

Keswick Convention 2022

Grasping God's Masterpiece: Learning to rejoice in the Old Testament

Seminar 2: Grateful for its Realism

When more reports of atrocities fill our TV screens, it can be overwhelming. It is painful to watch. Likewise, it is hard to be grateful for the Old Testament with its accounts of horror and wickedness. Yet the Bible is not a Disney version of life. It is not afraid to describe evil in all its dimensions. How do stories such as Judges 19 build us up rather than cause us sorrow?

Break out question

What things do you find challenging about the Old Testament?

'The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.' Richard Dawkins *The God Delusion*

The Realism of the Old Testament

1. It sees the sadness, pain and struggle of messy families

Genesis 4
Genesis 25-33
Genesis 50:20

2. It is realistic about struggle

Moses' doubts and fears Exodus 3
Elijah's hopelessness 1 Kings 19: 3-4
Jonah's rebellion and then despair
Jeremiah 15:15-19

2. It is realistic about failure

Noah and his drunkenness Genesis 9:20-23
Gideon and his gold ephod Judges 8:27
David and Bathsheba 2 Samuel 11

3. It is realistic about horror.

Judges 19

A. We are not to be surprised by evil.

B. We must not be seduced to believe there is any lasting solution other than the gospel.

C. We need God to bring order to the world.

Deuteronomy 21:10-14

Mark 12:28-31

Romans 13:8-10

D. We must understand that God's just judgement is good news.

Habbakuk
Psalms

For Further Reading

Christopher Ash, 'Can we pray for God's judgement on the wicked?' Ch.8, *Teaching the Psalms*, Christian Focus Publishing

Kelly M. Kopic, *You're only human: how your limits reflect God's design and why that's good news*, Brazos Press.

