

The reason God divided the nation of Israel

The Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah)

The prophets enter to give a loving and clear message from God

Hosea's voice...God speaks; Hosea's life...God's message

Discussion questions:

1. God still loves His people, still tenderly seeks to warn us when we are in danger. Name some ways God posts a warning sign in the middle of the road as we travel through life.
2. When Elijah challenged the false prophets of Baal, at one point he turned to all the people of Israel and asked, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). What can it look like in our day when Christians "waver between two opinions", trying to keep one foot in the world while still trying to walk with Jesus? How does such a lifestyle keep us from really experiencing intimate friendship with God?
3. Right after an amazing victory, Elijah faced one of his hardest times both spiritually and emotionally (1 Kings 19:1-9). What did Elijah go through (emotionally, physically, and spiritually) and how did God seek to lovingly restore him?
4. Describe the Upper Story and the Lower Story as you follow Elisha and his servant through the account told in 2 Kings 6:8-23). Why is it important for us to pray for spiritual eyes that can occasionally get a glimpse of what is happening in the Upper Story?
5. Through the prophets Amos and Hosea, God pointed out the people's sin and actions of rebellion. What were some of Israel's sins and why do you think God was being so severe with them?
6. It is clear that if God's people will repent (turn from sin and return to him), God is ready to embrace them with love and grace. How is God still offering this same invitation through Jesus today? What does true repentance and turning back to God look like, in light of the cross of Jesus?
7. When Israel walked closely with God, they were joy-filled and fruitful. When they were distracted by other pursuits (including false gods and idols), their whole community life went sour. How does your life, including your attitude and general disposition, change when you are not walking closely with Jesus?
8. How does reading and following the teaching of the Bible keep us connected to God and guard our hearts against the kind of complacency Israel experienced? What can we do to deepen our commitment to study and obey God's Word?

Homework: God is calling. Don't put him into voicemail. This week sit quietly in prayer and listen to God with a journal or blank piece of paper and pen in hand. Ask God a few simple, pointed questions and write down any words he places on your heart. Here are a few questions to get you started: What have you done to show your love and patience with me? (Thank him.) What are the behaviors and attitudes in my life that are not honoring to you? (Commit to change) How can I listen more closely to your Word (the Bible) and other ways you speak to me? (Seek to follow his leading...even when it is hard)

For next week, please read Chapter 16 of The Story (2 Kings 17-19; Isaiah 3, 6, 13-14, 49, 53)