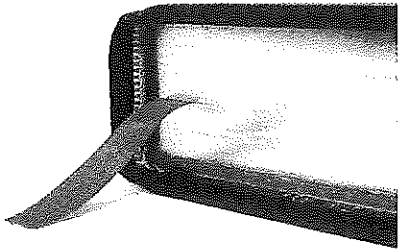


Old Testament Books



Topic

Survey of the Old Testament

Theme

God inspired each book of the Old Testament with purpose and for our benefit.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will consider which Bible books he will purpose to read and study over the next year.

Materials

- Resource 11

Scripture Focus

Various Bible passages

Summary

This lesson provides a brief summary of each book of the Old Testament. Each one has a message designed by God and worthy of our attention and study.

Outline

- I. The Books of the Law
- II. The Books of History
- III. The Books of Poetry
- IV. The Books of Prophecy
 - A. Major Prophets
 - B. Minor Prophets

Memory Verse

*"Now all these things happened unto them for examples:
and they are written for our admonition,
upon whom the ends of the world are come"
(1 Corinthians 10:11).*

GETTING STARTED

LESSON 10

Famous Books

List off five famous books (e.g., *Paradise Lost*; *War and Peace*; *Moby Dick*; *Of Mice and Men*; *Fahrenheit 451*).

ASK: Which of these books have you read?

ASK: What do you remember about the plots?

List off five of the Minor Prophets and ask the same questions.

This lesson will give an overview of each of the Old Testament books and will encourage us to be familiar with the whole Bible, even the Minor Prophets.

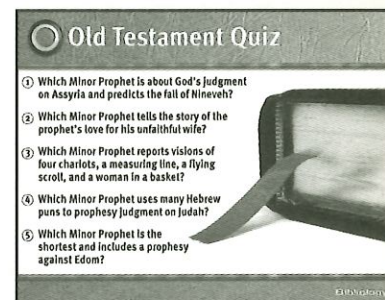
Minor Books?

RESOURCE: Display resource 11. Give the learners a few minutes to complete the quiz. Review the right answers: (1) Nahum; (2) Hosea; (3) Zechariah; (4) Micah; (5) Obadiah.

ASK: How many questions did you get right?

ASK: Why should we be familiar with the Minor Prophets?

This lesson will give an overview of each of the Old Testament books and will encourage us to be familiar with the whole Bible, even the Minor Prophets, because it is all inspired by God.



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. The Books of the Law

The books of the law contain the Law of Moses, but they also include a lot of narrative. In narrative literature we step into the lives of those who have walked before us. We observe the way they lived and see the consequences of their choices. Yet narratives are primarily accounts of how God dealt with humanity. We need to look for God in every account we study. His dealings with humanity will almost always translate to some degree into our lives today.

Every narrative has three components: action, characters, and setting. The plot is the story line. It reveals the relationships among the characters in the setting of their lives. It is important to remember that the narratives of the Bible are not fiction. They record the lives of actual characters in real settings.

Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. They comprise the books of the Law and lay the foundations for understanding God and His relationship with humanity.

Genesis. Genesis takes us back to the beginning of time when God created the heavens and the earth in a six-day period. Genesis also relates how mankind fell into sin and was driven out of the Garden of Eden by God. In addition, Genesis

describes the Flood and the family and call of Abraham. Genesis spans a longer period of time than all the rest of the Bible put together. It begins at Creation and ends with the family of Jacob living in Egypt, approximately 1800 BC.

Exodus. *Exodus* means *a way out*. This book tells how God used Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, and how He gave Moses the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai (20). Exodus also mentions God's detailed instructions about the tabernacle and directions concerning the priesthood.

Leviticus. The book of Leviticus deals primarily with Aaron and his sons. It includes material on priestly consecration and an example of judgment on those who take God lightly. Nadab and Abihu (two of Aaron's sons) were struck dead for not following God's instructions concerning the fire on the altar. Leviticus closes with regulations concerning property dedicated to God.

