



[Hosea 4:12](#)

(12) My people ask counsel from their wooden *idols*,
And their staff informs them.
For the spirit of harlotry has caused *them* to stray,
And they have played the harlot against their God.

[Hosea 5:4](#)

(4) " They do not direct their deeds
Toward turning to their God,
For the spirit of harlotry is in their midst,
And they do not know the LORD.

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Undoubtedly, the fount of Israel's despicable behavior is what Paul concludes in [Hebrews 3:12](#): "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

Israel, despite the fact that [God](#) voluntarily revealed much about Himself to her, simply does not believe what He says. The fruit of unbelief is betrayal expressed as departing from the relationship. However, an "evil heart of unbelief" is quite general. To begin, we need to explore one particular step in the process of [sin](#) beyond the "evil heart of unbelief."

In addition, we need to understand that our subject is not women who have been forced by their cultures into prostitution. Such a circumstance is far more understandable; women trapped in such a situation are truly victims and elicit our pity. We will be exploring those women who were free to pursue other courses in life yet deliberately chose to prostitute themselves, whether in service at a pagan temple as part of the worship of a god or in making a living. Israel deliberately chose to prostitute herself.

A *prostitute* is "a person, usually a woman, who provides sexual activity in exchange for material security." Dictionaries also define *prostitution* as "debasing oneself for personal gain," and this usage applies to either gender. Additionally, it is "a misuse of one's gifts, talents, or skills," and this too applies to either gender.

Because of these usages, in its broadest sense, prostitution is not confined either to sexual activity or to women alone. The selling of sex by a woman is only its best-known form. A prostitute is anybody who, as we would say today, "sells himself out" or makes compromises for personal gain. The gain does not have to be in the form of money. However, biblically, its descriptions and examples are confined to the illicit sexual activity of women because of Israel being symbolized as a woman.

A female prostitute is generally distinguished from an adulterer due to her lack of discrimination in choosing her partners. This lack of discrimination is important because it reveals a mindset, an attitude, that approaches what we today might call an "airhead," one who seriously ignores the harsh realities of sin. The attitude also exposes a stubborn addiction to gambling on sin's outcome. The prostitute usually justifies the sin because of her immediate needs.

All sin follows a pattern. The actual act is the next to the last step in a process that, once it starts, often does not take a great deal of time to complete. [James 1:13-15](#) shows:

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Here, simply stated, is the process of sin:

1. Temptation triggers desire.
2. Desire stirs the yearning for gratification.
3. Failure to consider the end and to discipline oneself prompt the sinful act.
4. The sinful act brings forth death.

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Repeated frequently enough, this process becomes habitual. The Bible pinpoints the source of sin in another way in [Matthew 15:18-20](#):

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.

This is another way of saying that it is within mankind's nature to sin. However, this does not justify sin because man's nature can be disciplined far better than mankind exhibits.

If sin is to be stopped, these two areas simply must be dealt with, or sin will continue unabated. The carnal mind—man's normal nature—is at war with God ([Romans 8:7](#)), and it is not subject to God's law because, out of sheer unbelieving stubbornness, it will not permit itself to submit completely. This is why God says that He will give us a new heart ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)).

The Bible uses the word *heart* to represent all the internal intangibles of human personality. Today, we might say this heart is what makes us "tick." It is the spirit in that heart that lures us—indeed, drives us—to conduct ourselves in a way that is hostile to God. The Bible shows the prostitute having a specific spirit or heart driving her.

God says in [Hosea 4:12](#): "My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God." He adds in [Hosea 5:4](#), "They do not direct their deeds toward turning to their God, for the spirit of harlotry is in their midst, and they do not know the LORD." In a context like this, the Bible uses *spirit* to indicate an immaterial force or power, an attitude, leaning, inclination, outlook, position, propensity, or proclivity to move, act, or conduct oneself in a certain manner or direction.

In [Hosea 5:4](#), the conjunction "for" shows the direct connection between the people's sinful, idol-worshipping conduct and "the spirit of harlotry." This spirit is one of the intangibles that comprise human nature, and its direction of conduct is to be disloyal and unfaithful to Israel's commitment to God ratified in the Old Covenant, in which she vowed, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient" ([Exodus 24:7](#)).

Remember, what we are considering is something the entire nation is guilty of, both

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men and women. We are looking at the streetwalker-type of prostitute only because the Bible provides a clear picture of what motivates her. Once we grasp her motivations, we can extrapolate them to illustrate the whole nation—and ourselves individually because we have participated in the same system, and its drives linger in us.

This, of course, is not to accuse anyone of being a streetwalker. Recall that two of the definitions of *prostitution* are "abasing oneself for personal gain" and "abusing one's gifts, talents, and skills" for the same. For instance, biographers of famous personalities, especially of artists, occasionally write that their subjects felt they had prostituted their gifts to become wealthy.

This is what God implies in [Amos 3:2](#): "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." He expected more and better from them than from any other nation. In terms of the knowledge of God and their access to instruction in the way of life that would produce the most and best toward physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, no other nation came even close to what Israel had because God had chosen them to be His people. Nevertheless, in following the examples of pagan nations who did not know God, Israel frivolously prostituted herself for what she considered personal gain.

Have we not all debased ourselves by indiscriminately accepting the personal gain of the immediate gratification of an unlawful desire, and in the same process, ignored or consciously shoved aside our knowledge of the [truth](#) of God? Once we have knowledge of the truth, thus removing our ignorance of God, His way, and His law, if we did not prostitute ourselves, there would be no sin in our lives. The sad truth is that we do not discipline or control ourselves, but instead, we indulge ourselves, and sin occurs. We have prostituted ourselves. We must do better.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The Beast and Babylon \(Part Nine\): Babylon the Great](#)

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[Evil Heart](#)

[Evil Heart of Unbelief](#)

[Israel as Harlot](#)

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[Israel as Prostitute](#)

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[Sin, Habitual](#)

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