



# GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

Old Testament—Covenant History **2**



Community  
Bible Experience™



## DEAR GROUP LEADER,

We're delighted that you're a part of Community Bible Experience.

"Reading big" for eight weeks will stretch your group in powerful ways. This guide has everything you need to lead them through this eight-week journey.

Whether you find the prospect of reading the Old Testament exciting, daunting, or maybe a bit of both, we promise you this: it may not be easy, but when we immerse ourselves in the redemptive drama of God's Word, we'll discover our place in his story.

You don't have to have all the answers to be a great discussion group leader. Just think of your weekly gatherings more like a book club than a traditional Bible study, and come ready to explore the Bible with your fellow readers.

Thank you for sharing this journey with us.



# CONTENTS

## About this journey

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A better Bible experience	4
How it works	4
The Books of the Bible	5

## Preparing for the journey

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Five tips for reading	6
Planning your weekly gatherings	7
Five conversation starters	8
Five tips for weekly gatherings	9
Covenant History 2 reading plan	10

## Weekly discussion guides

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Week 1: Joshua	14
Week 2: Judges, Ruth	15
Week 3: Samuel-Kings	16
Week 4: Samuel-Kings	17
Week 5: Samuel-Kings	18
Week 6: Samuel-Kings	19
Week 7: Samuel-Kings	20
Week 8: Samuel-Kings	21

## After the journey

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Four tips for finishing strong	22
Oakwood comments on CBE	23

# ABOUT THIS JOURNEY

## A better Bible experience

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What would happen if we actually read the Bible? Not a verse here or there, but the whole Bible?

What if, instead of going it alone, we could have a real conversation about the Bible—one anyone can join, no matter where they are in their faith journey?

Community Bible Experience is about reading the Bible as it was meant to be read—whole books, in community. It will take your church beyond Bible study, beyond reading in fragments, and beyond reading in isolation.

Discover the complete story. For eight weeks, let's read big, read real, and read together.

**READ BIG.**  
**READ REAL.**  
**READ TOGETHER.**

## How it works

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1. **Read big.** You'll cover Joshua through 2 Kings in the Old Testament in 8 weeks—reading 5 days a week, around 8 pages a day. The average day's reading takes 30 minutes or so to complete.
2. **Read real.** You'll use a groundbreaking presentation of the Scriptures, called *The Books of the Bible*. It's designed to feel more like reading the original.
3. **Read together.** Your group will meet once a week for a book club-style conversation about the Bible.



## ABOUT THIS JOURNEY

### The Books of the Bible

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During Community Bible Experience, you'll read from a revolutionary presentation of Scripture called *The Books of the Bible*.

When you open your copy, the first thing you'll notice is that this is no ordinary Bible. There are no chapter or verse numbers. No study notes or cross references. No red lettering.

That's because none of these features are original to the Scriptures. Most were added centuries later to help us find things. But the Bible isn't a reference book; first and foremost, it's a story. It's a collection of books, each of which was meant to be experienced as a whole. Modern Bible formatting imposes a different structure on the text, one that encourages us to read in fragments.

*The Books of the Bible* is designed to be read from beginning to end. We've stripped away centuries of artificial formatting, leaving behind nothing but pure Bible text in a presentation that's easier to read and understand.

We've formatted each book so you can see the natural section breaks put there by the authors.

*The Books of the Bible* features the complete text in the NIV®, the most widely read contemporary English translation of the Bible.

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## Five tips for reading

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1. **Read what you can.** Don't get discouraged if you fall behind. Keep at it, even if you don't make it all the way through each day's reading. If you have trouble keeping up, listening to the Oakwood O.T. podcast or audio version can help.
2. **Read every day.** Plan on reading five days a week, Monday – Friday. The pace is a little intense, but reading large portions of Scripture is also incredibly rewarding. (And remember, you only have to keep this pace up for eight weeks.)
3. **Be fully present.** Avoid distraction while reading. (Turns out we're not that good at multitasking.) Instead, devote your full attention to the text.
4. **Read the book intros.** *The Books of the Bible* includes brief introductions or "invitations" to each book, unpacking the context and literary structure of what you're about to read. Trust us, they're well worth your time.
5. **Don't worry about the parts you don't understand.** The goal is to read big, not to catch every detail. You can always go back and study a specific passage in greater detail later. For now, take in the big picture; let that be your focus for the next eight weeks.

