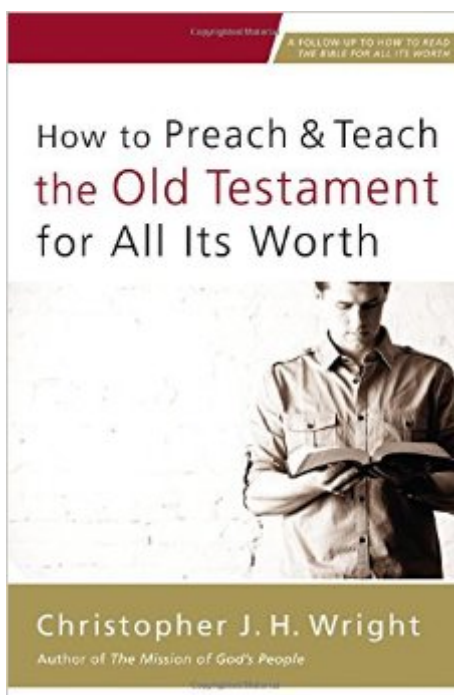


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# How To Preach And Teach The Old Testament For All Its Worth



## Synopsis

Many preachers ignore preaching from the Old Testament because they feel it is outdated in light of the New Testament and difficult to expound. On the other hand, some preachers will preach from the Old Testament frequently but fail to handle it correctly, turning it into moralistic rules or symbolic lessons for our spiritual life. In *How to Preach and Teach the Old Testament for All Its Worth*, Christopher J. H. Wright proclaims that preachers must not ignore the Old Testament. It is the Word of God! The Old Testament lays the foundation for our faith and it was the Bible that Jesus read and used. Looking first at why we should preach from the Old Testament, the author moves on to show the reader how they can preach from it. Covering the History, Law, Prophets, Psalms, and Wisdom Literature, interspersed with practical checklists, exercises, and sermons, Wright provides an essential guide on how to handle the Old Testament responsibly.

## Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Zondervan (April 19, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0310524644

ISBN-13: 978-0310524649

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #90,278 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #46 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Ministry & Evangelism > Sermons #48 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Worship & Devotion > Sermons #57 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Ministry & Evangelism > Preaching

## Customer Reviews

Dr. Christopher J. H. Wright is International Director of the Langham Partnership International. After teaching the Old Testament in India and the UK, he also served as chair of the Lausanne Movement's Theology Working Group and was the chief architect of the Cape Town Commitment at the Third Lausanne Congress, 2010. His books include: *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, *Deuteronomy (Understanding the Bible Commentary)*, *Salvation Belongs to Our God*, *The Mission of God*, *The God I Don't Understand*, and *The Mission of God's People*. Chris and his wife Liz who have four adult

children and a growing number of grandchildren, live in London, UK, and belong to All Souls Church.

Christopher Wright takes a simplified approach to the various stages of the biblical story and weaves a cloth which is intricate and beautiful. His approach to the Old Testament is simple, yet profound in his hermeneutic. Each major section of the Old Testament writings is linked to the story of God for all mankind, and especially applicable to the New Testament interpretations. In each section Wright provides tools for understanding that section of Scripture in context, gives teaching and preaching outlines as examples, and points out how to preach or teach it well. Wright challenged my ways of studying, and teaching, the Old Testament passages. I will be more careful in how I present Old Testament texts thanks to Wright's insights into how the Old Testament fits into the grand meta narrative of God's story. I highly recommend this book for anyone who is preparing to preach or teach from the Old Testament. By following Wright's model anyone can preach or teach with clarity what is far too often made complicated.

Comprehensive and made a compelling case to preach more on OT. Not just focus on OT but give a big picture of the whole biblical theology

This is a good, substantial book. It requires application to work through it. It is the kind of book that one keeps for reference purposes

Excellent book.

