



high school group study



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general editor

the old testament



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how to use the uncommon group bible studies

Each *Uncommon* group Bible study contains 12 sessions, which are divided into 3 stand-alone units of 4 sessions each. You may choose to teach all 12 sessions consecutively, to use just one unit, or to present individual sessions. You know your group, so do what works best for you and your students.

This is your leader's guidebook for teaching your group. Electronic files (in PDF format) of each session's student handouts are available for download at www.gospellight.com/uncommon/. The handouts include the "message," "dig," "apply," "reflect" and "meditation" sections of each study and have been formatted for easy printing. You may print as many copies as you need for your group.

Each session opens with a devotional meditation written for you, the youth leader. As hectic and trying as youth work is much of the time, it's important never to neglect your interior life. Use the devotions to refocus your heart and prepare yourself to share with kids the message that has already taken root in you. Each of the 12 sessions are divided into the following sections:

starter

Young people will stay in your youth group if they feel comfortable and make friends in the group. This section is designed for you and the students to get to know each other better.

message

The message section will introduce the Scripture reading for the session and get students thinking about how the passage applies to their lives.

dig

Many young people are biblically illiterate. In this section, students will dig into the Word of God and will begin to interact on a personal level with the concepts.

apply

Young people need the opportunity to think through the issues at hand. This section will get students talking about the passage of Scripture and interacting on important issues.

reflect

The conclusion to the study will allow students to reflect on some of the issues presented in the study on a more personal level.

meditation

A closing Scripture for the students to read and reflect on.



unit I

extraordinary books

Imagine yourself walking into a party by yourself. You scan a sea of faces, searching for the four friends who said they would meet you there. Finally, you spot Dolores, Chris, Les and Annmarie standing in a circle in the far corner of the room near the food table. Weaving your way through the crowd, you arrive where your friends are standing. Dolores is in the middle of telling a story, but she stops as you greet your friends. Dolores resumes telling her story, which appears to be about two-thirds finished. When she concludes her story, your four friends burst out laughing, but you don't understand what's so funny. Why? You missed the first two-thirds of the story.

Let me ask you this question: How much of the story are you telling your students? There seems to be a nationwide youth ministry trend toward spending most of our time teaching students about the life of Christ, the writings of Paul and the stories of the

early Church—all of which are vital to Christian growth, but none of which capture the entire story of Scripture.

You may fear that your students will respond to your attempts to teach about the Old Testament with one word: “Boring.” How far from the truth! The Old Testament is bursting with stories of conflict, war, envy, jealousy, miracles and healing. Anyone who views the Old Testament as boring has probably not read it—or maybe they spent all their time in Leviticus and Numbers!

This unit is designed to give your students an overview of four key books in the Old Testament. Each session is designed to give you a flavor of the overall book by analyzing one slice from it. Each session gives you the opportunity to interact with your students, helping them understand the life of the Old Testament.

Thank you, dear friend, for being committed to helping students understand the complete story of Scripture. May you, as well, enjoy learning from its extraordinary adventures.



session 1

genesis: creation and curse

He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

An unknown Confederate soldier wrote these powerful words:

I asked God for strength that I might achieve.
I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked God for health that I might do great things.
I was given infirmity that I might do better things.
I asked for riches that I might be happy.
I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men.
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life.
I was given life that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing I asked for
but everything I had hoped for . . .
Almost despite myself, my unspoken
prayers were answered.
I am among all people most richly blessed.

Somehow, this soldier understood the truth of 2 Corinthians 12:9, quoted above, and the truth behind this session. It is not what you have or even how good you are, but rather who you know. God created the world, humankind sinned and Christ redeemed us. Our Christian faith is all about God and relying on His strength, not about using our own strength. The apostle Paul wrote it like this: “The foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength” (1 Corinthians 1:25).

In your weakest moments, don’t be afraid to lean on the strong and steady arms of your Savior. As you introduce your students to this session’s description of God’s creation, our weakness in sin and the Good News of His redemption, please be reminded that, like the Confederate soldier, God can use us despite our imperfections. Isn’t God good?

Bring Him your weakness and find strength in His might.

JACK HAYFORD



group study guide

genesis: creation and curse

starter

CREATIVE CREATIONS: Get together with four or five people and get creative with the following questions:

1. What's the strangest, most bizarre invention that you've ever heard of?

Note: You can download this group study guide in 8½" x 11" format at www.gospellight.com/uncommon/the_old_testament.zip.

2. What's the most useful creation or invention you use regularly?

3. If you could create or invent anything, what would it be?

Now, with clay or Play-Doh, make a prototype of your group's best invention idea. It doesn't have to work, but try your best to sculpt a model of the finished product. Now share your small group's answers and brilliant creation with the larger group (and, if time allows, vote on the most promising invention!).

message

Today we're going to take a close look at our human family's origins. Here's something to keep in mind: Sometimes when we read the Bible, we forget that the stories in it are about real people with real feelings, thoughts and motivations. The following questions can help us put ourselves in the "shoes" (metaphorically speaking, of course, since Adam and Eve were naked a good bit of the time) of the characters.

