

# STEP 2

## Bible Learning

15–20 minutes

### Bible Basis:

Hosea summons Israel to return to God from sin (Hos. 14:1–7).

**Objective:** That your students summarize the meaning of Hosea 14:1–7.

#### Materials:

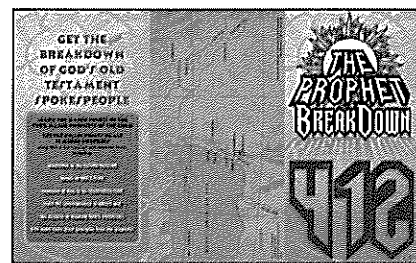
- ☐ Bible
- ☐ *The Rock*
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens
- ☐ Whiteboard or poster board and markers
- ☐ "The Prophet Breakdown" pamphlet from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

Hosea prophesied to Israel at a time when the whole country was headed downhill. It seemed that everyone was rejecting God and living immoral lives. In a period of 20 years, four different kings ruled over Israel. Three out of four had murdered the previous king to put themselves in power.

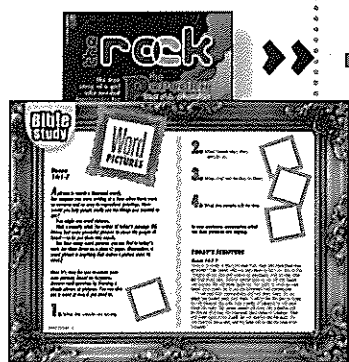
In chapter 13, just before today's passage, God speaks through Hosea about His anger toward Israel. God says He will destroy Israel like a lion would attack its prey and devour it. He speaks of a desert wind drying up all that is in the land, of people brutally slain, and little children dashed to the ground. Then comes chapter 14, and a chance for Israel to repent. God will forgive and refresh!

Hosea 14 is filled with imagery. Some is easy to understand; some is more difficult. Our point in this lesson is not that students understand every detail of every word picture, but that they understand the message God was giving to His people through Hosea. The beautiful imagery can help us grasp that message as we examine it in this section by means of words and pictures.

Go over the section about Hosea in "The Prophet Breakdown" pamphlet in *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*. Have students turn to Hosea 14:1–7. Ask them to read it slowly and thoughtfully. When they have finished reading the text, have them turn to the Bible study in *The Rock*. Read the opening paragraphs aloud to them.



LES. 7



#### ■ From *THE ROCK*—Word Picture

Hosea 14:1–7

A picture is worth a thousand words. But suppose you were writing at a time when there were no cameras and no way to reproduce paintings. How would you help people really see the things you wanted to say?

You might use word pictures.

That's exactly what the writer of today's passage did. Hosea had some powerful pictures to show the people of Israel—so he put them into words.

See how many word pictures you can find in today's text. Jot them down on a piece of paper. (Remember, a word picture is anything that makes a picture come to mind.)

Give your students a few minutes to go over the passage again, jotting down the word pictures or just circling them in the Scripture printed in *The Rock* Bible study. If they have trouble understanding what a word picture is, point out a few to them from the sample list given below. Your students may not circle all of these or they may circle some that are not listed here, but that's fine.

## TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Hosea 14:1-7

<sup>1</sup>Return, Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! <sup>2</sup>Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips. <sup>3</sup>Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount war-horses. We will never again say 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion."

<sup>4</sup>I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. <sup>5</sup>I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; <sup>6</sup>his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon. <sup>7</sup>People will dwell again in his shade. He will flourish like the grain. He will blossom like the vine, and Israel's fame will be like the wine of Lebanon.

Some word pictures in Hosea 14:1-7:

- Your sins have been your downfall
- Offer the fruit of our lips
- Like the dew
- Like a cedar of Lebanon
- Young shoots will grow
- Fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon
- Flourish like the grain
- Take words with you
- We will not mount war-horses
- Blossom like a lily
- Send down his roots
- Like an olive tree
- Dwell again in his shade
- Blossom like a vine

When your students are finished writing the word pictures, move on to the next part of the Bible study.

Now it's time for you to create your own pictures, based on Scripture. Answer each question by drawing a simple picture or pictures. You can also use a word or two if you need to. (Have students draw the word pictures they have found, as instructed. Be sure they understand that each of the word pictures should be drawn under one of the four headings. Assure them that they don't have to be artists to make these drawings; just draw what the word pictures bring to mind.)

