Royal Priesthood Roleplaying Game

Created by
Giles Hash

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Credits

Creation, Design, and Editing
Giles Hash

Playtesting
Spud Duffey, Sara Duffey, Emily Hash, Michelle Graham, Molly King, Sharon King
Shaneen Thompson, Keela Dee, Andrea, Jyra
Casey Einfalt, Hannah Einfalt, Samual Boling, Laurie Bouchard, Abigail Biggs

Additional Feedback
Jacob Hash
Elizabeth Garn
Ben Fassl

Royal Priesthood Roleplaying Game

Royal Priesthood Roleplaying Game (RP²) is a rules-light Tabletop Roleplaying Game (TTRPG, or just RPG) inspired by Exodus 19:6[1] and 1 Peter 2:9[1] that relies on cooperative storytelling between a Game Master (GM) and a group of players who narrate the decisions their Player Characters (PCs) make. Unlike other popular TTRPGs, this game emphasizes a focus on biblical principles so that players can interact with Scripture by imagining a personal role in their favorite Bible stories, making biblical history more personal. With that in mind, it's important to remember that Scripture is God's word to humankind (see 2 Timothy 3:16[1]), and this game provides an opportunity for players to engage in make-believe to gain a new perspective on God's word. We cannot confuse the two.

When we use the term "rules-light," we mean that there are rules available to help players determine outcomes in the story if their PC would not be able to reasonably succeed at the attempted task, but the players and GM should focus on narrating the story to reach a shared goal for the party. For example, if a PC needs to run across a flat field, they could reasonably do that on their own, but if they're being chased by a soldier who is hurling rocks at them, they may need to roll some dice to determine if they make it to the other end of the field. Remembering where a PC left their cloak shouldn't require a roll, but remembering a passage of Scripture might. The GM will generally ask the players to roll dice, keeping in mind that the game mechanics should improve the story rather than getting in the way of plot progression.

Two rules are more important than anything else written in this guide: make decisions that reflect biblical principles and have fun!

Now that we've introduced you to the game, it's time to get a pencil, a piece of paper, and 6-sided die (D6) so you can create your first character.

Character Creation

According to Genesis 1:27[1], everybody is created in God's image, and 1 Corinthians 12[1] tells us that God creates individuals with unique abilities. In *RP²*, your PC's individuality, strengths, and weaknesses will be represented by their Background, Traits, and Talents. Your PC's Background lays the foundation for who they will become, their Traits represent their basic physical, mental, and spiritual limits, and their Talents demonstrate the training they've undertaken to become experts in their field. In the Playing the Game section, we'll explain how to use all three character elements, but the first thing you need to know is that each of your PC's Traits will always provide a bonus to your D6 rolls, and if it can apply, your Background *or* a Talent will provide an additional bonus.

Character creation rules are provided below, and you can follow along with Mary as she creates her PC. Additional character examples are provided at the end of this guide.

Your group should plan to create all of your characters as a "Session 0," which is when your GM will also fill you in on the historical context surrounding the book of the Bible that will inspire your campaign. During this first session, collaborate with your group to make sure you each get to play the characters you want to play while building a group of PCs who can help each other succeed at their collective goals.

Background

We're not playing Adam and Eve in this game, so your PC comes from somewhere. Mechanically, your Background can give you a +1 bonus to D6 rolls if you and your GM can agree that your PC would have the expertise to apply their Background instead of a Talent. It also gives you an idea of who your PC is and how they might act. A Levite, for example, will behave differently than a Roman soldier-turned Christian. If you're not sure what your PC's Background is, skip this step and come back to it once you've selected your Traits and Talents, but if you need the inspiration to decide how to designate Traits and Talents, this is a great place to start.

Traits

When it's time to perform an action, your character will roll a D6 and add the result to one of three Traits: Body, Mind, or Spirit. You may also add a Faith Roll to your attempt, but we'll discuss that later. Every character begins with a base value of 1, so Body, Mind, and Spirit automatically give your D6 rolls a +1 bonus. However, you also start with 4 Trait Points that you can use to increase your Traits. In the beginning, you cannot increase any Trait over a 3, but you'll have the opportunity to earn Trait Points later. Allocate your Trait Points to create a PC that enables you to focus on the

style you want to play.

