

Introducing the Old Testament
Worksheet for Week 2
Keys to Understanding the Old Testament

Our study topic for this week is based on chapter 1 of Tremper Longman's book, *Making Sense of the Old Testament*. Mr. Longman notes that some aspects of the Old Testament attract us but that other aspects are obstacles that often keep Christians from incorporating the Old Testament into their spiritual lives.

<i>Attractions</i>	<i>Obstacles</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gripping stories• Heart-wrenching poems• Images of God• Guidance for life• Background to the New Testament	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Length and diversity• Antiquity• Cultural distance• Position in the story of redemption

Overcoming these obstacles is not easy, but it is well worth the effort! The key to becoming passionate about the Old Testament is to close the historical/cultural/geographical distance between the ancient Israelites and us. Mr. Longman suggests several principles that will help us, as God's people, to open the Old Testament.

Principles for Successful Interpretation

- Discover the author's intending meaning
 - Before we can determine the meaning of a passage for our lives, we have to determine what it meant for the author and original readers. It can't mean for us what it never meant for them!
 - God⇒human author⇒Biblical text⇒first readers⇒present day readers
 - Embrace the mystery in the relationship between divine and human authorship - don't diminish either!
 - Rely on the 2000 year-old Christian community to help you.
 - Read scripture in its context
 - Resist the temptation to grab scriptural nuggets.
 - Read the bible as stories, poems, oracles and always look for the bigger story.
 - Identify the genre of the book and passage (a genre is a type of literature, e.g., prose and poetry)
 - The genre of individual books - let poetry be poetry! Don't read Job as history!
 - The genre of individual passages - some books mix genres within them - e.g. history and prophetic oracles.
 - Consider the historical and cultural background of the Bible
 - Every verse in the Bible is culturally conditioned, just as is every person!
 - Consider the grammar and structure within the passage
 - Using several translations will help. Always remember that much of the richness in the original Hebrew (puns and other wordplays for example) resist translation into English. Study notes can help.
 - Interpret experience in the light of scripture and scripture in the light of experience.
 - Always seek the full counsel of scripture.
 - The key parts of the Bible's big story are told over and over. Let clearer passages help you interpret more obscure passages.
 - Discover how the passage presents Jesus.
 - We read the Old Testament as Christians, not as anthropologists interested in ancient cultures. We can use the tools of anthropology in our study, but we always approach the Old Testament from within a Christian worldview.
 - Be open-minded and tolerant of differing interpretations, but always discerning.
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Bible Readings for Week 2

All the readings for this week are taken from the New Testament (NT)! About a third of the New Testament consists of quotations from the Old Testament (OT) or allusions to it. Before reading each passage, take a few minutes to get a sense of the context. Your study bible should help. Jot down a few questions that come to mind from your reading of the passage.

Day 1 Luke 4:14-30	Day 2 Luke 24: 13-53
Day 3 Acts 7	Day 4 1 Corinthians 10:1-11
Day 5 Hebrews 11	Weekly Prayer Concerns