

An Introduction to the Bible: Old Testament
Study Guide
By M. Todd Hall

Module 1: Introduction

- 1) What effects do you think the decline in Biblical literacy has had on the church? What have you noticed personally from this lack of Biblical literacy?
- 2) How have you seen people misuse the Bible to justify a belief that they have?
- 3) How would you respond to the person in the elevator who asks you what the Bible is?
- 4) What, primarily, is the overarching “story” of the Bible?
- 5) What different designations/names does the Bible apply to itself?

Module 2: What is the Bible?

- 1) How is it appropriate to say that the Bible is a “library”? A “book”?
- 2) What is the “story” recorded in the Bible?
- 3) What are the major divisions of the Bible?
- 4) Why do we use the term “testament” in referring to the divisions of the Christian Bible?
- 5) What are the “groups” of books in the Old Testament? How do these differ from the Jewish Tanakh?
- 6) Why do Josephus and Origen consider the Old Testament to consist of twenty-two books?
- 7) What are the groupings of “books” in the New Testament?
- 8) What are the benefits of chapters and verses, as well as unit headings, in our modern Bibles? What are some possible limitations?

Module 3: Introducing the Old Testament

- 1) How have some suggested that the Old Testament is irrelevant to the church today? How is this seen often in practice rather than spoken out loud? How have you approached the Old Testament in study?

2) When writers of the New Testament use the word “Scripture,” to what are they referring? How does this help us understand the relevance of the Old Testament to New Testament Christians?

3) How does the Old Testament function in the overall story of God recorded in the Bible? How is it relevant to Christians today?

4) How can the Old Testament be relevant both for its original audience and for future readers, all the way down to contemporary Christians? Explore the meaning of *sensus plenior*.

5) When reading the Bible, what three questions should guide us? How do we apply these to the original context of the text? How do we apply them to a Christo-centric reading?

Module 4: Beginnings

1) What are the three most cited books in the New Testament? What is especially interesting about that fact?

2) Why, beyond the obvious (creation account), is Genesis the right place to start in Scripture?

3) How does the account of creation differ from other creation stories, e.g., the *enuma elish*? What *theological* points can be drawn from these differences? What does God’s creation of the world *in contrast* with these accounts suggest about God—his being, his character, and the purpose of creation?

4) What is the importance of “order” for the flourishing of life?

5) What does the phrase “it was *truly* good” mean in Genesis 1?

6) Why does God create more than one human? What does this suggest about human life and the function of the human family in God’s good creation?

7) Why is it important to understand that Adam and Eve were “naked and unashamed”?

8) How does the serpent’s question sow the seeds of distrust in Eve and Adam? How might Eve’s response reveal this?

9) In what ways do Adam and Eve “die” on eating the fruit?

10) What are the elements of God’s promise to Abraham? And what role do these play in what we suggested is the “theme” of the Pentateuch?

Module 5: Exodus

- 1) By what Name does the God of Israel introduce himself? What are some implications of this Name?
- 2) How does Exodus point to God's deliverance of Israel from *chaos*, and how does this relate to what we learned about God and order from Genesis?
- 3) What happens to the Israelites when they "grumble" against God and Moses in Exodus? How is this different from the grumbings in Numbers? Why is God's response different?
- 4) What are the elements of Passover, and what is the purpose of the Passover celebration?
- 5) What is apodictic law? Casuistic law? How are the different, and what possibilities does this open for Christian application?
- 6) What is the "Deuteronomic history," and why is it often called by that name?

Module 6: The History of Israel

- 1) What is the basic teaching of Deuteronomy regarding Israel's faithfulness (or faithlessness)? How does Joshua use these themes to understand Israel's taking of the Promised Land?
- 2) What different visions of conquest are there in Joshua? Why are they different? Why might we consider the account of the complete conquest of the Promised Land a "Theological account"?
- 3) What are the differences between Israel's taking of Jericho and Ai? Why are these different, and what do they suggest about Deuteronomy's basic teaching (from question 1)?
- 4) What is the cycle in Judges? What is the character of the judges we find in the book of Judges?
- 5) What is the view of kingship in Judges? Contrast Judges 8:22–chapter 9, and Judges 18:1, 19:1, and 21:25. Why might these two pictures help understand kingship?
- 6) Evaluate Saul as a king. In what ways does Saul prove himself ultimately unworthy of being Israel's king?
- 7) What is David's first act upon becoming king? Why might he do this?
- 8) What are the elements of God's covenant with David and with Jerusalem? How does it differ from the covenant with Moses? In what ways might Christians interpret this covenant with regard to Jesus?
- 9) How is Solomon often understood in terms of character and the story of his life? How did we suggest that the story is more complicated than this story?
- 10) How does Solomon show both wisdom and folly?

11) What are the elements and who are the players in the division of the Kingdom of Israel into North Israel and Judah?

12) How does Chronicles differ from Samuel/Kings, and how does the context for each book help us understand them?

Module 7: Psalms and Wisdom

1) What books are included in this genre? What makes these books “wisdom”?

2) What are the “majority” and “minority” reports in the Wisdom books, and what are some examples of them? Why do these different takes on things both appear in Scripture, and how do they *both* help us live faithful lives?

3) What is the ancient question of “the problem of evil,” and how does wisdom literature engage this question?

4) What do Job’s friends initially do in interacting with Job? What do they do next, and how might the “majority” report of wisdom effect their reaction?

5) How does Job provide relief to Christians who suffer?

6) Considering the Psalms as Israel’s “hymnbook,” how might this contrast with contemporary hymns and hymnals? What place does lament have in our contemporary worship?

7) How do the proverbs function in daily life? How do they differ from, for instance, law? How can they be misused if not properly understood?

8) What does Ecclesiastes argue regarding the things that humans usually consider very important? How does Qohelet suggest one might find “wholeness” in life? How might that speak to contemporary consumer culture?

9) Is Song of Songs/Solomon about Marital love or is it an allegory of Christ and the church? How do we interpret and understand it?

Episode 8: The Lord’s Spokesmen

1) What is the role of a prophet? What is the relationship between “foretelling” and “forthtelling”?

2) How does *sensus plenior* help us better understand and interpret the prophetic books?

3) What are some of the “roots” of prophecy in Israel, and what is the “crowning” role of prophets?

- 4) How does Samuel serve as a bridge between the various types of prophecy?
- 5) What are the major problems in both Israel and Judah that we find in the prophets?
- 6) What God is revealed in the prophetic callings to Israel? What is his character, and what is the character he calls for his people to have?