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**The Institute for Christian Learning**  
**Old Testament Survey**  
**Fall 2020**

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*“Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”*  
*Exodus 34:5-7*

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

The Old Testament is an amazing body of literature. As an expression of the religious life and thought of ancient Israel, it is a foundational document for Christianity and for Western civilization. More than a collection of stories and sayings, the Hebrew Scriptures are a spiritual compass. The events of those years, when interpreted correctly, give us an accurate understanding of the hour in which we currently live and the reality of the need for prophetic imagination in our own day. Moreover, for Christians, studying the Old Testament is a journey into the very heart of God, to the “roots” of faith, giving us inspiration and direction for today. Israel’s story, feelings, and learning become our own. In the end, one comes to realize that the text is divine revelation *from* God and *of* God himself.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Understand the basic chronology, structures, and themes of the Old Testament.
2. Discover how the Old Testament narratives reveal God’s hand in Israel’s history.
3. Recognize the various literary genres of the Old Testament and learn how to handle them accordingly.
4. Identify differences between ancient cultural forms, mindsets, and practices and our world today.
5. Appreciate the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, including continuity and discontinuity.
6. Grasp the missional value of the Old Testament and be able to teach effectively from it.
7. Inspire in others a passion for reading and studying the Scriptures.
8. Come to know God better.

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

DeRouchie, Jason S., ed. *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus’ Bible*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013.

ISBN-13: 978-0825425912  
Amazon List Price: \$28.99 (Hardcover); \$27.54 (Kindle)

Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

ISBN-13: 978-0310517825  
Amazon List Price: \$15.84 (Paperback); \$2.99 (Kindle); \$14.99 (MP3 CD)

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Dorsey, David A. *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999.

Heiser, Michael S. *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015.

Merrill, Eugene H. *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

Richter, Sandra L. *Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.

Walton, John H. *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*. Rev. and exp. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1994.

Videos from “The Bible Project” at <https://bibleproject.com>.

## CLASS SESSIONS

Ephrata Community Church  
Wednesday Evenings in Conference Room A  
September 16 – November 4, 2020  
6:30 – 7:45 p.m.

## TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Class Topic</u>	<u>Assignment Due</u>
1	<b>September 16</b>	Course Introduction Approaching the Old Testament Interpreting the Old Testament God’s Story through Covenant	Week 1 Optional Preparatory Work
2	<b>September 23</b>	Old Testament Literary Structures The Creation & Fall of Humanity Patriarchal History & the Exodus Genesis 1 – Exodus 18	Week 2 Assignment Due
3	<b>September 30</b>	Idolatry and the Giving of the Laws The Tabernacle & Priesthood The Conquest of Canaan Exodus 19 – Joshua	Week 3 Assignment Due

4	<b>October 7</b>	More on Old Testament Law The OT Law & the Christian A Time to Catch Our Breath A Time to Catch Up on Reading	<b>No Weekly Assignment Due!</b>
5	<b>October 14</b>	Israel's History, Part 1 The United & Divided Kingdoms The Collapse of the Kingdom Judges – Kings	Week 4 Assignment Due
6	<b>October 21</b>	Israel's History, Part 2 The Exile & Return Introduction to Hebrew Poetry Chronicles – Esther; Psalms	Week 5 Assignment Due
7	<b>October 28</b>	The Poetical Books, Continued More on Hebrew Poetry A Life of Wisdom & Devotion Job – Song of Songs	Week 6 Assignment Due
8	<b>November 4</b>	The Prophets God's Exhortations to Return to Him Messianic Hope & Israel's Consolation Isaiah – Daniel	Week 7 Assignment Due
	<b>November 8</b>		Response Letter - OR - Insights Journal

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Your grade for the Old Testament Survey course will be based on the weekly assignments (60%), the response paper **OR** theological insights journal (30%), and your classroom engagement, which consists of attendance, readiness, participation, and respectful discourse (10%).

### 1. Weekly Assignments (60%)

Each week students will need to complete a variety of short written and reading assignments. Students will complete readings from select portions of the Old Testament and course textbooks and will respond to a few questions relating to the biblical text and/or topics covered in class. These questions serve a range of purposes, including: (1) to help the student reflect on his or her course readings or discussions; (2) to help the student think carefully about the biblical text; and (3) to develop the student's ability to draw theological insights and practical applications from the text. The specific questions and readings are outlined below.

These assignments need to be completed each week and submitted at the beginning of the class in hard copy OR uploaded to Canvas. The assignment document must include at the top of the first page: (1) the student's name; (2) the weekly assignment number and original due date; and (3) the date submitted.

