

# Study Guide for *He Gave Us Stories*, by Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

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Extra Reading for the course:  
"The Book of Samuel"

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## **STUDY GUIDE**

**He Gave Us Stories, Richard L. Pratt, Jr.**

### **Introduction**

#### **Review Questions**

1. According to the preface, this book focuses on what kind of biblical literature?
2. Define hermeneutics.
3. What are the three hermeneutical processes followed in this book?
4. Explain the author's view of the relationship between human effort and dependence on the Holy Spirit as we interpret Scripture. What illustration does he give regarding construction?
5. What two reasons does the author mention that lead some people to neglect careful study of the Scriptures?
6. According to Dr. Pratt, does the Holy Spirit usually work through human study?
7. According to Dr. Pratt, does the Holy Spirit ever work without, beyond, or against our interpretive effort? In what ways?
8. What term is used to describe the traditional evangelical hermeneutical method of interpreting Scripture? Explain this method.
9. What was the typical method of interpreting Scripture during the medieval period?
10. What are the three pillars given by the author that undergird the importance of historical investigation when we study the Bible?
11. What is the meaning of "organic inspiration"?
12. What is the meaning of "accommodation," as used when we are referring to God's revelation?
13. Besides studying the Bible's original meaning, evangelicals have begun to see that we must also give attention to what aspect of hermeneutics?
14. What is the greatest difficulty we face in making application of Old Testament narratives?

15. What is the fact that creates tension, pulling us back and forth between the relevance and the distance between ourselves today and the Old Testament stories?

### **Application Questions and Exercises**

1. In your own study of the Bible, do you normally follow the three processes explained in the introduction to this book? If not, what processes do you normally follow?
2. How could you make your study of Scripture more meaningful and beneficial?
3. Do you sometimes tend to avoid studying and teaching from the Old Testament because you are not confident about interpreting it?
4. EXERCISE: Select a narrative passage from the Old Testament that you would like to study. It should be brief, but it should include a complete story. Think of a passage that interests you, hopefully something you are curious about, something that has been difficult to understand. In some of the application questions, you will study this same passage, applying what you are reading in the chapters. For now, just select the passage, and read it over a few times, hopefully using different translations. Meditate on this passage as you read the following chapters of the textbook.

## **Chapter 1, Orientation for Preparation**

### **Review Questions**

1. Describe the three models of hermeneutics explained in this chapter: subjective, objective, and authority-dialogue.
2. Which of the three models of hermeneutics explained in this chapter does the author prefer, subjective, objective, or authority-dialogue? Why?
3. What philosophical postulate of Kant provided support for a more subjective view of biblical hermeneutics?
4. What example does the author give of how Liberation theologians sometimes emphasize the subjective side of biblical interpretation to an extreme?
5. What are the three philosophical views mentioned in the book that gave support to the objective model of hermeneutics?
6. According to the author, do evangelicals tend to emphasize the objective text as the locus of meaning in hermeneutics, or do they give more attention to the subjective element of interpretation?
7. What is the contrast between the “authority-dialogue model” of hermeneutics and the objective model?

8. What is the contrast between the “authority-dialogue model” of hermeneutics and the subjective model?
9. Why does Dr. Pratt prefer to describe the process of biblical interpretation as a “hermeneutical spiral,” instead of a “hermeneutical circle”?
10. What are the three major resources that the Holy Spirit uses to prepare us so that we can move forward on the hermeneutical spiral toward a fuller understanding and appropriation of Old Testament narratives?

### **Application Questions and Exercises**

1. In the past, what has been your tendency in Bible interpretation? Have you emphasized the subjective method, the objective method, or the authority-dialogue method? Which do you think is best? How do you think you could improve your method?
2. To what extent do you think we can really understand Scripture? What percentage of our understanding would you say is accurate?
3. How can we avoid the common pitfalls of subjectivism and objectivism?

## **Chapter 2, The Influence of Christian Living**

### **Review Questions**

1. What are the three areas of our personal Christian lives studied in this chapter that influence our interpretation of Scripture?
2. According to the author, does studying the Bible affect our spiritual condition? Does our spiritual condition also help and hinder our study of the Bible?
3. What three aspects of our spiritual sanctification affect our interpretation of Scripture?
4. What examples does the author give of how conceptual sanctification (or the lack of it) might affect our interpretation of Old Testament narrative?
5. How does our behavior affect our understanding of Scripture? Mention examples that the author gives.
6. How do our emotions affect our understanding of Scripture? Mention examples that the author gives.
7. What does the author mean when he speaks of our “endowments”?
8. How do our endowments affect our understanding of Scripture? Mention examples that the author gives.

