

# FULL OF PROMISE



8 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR  
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS



O.T. OVERVIEW

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8 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR  
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

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*Full of Promise*

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## » CONTENTS

How to make the most of these studies .....	5
STUDY 1: When good turns bad <i>[Genesis 1-11]</i> .....	9
STUDY 2: Promises, promises <i>[Genesis 12-50]</i> .....	17
STUDY 3: The great escape <i>[Exodus-Deuteronomy]</i> .....	25
STUDY 4: Great expectations <i>[Joshua-1 Samuel]</i> .....	35
STUDY 5: The kingdom comes <i>[David-Solomon]</i> .....	45
STUDY 6: The kingdom goes <i>[Solomon-Exile]</i> .....	55
STUDY 7: Is God dead? <i>[The Exile]</i> .....	65
STUDY 8: A diary of disaster <i>[Nehemiah]</i> .....	75
APPENDIX: Tips for leaders .....	85

## » HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE STUDIES

### 1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

Interactive Bible Studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. They take you through a particular part of the Bible, helping you to know where to start, pointing out things along the way, suggesting avenues for further exploration, and making sure that you know how to get home. Like any good tour, the real purpose is to allow you to go exploring for yourself—to dive in, have a good look around, and discover for yourself the riches that God’s word has in store.

In other words, these studies aim to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do plenty of the exploration and discovery yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of ‘interaction’—interaction with the Bible, with the things we’ve written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

## 2. The format

The studies contain four main components:

- sections of text that introduce, inform, summarize and challenge
- numbered questions that help you examine the passage and think through its meaning
- ‘Implications’ sections that help you think about what this passage means for you and your life today
- suggestions for thanksgiving and prayer as you close.

## 3. How to use these studies on your own

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in the Bible, and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.
- Work through the study, reading the text, answering the questions about the Bible passage, and exploring things in more detail as you have time.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the ‘Implications’ and ‘Give thanks and pray’ sections at the end. It is important that we not only hear and understand God’s word, but also respond to it. These closing sections help us do that.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you’ve learnt.

## 4. How to use these studies in a small group

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and triplets. Get together with a friend or friends and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don’t need the formal structure of a ‘group’ to gain maximum benefit.

- For small groups, it is *very useful* if group members can work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how sidetracked you get!) if all the members have done some work in advance.
- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. If you are a group leader, the material in the appendix ‘Tips for leaders’ will help you think through how to use these studies in a group setting.
- If your group members usually don’t work through the study in advance, it’s extra important that the leader prepares which parts to concentrate on, and which parts to glide past more quickly. In particular, the leader will need to select which of the ‘Implications’ to focus on.
- We haven’t included an ‘answer guide’ to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of the Bible, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

## 5. Bible translation

Previous editions of this Interactive Bible Study have assumed that most readers would be using the New International Version of the Bible. However, since the release of the English Standard Version in 2001, many have switched to the ESV for study purposes. So with this new edition of *Full of Promise*, we have decided to quote from and refer to the ESV text, which we recommend.





» STUDY 1

# WHEN GOOD TURNS BAD

[GENESIS 1-11]

1. Without looking at a Bible, draw a diagram or a timeline containing what you see as the main events of the Old Testament.

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## The big picture

JIGSAW PUZZLES ARE GREAT FUN. At least that's what people keep telling me. Personally, I find them hard work. Sitting at a table surrounded by hundreds of little pieces of coloured cardboard only confuses and frustrates me.

The way I feel about jigsaw puzzles is the way many of us feel about the Old Testament. We may know lots of individual stories of the Old Testament, like Daniel in the lion's den or David and Goliath, but we're not really sure how they all fit together. In fact, some of us may not even know that they do fit together! The end result is that the Old Testament can be a confusing and frustrating part of the Bible, which we either avoid altogether or dip into at random like a phone book or a dictionary.

The aim of these studies is to take some of the confusion out of the Old Testament by providing an overview of its main themes and events. The studies

will be like taking a scenic flight over a spectacular but varied landscape. From the plane we'll be able to see the main points of interest—but naturally, we won't have the time to land and study many things in detail.

By the time our flight is over, however, we will have gained an appreciation of the overall landscape, and how it all fits together. That's a particularly important thing to do with the Old Testament, because the events of this part of the Bible prepare us for the greatest event in the history of this planet: the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The big question is: where do we start? There are so many different people, places and events. Which should we look at first? Well, believe it or not, when it comes to the Old Testament, the best place to start is at the beginning.

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### Read Genesis 1:1–2:3.

2. Do you notice any recurring words or phrases?

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3. What do you think these patterns tell us about God and the world?

4. What things reflect the fact that humanity has a special place in God's plans?

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## A good creation

WE HAVE DISCOVERED THAT THE OLD Testament opens with God creating a good world. We have also discovered that God is a powerful and systematic creator. First he separates all the different compartments of creation, and then he methodically fills each compartment with appropriate things. For example, first the land and water are separated, and then the water is filled with sea creatures and the land is filled with vegetation and animals.