I really looked at the Bible differently by reading for the "big picture." It was good for me to put all the pieces in one "connected" story.

– an Oakwood participant

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## Planning your weekly gatherings

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Discussion groups should meet once a week during Community Bible Experience. The next few pages cover some of the basics to help you make the most of your weekly gatherings.

### **When should we meet?**

Any time during the week works—just jump in and discuss what you've read since your last time together. Weekends are most aligned with the sermon series. There are no readings assigned for Saturday and Sunday, which makes the weekend a good time to get together.

### **How often should we meet?**

Plan on meeting eight times during your reading campaign. Some groups meet one week in advance to get ready; some groups enjoy a final wrap-up celebration together after they've completed the eight weeks.

### **How much time should we spend together?**

Most discussion groups meet for 60 – 90 minutes each week, but feel free to adjust this based on the needs of your group.

### **What will we cover?**

Here's a general outline of each week's discussion time, which you can adapt as needed:

- Introduction (15-20 minutes, first week only)
- Reflecting on the previous week (30-60 minutes)
- Preparing for the week ahead (15-30 minutes)

See pages 14–21 for a week-by-week guide.

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## Five conversation starters

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Each week, participants will share their reflections on the text with their discussion groups, using these five simple prompts:

1. What's something you've noticed **for the first time**?
2. What **questions** did you have?
3. Was there anything that **bothered** you?
4. What did you learn about **loving God**?
5. What did you learn about **loving others**?

OK, these are a bit different from your average Bible study questions. Then again, this isn't your average Bible study. When people read whole books of the Bible, they notice things for the first time. They may have questions they never thought to ask before. They may even come across things that trouble them. These discussion prompts are meant to help readers navigate the text without giving them all the answers. They're an invitation to wrestle with the Bible and ponder its implications for how we live.

Encourage your group to treat weekly gatherings more like a book club than a Bible study, to allow the discussion to be free-flowing and wide-ranging.

I so enjoyed hearing  
how fellow believers  
wrestled with God's  
Word and being  
able to discuss our  
struggles out loud.

– an Oakwood participant



# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## Five tips for weekly gatherings

This may be one of the easiest discussion groups you've ever led. You don't have to have all the answers; you just need to get the ball rolling each week. Chances are, participants will come full of things to talk about. Here are five tips for a great book-club experience.

**1. Don't stress.**

You don't have to do any advance preparation to lead your group on this journey. Just do your best to keep up with each week's reading.

**2. Think "book club."**

Participants will come with different perspectives, backgrounds, and assumptions. Some may be new to the Bible; others may be lifelong students. Your job isn't to settle every debate or answer every question. Let the Bible speak for itself, and let each person absorb the story as it unfolds. Group members may come to each week's gathering with lots of specific questions. That's OK! Try to focus your conversation on the big picture—where the overall story is moving and the part we're invited to play in it. To help, you can suggest your group keeps a "parking lot" list of questions to explore further after your eight-week journey.

**3. Give everyone a voice.**

Encourage everyone to join the conversation, but don't pressure someone to share if they don't want to. Make sure no one inadvertently monopolizes the conversation. If they do, invite some of the quieter participants to chime in.

**4. Share the reins.**

Anyone can facilitate a Community Bible Experience discussion group. If you feel like a change of pace, give yourself the night off and invite another member to guide the conversation.

**5. Watch the overview videos together.**

There are overview videos for each book from The Bible Project ([www.jointhebibleproject.com](http://www.jointhebibleproject.com)). Scroll to "Read Scripture Old Testament" series and select the video that aligns with the reading, or else view videos at the YouTube links provided on pp. 14-21). Take a few moments to watch these videos together, so you can prepare for what you're about to read, or are currently reading. We'll indicate in the weekly discussion guide when to view one of the videos.

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## Old Testament—Covenant History reading plan 2

Read five days a week, Monday through Friday. Most readings take around 30 minutes to complete. Some daily readings are longer or shorter, because each one ends at the close of a book or a natural section break within a book. Section breaks are indicated by line spaces—the bigger the space, the bigger the break.

### Week 1: Joshua

The book of Joshua begins with the young nation of Israel making preparation for their invasion of Canaan. Joshua leads them on an overcoming campaign, followed by the distribution of the land by tribe—the fulfillment of a covenant promise of God's. Note Joshua's speech before his death, urging each tribe to take full possession of what God's given.