9. What does Dr. Pratt mean when he speaks of “cognitive style”?
10. What is the difference between “analytic” and “global” cognitive styles?
11. How does our calling affect our understanding of Scripture? Mention examples that the author gives.

### **Application Questions and Exercises**

1. Are you aware of the influences on the way you interpret Scripture? Why do you think it is important to be aware of the influences?
2. When you consider the three main areas of our individual lives that influence our interpretation, which one were you least aware of previously?
3. Do you pray for guidance when you read Scripture?
4. Have you ever noticed how your spiritual condition influenced the way you interpreted Scripture? Give an example.
5. Do you tend to use an “analytical” cognitive style or a “global” cognitive style when you interpret the Bible?

## **Chapter 3, The Influence of Interaction**

### **Review Questions**

1. What is Dr. Pratt’s view of whether we can gain valid insights from unbelievers?
2. What was Calvin’s advice regarding finding truth among unbelievers?
3. Why is the need for interaction in the community of faith greater than ever in our day?
4. What are the three basic elements of interaction in the community of faith that we should consider as we approach Old Testament stories?
5. How do the three elements of interaction in the community of faith relate to each other?
6. How did the Reformers view the importance of the contribution of heritage and present community to Biblical interpretation?
7. What movement was an influential trend away from an emphasis on systematic theology among evangelicals in the second half of the twentieth century?
8. What is the key emphasis of Biblical Theology?

## **Application Questions and Exercises**

1. What is your attitude toward finding truth from unbelievers? Does this chapter make you realize that you need to modify your attitude? In what way?
2. Do you tend to overlook interaction with the community of faith as you study Scripture? Do you make an effort to include it? In what ways could you improve this aspect of your study?
3. What are the dangers in interacting with the world or with the community of faith as you study Scripture? Give an example of how it might sometimes cause problems. Give an example from your own life of how it caused a problem.
4. What are the dangers in NOT interacting with the world or with the community of faith as you study Scripture? Give an example of how it might sometimes cause problems. Give an example from your own life of how it caused a problem.

## **Chapter 4, The Influence of Exegesis**

### **Review Questions**

1. What does the author mean when he says we can look at Old Testament stories as mirrors, windows, and pictures? How does this analogy explain the difference between thematic analysis, historical analysis, and literary analysis?
2. What is the difference between the way the book of Samuel and the Chronicler tell about the life of David? How does this give validity to thematic analysis?
3. What are the three ways mentioned in the text of how thematic analysis has been applied?
4. What is Dr. Pratt's view of the historicity of Old Testament narratives?
5. Why is literary analysis important?
6. How is the Old Testament basically structured?
7. How does literary analysis help us interpret the story of Abram's sojourn in Egypt, as narrated in Genesis 12:10-20?
8. Describe each of the following types of literary analysis: source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, rhetorical criticism, structuralism, and canonical criticism.
9. Summarize the focus of each approach to exegesis of Old Testament stories: thematic, historical, and literary.

## **Application Questions and Exercises**

1. Which approach to exegesis is normally your greater emphasis (thematic, historical, or literary / as a “mirror,” “window,” or “picture”)? Do you think you should modify the way you use these approaches? In what way?

2. Do you agree with Dr. Pratt’s view of the historicity of the Old Testament narratives? Explain.

3. Which kind of literary analysis do you find more acceptable and helpful (source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, rhetorical criticism, structuralism, or canonical criticism)? Explain why.

4. EXERCISE: Now that we have finished reading about preparation for interpreting a passage, take a look at the Old Testament narrative passage you selected back when you read the introduction. As you prepare to study it more carefully, begin by praying for the Lord to guide you. Then write down some of the things you need to consider in preparation for your study, things that were discussed in the first chapters of the book.

For example:

- a. Are you aware of how your own spiritual condition might influence your interpretation of the passage? Is there anything you need to deal with?
- b. In what ways do you plan on interacting with community to help understand the passage?
- c. Do you plan on focusing mostly on thematic analysis, historical analysis, or literary analysis? Or do you hope to look at the passage in all three ways, as a mirror, as a window, and as a picture?
- d. Do you tend to use an “analytical” cognitive style or a “global” cognitive style when you interpret the Bible? Do you hope to combine the two?

Write down your reflections in preparation to study the passage.

