group Bible Study – February 6, 2008

Read Hosea Chapter 5-7

Reflection: Ellen Pew, group cellist and core team member

I confess that my heart has been struggling to know what Lent means. I am convinced that I knew at one time, but now my heart forgets. As I read Hosea, I am struck by this season of despair and hopelessness; a season of forgetting what was once unforgettable. Maybe it is entirely bad to forget such things, but today I am almost willing to believe that I couldn’t choose to remember, even if I wanted to more than anything in the entire world. For good or bad, I cannot say. But on this side of the fall we do see these seasons. We live them. Our minds can tell us of our hope for the future, and may occasionally allow us to see life-giving glimpses of redemption and the Kingdom of God in our distant future. But still, my body and mind feel trapped in this land of forgetfulness and isolation.

I encourage you. This isn’t the end of the story. But it is a part of it. It is a part of it that, if we do desire this “communion with the saints,” we will not refuse. We do not have to be afraid—we know the end. Join us now, and enter into this season as we recognize that we are not enough on our own. We enter this season as a body, to die so we might know what it means to live. As we look at the people of Israel and all their inadequacies, let us now—just for a moment—rest here with them and contemplate these things.

Discussion Questions (for individuals or small groups):

— In this time of Lent, we recognize our need for God. Hosea 5:13 says, “When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to the great king, but he is not able to cure you or heal your wound.” In what way do you see yourself taking your brokenness or your wounds to another king, or another lover, or another god?

— Hosea 6:6 says, “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” In what way do you try to buy God’s salvation and relationship with works and sacrifices and tradition?

“Let us know, let us press on to know the LORD; his appearing is as sure as the dawn; he will come to us like the showers, like the spring rains that water the earth.”

Hosea 6:3