

How Can We Return to the Lord?

[Hosea 14](#)

Hosea, Day 24

Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God,
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.
Take with you words
and return to the Lord;
say to him,
“Take away all iniquity;
accept what is good, [or: "receive us graciously"]
and we will pay with bulls
the vows of our lips.
Assyria shall not save us;
we will not ride on horses;
and we will say no more, ‘Our God,’
to the work of our hands.
In you the orphan finds mercy.”

I will heal their apostasy;
I will love them freely,
for my anger has turned from them.
I will be like the dew to Israel;
he shall blossom like the lily;
he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon;
his shoots shall spread out;
his beauty shall be like the olive,
and his fragrance like Lebanon.
They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow;
they shall flourish like the grain;
they shall blossom like the vine;
their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?
It is I who answer and look after you.
I am like an evergreen cypress;
from me comes your fruit.

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 upright walk in them,
but transgressors stumble in them.

- Hosea 14, ESV

In 1517, the Protestant Reformation began with these words:

1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, “Repent” (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.

That's the first thesis in the famous 95 Theses that Martin Luther nailed to the church door at Wittenberg on October 31, 1517.

Luther was right. Jesus calls every believer to a life of repentance. To repent is to return to the Lord. Because we are always sinning and always straying into idolatry in our hearts and minds, we must always be returning to the Lord. But how can we do so faithfully and fruitfully, and not just as a fake reaction in a time of crisis? We all know of people who have called out for help to God in the midst of a crisis and have not really been sincerely returning to Him. How can we do better and return to the Lord rightly?

Thankfully, Hosea 14 gives us clear instructions on how to return to the Lord, along with loving and compelling reasons to do so. God tells us how to pray:

1. Pray for forgiveness: *"Take away all iniquity"*
2. Plead for God's goodness: *"Receive us graciously"* (I'm following the KJV, NASB, and NIV here)
3. Resolve and pledge to obey the Lord: *"We will pay with bulls the vows of our lips"*
4. Turn away from trusting in the world: *"Assyria shall not save us"*
5. Reject idolatry: *"We will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands"*
6. Trust in the goodness of God: *"In you the orphan finds mercy"*

This is a wonderful pattern of prayer, whenever we come under conviction for sin or realize we have been trusting in worldly things or idols of our hearts and minds. God promises to answer this kind of prayer: *"I will heal their apostasy. I will love them freely."*

In all that we have seen of the Lord's goodness, persistent love, gracious kindness and all that we have seen of our own sin and stubborn idolatry through our studies in Hosea, this is a fitting way to conclude. So, let us return to the Lord and rest in His goodness and His redeeming power.

*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 upright walk in them.*

Amen!