Weekly assignments will be evaluated on their completeness and general quality (including thoughtfulness of content, degree of clarity and focus, and grammar/readability). They are worth 10 points each, for a total of 60 points. The points from each week will be added together and converted to a percentage that will account for 60% of the student's final grade.

## 2. Response Letter (30%)

*Situation:* A Christian friend writes to you, and in the letter he or she states: “I’ve been thinking a great deal lately about the Old Testament. In all honesty, why do we need it? It was essentially for ancient Israel, while the New Testament is for us Christians. Sure, there are shadows and prophecies about Christ, but why should we spend time studying elusive shadows now that the reality has come? And, yes, there are human examples for us to follow or avoid in the pages of the Old Testament, but there are even clearer examples for us to follow or avoid in the New Testament, in church history, and even in today’s world among our own friends, acquaintances, and public figures. Besides, every important doctrine we need to know as Christians is found in the New Testament. Anything important for us that might be found in the Old Testament (e.g., the need for holiness) is repeated in the New Testament, anyway. I have enough of a challenge learning and applying the teachings of the New Testament without trying to struggle through all the confusion, chronologies, and wars of the Old Testament. Would we really lose much if we were to eliminate the Old Testament from our Bibles? They’d be much easier to carry around! We could keep the Old Testament on our shelves as a resource book for important background information in our study of the New Testament, but why not stick to the New Testament for our devotions, teaching, and preaching?”

You begin think honestly about your friend’s letter. Could he or she be right? Does he or she make valid points? Think about whether or not you would agree. If you were to receive such a letter today, how might you respond? Write a 5- to 6-page response paper (double-spaced) to your friend. Include in your response: (1) the value (or lack of value) one gains from the Pentateuch, the Historical books, the Wisdom books, and the Prophets as a Christian today; and (2) how you think your friend could best utilize the Old Testament in his or her own study and teaching (i.e. what method you might suggest they use to interpret the OT). While this is a letter and not a formal academic paper, be sure your response is serious and substantive.

The response paper will be evaluated on its completeness and general quality (including thoughtfulness of content, degree of clarity and focus, and grammar/readability). It will account for 30 points, or 30% of the student’s final grade. **Due: By midnight on Sunday, November 8**—four days after the last class session.

- OR -

## 2. Theological Insights Journal (30%)

Throughout the course, keep a journal of theological insights—legitimately derived from and connected to specific Scriptures—with a suggested practical application or two to follow. You will compile at least **80** theological insights that you appreciate from across various parts of the Old Testament (approximately 10 per week). Include at least one biblical reference for each theological insight. The structure of your entry should include: (1) the text of the Scripture(s) from which you are drawing your theological insight; (2) your theological insight; and (3) a suggested practical application. For example:

Jeremiah 1:12: The Lord said to me, “You have seen it correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.”

Theological Insight: God actively sees to the fulfillment of his own word, taking care to ensure that what he has spoken comes to pass, whether the follow-through is pleasant or difficult.

Practical Application: If I am to be a godly person, I should likewise see to the fulfillment of the words I say and the promises I make, lest I undermine my own credibility. If I promised my spouse that I would do yardwork in the next couple of days, I need to take appropriate steps to keeping my word. If I told my child there would be certain rewards or disciplines for certain behaviors, I should keep my word as stated, even if doing so would be somewhat unpleasant.

Begin each insight with “God . . .” Also, avoid first-person references (e.g., “I,” “me,” “my,” “we,” “us,” etc.) in stating the insight (i.e., don’t write “God wants *us* to . . .” or “God cares about *my* . . .”). It is more accurate to make observations like, “God wants *his people* to . . .” or “God is delighted when *an individual*

...” In so doing, your insight applies both in its original biblical setting and in a modern setting as well, assuming, of course, that God does not change. On the other hand, in expressing a *practical application* of a theological insight, it is appropriate to use the first person (e.g., “In light of this insight, I may need to reexamine how I pray for my personal enemies”). A theological insight from Psalm 22 might be: “God may allow a person whom he loves to feel utterly abandoned by him” (Ps 22:1). My application might be, “I do not need to conclude that God has *actually* abandoned me or doesn’t love me when my feelings tell me otherwise.”

The theological insights journal will be evaluated on its completeness and general quality (including thoughtfulness of content, degree of clarity and focus, and grammar/readability). It will account for 30 points, or 30% of the student’s final grade. **Due: By midnight on Sunday, November 8**—four days after the last class session.

