

Introduction: For Bible Study Leaders

Read before Week 1

Introducing the Old Testament Bible Study.

In the Protestant church in America, sometimes we neglect the Old Testament. We often focus on only the New Testament because it tells us the stories of Jesus' life on earth. The thing is, the Old Testament (OT) also tells us about Jesus. It shows us how God was always at work in creation and the world and in a particular people, a particular family, to bring God's redemption to all of humankind and the creation.

Without the Old Testament, the New Testament makes little sense. If we neglect the OT, then we neglect the whole history of the people through whom God chose to bring redemption. That's like trying to understand a person but ignoring their family, their culture, their country, their home context. Can you really know them without knowing what made them who they are?

Of the sixty-six books of the Bible, the Old Testament holds the first thirty-nine. The other twenty-seven are the New Testament. There are a variety of genres in the Old Testament writings: we have narratives, historical accounts, wisdom literature, prophetic writings, apocalyptic writings. We need to get to know the first (more than) half of the Bible. We read the Old Testament to see how God has always been present, always been at work, and always pointing to the coming of Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of God's plan of redemption. That's the point of this study—to learn parts of the Old Testament and to see how it points us to Jesus Christ.

How to do this study

- Each week, before meeting with your group, take 30-45 minutes to read and pray through the study guide and for your group.
- When your Bible Study gathers:
 1. Open with a prayer for the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds for understanding.
 2. Follow the outline.
 3. Do a Connect question. Let your group bond and get to know and trust one another.
 4. Read the passages out loud.
 5. Do "Engage the text" #1-2.
 6. Read the "Why matters?" and "How does it point to Jesus?" paragraphs together.
 7. Do "Applications" (#3)
 8. If time allows, as a group look through the 6 Tools; if not, encourage your group to read it on their own.
 9. If there is a video and time allows, watch the video. If no time, send them home with the video link.
 10. Close in prayer.

11. Note: you may not have time to get through the whole study guide each week, *and that is ok*. As a leader, discern what will be most helpful and effective for your group. Reading the passage, and the “Why matters?” and “How does it point to Jesus?” parts are especially pertinent, so do cover those with your group.

A word on reading the Bible passages aloud:

- A way to read the passages together is for each person to read one verse, going in a circle. To pass, simply say pass. Keep taking a verse each until the passage is complete. OR, a few people can read several verses each.
- Listen for what stands out to you or draws emotion out of you—note it.
- OR invite your group to simply listen as you, the leader, read the passage.
- The passages you will be reading are often narratives and so are longer. We want to read the passages in as much of their contexts as possible. Don't be discouraged or impatient when the passages are long. Take your time with the story. Encourage your group to listen attentively and stay engaged.
- Anticipate the Holy Spirit teaching and revealing more of God's self to you and your group through this study.

If you have any questions or issues, email pastorjoella@calvin.edu.

Blessings as you lead your group through the semester!

Enjoy!

Rev. Joella Ranaivoson

Associate chaplain for Upper Class students