Individually or in a group, read Genesis 2:4–3:19. If you're feeling creative, assign each person in your group a part and act out the drama that took place between Eve, the serpent, Adam and God. Once you've read the passage, answer the following questions on your own or as part of a group discussion.

1. How do you think Adam felt when God told him that he would have a partner?

2. Why do you think Eve would want to be like God?

3. How do you think the serpent must have felt as Eve bit into the forbidden fruit?

4. What might Adam and Eve have been thinking as they were sewing fig leaves together to cover themselves?

5. What would you guess was God’s tone of voice when He spoke to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:11?

6. As Adam was explaining to God that it was all Eve’s fault, how do you think Eve felt?

7. If you were Adam, what would you have wanted to say to Eve after God explained the curse?

8. What would you have wanted to say to Adam if you were Eve?

9. Do you think Adam and Eve were sorry for what they did or sorry that they were caught (or both)? Why do you think this?

dig

There was a progression in Adam and Eve's feelings about their sin. First they felt good, then they felt ashamed and then they were afraid. Get into pairs to answer the following questions:

1. Think about a temptation you are struggling with in your life right now. How would giving in to it make you feel good, at least at first?

2. How might giving in to this temptation later make you feel ashamed?

3. Read 1 John 4:15-18. Adam and Eve went from ashamed of their sin to afraid of God. Why don't we need to be afraid, even when we sin?

4. Even though we never need to be afraid of God, sin is destructive to our relationship with Him and others—so avoid it! Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. How do you think God can give you a way out of your temptation this week?

apply

The fallout from Adam and Eve's sin didn't just affect them; we are still dealing with the consequences today. Ever wonder why the world is so beautiful and so messed up at the same time?

1. Read Romans 5:12-21. This passage in Paul's letter to the Roman church is one of the foundational Scriptures that explain the Christian doctrine of *original sin*. Compare these verses with Genesis 3:16-19, then do your best to come up with a definition for original sin. What does it mean that "the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men" (Romans 5:18)?

2. Christians have wrestled to pin down a definition of original sin since the Church's earliest days. Most agree that the Fall of humanity resulted in a "sin nature" in all of us, an inability to do the right thing every time. We can't help but "miss the mark," which is what the Greek word *hamart* means—translated into English, "sin." Think about your own struggle to do the right thing every time. How have you "missed the mark"? Do these sins demonstrate the reality of a sin nature? Why or why not?

3. Take another look at Romans 5:12-21. If your sin nature, inherited from Adam and Eve, makes it impossible for you to hit the mark every time on your own, how can you "receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness" (v. 17)?

4. People aren't the only ones who bear the penalty of the Fall. Read Romans 8:19-22. Do you see humanity's sin nature affecting the natural world? In what ways?

5. Now check out 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. What does it mean to be a "new creation" (v. 17) in light of the curse found in Genesis 3:16-19? What do you think it means for God to have given us the "ministry of reconciliation" (v. 18)?

reflect

There are two different accounts of Creation in the book of Genesis. In chapter 1, God lets us have a look at what He was thinking through the whole process (isn't that amazing?). Read Genesis 1:26-28, and then answer the following questions on your own or with a partner or small group.

1. What do you think it means to be made in God's image?

2. What do you think God had in mind when He said, "Let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (v. 26)?

3. How do you think this job, given to humanity by God at the very beginning, relates to Romans 8:19-22, which we read in the previous section?

4. You are created in God's image. On top of that, if you have asked Jesus to be your Lord and Savior, you are a new creation who is called to be Christ's ambassador of reconciliation (see 2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Let those facts sink in for a minute, and then write a prayer on the lines below that expresses your feelings about who you are and what you are called to do.

meditation



So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

GENESIS 1:27

the ultimate origin story starts here

In recent years, movie goers have been taken back to the beginnings of nearly every modern action hero—Batman, Spider-Man, James Bond and Iron Man (and company), just to name a few. Our fascination with these heroes' origins are a reflection of our longing to know where we came from and why we are the way we are. With *Uncommon: The Old Testament*, you can share with the teens in your group their own origin story and help them make sense of their world and themselves. These 12 sessions of youth-friendly Bible study will introduce your students to the God who keeps His promises, works miracles and forgives His people when they make terrible choices, and help them understand the physical and spiritual history of our human family. And when they meet Adam and Eve, Samuel, Job, Esther, Daniel and many more biblical characters, your students will get to know the *real* heroes of the faith. Plus, you can download reproducible student handouts for every session—find out how inside!

I don't know anyone who knows and understands the needs of the youth worker like Jim Burns.

DOUG FIELDS

Senior Director of HomeWord Center for Youth and Family @ Azusa Pacific University
Simply Youth Ministry (www.simplyyouthministry.com)

I heartily recommend these studies.

RICK WARREN

Author of *The Purpose Driven Life*

- Reproducible student handouts available for download
- Every session is an interactive, in-depth study of God's Word
- Flexible format—youth Sunday School, midweek meetings, camps and retreats
- Adjustable for groups of any size and age, junior high to high school



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