### 3. **Preparation & Participation (10%)**

The value of this course will not reside merely in the lectures and presentations given, but in the exchange of ideas they provoke. Assigned readings, handouts, slides, video clips, etc., are all geared toward introducing students to the vast and vital subject of Old Testament theology and its growing arsenal of quality resources. A single course, and a brief one at that, can never cover every important aspect of a corpus as vast as the Old Testament, but it is well positioned to challenge students how to think, learn, and be directed to further resources that are useful in ministry. Students are therefore asked to come to class prepared and also to **participate substantively and respectfully each week** with their classmates.

## ASSIGNMENT POINT SUMMARY

Weekly Assignments .....	60 points
Response Letter or Theological Insights Journal .....	30 points
Preparation & Participation .....	10 points
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>100 points</b>

## WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

### WEEK 1 ASSIGNMENT

**Due: September 16**

*The work for this week is optional and does not need to be submitted. However, students are encouraged to do the readings and answer the questions in order to get the most out of the first class session.*

1. Read DeRouchie, chapter 1: “Jesus’ Bible: An Overview” (pp. 26-54).
2. Read Fee and Stuart, chapter 1: “The Need to Interpret” (pp. 21-35).
3. Discussion Question: The OT makes up about 2/3 of our Bible; however, large portions of it are often neglected in the church’s teaching and preaching. Have you found this to be true? If so, why do you think this is the case? Be prepared to discuss your thoughts in class. You do not need to provide a written response.

### WEEK 2 ASSIGNMENT

**Due: September 23**

1. Read Genesis chapters 1-3; 12; 15:1-18; 15; 21-22; 27-28; 32-33; 35:1-14, 37:1-46:5; and Exodus chapters 1-14. Optional: Read Exodus 15-18 if you have time. (Note: Record as “Bible reading completed” [or the percentage completed], and do likewise for the following weeks.)
2. Genesis 1 through Exodus 18 tells us about God’s creation of the world, humanity’s fall, and God’s interaction with Abraham and his descendants. These stories are foundational to a Christian

understanding of the world and to our understanding of the nature and character of God. If Genesis 1 through Exodus 18 were the only part of the Bible you had, and assuming it represents an accurate portrayal of God, what might you learn about God and his ways (e.g., his character, his attributes, his perspectives, his values, etc.) from these chapters that could be of value to you this coming week? List 10-12 theological insights, in each case mentioning the biblical reference and how this insight about God might possibly be helpful to you. Begin each observation about God with “God . . .”

3. Read DeRouchie, chapter 2: “Genesis” (pp. 60-79). (Note: Record as “DeRouchie reading completed” [or the percentage completed], and do likewise for the following weeks.)

### WEEK 3 ASSIGNMENT

**Due: September 30**

1. Read Exodus chapters 19-24; 32-34; and 40.
2. Briefly skim sections of Leviticus and Numbers—but read Leviticus 19 in its entirety.
3. Read Deuteronomy 1-11; 28-31; and Joshua 1-6; 23-24.
4. Despite the fact that we are not under the Old Covenant as detailed in Exodus 20 through Numbers 10, these laws were issued by the same God we want to better know and serve, and they presumably reveal a great deal about him, his character, his ways, his values, his concerns, his perspectives, his likes and dislikes, etc. Examine the laws that God issued to Israel in Exodus 21:12-23:19 and list 6-8 things you learn about God that might suggest practical applications in your own life this coming week. In each case, specify the kind of practical application this insight might suggest. For example:

Theological Insight: God cares deeply about the plight of those who are socially disadvantaged (Exod 22:21).

Practical Application: During this next week, I could call Jim, the teenager down the street who is not part of the “in crowd” at school to see how things are going with him.

Avoid using 1<sup>st</sup>-person references in stating a theological insight from an OT passage. That is, don’t write, “God wants *us* to . . .” or “God cares about my . . .” As noted above in the instructions for the theological insights journal activity, it is more accurate to make observations like, “God wants *his people* to . . .” or “God is delighted when *an individual* . . .” In so doing, your theological observation stands true in its biblical setting and is also true today. On the other hand, in a practical application of an OT passage, it is proper to use the first person (as in the example above).

5. List 4-5 main themes that you found in the book of Deuteronomy and/or Joshua.
6. Read DeRouchie, chapter 3: “Exodus” (pp. 80-101) and chapter 6: “Deuteronomy” (pp. 140-62).
7. Read Fee and Stuart, chapter 9: “The Law(s)” (pp. 168-86).
8. Discussion Question: The detailed instructions about the Tabernacle, the sacrificial system, and laws regarding purity and impurity take up a large amount of space in the Pentateuch. Do you see any practical value of all these instructions for the Christian? Be prepared to discuss your thoughts in class. You do not need to provide a written response.
9. Take note of the chapters we skipped in DeRouchie (4, 5, and 7; Leviticus, Numbers, and Joshua). You may want to come back to these important chapters later as time allows.

