

## READING THE OLD TESTAMENT AS STORY: A PEDAGOGY FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION



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*Abstract:* Since the middle of the 20th century, noted Old Testament scholars and theologians like Bernard Anderson, Hans Frei, Craig Bartholomew, and Michael Goheen have raised the concern that the contemporary church not only has lost reading and understanding the Old Testament as story, but that this loss has hindered its spiritual formation. While affirming their concern, qualitative research composed of interviews, narrative descriptions, and questionnaires of 138 college-aged students who largely identify with the Evangelical tradition will be presented showing that when the Old Testament is recovered as story, God is encountered, transformation is experienced, and faith is developed.

*Key Words:* Old Testament story, narrative, Christian formation, transformation

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### Introduction

In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Old Testament scholars and theologians began to voice their concerns about the contemporary church's loss of reading and understanding the Old Testament as a story for Christian formation and growth. For these scholars, Christian formation and growth can best be summarized as the dynamic, growing relationship between God and his people. In this relationship, God takes his people through the process of being transformed into the image of Christ for the purpose of participating with him in his mission of reconciling the whole of creation to himself (Bartholomew and Goheen, 2004, pp.15–26).

The first theologian to voice a concern about the contemporary church's loss of reading the Old Testament as story was Bernard Anderson. He declared that this issue was so important that the very meaning of the Christian faith depended upon it (1963, p. 1). His concern was soon echoed by Yale professor and theologian Hans Frei who lamented that the advent of the post-reformation period brought to the Christian Church not only a loss of reading the Old Testament as story, but, as Anderson had previously stated, the very meaning of that story for its faith and life (1974, p. 76). A generation

later, Evangelical scholars Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen reiterated this now growing concern with their own declaration that the failure to adequately understand the vital relationship between reading the Old Testament as story and Christian formation and growth may actually produce theologically orthodox, morally upright, warmly pious idol worshippers (2004, p. 12).

In voicing their concern about the critical importance of reading and understanding the Old Testament as story for Christian formation and growth, these contemporary scholars were neither dismissing the need for nor the importance of reading it for sound doctrine and theology. Rather, they were declaring that reading Scripture for sound doctrine and theology is not enough for healthy spiritual formation. Lutheran scholar Henry Corcoran clarifies this concern stating that when the church only focuses on reading Scripture to teach doctrine and theology, it creates people who have heads without hearts (2007).

By raising an awareness of the need for recovering a proper place for reading the Old Testament as story for healthy spiritual formation, these scholars have served the contemporary Church well. My 20 years of teaching Old Testament classes to college students in a university setting who primarily identify with the Evangelical Christian tradition largely supports the above voiced concerns. Most of the students coming into these Old Testament classes readily affirm that they believe that the Old Testament, along with the New Testament, is the inspired Word of God. Moreover, these students tend to readily admit that they read the Old Testament as an authoritative source and foundation for theology, ethics, and morality. However, few have claimed to read or even understand how to read it as a story for spiritual formation (Brisben, 2011).

In response to the above mentioned concerns, I began to not only emphasize the importance of reading the Old Testament as story in my Old Testament classes, but I also began to teach the students how to read and understand the Old Testament as a story for spiritual formation and growth. This current study presents both the story telling pedagogy that was used in teaching this group of students how to read and understand the Old Testament as a story, as well as the findings from questionnaires and a series of narrative descriptions and structured interviews with those students that illustrate the valuable relationship between a person's reading and understanding the Old Testament as a story and that person's spiritual formation and growth.

### **Why Story? A Literature Review**

In a discussion on the topic of reading and understanding the Old Testament as story, one of the first issues that should be addressed is the

motivation for reading it in such a manner. Part of the justification is obvious. Since narrative or story is the dominant literary genre that God uses to reveal himself in the Old Testament, it is reasonable to assume that the Old Testament should be read and understood as story. Recognizing this, however, does not explain why God chose this kind of literary genre to reveal himself.

