

Hosea 14:9

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/hos/hos-14/hosea-149/>

Hosea urges anyone reading his prophecy to live wisely by obeying God's precepts because they are completely true, and will lead those who follow His ways to be "righteous." The way of righteousness is the path to our greatest possible fulfillment.

The chapter ends with a word on wisdom, urging anyone reading the book to live wisely: *Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them* (vs 9). The words *wise* and *discerning* describe a means by which a person can *understand* and *know* how to live in a manner that is *righteous*. The biblical idea of righteousness is to live in accordance with God's design.

God designed the world to be good; to be stewarded by humans working in harmony with God, with nature, and with one another. God's covenant with Israel reflects this standard, being summarized in terms of loving God and loving others (Matthew 22:37-39). Mutual love leads to unity and service. When we walk in God's design, it leads to our greatest fulfillment. To know God gains us the greatest experience of life. ([See our article What is Righteousness?](#)) This was asserted by Jesus in His prayer to His Father recorded in John (John 17:3). To *know* the *things* spoken by God leads us to walk His ways, which leads to our greatest possible fulfillment.

To be *discerning* means we have the ability to make sound judgment. It is about looking at things and knowing the truth about them. Discernment is always to be desired because it guides us in righteous living (Proverbs 28:7). Those with *discernment* are considered wise and knowledgeable (Proverbs 8:9, 14:6, 17:24). Therefore, those who possess *wisdom* and discernment were to understand and know the things of God, as laid out in the book of Hosea. This equips us to walk in God's ways, which aligns us with our design. It is the path not only to our own fulfillment, but it also brings life to those around us.

The reason for seeking to understand the things laid out in the book of Hosea is because *the ways of the Lord are right* (vs 9). The term translated as *ways* ("derek" in Hebrew) literally denotes a road or path. In Hosea 14, it is used figuratively to describe God's principles as found in the Bible. The *right* road leads to life, benefit, truth, and flourishing (Deuteronomy 30:15-16).

The wrong road leads to death, violence, deception, and destruction (Hosea 4:2). Since Israel chose to live in the pagan ways of exploitation, God eliminated them as an example, since they failed to perform their priestly function to show other nations a better way to live (Exodus 19:6). Jesus told His church at Ephesus something similar if they did not add love to their commendable stand for truth (Revelation 2:4-5).

The Bible tells us that there are two groups of people: those who are *righteous* and those who are wicked (Psalm 1, Proverbs 11). A *righteous* person learns to depend on God and seeks to do what is right by following His ways. A person is not *righteous* who declares their own rightness,

as the Israelites were apparently doing. A person is *righteous* if they follow God's ways of love and service toward others.

The *righteous* person follows the two great commandments, as set forth by Jesus. First, they love God with all their being, which includes believing that His ways are for our best. Second, the *righteous* person seeks the best for others, and seeks to serve their best interest in a way that pleases God, without regard to the world's opposition. Jesus summarized these two basic ideas during His ministry on earth (Matthew 22:37-39).

When he sins, the *righteous* person humbles himself before God and asks God for forgiveness. This is a by-product of a perspective of God that aligns with His revelation to us of Himself: He is a forgiving God, that desires restoration of all who will repent. He is also patient (2 Peter 3:9). However, eventually, judgment will come to those who refuse to repent. That is the case in this message of Hosea to Israel; however, even then God still holds out hope that they will repent.

Unlike a righteous person who seeks God's forgiveness, and recognizes that aligning with His ways is for our best, a wicked person is arrogant. He is a *transgressor* because he does not consider God's commands to provide his best benefit. Rather, the *transgressor* thinks he knows what is best for himself.

Accordingly, he breaks God's laws (Isaiah 1:28, Psalm 37:38). He is "selfishly ambitious" (Romans 2:8). The *righteous* person would understand that the path to greatness is through humility and obedience (1 Peter 5:5-6).

The wicked person considers the path to greatness to be through exploiting and elevating themselves above others, lording over them (Matthew 20:25-28, 1 Peter 5:3). The path of life according to God is the opposite; as Jesus said:

"...whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant..."
(Matthew 20:26b)

Thus, Hosea made clear that those who are *righteous* love God's principles and *will walk in them*. But the *transgressors* are unwise and arrogant because they consistently violate the boundary that God has established. And because they do not love God's precepts, they *will stumble in them* (vs 9). God had given Israel (and has given us) "ten thousand precepts of My law" (Hosea 8:12) in order to instruct the Israelites in the path that leads to their greatest thriving. But instead of following this path, they chose the path of pagan exploitation. They now *stumble in* God's precepts, they do not keep them, and this *stumble* has led to a culture of deception, exploitation, violence, and injustice that has swept the land (Hosea 4:2).

Obedience to God's principles allows us to follow the right path leading to life, but disobedience causes us to *stumble* and fall, as Israel did in Hosea's days. This was in accordance with God's covenant with Israel, which was laid out clearly (Deuteronomy 30:15-20). God gave Israel the choice, and clear consequences for the choice they made.

Anyone with *wisdom* should learn to walk in God's *ways*, not in his own *ways*. But someone without *wisdom* and discernment will certainly violate God's revealed standards *and fall*. This principle that applied to Israel is restated in the New Testament. For example:

“the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”
(Galatians 6:8)

This verse in Galatians is similar to God's proposition to Adam, where He made clear Adam had a choice between life and death (Genesis 2:16-17). It is similar to the proposition God gave Israel in His covenant with them, telling them if they followed His commands it would lead to life and blessing, and if they disobeyed His commands it would lead to violence, abuse, and death (Deuteronomy 30:15-20). It has applied from the creation of humanity until today; choices have consequences. Just as the physical universe has cause-effect, so has the moral/spiritual universe.

In His grace, God has told us clearly and specifically how to live in a manner that leads to our greatest flourishing:

“Though I wrote for him ten thousand precepts of My law,
They are regarded as a strange thing.”
(Hosea 8:12)

The Hebrew word translated “law” is “torah” and means “instruction” or “teaching.” God has given us sufficient instruction about the moral universe such that we can access it, believe, follow it, and gain the greatest possible spiritual benefit. The only question is whether we will listen, believe, and act upon this great teaching (Revelation 1:3).

The book of Hosea contrasts God's faithfulness to Israel's faithlessness. In the first three chapters, Hosea introduces the reader to Israel's infidelity to their Suzerain (Ruler) God who entered into a covenant with Him, and spelled out the path they could take that would lead to great blessing. God's covenant with Israel can be viewed as a marital contract. By using Hosea's own marriage to his unfaithful wife, Gomer, God demonstrated that Israel is an unfaithful covenant partner. Israel had broken her vows to her Covenant Husband.

Throughout the rest of Hosea, Israel's condition is described as disobedient, rebellious, and idolatrous. As God had warned, Israel's adoption of pagan principles of self-indulgence led to exploitation, deception, and violence (Hosea 4:2). The people of Israel stood in need of repentance and genuine righteousness. Hosea called them to repentance, but Israel declined.

Through it all, however, the book offers hope to Israel. For although the Suzerain God invoked the discipline provisions of their covenant contract with Him, resulting in them being wounded grievously, in the end times He will heal them, revive them, and restore their blessings (Hosea 2:20, 14:7). May all who read this book find comfort and hope in the steadfast love and faithfulness of God!

Biblical Text

**⁹ Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;
Whoever is discerning, let him know them.
For the ways of the Lord are right,
And the righteous will walk in them,
But transgressors will stumble in them.**