

CAN YOU HEAR HIM NOW?

Verizon Wireless created one of the most memorable marketing campaigns ever in 2005. In their commercials a so-called “test man,” accompanied by a crowd of network engineers, travels the country asking the simple question, “Can you hear me now?” in an ongoing exercise to determine the reliability of the mobile phone carrier’s network.

The “catch phrase” caught on. The company’s market share went up and employee turnover went down. It seemed people could relate to the struggle to connect. Folks were tired of dropped calls and unreliable communication systems. And Verizon sent a message that they wanted desperately to connect with its subscribers and wanted its subscribers to be able to connect with each other.

At the risk of selling him short, God has done the same. Even when the Kingdom had split in two, he kept sending his message. He gave the people of the Divided Kingdom some 208 years to decide whether they would “accept” or “reject” his call. He sent his own “technicians” to get the message out. We call them “prophets.”

The job of the Verizon technician is unique. But not nearly as unique as the task given Hosea. Hosea, himself a prophet, appeared in a down time in the nation of Israel. The reality is that people often hear best when things are at their worst. So Hosea signed on with God. But God gave him a most unusual assignment. Hosea’s life would be his message. He was to marry a prostitute named Gomer and love her. What an incredible request! (Just imagine a young man with a seminary degree in hand trying to explain that one to a pastor search committee.)

The tough assignment was made even more difficult as Gomer left Hosea. She would conduct her ‘transactions’ with customers and all the time in her mind believing they were the ones supporting her. In reality, though, it was Hosea who continued to care for her and provide for her necessities even during her times of unfaithfulness.

God tells Hosea to go and demonstrate his love for her, so he does. Now picture this scene, as ugly as it is: Hosea pays some Hebrew “pimp” for some time with his wife, Gomer. When she enters the room expecting her next customer, she comes face-to-face with her husband. It is then that Hosea tells her again he loves her and wants her to come back home.

It’s the lived-out message that Hosea later gives in words. And it’s the same message God sends today. He loves us—even in our extreme unfaithfulness. And he wants us to come back home, even though we have abandoned him. But much like a call on your cell phone, you can hit the “accept” button or the “reject” button. You have the power to send God to voicemail and make him wait. Or you can answer his call today. The people of Israel had 208 years to pick up and they never did. The network is clear. The message is reliable. Can you hear him now?