Example of Trait Point Allocation: Mary decided her PC, Hannah, is a Levite who wants to help rebuild the temple following the Babylonian exile. With an emphasis on mental Talents that will help Hannah craft items for the second temple, Mary spent 2 Trait Points on Mind. Mary also envisioned Hannah as having a strong spirit, so she spent 2 more Trait Points on Hannah's Spirit and 0 Trait Points on Body. The final result is:

Body: 1
Mind: 3
Spirit: 3

Talents
Like real people, PCs will have specific Talents that improve their ability to succeed at tasks. Whenever the GM asks a player to attempt a task that requires a Talent Roll, players can use the applicable Trait even if their PCs aren't trained in the Talent.

During character creation, players will select two Talents for each Trait and circle the letter (B, M, or S) on their Character Sheet that corresponds to the related Trait, which will give them a bonus of +1 to Talent Rolls. This will give your PC six total Talents to begin the game, and through Character Advancement (explained later), you can eventually add up to six (6) additional Talents and increase your Talents' bonuses.

Since **RP²** focuses on collaborative stories over lists of rules, the Talents available to a PC will cover a wide range of challenges. The Talents provided below are recommended to simplify your game, but if the players and GM want to add new Talents, that is something your group can discuss. Just make sure they enhance your ability to tell great stories so that the rules don't get in the way of having fun.

Body Talents:
Athletics: used for climbing, lifting, sprinting, jumping, etc.

Combat: Attack: used when attacking an opponent.

Combat: Defense: a passive talent that increases Body Defense.

Endurance: Used to determine how PCs fair on long journeys without rest, extended physical exertion like a full day of manual labor, and surviving extreme weather.

Sneaking: used to hide from adversaries.

Mind Talents:
Awareness: used to investigate an area, maintain alertness to danger, or perceive someone who may be Sneaking nearby.

Crafting: used to craft objects, cook

food, construct shelters or buildings, etc.

Knowledge: used to recall colloquial and cultural details, learn new information, and heal Body and Mind injuries.

Mental Fortitude: a passive talent that increases Mind Defense.

Tactics: used in combat to give a temporary +1 bonus to another PC's attack. Outside of combat, it can be used to plan safe travel and provide a +1 bonus to potential Body/Endurance rolls.

Spirit Talents:
Charisma: used to persuade, intimidate, or otherwise convince another character to do or believe something.

Conviction: used gain moral guidance. It can also be used in Spiritual Combat to attack a spiritual foe.

Intuition: used to gain insight and empathy. It can increase the chances of making correct, gut instinct decisions under pressure.

Willpower: a passive talent that increases Spirit Defense.

Wisdom: used to adapt to changes in circumstances and make difficult decisions. It is also used to heal Spirit injuries.

Example of Talent Selection: Mary's PC, Hannah, is a craftswoman, so Mary selected Crafting and Knowledge for Hannah's Mind Talents. Mary envisioned Hannah as a physically passive individual, so she selected the Sneaking and Endurance Body Talents to allow her to hide in dangerous situations while enabling her to work long hours. To round out Hannah's Spirit, Mary selected Willpower and Wisdom. The final result is:

Endurance
Sneaking
Crafting
Knowledge
Willpower
Wisdom

Faith
In Matthew 17:20-21[1], Jesus told his disciples that a small amount of faith could move mountains. In **RP²**, Faith gives PCs the ability to surpass their natural limits. Just as our daily lives provide opportunities to rely on God and increase our faith in him, PCs can and should search for ways to use and strengthen their Faith. We'll discuss how players use their faith in the Playing the Game section.

Every PC begins their journey with a Faith level, determined by the GM and players before the first game session. Many groups will begin with Faith at level 1, providing PCs with 1 Faith Point, but if the story calls for PCs to have a higher level, that is something

you can discuss with your group.

Defense and Damage

A PC's Defense is calculated as [*Trait*] + Faith.

Example of Defense Calculation: to calculate Hannah's Body Defense, Mary will add Hannah's Body 1 + Faith 1 to get 2. Using the same process, Hannah's Mind Defense comes to 4 (Mind 3 + Faith 1) and her base Spirit Defense comes to 4 (Spirit 3 + Faith 1). However, Mary gave Hannah the Spirit/Willpower Talent, which gives her a bonus to her Spirit Defense that will increase if she improves the Talent through Character Advancement. It starts at a +1, giving Hannah a Spirit Defense of 5.