Walter Wangerin (2004) begins to address this issue by upholding the important place of story in developing religious faith. He argues that story is so important in faith development that nearly every religion, including Christianity, has a story at its core. Generally it is a story about a religious deity and that deity's action for the sake of its followers (p. 66). Again, Wangerin is not dismissing the importance of doctrine or theology. Rather he places story at the core, because he believes it to be the best genre for conveying the realities of faith. In essence, he argues that God's relationship with believers is communicated and expressed in story better than it is expressed in other literary genres.

Henry Corcoran (2007) also thinks that story is a better genre than is theology and doctrine for communicating the way God relates to believers. He claims that reading Scripture as narrative has transformational power that is missing in reading Scripture as a source for teaching doctrine and theology. He further states that as long as "human experience is narrative or story-like in nature, teaching only doctrine and theology will not provide growth in faith and life the way that teaching narrative will" (p. 34).

Agreeing with Wangerin and Corcoran, Sandy Sasso (2005) claims that story conveys the realities of faith better than any other type of genre. She believes that it is the genre that best "nurtures spiritual growth" (p. 13). Finally, adding further support to this understanding, S. D. Crites claims that in the fundamental narratives of Scripture a person's sense of self and world is created. Narrative acts as a sort of blue print for one to find his identity (1971, p. 295).

John Westerhoff (1976) moves beyond explaining why story is better than other genres for Christian formation and faith development. He explains how story develops faith as part of the process of spiritual formation. According to Westerhoff, faith development begins with experienced faith, which comes from the story that the individual lives out. The next step is affiliative faith, which correlates with the faith stories of a community to which one belongs. This is followed by searching faith, which develops as a person asks questions of the story. Finally, owned faith arises when the person's story intersects with the communal faith story. Thus when one moves through these stages of faith, that is, when one has her own story, hears another grander story, and can put her story within the grander story, her faith is nurtured. This explains how Christians with their own stories, when reading and

hearing the Old Testament as story, are then able to place themselves in the story and thus experience greater faith development (p. 88).

Like Westerhoff, Jerry Camery-Hoggatt (2007) also focuses on how story facilitates the process of spiritual formation and growth by pointing out that the knowing that comes from story is categorically different from the knowing that comes from rational discourse. Rational discourse is the genre that is used to present factual information and as such, is the genre of doctrine and theology. It uses "logical coherence, clarity of exposition, simplicity of language, and the rigorous clarification of ambiguity" to define truth in terms of accuracy and verifiable propositions (p. 461). This is unlike story, which places truth in the greater context of "fidelity, integrity, courage, discovery, empathy, fear, anger, and hatred" (p. 461). Story creates and utilizes ambiguity, uncertainty, and doubt. It goes so far as to "time the delivery of information to create suspense, surprise, and even new perspectives on the human condition" (p. 461). For this reason, story is the primary genre used in the Scriptures "to convince, to encourage, to reaffirm, and to challenge" (p. 457).

Story differs from rational discourse in that it invites the reader's participation. Camery-Hoggatt (2007) illustrates this difference in his experience of teaching students the same material via story versus teaching them via rational discourse. Using rational discourse, he taught a lesson on AIDS and the consequences of dangerous behavior. He had little response. However, when he taught the lesson telling a story about how an unexpected truck driver became a victim and contracted AIDS, the class responded universally with a gasp. "The gasp reflects their sudden realization that what happened to the truck-driver could happen also to them" (p. 461). This example illustrates how story is powerful and life-changing because it allows the listener to participate in the drama itself. As C. S. Song explains:

A story . . . grips you in the depths of your hearts and minds, forces you to look deeply into yourself and into human nature, and compels you to examine relations between you and other human beings, between human beings and the world, nature and creation, and relations between human beings and God. If this is what story does, it is already profoundly theological (2008, p. 28)

Sandy Sasso (2005) goes even further in explaining the difference between story and rational discourse. She argues that the telling and hearing of story is already a part of the process of spiritual formation because it causes one to "quiet the self" and to "relinquish control." She continues, "The characters of a narrative invite the reader into the story not as directors, but as witnesses" (p. 23). The reader is invited to stand beside, to experience with, and to encounter what is in the story. In doing this, the Biblical narratives

create space for one's imagination to "try on" a new life, a new community, and a new worldview" (Corcoran 2007, p. 36).