The four headings from *The Rock* are given here for you with sample drawings:

1. What the people did wrong.
2. What Hosea says they should do.



3. What God will be like to them.



Give your students a few minutes to draw; then ask volunteers to explain their word pictures. Answers will vary, but should include these ideas.

1. **What the people did wrong:** They turned from trusting God to trusting other things. They sinned.
2. **What Hosea says they should do:** They should return to God and ask His forgiveness.
3. **What God will be like to them:** He will be refreshing to them and turn His anger from them.
4. **What the people will be like:** They will be strengthened and refreshed; they will grow healthy.

- In one sentence, summarize what the four pictures are saying.  
(God promised to refresh the people if they would just ask His forgiveness and return to Him.)

God wants to refresh us, too. What we need to do is turn to Him—He'll make good on His offer!

# STEP 3

## Bible Application

(5–10 minutes)

**Objective:** That your students brainstorm ways we sometimes turn from God.

**Materials:**

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ *The Rock*
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens
- ☐ Whiteboard or poster board and markers
- ☐ "Psalm 51:10" memory verse poster from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

We sometimes choose to turn our backs on God just like Israel did. We think we are perfectly able to make it on our own and don't need to rely on anyone for anything. But before long we get things all messed up, just like Israel did.

Have your teens brainstorm ways in which we turn our backs on God. Have one student write the responses on the whiteboard (and number them for use later).

Students may give answers such as these:

1. We don't allow time for God in our busy schedules.
2. Sports, hobbies, or other things have priority over fellowship with Christians.
3. We do sinful things to gain acceptance.
4. We spend our money on ourselves and leave nothing to give to God.
5. We've never asked God to forgive our sins.

Making a list won't do us any good if we don't do something about the sins on it. This doesn't mean we have to "clean up our act" before we can come to God. It means that we must want to turn from the things we are doing and turn toward God. When we sincerely ask His forgiveness, He'll forgive us and refresh us.

Display the "Psalm 51:10" memory verse poster from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*. For impact, have students read it aloud in unison.



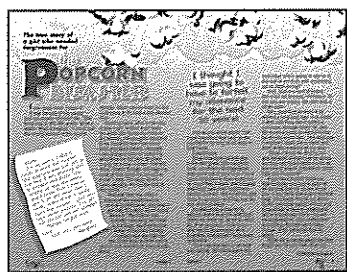
- ❶ What does "renew a steadfast spirit within me" mean? Allow students to provide answers, but make sure they understand that the psalmist is asking God for the inner strength to obey God consistently instead of being wishy-washy about obedience. God changes people from the inside so their behavior changes, not the other way around.

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

**Materials:**

- ☐ *The Rock*

1. If your class is large enough, divide students into small groups and have them roleplay ways in which people turn their backs on God. Use ideas from the list on the whiteboard. Have each group also portray the act of turning to God and being refreshed. After each roleplay, discuss what students have seen and understand. Be sure to emphasize the positive aspect of God's blessing.
2. Take some time to read and answer the questions from "The Popcorn Disaster" feature in *The Rock*.





# STEP 4

Life Response  
(5–10 minutes)

## Bible Truth:

Repentance can  
bring healing and  
refreshment.

**Objective:** That your students seek God's forgiveness and refreshment in their lives.

### Materials

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens

Now distribute paper and ask your teens to silently review the list they created on the board during the Bible Application section of the lesson. Have them jot down the numbers of the items that describe areas in which they need to seek God's forgiveness and cleansing. If they need forgiveness in an area not mentioned, ask them to draw symbols for it.

Now circle one item that you want to discuss with God in private. In a minute we'll begin a time of silent prayer in which you can ask God for forgiveness concerning that item.

Give students a minute to decide which item to circle. If students are not sure how to ask God for forgiveness, refer them to the memory verse. Encourage them to use it as a prayer starter by creating a blank and filling it in, like this:

Create in me a pure heart, O God, concerning

and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

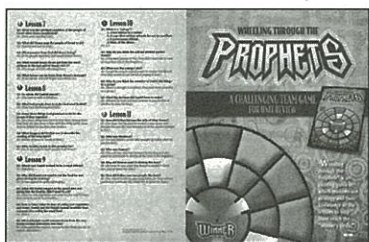
Close class by thanking God for being willing to forgive. Invite students to talk with you privately or as a group about God's forgiveness. If any students indicate that they asked God to forgive them for their sinfulness for the first time, reinforce their experience by talking with them about becoming a Christian. Tips for leading students to Christ are on the inside back cover of this teacher's commentary.

