

Accepting My Powerlessness Over God's Love A Bible Study On Hosea 11:7-11

1st Step – Lesson 7

"I get all confused when I think about my little nine-year-old daughter. I've been a terrible mother to her because of my cocaine addiction--money that should have gone for clothes and groceries went to the dope man; times when I should have been there for my little girl I was off getting high. But what's bothering me is the way this girl keeps loving me! She can't seem to walk past me without giving me a hug. Every time she goes to the store to get something for herself she brings home something for me, too. Why do I still have this girl's love after all I've done to her?"

Powerlessness is something that's hard to accept, even when it's powerlessness over something good, like love. We're used to having the power to either earn something or to lose that same thing.

It's ego-building for us to believe we have that power, but there's also intense pressure that goes along with it. God's love for us removes the pride and also the pressure of thinking we have all that power: God's love is ours whether we think we deserve it or if we know we don't.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

- When someone gives you an unexpected compliment or does you an unexpected favor, how do you react? Does it make you uncomfortable? Why do you think that might be?

- Do you find yourself thinking you need to change before God can love you?

In these verses from the Old Testament book of Hosea, God expresses his hurt and anger over the way the people of Israel have treated him, but then he says he's determined to go on loving them and doing them good.

Hosea 11:7-11

7 My people are determined to turn from me. Even if they call to the Most High, he will by no means exalt them.

8 How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. 9 I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God, and not man-- the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath. 10 They will follow the LORD; he will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children will come trembling from the west. 11

They will come trembling like birds from Egypt, like doves from Assyria. I will settle them in their homes," declares the LORD.

[Note: *Admah* and *Zeboiim* are mentioned in Deuteronomy 29:23 as sister cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah for their violence and perversion. *Ephraim* is another name for Israel.]

DISCUSSION:

1. In verse 7 God talks about how angry he is over the way the people he loves have abandoned him. Could you see God having the right to focus that kind of anger on you?

2. In verses 8 - 9 something far more powerful than God's disappointment and anger comes into the picture: God's loving determination to keep reaching out to his people. How do you see God expressing that determination in these verses?

3. Notice that the people of Israel hadn't *made* God love them by changing their behavior. It's easy to fall into the way of thinking that says, "I can control God's love by the way I live my life: the better I behave myself, the more God will love me." What difference can you see between that way of thinking, and what the Bible says in I John 4:10?

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

4. In the verses from Hosea God makes it clear that we are powerless over his love: we don't have the power to earn it, and we don't have the power to lose it. How might that realization affect the way you look at God, and your relationship with him?

How might this realization affect the way you live your life?

CLOSING PRAYER: God's unconditional love calls for unconditional acceptance of that love. What do you need to say right now to the God who refuses to quit loving you?