<b>Day 1</b>	pages 297-305	read until the end of the page
<b>Day 2</b>	pages 306-316	read until ".....thirty-one kings in all"
<b>Day 3</b>	pages 316-322	read until "...you can drive them out."
<b>Day 4</b>	pages 322-328	read until "...every one was fulfilled."
<b>Day 5</b>	pages 328-333	read until the end of Joshua

### Week 2: Judges, Ruth

The book of Judges details Israel's worsening pattern of lapses into covenant violation. God allows other nations to conquer them, after which they cry out for help, and He delivers them over and over. The book of Ruth connects the time of judges with the time of the kings, and also invites its readers to be a part of God's kindness toward "outsiders."

<b>Day 6</b>	pages 335-343	read until "...peace for forty years."
<b>Day 7</b>	pages 343-352	read until "...he was buried in Karon."
<b>Day 8</b>	pages 352-361	read until "...led Israel twenty years."
<b>Day 9</b>	pages 361-368	read until the end of Judges
<b>Day 10</b>	pages 369-375	read until the end of Ruth

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## Old Testament—Covenant History reading plan 2

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### Week 3: Samuel-Kings

The books of 1 Samuel through 2 Kings are actually parts of one long book, telling the story of the Israelite monarchy from beginning to end. The history is set in the context of the nation's covenant relationship with God.

<b>Day 11</b>	pages 377-381	read until "...under Eli the priest."
<b>Day 12</b>	pages 381-387	read until "...twenty years in all."
<b>Day 13</b>	pages 387-394	read until "...your king will perish."
<b>Day 14</b>	pages 394-398	read until "...him into his service."
<b>Day 15</b>	pages 398-404	read until the end of the page

### Week 4: Samuel-Kings

David's relationship with Saul develops. Note a theme: Saul, the first king, doesn't follow God faithfully, and so God announces He will seek "a man after his own heart" to rule Israel. God finds this person in David.

<b>Day 16</b>	pages 405-409	read until "...back to the town."
<b>Day 17</b>	pages 409-414	read until "...up to the stronghold."
<b>Day 18</b>	pages 414-418	read until the end of the page
<b>Day 19</b>	pages 419-425	read until "...and all Israel."
<b>Day 20</b>	pages 425-429	read until the end of the page

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## Old Testament—Covenant History reading plan 2

### Week 5: Samuel-Kings

David now reigns over both Israel and Judah. God has promised that David's descendants will always rule Israel if they worship and serve God faithfully. Pay particular attention to David's wholehearted dedication to God—it becomes the standard this book uses for every subsequent king.

<b>Day 21</b>	pages 430-436	read until "...Ammonites anymore."
<b>Day 22</b>	pages 436-446	read until "...he refreshed himself."
<b>Day 23</b>	pages 446-454	read until "...Jairite was David's priest."
<b>Day 24</b>	pages 454-459	read until the end of the page
<b>Day 25</b>	pages 460-466	read until "...was firmly established."

### Week 6: Samuel-Kings

King Solomon takes the stage. We now trace the tragic wavering of the people's devotion as it leads over the years to their nation first being divided...and then conquered by the empires to the east.

<b>Day 26</b>	pages 466-470	read until "...to administer justice."
<b>Day 27</b>	pages 470-476	read until "...of the LORD's temple."
<b>Day 28</b>	pages 476-481	read until "...disaster on them."
<b>Day 29</b>	pages 481-485	read until "...succeeded him as king."
<b>Day 30</b>	pages 485-490	read until "...succeeded him as king."

# PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

## Old Testament—Covenant History reading plan 2

### Week 7: Samuel-Kings

The succession of kings continues. Many of them abandon God and lead the people to do the same, although a few of the kings call the people back to faith.

<b>Day 31</b>	pages 490-494	read until the end of the page
<b>Day 32</b>	pages 495-502	read until "...palace in Samaria."
<b>Day 33</b>	pages 502-510	read until "...returned to Samaria."
<b>Day 34</b>	pages 510-516	read until "...his hand and took it."
<b>Day 35</b>	pages 516-525	read until "...twenty-eight years."