Your PC's Defense is a static number that determines whether or not an opponent's Attack (explained later) succeeds or fails. When defending, one character, whether it's a PC or Non-Player Character (NPC), will roll to Attack, and if their Attack roll exceeds the Defense threshold, the defender takes damage. *Example: Hannah is arguing with another craftswoman about how to weave a garment. The craftswoman, an NPC played by the GM, launches a verbal assault, rolling 4, which matches Hannah's Mind Defense, doing no damage. On her turn, Hannah responds and rolls an Attack of 4, exceeding the NPC's Mind Defense of 2.*

Defense also determines how much Damage your PC can sustain. When a PC takes Damage, the player will reduce the Hit Counter on their Character Sheet by 1. By default, all PCs begin their adventure with their Hit Counters set to 2. They will then add their Defense to that score. *Example of Hannah's Hit Counters:*

Body Hit Counter: 4
Mind Hit Counter: 6
Spirit Hit Counter: 7

If Hannah takes physical damage, she will reduce her Body Hit Counter to 2.

If a PC's hit counter is ever reduced to 0, they are unable to act until they're revived (explained under the Combat section), and they must mark an Injury on their Character Sheet.

Playing the Game
Using Talents

In non-combat situations, you may need to use a Talent to determine if your PC succeeds at a specific task. To maintain a narrative flow and move the story forward, the GM may permit one or more players to narrate their way to success rather than interrupting play with a die roll, but the GM might require players to use a Talent by rolling a D6 and adding the appropriate Trait and Talent (if applicable) bonuses. Remember, your PC doesn't have to be trained in a Talent to to make a Talent attempt, but using a trained Talent does apply a +1 bonus

(or higher if the PC's Talent has been improved).

Alternatively, you can use the relevant Trait and your PC's Background to gain a +1 bonus in lieu of a Talent. After a player rolls a D6 and adds their Trait and applicable Talent or Background, they announce their result. If the result matches or exceeds the GM's predetermined difficulty level, the PC succeeds.

Generally, if players think the minimum possible result—meaning that a result of 1 on the D6 plus the Trait and Talent—exceeds the task's difficulty level, they can ask to narrate their approach to see if they can avoid a Talent Roll. Alternatively, if the players expect the task to be difficult, they may narrate a solution that either solves their problem or reduces the difficulty. If the GM believes there's a decent chance of failure, though, prepare to roll your D6.

Example of Using Talents: Mary's PC, Hannah, and Tom's PC, Yosef, are escorting a caravan. Along the way, a chest of goods falls out of one of the wagons. Hannah and Yosef need to work together to lift the chest back into the wagon. Hannah has Body 1, and Yosef has Body 3 with training in Athletics. If Mary rolls a 1 for Hannah to help lift the chest, she'll get a result of 2 (D6 Result 1 + Body 1), and if Yosef does the same, he'll get a result of 5 (D6 Result 1 + Body 3 + Body/

Athletics 1), for a total result of 7 between both PCs. Their GM decided the chest requires a Body/Athletics result of 8+, which means Mary and Tom must roll to simply lift the chest.

However, before making them roll, the GM asks how Mary and Tom want their PCs to lift the chest. Mary says, "There are loose planks in the back of the wagon that Hannah and Yosef can use as a ramp. We should set one end of the planks on the ground and the other on the cart and push the chest up instead of lifting." Considering Hannah's high Mind, the GM assumes the PC would have realized this option on her own without having to roll, and he reduces the challenge by 2 points, which means even the PCs' worst combined roll is a guaranteed success.

In the example above, if Yosef were the only PC to attempt to lift the chest, the GM might ask for a roll because there's a risk of failure that could force the players to change how they continue with the story. With a minimum guaranteed result of 5, there is a chance Tom could get a total result of 8 by rolling a 4 on his D6. Failure could result in a damaged chest that the PCs need to fix, or Yosef might require medical attention. If Tom's roll fails, though, he does have the chance to use a Faith Roll to give himself a bonus, but there are limitations to this option.

Faith Rolls
In addition to your PC's Traits and

Talents, you'll have a Faith Level that represents your character's growth. This number also represents how many Faith Rolls you have available at any given time. Beneath your Faith Level on your Character Sheet, you'll also see a line with Faith Rolls, which tells you how many Faith Rolls you currently have. You may only use one Faith Roll per Talent attempt, and when you use up the Faith Rolls on your Character Sheet, you will need to receive more from your GM before you can make another Faith Roll. However, your Faith Rolls should reset to your Faith Level when you begin a new game session.

