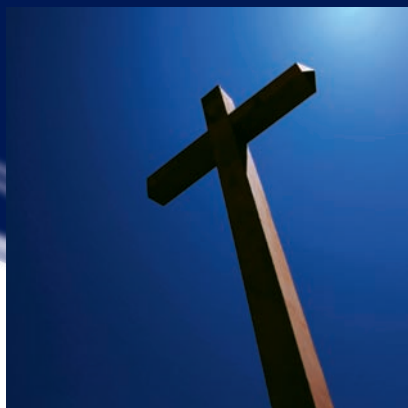


FROM SHADOW TO REALITY



10 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS



HEBREWS

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10 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR
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matthiasmedia

From Shadow to Reality

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» 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

Each study contains five main components:

- short sections of text that introduce, inform, summarize and challenge
- a set of numbered study questions that help you examine the passage and think through its meaning
- sidebars that provide extra bits of background or optional extra study ideas, especially regarding other relevant parts of the Bible
- an ‘Implications’ section that helps 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 the sidebars 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 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. This will mean a little extra preparation—underlining the sections of text to emphasize and read out loud, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will also probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- 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 studies in our Interactive Bible Study series 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. For this reason, we have decided to quote from and refer to the ESV text, which we recommend.

» STUDY 1

OVERVIEW: FROM SHADOW TO REALITY

THE SECOND-CENTURY HERETIC, Marcion, was infamous for deleting the Old Testament from his Bible. To him, the just and vengeful God of the Old Testament bore no relationship at all to the merciful and loving God of the New. The Old Testament had nothing worthwhile to say to Christians, and so Marcion simply got rid of it. He also deleted parts of the New Testament that either quoted or echoed the Old. We can

imagine that he would have loved the Bible on computer—it would've made cutting and pasting so much easier!

We might regard Marcion's attitude as crude and mistaken, but many modern Christians are Marcionites in practice. They aren't really sure what to do with the Old Testament, and so they basically ignore it. A 'New Testament with Psalms' is the only Bible they need to carry with them.

1. Have a quick glance through the book of Hebrews. How much of Hebrews do you think would be left after Marcion's scissors had finished their snipping?

2. What can we conclude about the relevance of the Old Testament for Christians, as far as the writer of Hebrews is concerned?

3. How does this compare with your attitude to the Old Testament? Are you a Marcionite in practice? What are your main difficulties in reading the Old Testament?

Shadows and realities

In Hebrews 10:1, the writer explicitly says that the Law of Moses "has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities". The Law spoke of a sacrificial lamb that would take away sin. This was but a shadow (which couldn't really cleanse us from sin) pointing forward to Jesus, the real lamb who does cleanse us finally from our sin. Throughout these studies, we will see again and again how the Old Testament shadows

THE WHOLE ARGUMENT OF Hebrews is founded on the truth and relevance of the Old Testament for us today. The ancient word of God still speaks (Heb 3:7); it is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). And yet for the writer of Hebrews, the Old Testament is to be read through the glasses of God's further revelation in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is a pointer to Jesus, and can only be fully understood in his light.

In fact, the key way in which Hebrews applies the Old Testament to us, through Christ, is through the imagery of 'shadow' and 'reality'. People, objects, institutions and events spoken of in the Old Testament are but **the 'shadows'; the 'realities'** are found in Christ.

AS WE WORK OUR WAY THROUGH Hebrews, we will come back to this pattern of teaching and exhortation. In fact, at the end of each study we will fill in part of a diagram (in the appendix) that will build up an overall picture of the contents of the letter. The diagram links together the Old Testament shadow, the New Testament reality, and the exhortation that the author of

Hebrews gives on this basis. (Flip over to the appendix and take a look at the diagram, if you wish.)

Hopefully as you fill in the diagram each time, you will be able to see how the argument of Hebrews unfolds. More than that, we trust that God will speak to you directly through this first century sermon, and the Old Testament on which it is built.

» Implications

- As you skimmed through Hebrews in this overview, what things struck you as strange or difficult to understand?

- What do you think was the main emphasis or point of the book?

» Give thanks and pray

- Give thanks to God that his promises made in the Old Testament aren't shadows any longer, but that we can know the reality in Christ.
- Ask God to help you understand more of his truth as you look at both the Old and New Testaments in the coming studies.