### Week 8: Samuel-Kings

Witness the demise of Israel's monarchy and the nation. Note the surprising last paragraph of the last day's reading. In the midst of the nation's downfall due to moral and religious failure, a glimmer of hope shines. Despite the people's unfaithfulness to the covenant, God has remained faithful to His own promise to David. The deeper purpose of God that was revealed at Israel's birth—to bring blessing and restoration to the nations—is still alive.

<b>Day 36</b>	pages 525-531	read until "...succeeded him as king."
<b>Day 37</b>	pages 531-537	read until "...their ancestors did."
<b>Day 38</b>	pages 537-543	read until "...succeeded him as king."
<b>Day 39</b>	pages 543-548	read until "...in place of his father."
<b>Day 40</b>	pages 548-551	read until the end of 2 Kings

# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 1: Joshua

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### **Introduction (15-20 minutes)**

Be sure to cover the following points at your first gathering:

- Introduce Community Bible Experience by sharing the information on pages 4-6 of this guide.
- Discuss the challenge of reading 8 pages a day. Remind participants that most readings take around 30 minutes to complete—about the same time it takes to watch a short TV show.
- Invite each group member to share what they hope to get from their journey through the history of the Old Testament.

### **Reflecting on the previous week (variable minutes)**

Depending upon when you meet, there is either no prior reading to discuss this week or a portion. Plan accordingly! Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide, if needed.

### **Preparing for the week ahead (15-20 minutes)**

Introduce your group to Joshua by watching the video overview at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqOqJlFF\\_eU&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkl9J\\_WEATHQCwRZou&index=9](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqOqJlFF_eU&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkl9J_WEATHQCwRZou&index=9), part of the "Read Scripture Old Testament" series produced by The Bible Project.

Encourage your group to take the time to read the Invitation to Joshua on pp. 297-298 in *The Books of the Bible—Covenant History*.

Remind your group that each Sunday's sermon will preview the week's reading in advance.

## WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

### Week 2: Judges, Ruth

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#### **Reflecting on the previous week (30-60 minutes)**

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide, if needed.

#### **Preparing for the week ahead (15-20 minutes)**

Continue your reading in the Old Testament by watching the video overview of Judges at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOYy8iCfIJ4&index=10&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodklgJ\\_WEATHQCwRZou](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOYy8iCfIJ4&index=10&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodklgJ_WEATHQCwRZou), part of the "Read Scripture Old Testament" series produced by The Bible Project.

Encourage your group to take the time to read the Invitation to Ruth on pp. 369-370 in *The Books of the Bible—Covenant History*.

# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 3: Samuel-Kings

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### **Reflecting on the previous week** (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide, if needed.

### **Preparing for the week ahead** (15-20 minutes)

Remind your group about Ruth by watching the video overview of Ruth at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oh1eoBeR4Jk&index=11&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodklgJ\\_WEATHQCwRZou](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oh1eoBeR4Jk&index=11&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodklgJ_WEATHQCwRZou), part of the “Read Scripture Old Testament” series produced by The Bible Project.

Encourage your group to read the Invitation to Samuel-Kings on pp. 377-378 in *The Books of the Bible—Covenant History*.



# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 4: Samuel-Kings

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### **Reflecting on the previous week** (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide, if needed.

### **Preparing for the week ahead** (15-20 minutes)

Continue your reading of Samuel-Kings by watching the video overview of 1 Samuel at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJOju5DwoVo&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkl9J\\_WEATHQCwRZou&index=12](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJOju5DwoVo&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodkl9J_WEATHQCwRZou&index=12), part of the "Read Scripture Old Testament" series produced by The Bible Project.

# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 5: Samuel-Kings

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### **Reflecting on the previous week** (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide, if needed.

### **Preparing for the week ahead** (15-20 minutes)

Continue to focus on Samuel-Kings by watching the video overview of 2 Samuel at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvoWDXNDJgs&list=PLHoSzn1yYNeeVFodklgJ\\_WEATHQCwRZou&index=13](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvoWDXNDJgs&list=PLHoSzn1yYNeeVFodklgJ_WEATHQCwRZou&index=13), part of the “Read Scripture Old Testament” series produced by The Bible Project.

This would be a good week to encourage your group to put this part of Covenant History in context by going back to pp. xv-xvi to read the Invitation to Covenant History in *The Books of the Bible—Covenant History*.

# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 6: Samuel-Kings

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### **Reflecting on the previous week** (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide, if needed.

### **Preparing for the week ahead** (15-20 minutes)

Introduce your group to the video overview of 1 Kings at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVFW3wb9pk&index=14&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodklgJ\\_WEATHQCwRZou](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVFW3wb9pk&index=14&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodklgJ_WEATHQCwRZou), part of the "Read Scripture Old Testament" series produced by The Bible Project.

# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 7: Samuel-Kings

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### **Reflecting on the previous week** (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide, if needed.

### **Preparing for the week ahead** (15-20 minutes)

Introduce your group to 2 Kings by watching the video overview at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVFW3wb9pk&index=14&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodklgJ\\_WEATHQCwRZou](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVFW3wb9pk&index=14&list=PLH0Szn1yYNeeVFodklgJ_WEATHQCwRZou), part of the "Read Scripture Old Testament" series produced by The Bible Project.

Encourage your group to take the time to reread the Invitation to Samuel-Kings on pp. 377-378 in *The Books of the Bible—Covenant History*.

# WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES

## Week 8: Samuel-Kings

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### **Reflecting on the previous week** (30-60 minutes)

Use the conversation prompts on page 8 of this guide, if needed.

### **Final Reflections (15-20 minutes)**

Give each person a chance to verbally share how their journey through these books of the Old Testament has:

impacted them,

shaped their understanding of the Bible,

prompted change in their life,

caused them to love God more,

caused them to love others more.

Ask each person to also write down their responses to those same questions. As the leader, collect those responses in an envelope and give to the church office. Prayerfully rejoice!

Wrap up your study by watching this video on "Covenants" at <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8ferLlsvlml>, produced by The Bible Project.

And don't forget to CELEBRATE your achievement together! Reading through these Old Testament books in just eight weeks is a major accomplishment!

## AFTER THE JOURNEY

### Four tips for finishing strong

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Here are four things you can do to finish your journey as strong as you started it:

1. **Encourage everyone to finish.**

If some participants fell behind in their reading, that's OK. Encourage everyone to keep reading through Joshua through 2 Kings, even if it takes an extra week or two.

2. **Take time to reflect.**

Try to meet one last time after the campaign is done, if possible, so everyone has a chance to reflect on their journey and celebrate.

3. **Share your story.**

Your experience can encourage others to try reading the Bible. Encourage members of your group to share their stories on a Sunday Connection Card, or by emailing their stories to [info@oakwoodnow.org](mailto:info@oakwoodnow.org). Be sure, as the leader, to get written responses to this prompt:

**Here's how this journey through Covenant History has**

impacted me,

shaped my understanding of the Bible,

prompted change in my life,

caused me to love God more

caused me to love others more...

## Oakwood comments on Community Bible Experience

"Doing it together as a group meant that we each got different things from it. It was helpful to meet together to discuss it because it let us fill in the gaps of the things that you didn't pick up on when you initially read it."

"I was consistently reading my Bible for the first time in my spiritual walk."

"CBE got me excited about reading the Bible again. I loved the daily emails as well as the audio reading. I liked taking a broad sweep without having to analyze things verse by verse."

"For me, it was the way that CBE was meant to be done in community. I feel we had a chance to experience the love for each other."

"Reading the Bible isn't scary and confusing any longer. It's enjoyable, way less confusing, addicting and wonderful!"

"Scripture is living and relevant. Following Jesus means to do so with others to appreciate fully what the Word says."

"Reminded me of the different angles and views...peering into God's Word and how He speaks from different angles. Wonderful to read in "community," sharing together what God is pressing on our hearts...learning and growing and encouraging each other. Thanks...it's a privilege to follow the King!"

"Not sure why, but the no-numbers, full lines of Scripture swept me up in the story...I commonly inadvertently read further than a particular day's reading! I was much more aware of the original readers and their situation than I've been in the past...and am all the more grateful that God loves us enough to give us His Word in written form."

"This has been an adventure. God's Word has been a feast!"

"The version was easy to read. It was a fresh way to hear and read the Word. Every day some section of Scripture would speak to my heart. I plan to read this version again and use it in devotional times."

This guide was adapted from Community Bible Experience™ *Group Leader's Guide, New Testament Reading Campaign*, along with portions of *The Books of the Bible—Covenant History*.

