

08 EMPTY PROMISES

KEY TEXT: HOSEA 6:1–7:2

CENTRAL truth

Even though we hate it when people use us, we sometimes try to use God. Like Israel, we wound Him with our disobedience and disregard the best relationship we could ever hope to have. Fortunately, God forgives and restores us when we truly repent. Like us, **God hates fake repentance, but loves sincere devotion.**

key question

God told Israel He wanted to be known and loved faithfully (see v. 6). What does that look like?

To know God is to focus on Him, pray to Him, study His Word, and pay close attention to His activity in the world. To love God is to obey Him out of gratitude for what He has done (see 1 John 5:3). God wants us to ensure He gets the praise and recognition He deserves by interacting with others in a way that demonstrates His kindness, compassion, mercy, and graciousness. He wants us to be faithful because He is faithful.

keep in mind

Grace is an easy topic. Everyone likes the idea of being treated better than we deserve, especially by a God who is able to heal, protect, and heap blessings on us. Personal responsibility is a more difficult topic to tackle. No one likes to feel obligated. But there's no way around it—we owe God. We have Him to thank for our very breath and every other good thing we enjoy in this life (see James 1:17).

Because students may like the idea of getting from God, but resist the idea of His expecting anything from us, be sure to focus on all that God has given us and done for us. Remind students that God gives us peace, joy, purpose, and power through the Holy Spirit when we put our faith in Jesus. In God, “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). If anyone deserves our undying devotion, He does!

application

What is the difference between sincere and false repentance? What does sincere repentance look like?

the win

FOR THE STUDENT: Students should understand that it is important to worship God with a sincere heart. He knows when we are just going through the motions. They should understand that what they do at church doesn't count for much if they treat people badly for the rest of the week.

FOR THE LEADER: Make sure students understand the difference between telling God they are sorry and actually repenting by turning away from things that don't match God's will and character. Remind students of God's deep and sincere love for them and encourage them to love Him deeply and sincerely in return.

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