Wesley Kort (1988), while agreeing that the Biblical story is intentionally designed to promote faith development through participation and discovery, further addresses the concern that the cultural differences between the Biblical world and the contemporary world are too great to allow reader participation and discovery. He argues that story is intentionally designed to present the universal truths of human experience and for that reason is able to cut through cultural differences. However, Kort also realizes that cutting through cultural differences does not explain how story allows one to encounter God. Here he argues that story, unlike rational discourse, offers a place where mystery can occur, and mystery is the setting to encounter God. In addition to offering a place for mystery, he claims that the very tenants of story, like tone and climate, allow the reader to enter a place of searching and questioning, and that such a place is "fertile ground" for experiencing God (p. 20).

Along these same lines, Corcoran (2007) notes not only how the Biblical story provides the climate for an individual to encounter God, but also explains what happens in this encounter with God. He states that in this encounter, the person confronts his own existence and identity. And this confrontation is what makes the encounter life changing for the person:

The central word of these narratives not only informs, it actually accomplishes the movement from chaos to order, bondage to deliverance, rebellion to obedience, accusation to vindication, despair to hope, guilt to justification, debt to forgiveness, separation to reconciliation, wrath to love, judgment to righteousness. It moves its hearers from defeat to victory, death to life, betrayal to restoration, embattled to victorious, old creation to new, blindness to spiritual sight, moral darkness to light, hostility toward God to reconciliation, sorrow to joy, filth to cleansing, self-righteousness to the righteousness of God, alienation to fellowship with God. The stories change people (Corcoran, 2007, p. 41)

For Corcoran, it is not enough to say that these stories are powerful, nor is it not enough to say that these stories change the way we read the Scripture. These stories are life transforming. These stories are "truth that addresses and re-creates persons" (p. 41).

In summary, this review of the literature supports the belief that there is a strong connection between reading Scripture as story and the process of Christian formation and growth. The literature identifies two different, but inter-related experiences that are aspects of this process. These two experiences are encountering God mentioned by Corcoran (2007) and Kort (1988) and experiencing personal transformation mentioned by Westerhoff (1976),

Camery-Hoggatt (2007), and Corcoran (2007). Personal transformation includes things like experiencing a greater sense of being loved, forgiven, accepted, and restored. Each of these different experiences, while inter-related, is correlated to reading Scripture as story.

### **A Case Study: Teaching the Old Testament as Story for Spiritual Formation**

As mentioned above, the perceived loss by the contemporary Church of reading and understanding the Old Testament as story for Christian formation and growth warrants its reintroduction. This suggestion certainly is not novel. John Goldingay (1997) has pointed out that the Christian tradition historically has believed that the reading and understanding of the Biblical story was an enabler for growth (p. 5). In a similar vein Henry Corcoran (2007) and Stanly Hauerwas and Will Willimon (1989), all contend that reading the biblical story as narrative is a means of fostering personal transformation. These understandings are foundational for this research, which presents a case study of a group of Christian college students who were taught to read and understand the Old Testament as story for spiritual formation.

The students participating in this study were all enrolled in a semester-long college course called *Old Testament Survey*. Using a college course in a traditional classroom setting for a case study on reading the Old Testament as story for spiritual formation is supported by research done by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. This research indicates that college students across a broad range of institutions have high levels of spiritual interest as well as a strong desire to explore the meaning and purpose of life (HERI, 2006).

Moreover, recent research done by Setran, Wilhoit, Ratcliff, and Hasse (2010) proposes that spiritual formation among college students is best facilitated when students are actively engaged in “inner work” involving self-reflection and contemplation as part of the curricular classroom experience. This research also argues that the spiritual formation of college students is most likely to occur when faculty encourage the process by creating assignments that allow students to engage in classroom-related “formation work” that fosters student engagement with God.