Numbers. The book of Numbers receives its name from a census taken of Israel (3:15). Though Numbers is one of the five books of the Law, it is more history than legislation. The book deals with the nation's forty years in the wilderness, the result of the people's fear and unbelief when God presented them with entering the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy. Moses' three discourses to the nation and his death are recorded in Deuteronomy. In his discourses, the great leader of Israel addressed Israel's past, present, and future. Moses appointed Joshua as the next leader of Israel and exhorted the people to be strong in the Lord (31). The book also contains Moses' song (32) and his blessings on the tribes (33). The final chapter traces Moses' journey up Mount Nebo in Moab where he died.

READ: Deuteronomy 32:1–4. **ASK:** What did Moses so poetically conclude about God? (Q3) *He is the Rock and His work is perfect.*

II. The Books of History

The books of history cover a period of one thousand years—from 1447 BC to 432 BC. They start with the conquest of the Promised Land and end with the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The historical books are mostly narrative accounts.

Joshua. The book of Joshua relates how Moses' successor, Joshua, led the nation in conquering and possessing the land of Canaan. The first victory was at Jericho. Ai was the place of defeat due to the sin and disobedience of a soldier named Achan. Joshua first struck through the center of the land, defeated the south, and finally the north. At Joshua's death, Israel was in the Promised Land with the majority of the land possessed and more conquering yet to complete.

Judges. Judges ruled the Promised Land during the time between Joshua and king Saul. The book of Judges describes their exploits. The judges functioned more like generals than judges of our day. During the three hundred years spanned by this book, Israel went through cycles, going from peace to apostasy to oppression to repentance to deliverance to peace. The book mentions twelve judges, some in great detail and some very briefly. It was a time when *every man did that which was right in his own eyes* (21:25). Thus, it has been labeled *the dark days of the judges*. The last five chapters describe the religious, social, and political confusion of the day. Overall, Israel digresses in its relationship with God throughout the period of the judges.

Ruth. The small book that follows Judges is Ruth. It presents the bright side of the period of the judges. It describes God's grace through a remnant that feared Him. Ruth, a Moabitess, chose to worship the God of Israel and worked to provide for her Jewish widowed mother-in law, Naomi.

READ: Ruth 1:16, 17. **ASK:** Describe the love Ruth showed for Naomi. (Q4)

In time Ruth married Boaz, a rich Israelite of the tribe of Judah, and became an ancestress of David's and ultimately of Christ's.

1 Samuel. First Samuel concludes the account of the period of the judges and describes the founding of the Hebrew monarchy. The book starts with the judge-ships of Eli and Samuel, describes the rise and fall of King Saul, and concludes with the rise of King David. Eli was a high priest with wicked sons. Samuel was a God-fearing leader who helped stabilize the nation while he was at its helm. Saul began as a humble man, but he allowed power to corrupt him, and he lost God's favor through disobedience. His life ended in defeat on the battlefield.

2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles. Second Samuel and 1 Chronicles essentially cover the same period of time. First Chronicles has ten chapters of genealogies that emphasize the theocratic lineage of David. Both 1 and 2 Chronicles were probably written after Judah's return from captivity, possibly by Ezra. Second Samuel and 1 Chronicles both deal with King David's reign. David was a great military leader and a godly man. He defeated all of Israel's enemies and enlarged the kingdom. However, he later fell into immorality with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. David repented, but during his last years he reaped the consequences of his sin.

1 and 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles. First and 2 Kings parallel 2 Chronicles. They begin with the reign of Solomon. Upon Solomon's death his kingdom split into the Southern Kingdom composed of Judah and Benjamin, and the Northern Kingdom that included the ten northern tribes. The split came as a judgment on Solomon for going after the gods of the many pagan wives he married. Eventually Assyria carried the northern tribes into captivity in 722 BC. The Southern Kingdom fell to Babylon in 586 BC. First and 2 Kings were written from a prophetic viewpoint. Second Chronicles was written from a priestly perspective.

