

Take words with you

By [Ryan Dueck](#)

June 3, 2013

A recent morning's Bible reading was a bit of an unexpected one: [Hosea 14](#). I suspect I am not alone in saying that I don't tend to spend a lot of time in Hosea for devotional reading. It's a fascinating book and a remarkable story about the fidelity of God to his people, but Hosea, like most of the minor prophets, is a bit off the beaten path. At least for me. It's like that interesting little town that you drove through once upon a time but haven't visited in quite a while. You're glad to know it's there, but you don't tend to treat it as one of the important stops on the Bible highway.

Anyway, Hosea 14. Often when reading some of the more poetic parts of Scripture, my attention will be captured by a single line or phrase. This time it was verse 2:

Take words with you
and return to the Lord.

Take words with you.

What a very interesting way to put it.

The context of this interesting little line is a dire one indeed. Israel has been whoring around after other gods. They have experienced the punishment of God. They have been wasting away in exile and shame. Thorns and thistles are growing in God's vineyard. The yeast has been contaminated. Injustice and idolatry, violence and false testimony flourish. After 13 chapters of misery and judgment and violence, the reader staggers toward chapter 14 with its welcome offer of repentance and restoration.

Return, Israel, to the Lord your God.

Turn away from this death-dealing madness. Turn back toward what is right and true. Come back to the one who can bind your wounds, forgive your sins, and restore your souls.

And take words with you...

Words? Yes, words.

Wait, aren't words kind of secondary here? What is needed is deeds, not words. Words are too cheap, too easy. Doesn't chapter 14 even end with, "The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous *walk* in them." *Walk*. Not talk. Surely the Lord has no need of our words. Doesn't Jesus himself even approvingly quote the prophet Isaiah about how easy it is to honour God with our lips while our hearts (and our hands and feet, presumably) remain far from him ([Mat. 15:8](#))? Anyone can say they are sorry, after all. We'll believe it when we see it.

Thousands of years after Hosea, we are quite literally drowning in words. To say that words are ubiquitous would be the height of understatement. We are assaulted by words from the moment we get up until our heads hit the pillow at night. Our devices rarely give us a moment's peace, filling our brains with words. Words trying to sell us things, to get our attention, words to impress and outdo, words to tear each other down. Words clogging up the ether, words demanding responses, words swimming around the borders of our murky half-aware, barely attentive days. Words doing nothing more than filling time and space. Words to convince us of what we should love, what we should click on, what we should support, what we should share, where we should go and what we should do. Words about God—so *many* words about God, about what God wants and who God likes and why God isn't doing x or y and about what God would do if we would only just...

I love words. Really. But some days, I hate words. Words are unreliable. They can be slippery things, so easily twisted and massaged and manipulated. Words both reveal and conceal. They clutter things up, they can get lost in the chatter and the noise, they drift away unnoticed in a never-ending current of commentary. Words aren't real like a seed or a sprocket or a sandwich. You can't pick them up and examine their texture. Sometimes they come too easily to be worth much. *You're good with words*, I sometimes hear. That's nice. But sometimes I wonder what good words are. The world needs more seeds and sprockets and sandwiches. Or silence, come to think of it. But not words. Those are a dime a dozen. Those are *everywhere*.

And yet.

Take words with you...

Your God thinks they are valuable, evidently. Words were there in the beginning when this beautiful world was spoken into existence... The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, speaking life and grace and truth to starved and straying hearts and minds... All kinds of strange and beautiful and inexplicably comprehensible words were there with tongues of fire when the church was born at Pentecost... Words matter in God's economy. They're not everything. But they're not nothing, either.

So take words with you. Wherever you go, whatever you do. Bring them along for the ride of repentance and return and restoration. They belong. They will always belong.

Originally posted at [Rumblings](#)