

# Way of Discipleship Small Groups

## The Old Testament in one hour



### Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



**Introduction:** The aim of this session is simply to get an overview of the story and themes of the Old Testament. We will look at themes, dates, books and events, showing how the 39 books tell a story which points to Jesus.

### Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

Who are some of the main characters in the Old Testament? How do they inspire or warn you?



### Understanding the information (40 minutes)

This session is simply about reading through the summary. There are missing words to create a bit of fun along the way.

Page one gives a background summary, and it is anticipated that you can read through the key events and find the missing words relatively quickly. Alternatively, you might like to get people to work on this in groups before looking at the whole story together.



### Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



## Group prayer (5 minutes)



Heavenly Father,  
We come before You with hearts full of gratitude,  
drawing inspiration from Your faithful servants of old.  
Like Abraham, we thank You for Your promises,  
trusting in Your unfailing word.  
As Moses led Your people with courage,  
we thank You for guiding us through the wilderness of life.  
With David, we sing praises to You,  
our Shepherd and King,  
for Your steadfast love.  
And like Ruth, we thank You for the gift of loyalty  
and the blessings of family.  
May our lives reflect their faithfulness  
as we walk in Your ways.

Amen.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## WHAT IS THE OLD TESTAMENT?

**The Old Testament is a collection of 39 books, written over 1,000 years and divided into four different types of writing: The Pentateuch (first five books), History, Poetry and Wisdom and the Prophets. We don't know exactly the books were put together as one, but it is likely to be from 400 BC when the Jews had returned from exile in Babylon.**

## WHAT IS THE OVERALL STORY?

**These different books can be best understood when we see them as part of one story.**

**The Bible begins by zooming out to paint a picture of who we are and why we are here (how God made everything and humans in His image) and what the problem is (the human and spiritual fall).**

**From Genesis 12 to the end of the Old Testament the story zooms in to focus on God's solution - the story of how God seeks to work through a people who will be His own, a new humanity who will represent Him, joining in with the restoration of His world by being a "blessing to the nations". From Abraham comes the people of Israel - a people God rescues and guides, gives a land in which they can start to demonstrate what life under God might look like, and establishes a way in which they can experience His presence. Through this family of tribes God might once again be able to restore the whole world.**

**Yet the story of Israel is a parable of history. Like us, they sometimes respond to God's call, yet more often than not turn away from Him - leading to chaos and being far from home. God remains faithful throughout, and the story of the Old Testament ends with a promise - that God Himself will act decisively through an anointed King who will finally restore and renew humanity and the world.**



| DATES                        | EVENTS   | BOOKS                 |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| <p><b>Around 1850 BC</b></p> | <p>God seeks to <b>restore the</b> _____ by calling Abram to leave Babylon and go to Canaan. He promises to make him the father of many nations and that through him all people on earth will be <b>blessed</b>.</p> <p>Abram and Sarah, despite finding it hard to trust God, have Isaac. God asks Abram to _____ Isaac, testing his ability to <b>trust in God's plan</b>. Child sacrifice to appease the gods was common at that time - by providing a ram at the last-minute God is showing Abram He is not like the other gods.</p> <p>From Isaac comes Jacob, who <b>wrestles with God</b> - and is renamed "Israel" - one who _____ with God.</p> <p>His twelve sons become the origin of the 12 tribes of Israel. Joseph is sold into _____ in Egypt but becomes the way in which God <b>rescues</b> the family, who join him there.</p> | <p><b>Genesis</b></p> |

MISSING WORDS IN THE EVENTS COLUMN

**Sacrifice, slavery, struggles, world.**



”

I AM WITH YOU AND WILL WATCH OVER YOU WHEREVER YOU GO, AND I WILL BRING YOU BACK TO THIS LAND.