Ezra. The book of Ezra is about the restoration of Judah and Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. The book has a break in the middle that spans fifty-eight years. The first half of the book (1–6) deals with the first return under Governor Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. The second half (7–10) covers the second return under Ezra. During the fifty-eight-year break, the events of the book of Esther took place.

Nehemiah. Nehemiah is a record of the incredible rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem despite opposition and threat of attack. The last part deals with revival among the Jews under the leadership of both Ezra and Nehemiah.

Esther. God is not mentioned in the book of Esther. The providence of God, however, is clearly seen. This book describes the evil plot of Haman as he sought to destroy the Jews. God providentially thwarted Haman's plot through the efforts of Esther and Mordecai. The message of the book is that God protected His people even while they were in captivity. The message of God's providence and faithful care is strong.

III. The Books of Poetry

The Bible contains six books of poetry. The primary characteristic of Biblical poetry is parallel structure, where two thoughts are placed in relationship to each other. In the psalms, for example, many of the verses are a combination of two thoughts that either support or contrast each other. This literary structure of pairing provides an immediate context in which to interpret the verse.

Job. Job describes the experience of a righteous man who suffered many hardships. He lost all of his possessions, his family, and his health. His three friends tried to convince him that his misfortunes were due to sin in his life, but Job maintained his innocence. The book contains much dialogue between Job and the three friends. In the end God vindicated Job and restored his prosperity once Job learned to

Psalms. Psalms is a collection of 150 songs. David wrote about half of them. Some of the other writers include Moses, Solomon, and Asaph. There are eight types of psalms, including hymns (113, 150), laments (42, 43), thanksgiving psalms (56, 100), psalms of confidence (11), psalms of remembrance (105), wisdom psalms (1, 12), kingship psalms (20, 93), and imprecatory psalms (10, 69).

Though written by and for Israelites and in a different dispensation with different worship practices, the psalms have universal appeal. Today we find the psalms to be a great source of comfort, worship, challenge, and encouragement.

ASK: What is your favorite psalm? (Q5)

ASK: Why are the Psalms often comforting in times of trouble? (Q6) *They were written to those who were facing troubling times. They are written in a way to convey truth vividly and apply it directly to the soul.*

Proverbs. Proverbs contains many wise sayings, which are common bywords dealing with life on earth. Most of the proverbs were the work of Solomon addressed to his son, Rehoboam. They still provide great wisdom for young people today. A theme of Proverbs is, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge* (Prov. 1:7).

Ecclesiastes. Solomon also wrote Ecclesiastes, which looks at life through the eyes of a natural man who finds no pleasure or purpose in life. The natural man concludes that all is *vanity and vexation of spirit* (1:14; 2:11; 6:9). In the book's conclusion, Solomon challenged the reader to *remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth* (12:1) and to *fear God, and keep his commandments* (12:13).

Song of Solomon. The final book by Solomon is the Song of Solomon. It is a love song describing the love of a bridegroom and his bride. The song honors marriage and wedded love. As part of God's inspired Word, it is more than a secular book on love; it is human love from God's perspective.

Lamentations. The prophet Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations. Jeremiah prophesied the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon (Jer. 1:14–16). After the city fell, he wrote Lamentations. Yet in this book of sorrows, Jeremiah recorded the promise of God's faithfulness (Lam. 3:31, 32).

IV. The Books of Prophecy

Sixteen prophetic books make up the last section of the Old Testament. Four

of these books are classified as Major Prophets, and the twelve other books are referred to as the Minor Prophets. The terms *Major Prophets* and *Minor Prophets* refer to the lengths of the books.

ASK: What comes to your mind when you think of the Old Testament books of prophecy? (Q7)

ASK: Name one truth you learned about God from reading or studying the prophets. (Q8)

The prophets ministered from the times of the kings to the days after the return from exile. The prophets' writings are some of the most dramatic and descriptive in all of Scripture. They communicate on both an intellectual and an emotional level so that God's heart is both understood and felt. Quality time spent in the prophets will cause lasting change in one's relationship with God.

