

True Conversion

Hosea 5:15 – 6:6

True Conversion Introduction

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- The book of Hosea is the story of the prophet and his unfaithful wife.
- But it is also the story of God and Israel – as told by God.

True Conversion Introduction

- They get married, but she leaves him for other lovers.
- He takes her back and she leaves again.
- It was a like a video clip that keeps repeating itself.

True Conversion Introduction

- To say the least, Hosea has an unhealthy marriage.
- Israel has an unhealthy relationship with God.
- The book also provides a background against which we can examine our own faith.

True Conversion Introduction

Mere outward correctness and attention to forms and ceremonies [will] not do for God ... God must have reality. All else is but hollow mockery in His sight. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

– Harry Ironside (1876 – 1951)



True Conversion

Introduction

1. God hides

5:15

2. Israel's cry

6:1-3

3. God's hesitant reply

6:4-6

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Introduction

1. God hides 5:15
 2. Israel's cry 6:1-3
 3. God's hesitant reply 6:4-6
- We'll end with a look at [True Conversion](#).

1. God hides 5:15

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- Israel's guilt is keeping God away.
- But there is also a hint of hope.
- God is leaving the door open for them to acknowledge their guilt and seek his face.

1. God hides 5:15

- There are times when God can seem distant.
- During those times it is important to ask what might be keeping him away.
- In Israel's case it was simply their own sin.

1. God hides 5:15

- The solution to the hiddenness of God is always within our reach.
- We can start by a sincere desire to know him better and a turning away from our sin.

2. Israel's cry 6:1-3

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- These are beautiful words.
- If this is our sincere attitude toward God, then we are expressing exactly what it takes to return to Him.
- History tells us what was really going on.

2. Israel's cry 6:1-3

Like the wayward wife ... Israel has recognized the futility of its ways. Like the wife, the people have been forced to recognize the real source of blessing and of trouble, and they know that their former partner still cares for them ...

– Moses Douglas Carew (1956 – 2012)



2. Israel's cry 6:1-3

But in both cases, the motive for return is selfish. Neither the wife nor Israel shows any love for the one they are returning to. They admit no guilt, and are only interested in what they can get out of the relationship.

– Moses Douglas Carew (1956 – 2012)



2. Israel's cry 6:1-3

- There are two key variables that make all the difference when we decide to turn (back) to God.
- The first is the depth of our repentance.
- The second is our commitment to persevere.
- In reality these are very closely related.

3. God's hesitant reply 6:4-6

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- Just like Hosea's unfaithful wife, God sees that Israel's repentance is not deep and it is not going to last.
- He knows the people better than they know themselves.
- 6:6 "steadfast love" can also be "mercy."

3. God's hesitant reply 6:4-6

The people neither 'know the Lord' nor understand what it means to know him. The Lord will only return to them when they truly repent of their sin. Such repentance will lead to true worship, founded on a real experience of the Lord, and to a life lived in obedience to God's word.

– Moses Douglas Carew (1956 – 2012)



3. God's hesitant reply 6:4-6

- The people had a history of turning back to God superficially.
- Their repentance was never deep or lasting.

3. God's hesitant reply 6:4-6



Many people wear religion like you would wear a loose-fitting garment; it is something they can put on or off at any time. God condemned these people because they were religious, but they did not know Him, and they had never had a transforming, life-changing, experience with Him.

– J. Vernon McGee (1904 – 1988)

3. God's hesitant reply 6:4-6

- This is precisely why religion in and of itself is not such a great thing.
- A certain kind of religion can seduce people into that they have a good standing before God when they do not.

3. God's hesitant reply 6:4-6

- There are at least two ways that religion can lead to error.
- Israel fell into both.

3. God's hesitant reply 6:4-6

- Error #1: Primarily before the exile.
- They kept falling back into idolatry of an especially gross and immoral type.

3. God's hesitant reply 6:4-6

- Error #2: Primarily after the exile – during the period immediately before and after the time of Jesus.
- They fell into a heartless, law-keeping rigidity.

Jesus Quoting Hosea

Jesus Quoting Hosea

Matthew 9:10-13 (ESV)

¹⁰ And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹² But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Jesus Quoting Hosea

Matthew 12:1-8 (ESV)

¹ At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ² But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” ³ He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him? ...

Jesus Quoting Hosea

Matthew 12:1-8 (ESV)

⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ...

Jesus Quoting Hosea

Matthew 12:1-8 (ESV)

⁶ I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

True Conversion

True Conversion

- Israel has had a history of turning to God and then turning away from God again and again.
- Maybe you have had a similar experience.

True Conversion

- Hosea had an unhealthy marriage.
- Israel had an unhealthy relationship with God.
- Their experiences provide a background against which we can examine our own faith.

True Conversion

Jeremiah 17:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;
who can understand it?

¹⁰ “I the LORD search the heart
and test the mind,
to give every man according to his ways,
according to the fruit of his deeds.”