### **Case Study design**

The component, learning to read the Old Testament as story for spiritual formation was interwoven into a 15 week, semester-long freshman level course of *Old Testament Survey*. At the beginning of the class, the 138

students participating in the study completed a demographic questionnaire that also asked them how they thought Christians should read the Old Testament story (Appendix A). Of the 138 students, 75 were female and 63 were male. They ranged in age from 19–27 and over 93% of the students identified with either the Evangelical, Fundamentalist, or Charismatic Christian tradition. As to how they thought Christians should read the Old Testament, only 9% indicated that they thought it should be read as a story for Christian formation and growth. The vast majority (91%) thought it was most important to read it as a source for doctrine and morality.

### **Case Study Method**

As mentioned above, the component of the course on reading the Old Testament as story for spiritual formation was interwoven throughout the 15 weeks of the Old Testament Survey class. Three structured experiences designed to support the spiritual formation outcomes of reading the Old Testament as story were utilized as the basic pedagogical method for this component of the course. Setran, et al. refers to such structured experiences as “soul projects” (2010, p. 408). These three structured experiences can be summarized as developing an understanding of the place of the Old Testament story in spiritual formation, participating in small group structured exercises for learning to listen to the Old Testament as story, and doing reflection exercises for learning to encounter God in the Old Testament story.

The first structured experience, developing an understanding of the place of the Old Testament story in spiritual formation involved having the students complete a series of readings that introduced them to two basic topics. The first basic topic was an introduction of story as a literary genre. Here the students began to understand the difference between reading the Old Testament as story and reading it as rational discourse. According to Michael Williams, developing this understanding is critical to properly reading the Bible. Williams states that the Bible as a whole is “best understood as a story or drama. To be sure, the Bible does more than tell a story. . . . it includes psalms and proverbs, prayers and songs, moral instruction and doctrinal reflection. But what holds all of it together, what makes it a unified revelation is the storyline, what theologians often call the drama of redemption” (Williams, 2005, p. 10).

The next basic topic focused on understanding the narrative structure of the Old Testament. Corcoran refers to this as narrative analysis (304). In narrative analysis, the students were introduced to the ways the Hebrew writers arranged their compositions, that is, in smaller story units arranged into larger story units for the purpose of conveying meaning and message (Dorsey, 1999, p. 15). Since narrative analysis is critical to reading the Old

Testament as story, a reader friendly translation of the Old Testament, *The Message*, was selected for this class. This particular translation was selected because it is edited without the common chapter and verse delineations that tend to obscure the narrative structures employed by the Hebrew authors and editors.

The second structured experience in teaching the Old Testament as story was having the students participate in small group exercises for learning to listen to the Old Testament as story. The 138 students participating in the class were arranged in small groups of 5 to 6 persons. Each week, the students in the course were assigned to read smaller story units that formed the larger units of the Old Testament story. Afterwards, they would answer discussion questions that encouraged them to reflect on the meaning of the smaller story units for the original hearers of the story. After doing these assigned readings and discussion questions, the students would meet in their small groups, share their understandings and insights from the readings, and reflect on the significance of these stories for their lives. Specifically, they reflected on how the reading of these stories increased their ability to pay attention to the already present activity and work of God in their lives. As Goldingay states, "Growth and change should be expected when we interact with God's story. Scripture is dominated by story and this story is designed to shape us, especially as we set our story alongside it." He goes on to explain that personal growth and development happen where the telling of the story of God and his people and our story meet. It is where they intersect that we find our place in the story (1997, p. 5).

The third and final structured exercise was having the students practice focused observation and reflection as a way to encounter God in the Old Testament story. For this structured exercise, the students read selected story units and as they read these units, they were asked to imagine themselves as selected characters in these different stories (Appendix B). This type of reading the story has been employed throughout church history and is called the imagination technique (Mulholland, 1985, p. 152). In this technique, a person does not bypass the rational, logical, cognitive, analytical approach to the Scriptures, but does move beyond it. Mulholland goes on to explain, "the imaginative process opens us at the affective, feeling level of our being where we often need to hear God speak to us" (p. 154). Corcoran (2010), Groome (1980, pp.139–149), and Hauerwas and Willimon (1989) encourage this way of reading the story because it is a powerful way to open us to encountering God in the story. Goldingay also encourages this way of reading the Old Testament story but for a different reason. He contends that by setting the scriptural story alongside our story, we are no longer limited to our own interpretations of our experiences. Rather, we open ourselves up to God's interpretations of those experiences (p. 8).