A. Major Prophets

Isaiah. Isaiah is often called the *prophet of the Messiah* since he had more to say about the Messiah than any other prophet did. Also he is called the *evangelical prophet* because of chapter 53, which is the clearest presentation of the gospel in the Old Testament. With sixty-six chapters, Isaiah has more chapters than any Old Testament book, except Psalms.

Jeremiah. The *weeping prophet* is the name often used for Jeremiah. He wept for his fellow Israelites and gave more biography on Israel than any other prophet. He received his call from God when he was a youth (1:6), and proclaimed that the Jews should surrender to Babylon. Because of his message, Jeremiah was one of Judah's most unpopular prophets. The Jewish leaders made several attempts on his life; they threw him into a cistern, put him in stocks, and later imprisoned him. Nevertheless, Jeremiah remained true to God in spite of all his sufferings.

Ezekiel. The Babylonians carried Ezekiel away into captivity when he was a young man. He saw many visions, such as the wheel in the middle of a wheel and the valley of dry bones. He was known to act out his messages; e.g., digging a hole in the wall and lying on his side for many days. His prophecies served to communicate God's love and grace to the needy captives in a highly visual way.

Daniel. The Babylonians also took into captivity Daniel and his three friends. The first part of Daniel's book gives historical events of his life, such as his ordeal in the lions' den. The second part describes prophecies of the future concerning Israel and the Gentile nations.

B. Minor Prophets

Hosea. Hosea is often called the *prophet of divine love*.

READ: Hosea 1:2. **ASK:** Is this how you would imagine a book about divine love would start? Explain. (Q9)

Hosea fell in love with Gomer and married her, but she was unfaithful to him. Eventually she became a prostitute and ended up a slave for sale in the slave market. Hosea still loved her, bought her, and brought her home. His love is a picture

of God's love for Israel. As such, Hosea is a powerfully touching book that leaves the reader with an awe of God's love.

Joel. *Jehovah is God* is the meaning of Joel's name. He began his book by referring to a locust plague which devastated the land (1:4). He also called for mourning because the grapevines and fruit trees were withered (1:12). This set the stage for his prophecy concerning *the Day of the Lord* (1:15), a time of judgment from God. The Tribulation will be *a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness* (2:2). Therefore, the nation was to repent and turn to the Lord with all its heart (2:12). Joel ended his prophecy with the blessing and restoration of God's people.

Amos. Amos was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit who was called by God (7:14). Many times he used the phrase *for three transgressions . . . and for four* (1:3, 6), depicting sin multiplied upon sin. He pronounced judgment on many neighboring nations and zeroed in on Israel, the Northern Kingdom. Amos received a number of visions: locusts, fire, the plumb line, and the basket of summer fruit (7; 8). These visions foretold coming judgment.

Obadiah. The book of Obadiah is the shortest book of the Old Testament and is not divided into chapters. Obadiah prophesied against Edom, the descendants of Esau, who lived in red rock cliffs surrounding Petra. He warned these descendants that God would judge Edom for its animosity toward its *brother* Judah (12–15).

Jonah. God called Jonah to preach against Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. It was the cruelest of all the ancient nations, and its wickedness came up before God (1:2). At first Jonah refused to go to Nineveh and tried to flee to Tarshish, but God stopped him with a storm and a big fish. After God delivered Jonah, the prophet went to Nineveh. He was not happy, however, when the city repented and God spared it from destruction. In the end God pointed out the error of Jonah's ways through an object lesson involving a withered plant.

Micah. The book of Micah begins with a vivid description of the holiness of God.