## **Chapter 5, Orientation for Investigation**

### **Review Questions**

- 1. What is the meaning of “polyvalence,” as we consider hermeneutics?
- 2. What is the meaning of “univalence,” as we consider hermeneutics?
- 3. What was the most common view before the Reformation regarding how many meanings Old Testament stories had, and who could interpret them properly?
- 4. How did the Reformers respond to the Roman Catholic view of interpreting Scripture?
- 5. What is Dr. Pratt’s view of how many meanings a passage of Scripture has?
- 6. What does Dr. Pratt mean by: original meaning, biblical elaborations, legitimate applications, and full value?
- 7. What are the three major controls on original meaning?

8. What does Dr. Pratt mean when he speaks of “paradigmatic,” “syntagmatic” and “pragmatic” perspectives from which we can grasp the original meaning of an Old Testament story?

9. The author says, “As we begin to investigate Old Testament stories, we must remember that there is one original \_\_\_\_\_, but there are many legitimate \_\_\_\_\_ ....”

### **Application Questions and Exercises**

1. Do you agree with Dr. Pratt regarding how many meanings a passage of the Bible might have? What difference does this issue make?

2. What would you say to someone who insists that we can all interpret the Bible our own way, and that each of us can be right?

3. What would you say to someone who insists that God revealed to him or her the correct interpretation of a difficult passage, for which there is much debate about its meaning?

## **Chapter 6, Characters in Old Testament Stories**

### **Review Questions**

1. Do Old Testament narratives always reveal something about God? Is His presence always revealed with the same intensity? Is He always in the foreground?

2. Besides God and human beings, what other type of characters have a role in Old Testament passages?

3. Are Old Testament authors honest in their description of characters? Are they selective in the way they portray them?

4. What are the four ways in which Old Testament writers reveal the characters?

5. What does Dr. Pratt mean when he speaks of “round characters,” “flat characters,” and “functionary characters”?

6. How does the author arrange the groups of characters in Old Testament stories, as he considers their relation to each other?

### **Application Questions and Exercises**

EXERCISE: Look over the Old Testament narrative passage you have selected to study and identify the characters. Identify the following: How does the author reveal their identities? Can you detect how the author might have been selective in the way he describes the characters? Try to identify which characters are “round,” “flat,” or “functionary.” Identify which characters are “protagonists,” “antagonists,” or “ambivalent.”



## **Chapter 7, Scene Depiction**

### **Review Questions**

1. How does the author define a “scene”?
2. What clues help discover the scene divisions in Old Testament stories?
3. Do Old Testament narratives spend much time describing the details of a scene, compared with other literature?
4. Mention the types of imagery used by Old Testament writers.

### **Application Questions and Exercises**

EXERCISE: As you read through the passage you selected for study, try to identify any scene divisions. Mention the types of imagery used in the story (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or gustatory).

## **Chapter 8, Structure in Individual Episodes**

### **Review Questions**

1. What are the three basic types of plot found in Old Testament episodes? Briefly describe each one.
2. What kind of plot is exhibited in the story of Caleb and his daughter in Joshua 15:16-18?
3. How do Old Testament writers tend to arrange episodes of resolution?
4. What does Dr. Pratt mean by “tripartite” design of episodes of resolution?
5. Do all Old Testament episodes of resolution have three steps in their structure? How many steps are included in the structure of the passages Dr. Pratt gives as examples?

### **Application Questions and Exercises**

EXERCISE: Examine the plot in the passage you are studying. What type of plot is it (report, unresolved tension, or resolution)? Examine the structure. Can you identify the steps?

## **Chapter 9, Large Narrative Structures**

### **Review Questions**

1. In general, how are large Old Testament narrative structures organized?

2. What are “clusters”?
3. What are “parallel accounts”?
4. What is “chiasm”?
5. What are “dramatic accounts”?

### **Application Questions and Exercises**

1. Why do you think it is important to analyze the literary structure of a passage of Scripture?
2. Do you normally take the time to consider the literary structure of a passage you are studying?

## **Chapter 10, Writers and their Audiences**

### **Review Questions**

1. What are some of the difficulties in determining the authors and audiences of Old Testament narratives?
2. Does Dr. Pratt accept the idea that Old Testament documents were composed over a period of time?
3. Does the author accept the idea that Old Testament authors sometimes used sources from an earlier time?
4. How does Dr. Pratt explain the phrase, “...and they are still there today,” in 1 Kings 8:8, referring to the poles used to carry the ark?
5. Does the author accept the idea that editorial adjustments were sometimes made to Old Testament narratives after their final composition?
6. What is Dr. Pratt’s advice about identifying editorial activity possibly made after the final composition?
7. What clues help us determine the *earliest* date of composition of Old Testament passages?
8. What is an anachronism?
9. What clues help us determine the *latest* date of composition of Old Testament passages?
10. What are some of the difficulties in discerning the intentions of Old Testament writers?
11. What clues help us discover the purposes of Old Testament writers?

