Running a discussion group series on the Yale  
**‘Introduction to the Old Testament’**lecture series

**About the material**

This study series utilises some excellent online lectures and materials from Christine Hayes at Yale University. Professor Hayes provides a solid and engaging introduction to the Old Testament as a whole, as well as an introduction to critical historical work done on the OT over the last two centuries.

The whole series and its associated resources can be found [at the Yale page](https://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rlst-145). The ‘Sessions’ tab brings up the full list of lectures, and clicking on each brings up the video, audio, transcription text and any other resources (occasional handouts, etc.) relating to that session.

While the full course is available directly from the Yale site, this *IF* version seeks to make it slightly easier to ‘consume’ in local ministry contexts. In addition to the links to the various videos on the Yale site, we’ve formatted the transcripts up into easily printable PDFs with paragraph numbering for ease of reference in small group conversations.

The full lecture series is quite long — 24 sessions! — so this *Illuminating Faith* version of the material breaks it up into a number of parts for use either consecutively or with pauses in between.

This study series has the advantage that it requires minimal initial effort by group members – around 45mins to listen to the lecture at normal speed, but will expose groups to a wide range of important material then to be discussed in a small group setting.

At the time of publishing the first part of these studies (June 2020), the Congregation of Mark the Evangelist (Uniting Church, North Melbourne) is currently working through the Yale material. The full sweep of the course will be added to this post as it is prepared for our local use. There's already plenty in place to get started!

**Preparing for the sessions**

Prior to each session, group members should:

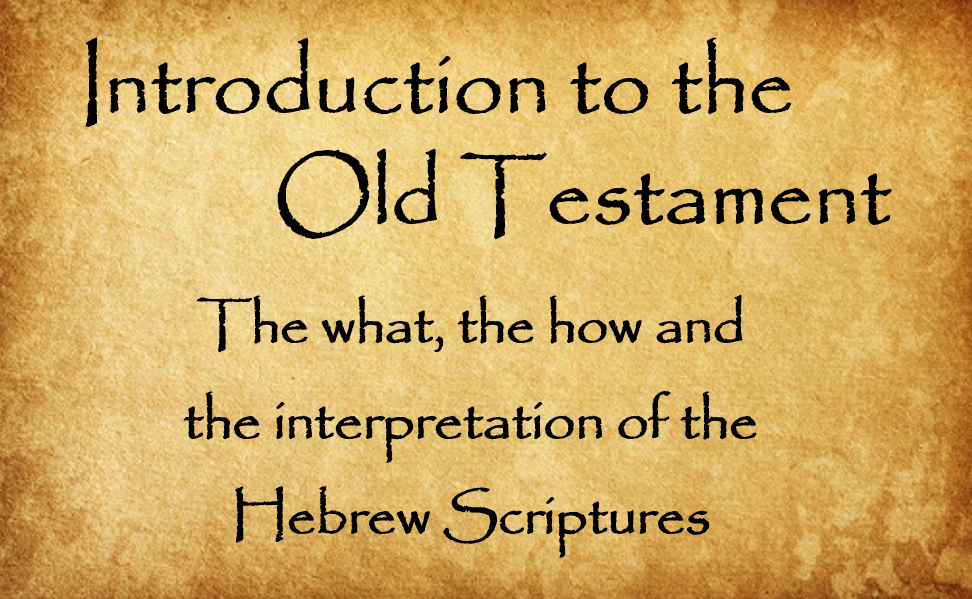
1. ***Watch the lecture*** via the links on the *Illuminating Faith* web page, or read the transcript. There is also an audio-only version of the lectures available on the course homepage under the 'sessions' tab -- click on the session you want and the audio can be downloaded at the bottom of the session page. (An alternative to this would be to watch the video together in the small group, which would require that the session time be longer but would mean less preparation by members prior to the session would be required).
2. ***Reading some of the Bible texts*** which will feature in each lecture. These are sometimes quite long -- a skim will often be enough to familiarise yourself with each selection. Again, the suggested reading is available on the web site.
3. *OPTIONAL:* Further help can be found via the links to brief summary videos from ‘The Bible Project’ included below, which give a quick summary of what is going on in each Bible book. These videos are about 6 or 7 minutes long and, although they approach the books from a different perspective than does Professor Hayes, are quite useful overviews of the biblical books nonetheless.
4. *OPTIONAL:* If you have a copy of the Jewish Study Bible (JSB – see below), there is usually a section Hayes suggests for further background reading.

This preparation being done, the small group setting becomes something of a ‘tutorial’ on the material for the session. The printed transcripts will be helpful for recalling the material, with the paragraph numbers useful to get everyone on the same page in the discussions. Group leaders should have viewed the material themselves and come prepared to prompt and lead discussion around the themes of the lecture for that session.

**Other resources**

1. Dr Hayes suggests a book companion to the series as a whole, which at least group leaders and perhaps group members might consider buying: **The Jewish Study Bible: Second Edition**. This book is not exactly cheap – being around $AU65 new (in 2020). As well as providing a useful non-Christian reading of the Hebrew Bible, it has a great deal of comment in the margins of each page as well as an extensive collection of introductory essays to each of the Old Testament books and scholarly articles on biblical history and interpretation, and other themes touched upon in the course. It is a book which will likely serve purchasers well for a long time. A look at the [‘Look Inside’ feature for the book](https://www.amazon.com.au/Jewish-Study-Bible-Berlin/dp/0199978468/ref=dp_ob_title_bk) on Amazon might be worthwhile, if you’re considering getting a copy. See [here](https://www.bookfinder.com/search/?author=&title=&lang=fr&new_used=*&destination=au&currency=AUD&binding=*&isbn=0199978468&keywords=&minprice=&maxprice=&publisher=&min_year=&max_year=&mode=advanced&st=sr&ac=qr) for a range of online sources for this book.

The following image may be of use in our local advertising, if you’re going to run a series with these resources.

****