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SCRIPTURE SESSIONS

— *on the* —

OLD TESTAMENT

Participant Workbook

SCRIPTURE SESSIONS ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

Pray It! Study It! Live It![®] resources offer a holistic approach to learning, living, and passing on the Catholic faith.

SCRIPTURE SESSIONS ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

Why do we *study* the Bible? If it is God's truth, can't we just read the words and immediately "get" what they mean?

The fact is that some of the Bible can be puzzling to modern ears. We may not understand the circumstances under which the texts were written or the meaning intended by the authors. Some of the material might seem contradictory. These traits are particularly true of the Old Testament, whose origins are complex.

In a literal sense, the Bible has been translated from the Hebrew and the Greek into a number of English versions. The translation we speak of here includes study that is aimed at discovering an author's original intent in writing a given scriptural text. Once we see what the author meant—and this takes some understanding of the circumstances under which the Scriptures were written and handed down—we can appreciate what God is saying to us today through these texts.

The purpose of studying the Scriptures is not simply that we might know a lot of things about the Bible or even its theological meaning. Knowledge is important and useful but not enough. The deeper intent of Scripture study is that we might "fall in love" with the Bible, and with God, who is its source and inspiration.

WHY THE OLD TESTAMENT?

Why, some might wonder, do we study the Old Testament? Isn't it enough for a Christian to study and appreciate the New Testament? Christians cannot understand the New Testament and Jesus without understanding the Old Testament. But in itself—and not just because it points to the New Testament—the Old Testament has permanent value. It contains profound teachings, beautiful prayers, and some of the greatest literature ever created. Most important, in the Old Testament we encounter God, its inspiration.

Once you are equipped with a Bible, this workbook, and a willingness to participate in this study, you are ready to discover the meaning of the Old Testament and to encounter God in the process.

For each session offered at your parish or school, this workbook has corresponding activities that include Scripture readings, commentaries, reflection and discussion questions, ideas to think about, and topics to discuss with other faith-sharers, friends, and family members.

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READING THE BIBLE AS CATHOLICS

Reading and studying the Bible can be a daunting task, particularly for those whose experience is limited to Sunday liturgy or religion classes. Often we are confused about how to understand the sacred Scriptures and are unaware that not all Christians approach studying and praying the Bible in the same way. During this session we will examine some factors Catholics should keep in mind as they encounter God's word.

THE SCRIPTURES

But Timothy has just now come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love. He has told us also that you always remember us kindly and long to see us—just as we long to see you. For this reason, brothers and sisters, during all our distress and persecution we have been encouraged about you through your faith. For we now live, if you continue to stand firm in the LORD. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our LORD Jesus direct our way to you. And may the LORD make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our LORD Jesus with all his saints. (1 Thessalonians 3:6–13)

ENCOURAGEMENT

Sometimes, we feel alone in our faith. We wonder if anyone feels, thinks, or prays the way we do. As a first missionary of the faith, Paul must have experienced his share of dark days when he wondered if the people would really accept the Good News. He must have been so encouraged when Timothy returned to tell him of the “faith and love” of the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 3:6).

The Christian faith is never meant to be held privately. We don't grow in our faith, hope, and love by being isolated from other people. Like Paul, we need the encouragement and challenge of other people; our family, friends,