“

| DATES                        | EVENTS  | BOOKS                                       |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| <p><b>Around 1250 BC</b></p> | <p>After 400 years in Egypt the twelve tribes of the Israelites have grown into a large people, but have become enslaved by Egypt where _____ rules the land with divine authority.</p> <p>God renews His <b>covenant</b> with Moses and, through the ten plagues, which increasingly take Pharaoh's divine authority apart, Moses eventually is allowed to lead the people out of Egypt so that they may <b>worship</b> God in _____, escaping through the Red Sea.</p> <p>God gives them the Passover meal as a way of _____ how death "passed over" them, and they were rescued through this Exodus.</p> <p>God re-establishes His covenant with His people at Mount Sinai (or Horeb, the place where He had met with Moses in the burning _____).</p> | <p><b>Exodus</b><br/><b>Deuteronomy</b></p> |

MISSING WORDS IN THE EVENTS COLUMN

**Freedom, bush, Pharaoh, remembering.**



”

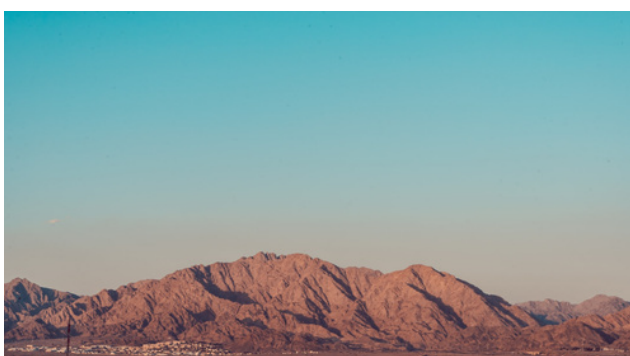
GOD ...REMEMBERED HIS COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM, WITH ISAAC AND WITH JACOB.

“

| DATES | EVENTS   | BOOKS   |
|-------|--|---|
|       | <p>He gives them _____ through the Ten Commandments and other laws (613 in total). At the heart of these is how they can <b>image Him in justice and righteousness</b> and be a blessing to the world. They will be a “_____ kingdom and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19: 6)</p> <p>God gives them a way of being “at one” with Him again through a system of <b>sacrifice</b>, which communicates both the serious need for forgiveness and the reality of sin being _____ for. He gives them the reassurance of His <b>presence</b> in the tabernacle, at the heart of which is the place where heaven and earth can overlap again.</p> <p>It takes 40 years for the people to enter the Promised Land (an eleven day journey!). Despite God’s rescue and continuing _____ they fail to trust Him, disobeying His call to <b>worship</b> Him, compromising with the other gods around them.</p> | <p><b>Leviticus</b></p> <p><b>Numbers</b></p> |

MISSING WORDS IN THE EVENTS COLUMN

**Atoned, provision, guidance, priestly.**



”

WHAT OTHER NATION IS SO GREAT AS TO HAVE THEIR GODS NEAR THEM THE WAY THE LORD OUR GOD IS NEAR US WHENEVER WE PRAY TO HIM

“

| DATES                            | EVENTS   | BOOKS  |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| <p><b>Around<br/>1050 BC</b></p> | <p>Joshua leads the people across the Jordan into this _____ <b>Land</b>. Over time the people become established in the land, driving out existing tribes, and allotting each tribe a different area.</p> <p>Following Joshua's death, the Israelites quickly start to worship the gods of other neighbouring nations. God appoints _____ as gifted leaders such as Deborah, Gideon, Samson and Samuel who will bring Israel back to God.</p> <p>As Israel continues to refuse to worship God enemy nations of Israel such as Canaanites or Philistines are used as instruments of _____.</p> <p>God agrees to giving the people a <b>King</b> as a compromise in His relationship with them. Samuel, a judge, _____ Saul and, after his death, David as king. David unites the tribes, establishes Jerusalem and secures Israel's borders.</p> | <p><b>Joshua</b></p> <p><b>Ruth,<br/>Judges</b></p> <p><b>Kings,<br/>Samuel<br/>and<br/>Chronicles</b></p> |

MISSING WORDS IN THE EVENTS COLUMN

**Judges, justice, anoints, Promised.**



”

THEN, BEFORE THE LORD, YOU WILL BE CLEAN FROM ALL YOUR SINS.

“



| DATES  | EVENTS   | BOOKS |
|--------|--|-------|
| 930 BC | <p>He brings the ark of the covenant - containing the Ten commandments and sign of God's <b>presence</b> - into Jerusalem with _____. God promises David that one day his dynasty will rule over the whole world. (2 Samuel 7)</p> <p>Solomon, David's son, builds a permanent <b>Temple</b> in Jerusalem - God is not confined to the Temple but it is the centre of His _____ on earth (2 Chronicles 7: 1-6; 11-22). Solomon leads Israel into its most fruitful period.</p> <p>Over the following 350 year period further kings often fail to be _____ to God's call, turning to <b>idolatry</b> and leading the Israelites into conflict with others and with themselves.</p> <p>Under Solomon's son, Rehoboam, there is a _____ in which the Promised Land gets divided into two kingdoms each with their own kings and capitals. The northern kingdom - called Israel - is made up of ten tribes. The southern - called Judah - is made up of two - with the capital in Jerusalem.</p> |       |

MISSING WORDS IN THE EVENTS COLUMN

**Faithful, joy, split, presence.**



”

I HAVE CHOSEN AND CONSECRATED THIS TEMPLE SO THAT MY NAME MAY BE THERE FOREVER. MY EYES AND MY HEART WILL ALWAYS BE THERE.