### **Findings**

Evaluation of what a person accomplishes in terms of spiritual formation is both difficult and controversial. This is understandable since there is little consensus as to defining and measuring spiritual formation. Helpful at this point is D. Setran et al. (2010) who argue that, in terms of evaluating spiritual formation, process is more important than product. Focusing on the process of spiritual formation will thus mean focusing on a person's ongoing experience with God. For the evaluation of the process of spiritual formation in this qualitative study, students were asked to describe in narrative form their experiences of participating in the previously described structured experiences (Appendix C). Admittedly, using narrative of one's experience is reductionistic in the sense that describing an experience with God is always less than the actual experience. Nevertheless, attempting such a representation in narrative form is a valuable aspect of doing theology.

Careful analysis of their narrative descriptions revealed that the students had the two different types of experiences identified in the literature review as vital aspects of the process of spiritual formation. These two experiences were encountering God and experiencing personal transformation. Over 70% of the students participating in this study described at least one of these experiences in their narrative descriptions and over 55% described both experiences. A third type of experience not noted in the literature review was also identified in their narrative descriptions. This third type of experience was identified as coming to a new understanding of the Old Testament as the Word of God. This was mentioned by 16% of the students participating in the study.

Encountering God and experiencing personal transformation were the two most common experiences described by the students after reading the Old Testament as story for spiritual formation. This is not surprising. As noted above, encountering God often leads to the experience of personal transformation (Corcoran, 2007). Marcos, an 18-year-old male, in his description of reading the Abraham story, provides such an example of encountering God and experiencing personal transformation, which in his case includes a greater experience of God's love. He states,

Identifying with Abraham in this story is important for me because it shows God's love in a way I had not seen before. Abraham was not a man of faith when God started off with him. But God built that faith in him. This shows me that through my struggles God is building something in me. It shows that no matter how many times I fail Him, He still wants to do everything that He promised. I identify with Abraham because sometimes it is hard to believe everything that God has promised me, but it is not dependent on me, but on him.

In another example, Tara, an 18-year old female student shares her experience of encountering God. For her, the encounter with God also brought a greater experience of love and grace. She states, "The God I encountered in this Old Testament story is more gracious and loving than the God I encounter at my church on Sundays."

Mia, a 19-year-old female student describes her encounter with God while reading the Old Testament as story as bringing a greater awareness of sin and of grace. She states, "In this story, I experienced God as Yahweh, who despite my unfaithfulness, has kept his promise to never leave me and still desires to have an intimate relationship with me." This recognition of God's presence and grace continued as a common theme among the students. Becca, a 20-year old sophomore reiterates this idea after reading God's story,

I find myself in this story because like his people, I constantly screw up, and like them, He judges me, forgives me, and brings me back to Him. I do see myself in the lives of these people God relates to because I am constantly unfaithful and He is continuously faithful, loving, and forgiving; and He pours out His graces on me.

Restoration was another part of the personal transformation experienced by the students as they read the Old Testament story. James, an 18-year old freshman talked about such restoration stating,

When the Israelites wandered through the wilderness, they kept turning away from God. However, just as with the children of Israel, no matter how many times I turn away from God because of circumstances in my life, he is always there to do two things. He is there to help me through whatever earthly troubles I have abandoned him for, and He is there to guide me back on the way of a righteous path.

This idea of being restored after being forgiven was mentioned by Brandon as well.

Hearing all the horrible things God's people chose to do in the OT and knowing Yahweh never gave up on them and was always there for them, really made me feel closer to Him. It showed me that no matter how badly I mess up, He will never leave me and will always love me. This comforted me and made me feel as though I do not need to stray anymore."