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

#### Materials:

- ☐ "Wheeling through the Prophets" unit review game from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*
- ☒ Party food

1. If you have time, play "Wheeling through the Prophets," the unit review game from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*. This game will help your students review Bible content from the five lessons you have just covered.
2. If your students participated in a service project during the unit, why not reward them with a little party? Serve treats and have students share their experiences. If photographs were taken during the project, be sure to include them in the celebration.





# the rack

**The true  
story of a girl  
who needed  
forgiveness for**

**the  
POPCORN  
DISASTER**





The true story of  
a girl who needed  
forgiveness for

# the POPCORN DISASTER

I was dead meat. I knew it. It was the end of my young and still mostly innocent life. "She lived only to the fifth grade. What a waste. What a tragedy." I could hear the crying women of the church

Mom,  
I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to burn the counter. The popcorn pan just got so hot and it was burning and it smelled and there was smoke all over the place and I knew that I had to get it off the stove, but I really didn't think it would burn the counter—your new, nice, white counter. I'm SO SO SO SO SO SORRY!  
Please forgive me!!  
Love,  
Your very sorrowful daughter

already. There was no hope for me. I just knew it. So I left a tear-stained note.

Morning came, after a not very restful night. When I went down the stairs and found my mom in the kitchen, I thoroughly expected to be punished like I had never been punished before. I thought I was going to have to forfeit my allowance for the next 30 years to pay for a new counter. The first thing I heard, though, (through my cries of "I'm sorry! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!") was, "It's okay. Don't worry about it. It's not the end of the world."

That just blew my mind. I expected the punishment to end all punishments, and what I got was "It's okay. Don't worry about it." My mother was actually consoling me! I had put a huge, blackish brown bulge on her new kitchen counter, and she told me she could keep a trivet over it and no one would ever know it was there.

I thought I  
was going to  
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30 years!

And do you know what? That trivet stayed on that spot on the counter for as long as we lived in that house.

Forgiveness.

What I experienced that day in the fifth grade was complete, total, unconditional forgiveness that came out of pure love. I have never forgotten it. Mom loved me so much that it really didn't matter that I had ruined her brand-new kitchen counter. She loved me and knew I was sorry, and that was the end of the problem.

As difficult as it may be to believe, that's how it is with God. When we mess up, as we so often do, if we are sorry—truly sorry—and ask for forgiveness, all is forgotten. God doesn't keep a sin scorecard.

"How can that be?" I can hear you asking. "Isn't God some big

bad judge who's going to zap us at the end of our lives with everything we've done wrong?"

Well, God is a God of justice, but when we become Christians, all our sins are erased. We start with a clean slate.

Why does God do that? It all started a long time ago. God made a deal with King David called a covenant, through which He said He would provide an eternal home for all who loved Him. This deal was completed when Jesus came and died on the cross for all our sins.

"Okay, I know He died for me and because of that I can be saved, but how can God forgive me for all the tons of stupid, sometimes mean little sins I commit?"

If you have trouble believing that God can love you in spite of all the junk that He knows about you, if you think that you're beyond help, take heart. You're not alone. God's unlimited supply of love and forgiveness is hard to understand. We're human and can't—nor are we supposed to, yet—understand everything. Sometimes it helps, though, if we put it into human terms.

Think for a minute about the best friend you've ever had. That one

Continued on page 6.



## Word PICTURES

**Hosea 14:1-7**

**A** picture is worth a thousand words. But suppose you were writing at a time when there were no cameras and no way to reproduce paintings. How would you help people really see the things you wanted to say?

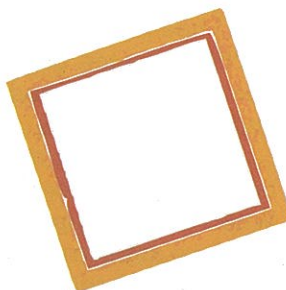
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See how many word pictures you can find in today's text. Jot them down on a piece of paper. (Remember, a word picture is anything that makes a picture come to mind.)

Now it's time for you to create your own pictures, based on Scripture. Answer each question by drawing a simple picture or pictures. You can also use a word or two if you need to.

**1.** What the people did wrong.



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**In one sentence, summarize what the four pictures are saying.**



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Continued  
from page 3.