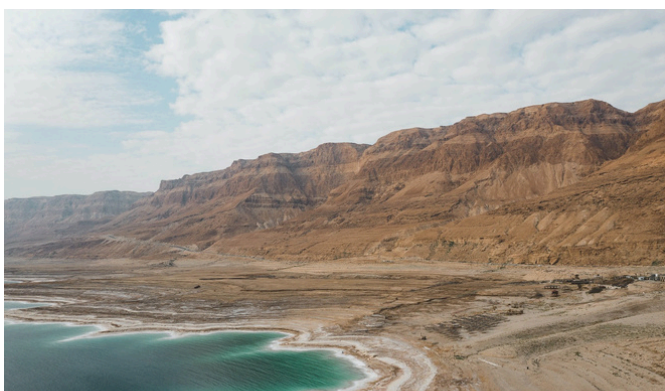
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| DATES  | EVENTS   | BOOKS  |
|--------|--|--|
| 850 BC | <p>In both kingdoms prophets rise up to call them back to God and to being a <b>covenant</b> people – most notably Elijah in the northern kingdom who challenges the _____ of Baal.</p> <p>The prophets, such as Hosea, Amos and Jonah call the people to enact God’s <b>justice</b> and warn of destruction and <b>exile</b> as a result of their disobedience. Interestingly, Jonah is sent, somewhat reluctantly, to the Assyrians – Israel’s _____.</p>  | <p><b>Major prophets:</b><br/> <b>Before and during exile:</b><br/> Isaiah<br/> <b>During exile:</b><br/> Jeremiah and Ezekiel.</p>  |
| 750 BC | <p>Yet within this increasing chaos there is also a promise – for example, Isaiah prophesies in Jerusalem that God will send an <b>anointed King, a “Messiah”</b>, who will come from _____, David and Judah’s line – fulfilling the promise. The end of Isaiah calls God’s people back to worship and foresees a time when Israel, God’s “delight”, will be His <b>covenant bride</b> once again, God will _____ His people in justice and there will be a new heaven and a new earth with no death, illness, sadness and pain.</p> | <p><b>Minor prophets:</b><br/> <b>Warnings to the north before exile:</b><br/> Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah.<br/> <b>Warnings to the south:</b><br/> Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah.</p> <p><b>After exile:</b><br/> Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.</p> |

MISSING WORDS IN THE EVENTS COLUMN

Prophets, Abraham, restore, enemy.



”

HE WILL REIGN ON DAVID’S THRONE AND OVER HIS KINGDOM, ESTABLISHING AND UPHOLDING IT WITH JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM THAT TIME ON AND FOREVER.

“





| DATES  | EVENTS  | BOOKS |
|--------|---|-------|
| 400 BC | <p>Between the ____ book of the Old Testament (Malachi) and the coming of Jesus (the inter-testamental period) there is 400 years of silence. During this time the people are ruled by Persians, Greeks, Syrians, and Romans. Different groups have different responses. The Essenes (of whom John the Baptist was one) emphasise withdrawal into the desert to become pure. The Pharisees looked to show the difference between faithful Jews and pagan rulers. The Sadducees were a religious group but opted for compromise with the authorities while the Zealots wanted violent revolution.</p> <p>As they wait for God's _____ the book of Daniel offers inspiration as a story of someone who is both faithful under oppression and has a vision of one who is God's <b>fully representative human</b>, "like a Son of ____" who will bring God's <b>plan to its completion</b>.</p> |       |

MISSING WORDS IN THE EVENTS COLUMN

**Promise, last, Man.**



”

HIS DOMINION IS AN EVERLASTING DOMINION THAT WILL NOT PASS AWAY, AND HIS KINGDOM IS ONE THAT WILL NEVER BE DESTROYED.

“