Using Faith Rolls
While **RP²** is a game that focuses on telling great stories, it is also a game that equips players to think meaningfully about biblical principles. When Players attempt to accomplish a task that aligns with biblical principles and values, they have the option of using a Faith Roll to gain a bonus to their Talent attempt.

Example of Using a Faith Roll: Yosef is defending a widow from robbers and wants to intimidate them so that they will leave her alone. The GM determines that Tom needs a 9+ on a Spirit/Charisma roll. Yosef has Spirit 2 and did not train in Charisma. Tom manages to roll a 6, which is not high enough to intimidate the robbers. However, Tom remembered that, in Jeremiah 22[1], the prophet commanded the King of Judah to protect the oppressed, a command that applies to anyone who claims to follow God. Tom declares that Yosef is seeking to live up to that standard, and he is going to use a Faith Roll to get a bonus to his intimidation. Tom reduces the Faith Roll counter on his Character Sheet by 1 and rolls his D6. The result is a 3, giving Yosef the extra points needed to scare off the robbers without resorting to violence.

If a player wants their PC to violate sound biblical principles, like robbing a wandering traveler or trying to conquer a God-fearing town, the GM could certainly let them try. But if they fail their Talent attempts, they cannot use a Faith Roll to get a bonus. Faith Rolls can only be used when the PCs are acting according to biblical principles. An easy way to figure out if you can use a Faith Roll is to ask if the attempted action would violate the 10 commandments in Exodus 20:1-17[1].

Losing Faith Rolls
If you attempt to actively violate biblical principles, regardless of whether or not your Talent Roll succeeds, the GM may remove one or more Faith Rolls from your PC.

Earning New Faith Rolls
Depending on the era in which your story takes place, your GM may have a principle that he wants you to remember for a specific game session. For example, if the PCs all exist during

the 1st century and are members of a congregation founded by Paul, perhaps the GM will use Colossians 3:1-17[1] as the applicable passage for that session. A core principle within that passage is God's calling to reject the passions and obsessions of the world, like greed and lust, while letting God transform you into someone who is focused on spiritual matters, like becoming a better person who reflects God's values. Any time you roleplay the session's applicable biblical principle, the GM can award you a Faith Roll, as long as you don't exceed your Faith Level and you did not use a Faith Roll as part of the action that was intended to demonstrate the biblical principle.

If you are playing an ongoing campaign, it's also possible that your GM will want you to remember principles from previous game sessions, so he or she may award Faith Rolls for roleplaying biblical principles from earlier in the campaign. They may also reward you for demonstrating sound biblical doctrine regardless of the session's or campaign's focus, but these are details that the GM and players should discuss as a group.

Combat
While the PCs in *RP²* will engage in conflicts of biblical proportions, they're still human. Supernaturally favored and protected, but still human. As a result, all successful attacks cause damage.

When you face conflicts of any kind, you'll have an opportunity to attack your adversaries using the appropriate Talent. Physical combat will use Body/Combat: Attack, but mental attacks may use another Talent, such as Mind/Knowledge or Mind/Crafting, and spiritual attacks could use Spirit/Charisma or Spirit/Wisdom if those Talents are appropriate for the type of conflict.

When PCs attack an NPC, they'll attack the NPC's Defense score (discussed in the Defense and Damage section above). NPCs will have Traits and Talents similar to PCs, and the GM will let players know when they defeat an NPC by reducing their Hit Counter to 0.

Combat Initiative
Even though combat requires Talent Rolls as described above, PCs will have to act in a determined Initiative order, whereas non-combat Talent Rolls may happen in any order in collaboration with other PCs and the GM.

Initiative is determined by rolling a D6 and applying the appropriate Trait. Physical combat uses the Body Trait, mental combat uses the Mind Trait, and spiritual combat uses the Spirit Trait. Faith Rolls cannot be used to improve an Initiative result.

Once the Initiative is determined, PCs and NPCs (controlled by the GM) will

take their actions in turn, either attacking or providing support for the group.

To attack, roll for the appropriate Talent. To support another PC, you could roll a non-attack Talent, such as Mind/Tactics or Spirit/Wisdom, to give a bonus to the next PC or the entire group. A player seeking to provide support would declare this to the GM and then roll the appropriate Talent. If the GM determines that the result is high enough, he or she could approve a bonus of +1 or +2 for either the next PC's attack or until the beginning of the supporting PC's next turn.