READ: Micah 1:3, 4. **ASK:** How does the descriptive language help you understand the holiness of God? (Q10)

Micah used many Hebrew puns to prophesy coming judgment on Judah. Micah was a social reformer who was concerned about his country. He spoke out against the rich, who were taking fields and houses from the poor and were oppressing them (2:2), and the prophets, priests, and judges, who were all corrupt (2; 3). Micah also prophesied that in the latter days, Jerusalem would be the center of worship for all nations (4). Micah is also noted for his prophecy of Christ's birth in Bethlehem (5:2).

Nahum. The book opens with a description of God: God is jealous for His people and will not acquit the wicked (1:2). God used Assyria to judge the Northern Kingdom, but Assyria was ruthless in how it conquered and treated the captives. Nahum predicted the fall of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. God's judgment on Assyria would be great and total (3:19). This prophecy was fulfilled in 612 BC.

Habakkuk. In his prophetic book, Habakkuk described a debate he had with God. Habakkuk's first concern was why God did not judge Judah for its sin (1:1–2:1). God stated that He was going to judge Judah by letting it fall into the hands of Babylon

(2:1–20). Habakkuk could not understand how God could do this since Babylon was more wicked than Judah, but God also promised to punish Babylon (3).

Zephaniah. Like Joel, Zephaniah prophesied the coming *day of the Lord*. Zephaniah gives a vivid description of the tribulation period. It will be a day of wrath, trouble, devastation, desolation, darkness, gloominess, clouds, and thick darkness (1:15). Through the Tribulation God will purify Israel and then regather His people (3:20).

Haggai. The prophet Haggai rose up to provoke the Jews who had returned from the Babylonian captivity to rebuild the temple, the Lord's house. They had laid the foundation but then grew apathetic toward spiritual things, caring more about their own houses than about the house of the Lord (1:4–8).

READ: Haggai 1:3–5. **ASK:** Describe the tone of the Lord's message through Haggai. (Q11)

Haggai challenged the remnant to be faithful and promised them that God would guarantee their peace and the prosperity of Jerusalem (2:3–5).

Zechariah. The prophet Zechariah was a contemporary with Haggai. He preached repentance and then recorded prophecies concerning the coming Messiah and end-time events (1:7–6:8). He saw visions of horses, four chariots, horns, a measuring line, Joshua (the high priest), a branch, a lamp stand and olive trees, a flying scroll, and a woman in a basket. The book ends with prophecies about the Messiah's coming, His rejection, and eventual kingdom (9–14).

Malachi. Malachi was concerned about the lack of genuine worship within Israel. The nation was going through the motions of worship, but it was all ritual and not from the heart. The priests were corrupt (2:1–4), and husbands were unfaithful to their wives (2:14). Malachi pointed out that God hates divorce (2:16). Malachi predicted the coming of John the Baptist who would prepare the way of the Lord at His first coming to earth (3:1).

MAKING IT PERSONAL

The Familiar

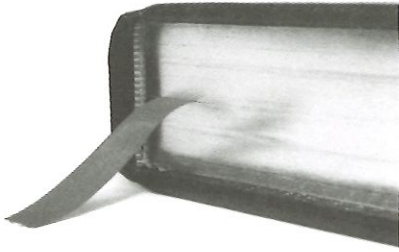
ASK: Which parts of the Old Testament are you most familiar with? (Q12)

ASK: What has contributed to that familiarity? (Q13)

The Not So Familiar

ASK: What books in the Old Testament do you want to become more familiar with? (Q14)

ASK: What steps will you take to become more familiar with those books? (Q15)



New Testament Books

Topic

Survey of the New Testament

Theme

God inspired each book of the New Testament with purpose and for our benefit.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will consider which New Testament books he will purpose to read and study over the next year.

Materials

- Resource 12

Scripture Focus

Various Bible passages

Summary

This lesson provides a brief summary of each book of the New Testament. Each one has a message designed by God and worthy of our attention and study.

Outline

- I. The Gospels and Acts
- II. The Pauline Epistles
- III. The General Epistles and Revelation

Memory Verse

"Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7).