The Old Testament is the Bible Jesus Christ read and preached. It is also the Bible of His first followers. When Paul writes, for example, "the Holy Scriptures are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15), he has the Old Testament in mind. It is foundational to Christianity. In too many American churches today, however, the Old Testament goes unread and unpreached. Why read the Old Testament, many seem to reason, when we've got the New Testament? Even when read and preached, however, the Old Testament is too often wrenched out of context, reduced to moralistic and legalistic applications, or mined for questionable prophetic significance. Christopher J. H. Wright sets out to rectify this situation in *How to Preach and Teach the Old Testament for All Its Worth*. He organizes the book's material into two sections. The first, comprised of chapters 1-5, asks the question, "Why should we preach and teach from

the Old Testament? Wright's book, *How to Preach and Teach from the Old Testament*, asks the question, "How can we preach and teach from the Old Testament?" Wright's answers to these questions are practical, grounded in sound biblical exegesis and solid evangelical theology, and attuned to both the ancient culture of the biblical writers and the contemporary culture of its readers. Let me highlight two things that I found helpful as I read Wright's book: First, as a Christian minister, I read the Old Testament with confidence that it will help me both to better understand the person and work of Jesus Christ and to better proclaim Him to others. With good reason, I might add! Christ himself says, "these are the very Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39). Similarly, Luke describes Christ's conversations with two disciples on the road to Emmaus this way: "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). We're supposed to find Christ in the Old Testament because He found himself there. And yet, I've heard sermons about Christ from the Old Testament in which the preacher's intention is good but their biblical interpretation is not. Chapter 3 helps us find Christ in the Old Testament using sound hermeneutical principles. Chapter 3, "Understanding Jesus through the Old Testament," examines the Old Testament to explain who Jesus thought He was and what He came to do. Chapter 4, "Don't Just Give Me Jesus," outlines five "dangers to avoid when preaching Christ from the Old Testament: (1) ignoring the text's original meaning, (2) proposing fanciful interpretations, (3) overlooking other things that God teaches in the Old Testament, (4) flattening the biblical story and removing the uniqueness of the Incarnation and (5) preaching the same message regardless of the text. (To me, this chapter alone was worth the price of the book.) Chapter 5, "Connecting with Christ," shows how we can preach Christ from the Old Testament in a way that honors its original meaning. A second thing I found helpful was Wright's attention to literary genres. He organizes the book's second section according to the literary genre of the Old Testament: narrative (chapters 6-8), law (chapter 9-10), prophecy (chapters 11-12), psalms (chapters 13-14), and wisdom literature (chapter 15). There are overlaps in these genres, of course. Law (Hebrew torah) includes stories, for example, and prophecy, psalms and proverbs all make use of poetry. Still, Wright's discussion shows what's distinct about these genres, why Christians should pay

attention to them, and how attention to them changes the way we interpret and then preach them. (For more on the proper interpretation of the Bible's literary genres, see Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart's *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, the first of a series of books of which Wright's is the most recent.) If you preach or teach the Bible at your local church, I encourage you to do two things: First, preach and teach regularly from the Old Testament. Second, read this book. It delivers on its promise of its title and is a helpful guide for seeing Christ in the Old Testament and so much more!

Christians who believe in the authority of the Bible will have no problem about the importance of the Old Testament. However, when it comes to communicating the truths and the nuances of the biblical texts for the general audience, it becomes more challenging because of the ancient contexts, the archaic languages used, and how it is relevant for contemporary cultures. Author Christopher Wright has seen it all. He knows how infrequent preachers use the Old Testament for their Sunday sermons. Even those who teach prefer to use the New Testament as it involves less work for the teacher and less intense for the students. Yet, the difficulty should not be the reason for not studying the Old Testament. Despite the title of the book, there is a progression of why first before the how. This is important. Part One of the book is about the WHY we need to preach and teach the Old Testament. Part Two reveals the HOW. In Part One, Wright gives us three reasons why we need to preach and teach the Old Testament. It is God's Word. The Old Testament is foundational to our Christian faith. It is the Bible of Jesus Christ. He shows us the big biblical story, the journey of Israel, and the promise of God revealed throughout the generations through His servants. This journey is important so that students will not get lost in the maze of narratives, poetry, and prophecies. The Old Testament is more about promises rather than predictions. The drama is depicted in six stages: 1) Creation; 2) Fall; 3) Promise; 4) Gospel; 5) Mission; and 6) New Creation. Seen in this light, we can better situate the Old Testament within the fuller context of the whole Bible. In fact, there are lots of references back and forth between the Old and the New testaments. Wright also deals with the person of Jesus Christ, aware that many believers will be quite uncomfortable if Jesus was not mentioned when teaching the Old Testament. Here, I feel that Wright does a good job in connecting the two. On the one hand, we need to teach and preach the Old Testament texts in a way that honours the original meaning, the ancient people's understanding, and God's intent for the people at that time. On the other hand, we cannot separate the centrality of Jesus in the Bible. In "Don't Just Give Me Jesus," Wright says that while the Old Testament points to Jesus, the Old Testament is not "all about Jesus." The main concern is

