

THE BIBLE *for* GROWN-UPS

PART 3: THE OLD TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Old Testament chronicles God's redemptive, sequential activity in history. It's a fabulous, gritty, epic history of the Hebrew people in which, over and over, Israel is reminded that they are a divine means to an end. So, maybe instead of seeing the Old Testament as a spiritual guidebook or a storyline that needs to be tidied up, we should see it as something even better: the history of God preparing the world for a Savior.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Leaders: Grab some pens and notecards for this group discussion!

1. Discuss a story or idea from the Old Testament that someone tried to tidy up and soften the edges of to serve their practical purpose in teaching you. What's the difference in seeing the Old Testament as a spiritual guidebook versus a history of the Hebrew nation?

2. Write each of the following words on separate notecards and put them in order where everyone can see them.

Abraham, Moses, Sinai Covenant, Kings, Temple, Prophets

As a group, discuss a few words and phrases that you associate with the subject of each card. Write your answers on the cards.

3. Many people criticize the seemingly unsophisticated nature of the Sinai covenant and use it as a reason to abandon faith. In actuality, the Hebrew nation, because of the guidelines in Leviticus, was way ahead of its time.

Which of the following ideas is most surprising or meaningful to you? What do these ideas change about the way you see God? What do they change about your view of the purpose of the Old Testament?

- The covenant represented a moral and civil code that ascribed inherent dignity to every person.
 - The covenant included a sexual ethic that protected the weak and vulnerable.
 - The covenant viewed humanity as the pinnacle of creation because every person is made in God's image.
 - Women, servants, foreigners, and children all fared better under Hebrew law than did their counterparts in the surrounding nations.
4. Many civilizations had creation stories that supported the idea that the human race was an afterthought of the gods. Consequently, individuals had no rights, hope, or intrinsic value. How did those beliefs shape the cultures of that time? Do you see evidence of that view now?

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5. Occasionally, a prophet would speak beyond their historical context to a future day when God would do something through a nation for all nations.

Read Isaiah 53:5–11.

What is the most meaningful image to you in this passage?

6. On a notecard, write “Jesus,” and put the notecard after Prophets, in line with the others you’ve already made so that everyone can see them in sequential order.

As a group, write words or phrases you associate with Jesus on the notecard. Now take the other cards, put them in a pile and place them to the side with only the Jesus card showing.

6. **Read Galatians 4:4–5.**

What does it mean that Jesus would redeem those under the law? What is different about the relationship we can have with God versus the relationship an ancient Jew could have with him?

MOVING FORWARD

The storyline of the Old Testament should cause us to drop to our knees in gratitude. There’s no need to tidy it up and sand off the rough edges. It’s not a spiritual guidebook. It’s the story of our God, who waded into the mess in order to write a story of redemption. This week, write Galatians 4:4–5 on a notecard and think about what these verses mean for you.