

*Introducing the Old Testament*  
Worksheet for Week 8  
Applying the Old Testament

This is the last week of the class and we'll consider what we've learned about the Old Testament and how we might apply it in our lives. I've drawn the readings from throughout the Old Testament as a means of reviewing some of what we've studied. In the final chapter of Yancey's book, he looks from the Old Testament forward to Jesus, seeing how Jesus is the surprising climax to the Old Testament story. Yancey speaks to some of the most fundamental questions about life: Do we matter? Does God care?

*The Old Testament gives us an unflinchingly realistic look at life!*

Too often, we want to compartmentalize our lives, separating the "church stuff" from the "real world" where we have to compete and make a living. For the Israelites, there was no such separation. God, YHWH, was a part of every aspect of their lives, or at least he was supposed to be! In the covenant between God and his people recorded for us in Deuteronomy, the laws of (i.e., instruction to) Israel extended from how they were to worship to how they were to marry to how they were to plant their fields. Because the covenant touched every part of their lives, the story of the covenant is a realistic look at life, all of its joys and sorrows, hope and despair, health and suffering. There is nothing "ivory tower" or "utopian" about the Old Testament. All of the messiness of life is confronted in its pages and we ought to take comfort from that as we work through the messiness of our own lives.

*We can be completely honest with God!*

One of the most striking aspects of the Old Testament is the writers' willingness to be completely honest with God. They were willing to be angry with God. They could be despairing. At times, they even seemed to give up on God. But God was always there. He was relentless in his pursuit of and love for his people. God may not have always told them what they wanted to hear or answered all their questions (remember Job!), but he was always there. We need not be afraid to take the worst part of ourselves to God or the toughest times of our lives.

*We are called to obedience as we make our journey of the heart!*

In the history of the Christian church, we've had a tendency to separate what we believe from what we do. Many Christians have seen the Old Testament as a book of the Law, filled with all sorts of old rules that have no meaning for us, while they see the New Testament as a book of the heart. Sometimes this is expressed by seeing the OT as a Book of the Law and the NT as a book of Grace. But this is a misleading separation. In the OT, God saved the Israelites by his grace. Abraham was reconciled to God by his faith (the test of Isaac's sacrifice). The whole point of the book of Job is Job's heart – his motivation. Even though David committed some of the most horrible of deeds, God still looked to David's heart. Throughout the OT, God wants his people's love and extends his own love to them freely. In the New Testament, the first large section of Jesus' teachings is the Sermon on the Mount, which plays the same role in the new covenant as Moses' sermons did in the old covenant. Jesus too focused on the heart, but he also issued a call for obedience. Just as the covenant in Deuteronomy showed the Israelites how they were to live in covenant with God, the Sermon on the Mount instructs us on how we are to live in covenant *with* God in the kingdom of God. If you would like to read more on this, I'd suggest reading *The Truth about God*, by Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon. For the authors, the Ten Commandments are not guidelines for humanity in general. Instead, they are a "countercultural way of life for a certain people to now a certain God, the God of Jesus Christ."

*We are part of the people of God!*

Finally, it is worth remembering that we are part of God's people, a people first chosen 4,000 years ago. Our charge is the same as that of Israel – we are to be the light to the world, a witness to the one, true God in a world chasing frantically after gods of all sorts!

## Bible Readings for Week 8

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 or thoughts that come to mind from your reading of the passage.

<p>Day 1 Psalm 19</p>	<p>Day 2 Isaiah 11: 1-9 [Note, Jesse was David's father and the messiah was to come from the lineage of David. Thus, this is seen as a messianic prophecy.]</p>
<p>Day 3 Leviticus 25:8-55 [Every fiftieth year was the year of Jubilee, a proclamation of liberty!]</p>	<p>Day 4 Ezekiel 37 [A vision of the restoration of Israel.]</p>
<p>Day 5 Isaiah 52:13-53:12 [The mission and death of God's suffering servant.]</p>	<p>Weekly Prayer Concerns</p>