. Her shameful behaviour and thoughtless distractions did not convince him to give up.

God continues to chase after each of His kids, you and me, despite our waywardness. Thank God for this truth. But God's experience does, to some degree, depend on me... will the Lord experience joy or pain in my relationship with Him?

**Hymn: “My Saviours Love”
(I Stand Amazed)**

1. I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner, condemned, unclean.

Refrain:

How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior’s love for me!

2. For me it was in the garden
He prayed: “Not My will, but Thine.”
He had no tears for His own griefs,
But sweat drops of blood for mine.

3. In pity angels beheld Him,
And came from the world of light
To comfort Him in the sorrows
He bore for my soul that night.

4. He took my sins and my sorrows,
He made them His very own;
He bore the burden to Calv’ry,
And suffered and died alone.

5. When with the ransomed in glory
His face I at last shall see,
'Twill be my joy through the ages
To sing of His love for me.