Experiencing a greater awareness of sin is also part of personal transformation. Ollie, a 21-year-old junior explains how this happened to him:

I read through this Old Testament story and asked myself how the Israelites could have been so blind that they would refuse God only days after He had performed a great miracle. But when I examine my own life, I realize that I do the same thing. I choose other things over God, looking for satisfaction or happiness. My issues with God sound very similar to what the Israelites experienced and I think that's why God decided to include such a story, so that we may see just how absurd our sins are in comparison to the wonderful things God has done in our lives.

Myra relates a similar experience,

For me, to read the Old Testament as God's story has put an entirely new perspective on how I view myself, as well as the rest of the world in light of our fallen state. In the Hebrews, I recognized doubt and forgetfulness of God's provisions, and it just really showed how I'm just like a lot of the people in the Old Testament. I go through the same struggles; I can really relate to it. It has brought to mind the unimaginable love and patience He has toward us on a continual basis.

As noted earlier, these examples of personal transformation which include things like experiencing a greater sense of being loved, forgiven, accepted, and restored are what should be expected since stories are intentionally developed, shaped, and presented for the very purpose of participation, internalization, and changed lives (Camery-Hoggatt, 2007, p. 455).

The students, through reading the Old Testament as story, experienced a third aspect of the process of spiritual formation not mentioned in the literature review. This was the experience of coming to a new understanding of the Old Testament as the Word of God. Emily exemplifies this changed perspective:

Through my life I've always read the OT in partitions and therefore never really understood the magnitude and depth of God's love and mercy as it cannot fully be seen unless you read His story as a whole and get the big picture.

For Matt, the changed perspective was not a moment, but a gradual movement. He stated,

I used to avoid reading the OT like the plague. I simply could not read anything without an overwhelming sense of boredom overcoming me. I could not understand how the rules for sacrifices and tabernacle worship were relevant in any way to my life as a high-schooler, and now, as a col-

lege student. After taking this class, I have learned that reading the OT is reading God's story. To read the OT as God's story is to read the OT as the way that God relates to his people.

A final example comes from Cynthia whose comment reflected not only a changed perspective about the Old Testament, but also a change in its purpose. She said,

We must allow God's story to be our story and to become our identity, not any other. We are meant to find our place in His story, not the other way around. If Christians learn to experience this story, they will also be able to experience the intimacy, wholeness, and goodness of God.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The objective of this present study was to qualitatively examine the kinds of effects that teaching students to read the Old Testament as a story would have on their process of spiritual formation. Like many qualitative studies, the population sample was a limitation for generalizability. The group of college students who participated in this study was homogeneous in terms of religious affiliation and age. These students, for the most part, identified with the Evangelical Christian tradition and were between the ages of 18–27 years.

Based on the students' self-reported comments in their written narratives and their comments from follow-up interviews, the major overarching conclusion of this paper is that innovatively teaching the students to read the Old Testament as story does correlate with the process of spiritual formation. The students reported encountering God and experiencing personal transformation while reading the Old Testament as story. The personal transformation they reported experiencing included a greater awareness of sin, a deeper experience of God's love, grace, and forgiveness, and a new sense of restoration in their relationship with God. The third experience they reported was coming to a new understanding of the Old Testament as the Word of God. These findings should certainly encourage pastors, teachers, and church leaders to emphasize teaching, preaching, and reading the Old Testament as story for spiritual formation in their churches. Moreover, Christian publishers of Sunday school and Bible study material should also be encouraged by these findings to develop curriculum that focuses on teaching those within the church how to read the Old Testament as story for spiritual formation.