### WEEK 4 ASSIGNMENT

**Due: October 7**

No assignment this week. Take a break, or catch up on your reading or late assignments as needed. You may also want to spend some time thinking about your course assignment (i.e., the Response Letter or the Theological Insights Journal).

## WEEK 5 ASSIGNMENT

**Due: October 14**

1. Read Judges 2:6-3:5; 4; 6-8; 13-16; Ruth 1-4; 1 Samuel 1-3; 10; 16; 25; 2 Samuel 5-7; 11-12; 1 Kings 1:28-2:4; 3; 8-12; and 2 Kings 17-25.
2. The historical books (Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings) relate the nation of Israel's long history from their entrance into the land of Canaan to their destruction and exile by foreign nations. These histories focus a great deal on the leaders of Israel, summarizing both their successes and their failures. Who do you think the authors of these books present as the true hero of the people? Give three to four reasons to support your position.
3. Read Fee and Stuart, chapter 5: "The Old Testament Narratives" (pp. 93-111).
4. Read DeRouchie, chapters 8-10: "Judges," "1-2 Samuel," and "1-2 Kings" (pp. 186-237).
5. Discussion Question: How do we best use the historical books in teaching, preaching, or individual study? Be prepared to discuss your thoughts in class. You do not need to provide a written response.

## WEEK 6 ASSIGNMENT

**Due: October 21**

1. Skim Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.
2. Read Psalm 1, 19, 22, 23, 51, 98, 104, 107, 121, and 139.
3. Summarize in one sentence 5 out of the 10 psalms listed above. From those 5 psalms, identify 1 key theological insight that might have practical implications for you this week. Based on one of these insights, write out a simple application that you would like to make this week.
4. Read DeRouchie, chapter 16: "Psalms" (pp. 336-57).
5. Read Fee and Stuart, chapter 11: "The Psalms" (pp. 212-32).
6. Discussion Question: As you read through the psalms, consider the range of emotions expressed within them, particularly the negative emotions (anger, doubt, etc.). If God indeed inspired these songs and considers them exemplary, what does this imply about whether or not he approves of his people having and expressing to him their emotions? Are their limits or cautions in this regard? Be prepared to discuss your thoughts in class. You do not need to provide a written response.
7. Take note of the chapters we skipped in DeRouchie (23, 24, and 25; Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles). You may want to come back to these important chapters later as time allows.

## WEEK 7 ASSIGNMENT

**Due: October 28**

1. Read Job 1-7; 38-42; Proverbs 1-6; 10; Ecclesiastes (as translated by Dr. Dave Dorsey—made available on Canvas); and several sections of Song of Songs.
2. What, in 2-3 sentences, seems to be the main thrust of God's words to Job in chapters 38-42?
3. In Proverbs 1-6, what are 3 of the author's main points?
4. Identify 5 exemplary characteristics of the young man's love for the young woman, or the young woman's love for the young man that you are particularly struck by (e.g., "He compliments her verbally"). Include references.
5. Read DeRouchie, chapter 17: "Job" (pp. 358-69); chapter 18: "Proverbs" (pp. 370-81); chapter 19: "Ecclesiastes" (pp. 382-91); and 20: "Song of Songs" (pp. 392-99).
6. Read Fee and Stuart, chapter 12: "Wisdom" (pp. 233-57).

## WEEK 8 ASSIGNMENT

**Due: November 4**

1. Read Isaiah 1-12; 36-37; 40-54; Jeremiah 1; 7-10; 30-39; and skim Lamentations.
2. The OT prophets devote a great deal of energy condemning idolatry (e.g., Isa 44). Without using any resources other than your own opinions and thinking, respond to the following:
  - a. Why do you think idolatry was so tempting to ancient Israelites? (1 paragraph)
  - b. In your opinion, what was so harmful about worshiping idols? (1 paragraph)
  - c. In addition to the usual temptations (e.g., money, fame, power, pride, sex), ancient Israelites were tempted by idolatry. Today, in addition to the same common temptations of money, fame, power, pride, sex, etc., is there anything similar to ancient idolatry that tempts modern Christians? (1-2 paragraphs)
3. From your readings of Isaiah and/or Jeremiah, list 4 theological themes (e.g., God's way of forgiving and restoring sinners) that you would enjoy developing in your teaching or preaching. For each theme, explain why you think it would be helpful for the people in your church, Bible study, S.S. class, etc.
4. Read DeRouchie, chapter 11: "Jeremiah" (pp. 238-59); chapter 13: "Isaiah" (pp. 278-93); and chapter 21: "Lamentations" (pp. 400-407).
5. Read Fee and Stuart, chapter 10: "The Prophets" (pp. 187-211).