exegesis and original meanings. If we make the premature insertion of Jesus into every Old Testament text, we are in danger of making the Bible say things beyond what the Bible is truly saying. When that happens, people will be doing eisegesis (reading meaning into the text) rather than exegesis (reading meaning out of the text). Thankfully, Wright shows us the way to connect with Christ even as we study the Old Testament for all its worth. Part Two of the book deals with the actual title proper. After explaining the importance of teaching and preaching from the Old Testament, we are now ready to enter into the nitty-gritty of actually teaching and preaching it. There are lots of wonderful techniques and methodologies here which really brings out the excitement of a teacher and preacher. We connect the story of God and our own stories with a single big story. This is also known as the bible meta-narrative, the story above all other stories. When we do that, we locate our own stories within the context of the Bible. From here, we learn to ask about what kind of world we live in; what it means to be human; what's wrong with the world; what's the solution; and what hope looks like. We learn about zooming into the biblical narratives and then zooming out to see the meta-narrative. Through these stories, we discover our identities. We hold our communities together with a common story. We pass down moral values and hope. We challenge the worldly views with the biblical worldview. We learn to use the five questions of when, what, who, why, and so-what. Other powerful ways include:- Seven dangers to avoid- Checklist to make sure we preach the Old Testament on the foundation of God's grace- How the Laws show the holiness as well as the mercy of God- The scale of values from the OT laws- Teaching from the Prophets on the basis of Mouth; Ears; Eyes; Head; Heart; and Hands- Spot the methods used by the prophets- How to Outline a sermon- Learning the features of OT Poetry (Parallelism; Contrasts; Supplementing; Lament; Praise; Thanksgiving; Cursing; and so on)- Distinguishing the Wisdom literature and the Prophets

So What?=====Let me share three thoughts about this book. First, it is a good book to kickstart any attempt to share from the Old Testament, whether for teaching or for preaching. Sometimes, we fail to understand the meta-narrative before embarking on the OT book. When that happens, we are tempted to cut down a OT book on the basis of personal familiarity of selected verses rather than the actual content. When choice verses take precedence over the actual flow of the Bible, not only will the teachers and preachers not learn anything new, the audience will be deprived of potentially important lessons the Holy Spirit wants to teach. With this book, just understanding the meta-narrative will dispel any sense of fear that we exclude the New Testament teachings. Far from that. With this awareness of the big biblical story, we can remind our hearers that when we preach from the OT, we are essentially expounding on the promise of God that was helpful to the hearers of old and also relevant to our people in present times. Second, I

really appreciate Wright for putting together the roles of teaching AND preaching. Personally, I believe that the two are not separate. They are essentially two sides of the same coin. A good preacher must also be ready to teach and to learn. A good teacher must learn to communicate effectively to a wide range of believers. Teachings can go from elementary to advanced. Preaching needs to be directed toward the average age of any audience. While both are different, they both carry lots of common features. From experience, I have learned that the best teachers have a pastoral heart and preaching experience. In the same way, the best preachers are also good teachers. Both are important and both skills are essential for any work with the Word of God. Third, I want to emphasize the importance of the heart of the teacher/preacher. This If knowing the WHY and the WHAT are steps 1 and 2, then having the heart of love for the Word is Step 0. If one knows the WHY, they will be motivated to look for the WHAT and the HOW-TO in doing anything. However, without the LOVE, the WHY will eventually fizzle out. The WHAT will then fall aside. Anyone desiring to teach or to preach from the Old Testament must cultivate the love for the Word because they love God and they recognize that God loves them. Many hearers have that sense of discernment. They can hear the content being preached or taught. They may appreciate the lessons and stories shared. More importantly, they can discern whether the person doing the teaching or preaching is a genuine believer and lover of the Word or not. Such attitudes are not taught but caught. For that to happen, the Holy Spirit is the ultimate Teacher and Preacher. Rating: 5 stars of 5. conrade This book is provided to me courtesy of Zondervan Academic and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. All opinions offered above are mine unless otherwise stated or implied.

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