At the same time, qualitative studies like this have recognized limitations such as population size and a lack of controlled variables. They are not meant to supplant quantitative studies. However, they are extremely helpful

in laying groundwork for future qualitative and quantitative studies. Some specific suggestions for such future qualitative studies would be to duplicate this study with more diverse population groups in terms of age, ethnicity, and religious/denominational affiliation. Qualitative studies are also important in identifying variables that can be studied quantitatively. Several such variables that hold promise for more quantitative studies did emerge in this research. These include encountering God, experiencing grace, a greater awareness of sin, and a deeper sense of forgiveness. While not all of these variables can be measured in terms of degree, they can be measured in relationship to other variables important to healthy spiritual formation.

### **Appendix A: Survey Results**

1. Age: 19–27 years
2. Gender:  
Male (46%) Female (54%)
3. Select one of the following statements that you believe is most true of you.
  - a. I consider myself an Evangelical Christian. (57%)
  - b. I consider myself a Fundamentalist Christian. (11%)
  - c. I consider myself a Charismatic Christian. (20%)
  - d. I consider myself a Mainline Christian. (5%)
  - e. I consider myself a Catholic Christian. (7%)
  - f. I consider myself an Orthodox Christian. (0%)
  - g. Other \_\_\_\_\_. (0%)
4. What is your class rank (based on courses completed)?
  - a. freshman (74%)
  - b. sophomore (19%)
  - c. junior (6%)
  - d. senior (1%)
5. Most of what I have learned about the Old Testament has been through:
  - a. Sunday school lessons (56%)
  - b. Videos (8%)
  - c. Sermons (17%)
  - d. Personal bible study (14%)
  - e. Other (5%)
6. Which of the following statements do you most agree with?
  - (9%) a. Christians should read the Old Testament as a story for Christian formation and growth.
  - (44%) b. Christians should read the Old Testament as an authoritative guide for doctrine and theology.
  - (47%) c. Christians should read the Old Testament as a foundation for morality and ethics.

## Appendix B: Structured Exercises

Structured Exercise #1: The readings for this exercise were:

Bartholomew, Craig and Goheen, Michael. (2004). The Bible as a grand story. In *The drama of scripture: Finding our place in the Biblical Story* (pp. 15–27). Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Co.

Wolters, Albert M. (2005). Worldview between story and mission. In *Creation regained: Biblical basics for a reformational worldview* (pp. 119–143). Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Structured Exercise #2: The discussion questions for this exercise can be found at:

Brisben, David. (2005). *Old Testament workbook*. Unpublished manuscript, John Brown University, Siloam Springs, AR.

Structured Exercise #3: Using the Imagination Technique to Enter the Story (Narrative descriptions)

- a. The Abraham story (Gen. 12–25) is the introductory story in God's program of redemption. In this story, God reveals himself as "El Shaddai", the God who faithfully keeps his covenant promises to Abraham, but also on God doing this in spite of Abraham's continual lack of faithfulness and belief. Imagine yourself as Abraham in this story. Talk about your specific struggles to believe and give some examples of God's faithfulness in spite of your unbelief.
- b. In the Exodus story (Exodus 1–40), God redeemed his people from Egyptian bondage and gave them instructions on how to live their lives in his presence and enjoy a close, intimate relationship with him. He then declared that his favorite spot in the entire universe was with his people. What would it have been like to have been a Hebrew living in Egyptian bondage at the time of the Exodus?
- c. The story of Ruth, (1–4), occurred during the period of the Judges. In this story, Naomi and her family abandoned their inheritance among God's people. Imagine yourself as Naomi in this story. Why did you abandon your inheritance and what did you think would happen to you? What was it like to experience restoration through the kinsman-redeemer?
- d. In the story of Kings (1 & 2), the Elijah/Elisha story is the climax or central point of the entire story. If you had been one of the Hebrew survivors of the fall of Jerusalem now living in Babylonian exile, how

would you have reacted to hearing the Elijah/Elisha climax to the Kings' story?

- e. Hosea told his story of his marriage to Gomer to the Israelites living in Samaria just prior to the Assyrian exile (Hosea 1–14). If you had been an Israelite at this time, how would you have responded to Hosea's message?

### Appendix C: Narrative Reflection Assignment

The Old Testament is a story, but even more, it is a story that you are invited to enter. Write a creative reflection on finding your place in the OT story.

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