

Study Guide Questions:
YES...the Old Testament CAN Make Sense to You

PART ONE:

Chapter 1

1. What has been your experience in reading the Old Testament? If you have tried reading it, what did you find difficult and what did you find enjoyable?
2. Outside of Psalm 23, what story, even, verse, or book in the Old Testament has been the most meaningful or impactful for you?
3. The author states at the end of chapter one that “God doesn’t change.” Why is this such an important concept to keep in mind when reading the Bible? Specifically, what does this truth mean for you in relation to God?
4. From your personal perspective, what are some of the keys to reading a story and seeing the big picture of that story even if you don’t understand a lot of the details in the story? In other words, what helps you to gain that big picture even when details may seem confusing?
5. If we stay away from reading the Old Testament, how do you think our faith and understanding of God can be impacted?
6. In what way do the details of the story of Jonah that the author shares add to the reading of the story? If you want to gain a greater understanding of the details of a particular Old Testament passage, what are some of the ways you can learn about them?

Chapter 2

1. The author says the Bible is essentially a singular story. On a scale of 1-10 how clearly do you think that singular story stands out? Why did you give the rating that you did?
2. How important is the inspiration---or authorship---of the Bible to the Christian faith and to your faith? Explain.
3. On page 9 the author says the story of Scripture is God's story and gives a summary of that story. What does it mean to say Scripture is "God's story?" What is your personal reaction to the summary provided and what it means?
4. What does it mean to you to see the Bible as a "rescue & restore" story? In what way is this "rescue & restore story" evident in its pages?

What does it mean to you to see the Bible as a "love story?" In what way is this "love story" evident in its pages?

Do you think most Christians you know see the Old Testament in terms of those two descriptions? Why or why not?

5. Have a couple of people provide an explanation of a familiar movie or TV series by giving briefly and concisely 3-4 storylines that are important to that movie or TV series.

How will those storylines help you to make sense of the details involved in that series?

6. On page 12 the author says "If you don't understand these key storylines of the Old Testament, you may have all kinds of knowledge about the Old Testament, and even about the Bible as a whole, but you will be missing out on God's primary message." Do you agree or disagree with this assessment? Why?

Chapter 3

1. In your view, why is it so important to our life and faith to remember that God created everything as “very good”?
2. Share some of the many ways that life in general and our lives in particular demonstrate the truth of the fall (Genesis 3) that “we have wanted to make life about us rather than letting our lives revolve around God.” (p. 15)
3. Take three minutes to list specific events in the Old Testament that reflect the reality that life is broken and the seriousness of this brokenness? Then share them with the group as a whole. If possible, be sure to not only name the event but why that event reflects our brokenness.
4. Taking the 4 observations listed on page 18 & 19, discuss each one of them and what role each can play in helping a person in reading the Old Testament as well as how we view life.
5. Read the last paragraph on page 19. In your own words, restate the author’s point in this paragraph.
6. Share your reactions to the story given on pages 20 & 21.

Chapter 4

1. What in your opinion is a good definition of justice? Give some examples that illustrate your definition.
2. We usually think of justice in terms of punishment. The author makes the point that biblical justice includes both “negative” aspects and “positive” aspects. Explain why the positive aspects that call us to treat people well and with care, are properly considered “justice” or should indeed be considered justice.
3. Does the idea that biblical justice has both negative and positive aspects to it alter your understanding of the Old Testament in any way? Explain.
4. In what way might even the “negative, punitive” aspects of justice be considered to be positive in their purpose?
5. Do you think the Old Testament paints a picture of God as angry and vengeful? Explain.
6. If God was not a just God, what difference would that make to life? To your faith?
7. Do you find the concept of the justice of God to be scary or comforting?
8. Complete the following sentence: “God’s justice means _____.”
9. Is the creation of a new heaven and new earth a reflection of God’s grace or of God’s justice? In what way?

Chapter 5

1. The author states “The purpose of the Old Testament is to prepare us for, and to point us to, the promise of God’s rescue and restore mission.” How can this truth guide you in reading various parts of the Old Testament? Give some examples.
2. When a person tries to read the Old Testament primarily in terms of how God wants us to live a better life, how can it distort their reading?
3. The author talks about Christ coming to *reverse* what sin has done. Can you explain how this is so? How is it true for you?
4. What do you think of the following statement on page 47: “The Old Testament is trying to point us to that fact. We are under a curse, and we can’t break it. Worse than that, in our sin, we don’t even want to break it.”
5. Do you consider the Old Testament one of despair or hope? Explain why.
6. State the three storylines of the Old Testament as given in this book. How would you see those storylines applying to books of the Old Testament where perhaps these storylines are not quite as apparent as in other parts of the Old Testament---such as Psalms, Proverbs, and the Song of Solomon (a book which is about romantic, erotic love)?

Part Two:

Chapter 6

1. Did you find the four backstories provided in this chapter helpful? Why or why not?
2. Of the four backstories, which did you find most meaningful and why?
3. Summarize the main point, as noted by the author, of each of the four books discussed in this chapter. How does each main point relate to the three storylines of this book?
4. How does each of the four books discussed in this chapter relate to your Christian life and growth?