

- 6 *Hosea 1-14*
This has been our first lengthy excursion into Old Testament prophets. What was your overriding response to *Hosea*?
- 7 *Hosea 1-14*
The twin themes of sin and judgment on the one hand, and love and restoration on the other recur several times in these chapters. Some of the imagery is extremely graphic in the case of the former (eg. 2:2-3;7:1-7). In contrast, his language for the latter is beautiful and moving (e.g. 11:3-4; 8-11). But as you apply his message to yourself, how does it make you feel? Does it leave you more with a sense of despair or a sense of hope, of being judged or being loved, or both?
- 8 *Hosea 6*
“I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (v.6). This will be a common prophetic refrain. Is there a similar danger that our churches can be too inclined to emphasise their rules and regulations, rather than focus on their role as dispensers of God’s grace?
- 9 *Hosea 9-10*
The notes offer two examples of British Saints. Some prefer to ignore such stories: suspicious of the very idea of ‘Saints’. What do you think? Can we learn from the lives of ‘Saints’?
- 10 *Psalms 27*
Re-read verse 4. The implication is that attending the Lord’s House is the highlight of the day (or week). How about you? Is that how you feel about coming to church? And can a church be welcoming and personal, while still offering a sense of the holiness and awesomeness of God?

Closing

Reflect on the discussion you’ve had, and pray for God’s help in addressing any specific matters. Close by saying the Grace.

SACRED

Group Resources

Month 6

Opening Prayer

God of the living word,
give us the faith to receive your message,
the wisdom to know what it means,
and the courage to put it into practice.
Amen.

(A New Zealand Prayer Book)

Review of Volume 1

1 In the last six months you've read through Mark, 1 & 2 Peter, Genesis, Habakkuk, Romans, Ruth, Exodus, Philemon and Hosea, as well as the first 28 Psalms. Well done!
Overall, which two books have you found the most rewarding in terms of both enjoyment and spiritual growth?
Why is this?

2 Two important themes have been a recurrent feature of the first Volume of SACRED: 'creation' and 'redemption'.

As a group, spend some time thinking of some specific ways in which the two themes have come to the surface.

General Questions

1 As usual, share with the group anything that has particularly stood out for you in the current month's readings.

Further Ideas

Once again you shouldn't aim to go through all these questions but to spend time on just a few of them as you see fit.

1 *Exodus 32 (also Psalm 26)*
The episode of the golden calf may be an extreme example, but it illustrates how easily even strongly held convictions can become compromised by the conventional 'wisdom' of society around us.
How do you manage to overcome this?

2 *Exodus 33*
Moses spent a great deal of time in the quiet presence of God. The notes describe an organisation where the norm is to have 30 minutes of silence each day, when no work is done. Silence in prayer may seem counter-cultural, but is it valuable? And how do you cope with silence personally? Is it something you actively seek out, or are you secretly a little intimidated by it?

3 *Exodus 37-39*
Did you find these chapters a little frustrating as they largely reproduce details that had already been included earlier? Why do you think the book *is* written this way? And does it make you question at all the value of reading the *whole* Bible, rather than selected highlights?

4 *Psalm 24*
Do you feel 'worthy' to "stand in his holy place" (verse 3)? Do you feel 'welcome' in the church community? Do you believe that God does 'accept' you?

5 *Philemon*
This interesting, short letter raises issues to do with the link between spiritual theory and practice. So we would wish to uphold Christian values of love and acceptance, but what about when we're the ones who've been hurt or wronged? How do we react then? Do you have any experience of trying to deal with this that you are willing to share with the rest of the group?