## **Application Questions and Exercises**

EXERCISE: Try to identify the author of the passage you studying. Try to identify the earliest possible date of composition and the latest probable date. Try to discern the purpose of the author.

## **Chapter 11, Describing a Writer's Intentions**

### **Review Questions**

1. What are the "two worlds" that Old Testament writers focused on?
2. What does the author mean when he talks about a writer's observations, anticipations, and implications?
3. What are the three main ways Old Testament writers anticipated their audiences? Briefly describe the meaning of each.
4. What are the three kinds of implications the Old Testament writers expected in the response of their audiences?

## **Application Questions and Exercises**

EXERCISE. Think of the passage you are studying. Try to identify the writer's intentions.

## **Chapter 12, Overview of Old Testament Narratives**

### **Review Questions**

1. What are the four groups of literary families in the Old Testament narrative books?
2. Describe the focus and purpose of each of the books of the Mosaic history.
3. Describe the focus and purpose of each of the books of the Deuteronomistic history.
4. Describe the focus and purpose of each of the books of the Chronistic history.
5. Describe the focus and purpose of each of the books of Ruth, Esther and Jonah.

## **Application Questions and Exercises**

EXERCISE: Think of the passage you are studying. Identify the group of literary families to which it belongs. Try to identify the purpose of the author.

## **Chapter 13, Orientation for Application**

### **Review Questions**

1. What are the three goals for contemporary application of Old Testament narrative passages? What question does each goal address?
2. What are the three lines of connection that help bridge the hermeneutical gap between the past and the present, as we make contemporary application of Old Testament narrative passages?
3. Why do we need to make adjustments as we apply Old Testament stories to our contemporary situation?
4. What types of adjustments do we need to make in our application of Old Testament stories to our contemporary situation?

### **Application Questions and Exercises**

EXERCISE: Consider the passage you are studying. Think of adjustments that you might need to make as you apply the passage in our contemporary world.

## **Chapter 14, From Age to Age**

### **Review Questions**

1. How did Paul, Peter, and Luke divide Old Testament history into periods?
2. How does the author suggest we divide the Old Testament history into epochs? Name the five major covenantal periods.
3. What is the “decisive division” in Bible history?
4. What did Paul mean by “the present age” and “the one to come”?
5. What does Dr. Pratt mean when he says that the epochal shifts within biblical history are “organic developments”?
6. How does the author distinguish his “organic developments” view of Old Testament history from the “dispensationalist” view and the “theonomist” view?
7. How can we make Christ the center of our applications of Old Testament narratives? What strategy does the author offer?
8. How is the motif of Israel’s national theocracy developed in Old Testament narratives? What stages are dealt with in each literary family: Mosaic History, Deuteronomistic History, and Chronistic History?

9. How is the motif of the theocracy developed in the New Testament?

### **Application Questions and Exercises**

EXERCISE: Try to discern which covenantal period your passage belongs to. Identify the stage of development of the theocracy at the time when the events occurred. Are there any references to the office of prophet, priest or king that point to Christ?

## **Chapter 15, From Culture to Culture**

### **Review Questions**

1. In what way is the Apostle Paul's view of culture in contrast with popular outlooks today?
2. What is the primary influence on every society?
3. How do natural diversities help us evaluate the moral quality of practices?
4. How has the relationship between faith and culture changed between the Old Testament period and the New Testament period?
5. "Now the Christian community is between ports, existing as a \_\_\_\_\_ among the nations of the world."
6. What are three practical steps to help bridge the culture gap between Old Testament stories and modern believers?

### **Application Questions and Exercises**

EXERCISE: Write down aspects of the Old Testament culture at the time of the events narrated in the passage you are studying. How did they affect the way ethical norms expressed in the passage were applied. Try to discover any New Testament teachings regarding the norms expressed in the passage. How about the contemporary culture in which you live? How would you apply the same ethical norms to your culture today?

## **Chapter 16, From People to People**

### **Review Questions**

1. What are the three obstacles mentioned by the author that hinder us from making practical applications of Old Testament narratives to modern believers?

2. What are the three basic steps that lead to effective personal application of Old Testament narratives?
3. In order to discover how to apply an Old Testament narrative passage to our modern culture, what kinds of developments do we need to look at?
4. What are the three levels of personal application?

### **Application Questions and Exercises**

EXERCISE: As you consider the passage you are studying, write down your thoughts about what response God expected from the original audience in terms of concepts, behavior and emotions. Then write down applications for a contemporary audience in terms of concepts, behavior and emotions. What would you focus on for a sermon or Bible study on this passage?