



THE OLD TESTAMENT

Supplemental Lesson Plans



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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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Chapter 1

Preparing for the Journey

Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 1, “Preparing for the Journey: Basic Information,” page 14–31.
- Students were also asked to complete the “Review and Reflection” questions on page 17.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Begin with a ten-minute ice-breaker to help students get better acquainted during this first session. Toss a set of luggage tags to a student. (*Have them seated in a circle or semi-circle.*) That student must immediately name an item needed for a long overseas journey to a cold destination. The tags are then tossed from person to person. Each successive person must recall and name the items already mentioned and then add another item.
- Present the metaphor of Old Testament study as a sort of journey. As we study the Old Testament, we travel back in time—almost 3,000 years. We “visit” people of faith, living in a completely different culture than our own. We “see” their difficulties, dangers, strengths—and failings. If we prayerfully invest time and study, we can connect with these heroes and heroines of the Old Testament and their journey of faith. This journey can help us as we follow Jesus, the New Testament redeemer promised all throughout the Old Testament.
- Invite students to keep a “travel journal” during this course.
- If the students have already completed the Review and Reflection questions on page 17, call on them to read their answers aloud. If they haven’t done these, have them do the first three questions now.

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Introduction, What Books Make up the Old Testament?, Who Is God?, Knowing the Basic Story Line(14–17)

- Show fifteen to twenty minutes of the twenty-two-minute video “A Firm Foundation: Introduction to the Old Testament.” This video presents an overview of the Old Testament and the context in which parts of the OT were written. It also addresses the question: “Why is the Old Testament important to Christians?” Discuss this question briefly with the students.
- Write the terms: **canon**, **deuterocanonical**, **apocrypha**, and **Tradition** on the board or overhead. Ask students to define these terms that relate to the forty-six books of the Catholic Bible. Make sure that students recognize that the denominational differences are relatively minor. By and large, Christians and Jews share the same books of the Old Testament. We have common ancestors in faith.
- Briefly describe the skills (actually professional studies and sciences) used to help us travel to a fuller understanding of the Old Testament. (Knowledge of languages, especially Aramaic and Hebrew; archaeology; pseudepigrapha, the study of documents from the same era as Bible books; history, theology.)
- Move to the issue of God’s name. Sample student opinion about some Jewish traditions that see God’s name as too sacred to even pronounce. Why is this hard to understand? On the other hand, is there a lesson for modern Catholics in this Jewish reverence for God’s name? How does our culture use or abuse God’s name? What about the second commandment? Is it the “forgotten” commandment?
- Pass out Handout 1A, “Old Testament Themes” (page 262 of the TWE) and ask students to keep it throughout their study of the Old Testament. They will also use it now for a small group poster project. Provide poster board, art supplies, magazines, newspapers, etc to cut up and use. Each group should create a poster: “Journey into the Old Testament” The poster should list the forty-six Old Testament books (see page 22 in text) and themes and should be attractively and colorfully illustrated.

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Allow students to choose their journal topic, using either the page 17 or 21 Journal Assignment.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: How the Church Interprets the Inspired Writings, Classifying and Arranging the Old Testament Books,

How Important Is the Old Testament in the Life of the Church?, Studying the Old Testament: Some Final Thoughts, Further Reflections (pages 17–31).

- Display Overhead 1A “Organization of the Hebrew Bible” and have students compare that to the division of Old Testament books illustrated on page 22. What’s the same? What’s different?
- Open the topic of Scripture as “inspired writing.” Find out what students think of that concept. Then reinforce the understanding that the Bible is also a handbook for life. Yes, it is inspired by God and therefore precious and unique. But, the inspired word of God shouldn’t be treated like a precious antique that needs to be kept—unused—in a display case.
- Remind students that the Bible’s books are not arranged in chronological order in the Bible. The first books in the Bible were not necessarily written first. Explain that attention to the chronology—the sequential history—of events will be given as they encounter and study content along the way.
- Display a variety of Bibles for the students. Encourage them to look through several different Bibles, examining type style, illustrations, family entries in family Bibles, accompanying tables and appendices, the title, index, etc. Show students several Bible concordances and how they are used.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Light several candles on a small table or bench at the center of the room. Display an open Bible on a decorative cloth or on a lectern.
- Provide classroom Bibles and the different Bibles presented earlier in class. Invite the students to begin this prayer individually with the Journal Assignment on page 29. While they read and write, quietly play some meditative instrumental music.
- Ask students to volunteer their prayers written in response to one of the Old Testament readings.
- Conclude the group prayer with intercessory prayers. Begin the prayers with a prayer such as: “Adonai. This is the name that our Jewish mothers and fathers called you, O Lord. We know that your name and your words were precious to them. Light our journey this year. Guide us all to great love and knowledge of who you are and who you are leading us to be. Thank you for your word, Adonai! Thank you for your name, Adonai!”

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign the Review and Reflection Questions on pages 21, 26, and 29.
- Have students read Chapter 2, “Maps for the Journey: Geographical, Historical and Literary Context” (pages 34–57) for the next session.