Genesis reveals a creator who has a place for everything, and who puts

everything in its place. This world has a design and purpose. We are not here by accident!

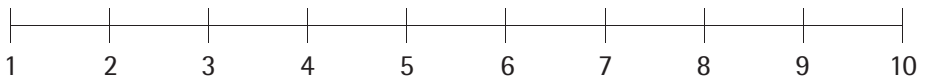
Within God's design for creation, humanity has a central role. Man is created to be God's representative on earth, placed here to enjoy fellowship with God and care for his creation. In this respect, God's creative work culminates in the 'rest' of the seventh day. The seventh day is a picture of God and humanity enjoying perfect rest together in an unspoiled world.







- 
- Because of the Fall, life in the world is a mixture of good and bad, achievement and frustration. In what specific areas of life are you feeling this?
  
  - From the following passages, what was Jesus Christ's role in creation? How should this affect the way we respond to Christ?
    - John 1:1-3
  
    - Colossians 1:15-17
  
    - Hebrews 1:1-4
  
  - On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest), how would you rate God's faithfulness to his creation? Mark your rating on the scale below.



- 
- From what you've seen so far, how would you rate mankind's faithfulness to God?



### » Give thanks and pray

- Thank God for his specific design and purpose in creation, and thank him for the precious gift of life that we so often take for granted.
- Ask God to forgive you for the times when you have followed in the footsteps of Adam and Eve, trying to rule your own life and disobeying God's word.
- Give thanks for Jesus, the Word, through whom all things were made.



## » TIPS FOR LEADERS

### Studying the Old Testament

**M**OST PEOPLE, IF THEY USE the Old Testament at all, treat it like a phonebook or a dictionary—a proof text here, a half-remembered verse there, and the occasional riveting yarn about Noah or Samson or King David thrown in for good measure. But how does it all fit together?

The first step to appreciating the Old Testament is to understand that it contains a single unified story. It is the unfolding story of God's commitment to his promises to bless the world through the descendants of Abraham. The Old Testament is full of promise—and the promise is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Like any other piece of unified literature, the whole Old Testament therefore needs to be read in such a way that recurring themes and patterns are noticed and appreciated. That's what we hope to achieve through these studies. Large slabs of the Old Testament are dealt with so as to draw out the key themes and ideas. Indeed, this is a good way to read any part of the Bible. For example, to truly appreciate each of the Gospels or any of the apostle Paul's letters, they are best read in one sitting. Approaching the Bible in this way helps us to see the 'big picture'.

Dipping into the Old Testament without understanding the big picture can lead to all sorts of problems. We end up with a fragmented understanding of the Old Testament and we never come to grips with the idea that from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Nehemiah—the last stage in

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the account of Israel's history—it's a story that's going somewhere. As Christians, we especially need to be always ready to jump into the storyline and follow it through to the logical destination—fulfilment in the life, death, resurrection, ascension and kingly rule of Jesus Christ.

Because these studies are designed to highlight the overarching storyline (or framework) of the Old Testament, that means certain issues and events are not even mentioned. Try to avoid the temptation to add bits that you feel should have been included—we've worked hard to slim things down to a manageable outline. And if your group can catch hold of the framework now, you'll find that detailed study of parts of the Old Testament later on will be much easier. Knowing where things fit in the big picture is a huge help in making sense of the Bible. So for now, be content with our 'aerial view', and don't be tempted to get any closer!

Even with our best efforts to make the studies containable, they're still a little more detailed than we would have liked. These studies will work best if your group prepares during the week. Not preparing ahead will mean that the group is very unlikely to be able to complete a study in a single session.

Getting a hold on the sweep of the Old Testament story is exciting. You'll marvel at the way the plot-line fits together. You'll groan at the constant failings of Israel. And most of all, you'll be thrilled at the way all the promises of God find their fulfilment in Christ.

## **Bryson Smith and Phil Campbell**

### **Feedback on this resource**

We really appreciate getting feedback about our resources—not just suggestions for how to improve them, but also positive feedback and ways they can be used. We especially love to hear that the resources may have helped someone in their Christian growth.

You can send feedback to us via the 'Feedback' menu in our online store, or write to us at PO Box 225, Kingsford NSW 2032, Australia.



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# FULL OF PROMISE



- If you've always wondered what the Old Testament is really about ...
- If you feel like the Old Testament is a confusing mix of hard-to-understand laws and boring history ...
- If you've ever been confused about how the Old Testament relates to Jesus ...

... then you need Full of Promise.

In **Full of Promise**, Phil Campbell and Bryson Smith take us on an exciting tour of the Old Testament. In just 8 studies, we see the big breathtaking picture of Creation, the Fall, and the history of God's dealings with Israel—the whole story, with all its ups and downs, and with the certainty of God's promise shining through.

These invaluable studies help us to understand the message of the whole Bible. They show us not only the big picture of the Old Testament, but also how the pieces fit together, and how they point to the One who was to come: Jesus, in whom all God's promises are Yes and Amen.

Ideal for small groups or individuals.