True Conversion



My moral history of late has been deplorable. More and more clearly one sees how much of one's philosophy & religion is mere talk: the boldest hope is that concealed somewhere within it there is some seed however small of the real thing.

*– The Letters of C. S. Lewis
to Arthur Greeves (29 October 1930)*

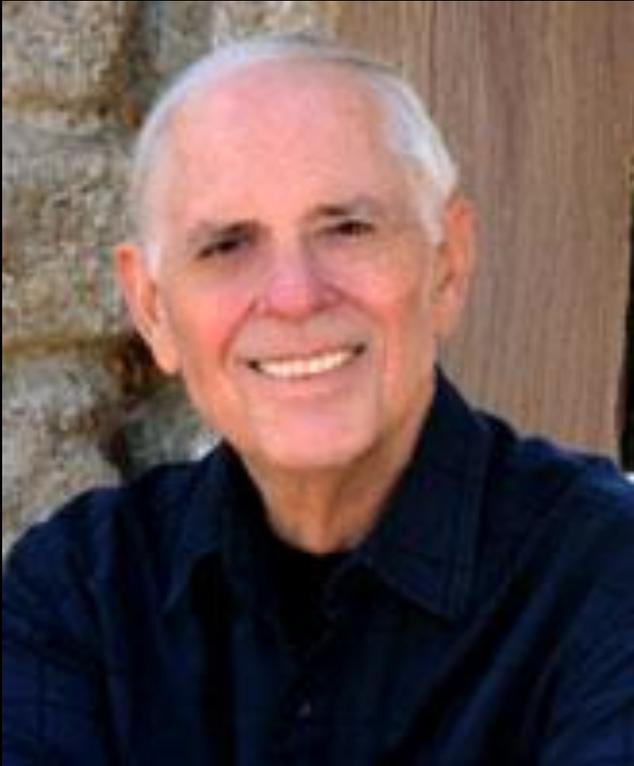
True Conversion

- That “real thing” is what God is after.
- That “real thing” is the starting point to genuine spiritual life.
- In order to avoid anything like a false conversion, we need to know what true conversion is really like.

True Conversion

- It's interesting that a lack of true conversion can allow someone to fall back into the worst kind of immoral life.
- But it can also cause someone to become religious in a heartless, even arrogant, way.
- Hosea dealt with the first, Jesus with the second.

True Conversion



Conversion is a reversal of disposition. Conversion requires two moves: a turning away from sin (repentance) and a turning to Christ (faith)— two phases of a single act of turning.

*– Thomas Oden, in Classic Christianity
(Systematic Theology)*

True Conversion

- The additional, vital component, however, is **regeneration**, in which God gives us new life in Christ.
- In Jesus' words, It is being "**born again**," which assures that we continue on in a right relationship with God.
- This is what he said to the rabbi Nicodemus.

True Conversion

John 3:3-7 (ESV)

³ Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?”

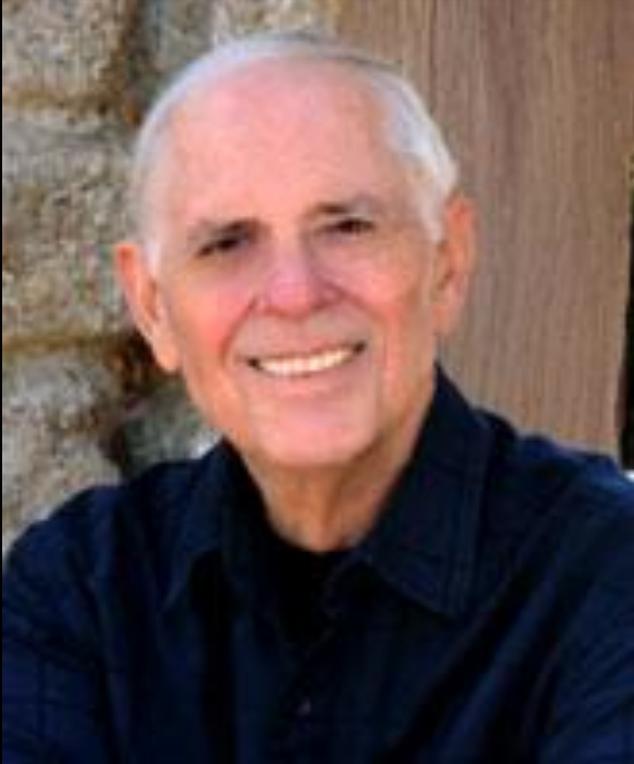
True Conversion

John 3:3-7 (ESV)

⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

True Conversion



To be born again, one must repent. Repentance is retrospective, regeneration prospective. Repentance looks back in regret and remorse toward sin. Regeneration looks forward to a new life that has emerged out of a new birth of faith. The process considered together is conversion.

*– Thomas Oden, in Classic Christianity
(Systematic Theology)*