If my mother, my very human mother, could forgive me so easily for something that was pretty major, how much more can God forgive me?

person who really stuck with you through thick and thin and knew you tripped going across the stage in front of the *whole* school (and not just tripped but fell flat on your face) when you were picking up your end-of-the-year attendance award.

Or the time you bought your lunch at school and dropped your tray in the always-packed cafeteria.

Or the time you ran down the basketball court at full speed with no one near you and the net wide open and sunk a beautiful lay-up with the fans screaming—screaming because it was the other team's basket. Yet your best friend was still there to be your best friend and even offered to cheer you up. That best friend accepts you for who you are, warts and all.

Now, let's see if we can follow some logical thinking here. (Don't worry, it's not geometry-like logic!) If our friends can forgive us when we do stupid things (and I mean *true* friends here), and if God is our friend—as He said He was when He came to earth in Jesus (John

15:12-15)—then God can forgive us when we do stupid things. All the little, stupid things. Make sense? I think so. God made a deal a long time ago, and He *never* goes back on His word. His forgiveness is for real.

When I begin to think that I've messed up pretty badly and that God couldn't possibly forgive me, I have to remind myself of all the dumb things that my friends and family accept and forgive me for, like falling on my face in front of the whole school or burning the counter with a very hot popcorn pan. If my mother, my very human mother, could forgive me so easily for something that really was pretty major, how much more can God forgive me? His love and forgiveness are limitless. That's pretty amazing.

All I have to do is ask. And it's forgotten. My sin is removed—not just covered up with a nifty decorative trivet, but completely gone.

God's love and forgiveness are there for you, too. Just ask.

# STORM MONSTERS

Erratic and deadly, tornadoes are the hit-and-run drivers of the air. They can roar along at speeds over 60 miles an hour, then suddenly vanish, leaving a trail of death and destruction costing hundreds of millions of dollars.



About 770 tornadoes touch down in the United States each year, but scientists know very little about how and why they occur. These spiraling killers pop out of some 50,000 to 100,000 thunderstorms, and their size and time of appearance is extremely difficult to predict. Most of them occur

in "Tornado Alley," which begins in the Texas Panhandle and angles northeast through Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa, and southern Illinois. The cool, dry air from the Rockies smashes into the warm, moist air from the Gulf of Mexico and produces the storms that spawn tornadoes.

Tornadoes tend to form near the updraft of air that rushes from the ground into the void at the heart of a storm. Sometimes these winds can rush upward at 100 miles an hour to form a storm monster 60,000 feet high. Although no one knows what finally triggers a tornado, wind shear is probably important. Wind shear occurs when



there are differences of wind speed and direction at various heights. These wind differences start the air in the center of the storm spiraling upward.

David, the author of Psalm 29, was deeply impressed by the power of thunderstorms. Thunder, lightning, and wind helped him imagine God's power working *against* David's enemies and *for* David's people. David pictured God riding on the wind and reaching down to save him from trouble.

Storms are still awesome and frightening. But when we experience storms, either physical or spiritual, we, like David, can be reminded of God's omnipotence and of His power to rescue us from harm.





# every day devos

Create in me a pure heart,  
O God, and renew a steadfast  
spirit within me.  
Psalm 51:10



THE  
PAUSE THAT

# REFRESHES

*Many years ago, a soft-drink company claimed that its soda was the "pause that refreshes." If you were tired, pausing to drink this ice-cold soft drink was the ideal way to end the day.*

*King David's idea of refreshment was quite a bit different. The refreshment David wanted came from forgiveness for sin and a heart cleansed by God.*

**MONDAY** Do you need to confess anything to God? Write your own prayer of confession or make David's prayer, Psalm 51:10, your own. Meditate on the verse all week.

**TUESDAY** Read about other people in the Bible who needed forgiveness (Isaiah—Isaiah 6:5-7; Peter—John 18:15-18, 25-27; 21:15-19). How did they feel? What did God do for them?

**WEDNESDAY** Draw a "before" and "after" picture to describe what it means to you to have a clean heart.

**THURSDAY** Read Psalm 51:10 in a different version of the Bible than your own. Make a list of any new ideas it gives you.

**FRIDAY** Take a walk with God today. Think about what He would say if He were walking alongside you. What desires or thoughts would you communicate to Him?

**SATURDAY** End the week with prayer. How did meditating on Psalm 51:10 help?