Another support action players can take is healing their fallen allies. When a PC or NPC is reduced to 0 on their Hit Counter, another PC or NPC can attempt to use Mind/Knowledge to heal physical and mental damage and Spirit/Wisdom to heal Spiritual damage. To heal a fallen PC or NPC, a player must roll a number equal to or higher than the fallen character's Hit Counter. If the healing player succeeds, the fallen character is revived and regains one (1) Hit Counter if the healing attempt is made during combat. When combat ends, players can tend to their wounded and fully heal everyone who had their Hit Counters reduced to 0. All characters with Hit Counters at 1 or higher return to their maximum Hit Counter scores when combat ends.

Injuries and Death

Any time a PC's Hit Counters is reduced to 0, they must mark an Injury on their Character Sheet by writing in the letter that corresponds to the Trait that was attacked (B, M, or S) in the next available Injury box. The first Injury will create a -1 penalty to all rolls, and the second Injury will create a -2 penalty.

Injury types can be mixed, so in theory a PC could take a physical injury after having their Body Hit Counter reduced to 0, then they could take a mental or spiritual injury.

To heal an injury, PCs will either need to seek an expert who can heal the injury type, typically found in a city or major encampment, or a trained PC may attempt to heal the injury. If a PC attempts to heal an injured character, they will roll the applicable Talent three times. If the total result meets or exceeds double the injured character's Defense in the affected Trait, then the injury can be removed.

This process takes time, so the GM will decide if the PCs have the option of healing an injury or if the attempt will have to wait until later in the story. If a healing attempt fails, the players must wait twelve (12) in-game hours before they can try again.

If a PC has two unhealed Injuries and receives a third Injury, they are taken out of the story. This could be physical death, but if a PC takes a spiritual or

mental injury that knocks them out of the game, the player could decide that their PC is simply too mentally exhausted or worn down to continue on their heroic journey, or they're too spiritually broken and need to return too a simpler life to renew their relationship with God. Regardless of how you decide to let your character go, their story is over and they either pass from the earth or return to a "normal" life.

Character Advancement
Transformative Moments
Throughout the game's narrative arc, the GM will declare specific Transformative Moments that will allow you to significantly improve your PC. When this happens, you will increase your Faith Level by one (1), and you can increase a single Trait by one (1) point. Remember to increase your Defense and Hit Counters, too!

Talent Advancement
Any time you roll a 6 on a Talent Roll (excluding any Faith Rolls), mark it on the Talent Advancement track on your Character Sheet. When you collect ten Talent Advancement marks, you may improve a single trained Talent by one (1) point, which will give your PC an additional bonus to rolls with that Talent. Add a plus mark next to the improved talent to indicate its increased level.

Talent Advancement marks cannot increase a PC's Background. The Background explains where the PC came from, but the Talents represent who they're becoming. You won't lose your Background bonus, but it will never increase.

Adding a Talent
If you want to train a new Talent, you can save twenty Talent Advancement marks and redeem them for a new Talent. That new Talent, like your first trained Talents, will give you a +1 bonus until you improve it following the rules above.

Because humans are finite, even our heroes are limited in the Talents they can learn. A character may only have twelve total trained Talents. While characters will start with two Talents per Trait, they may train any new Talents for any Trait they want. So a character could, for example, have three Body Talents, three Mind Talents, and six Spirit Talents.

Items
On your Character Sheet you'll see an Inventory section that can be used to keep track of items you've collected throughout your adventure. Some items, like food and money, will be used for roleplaying purposes, but your GM may also let you use items to give your PC a +1 bonus to Talent Rolls. For example, a quality pair of sandals may provide a +1 bonus to a Body/ Endurance attempt when traveling long distances, a particularly well-crafted sword could give you a +1 to Body/

Combat: Attack, or armor could increase your Body Defense and Hit Counter by +1.

Talk with your GM about the items available to your PC. Remember that not all items, including weapons, will provide a bonus, and it will ultimately be up to the GM to decide.

Game Master's Guide

One of the main purposes of *RP²* is to help players take a vested interest in the biblical narrative. Their Player Characters (PCs) should not be individuals named in the Bible, and their adventures should not be taken word-for-word from Scripture. It's always best practice to avoid altering the Word of God (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17[1]). Instead, you and your players should create stories that are adjacent to the biblical text as a creative and intellectual exercise that allows the group to interact with the Bible—especially biblical history—on a personal level.

As a Game Master (GM), you have the responsibility of giving your players narrative cues to help advance the story. Since *RP²* is also a Bible study aid, the story and game sessions should reflect sound biblical doctrine that relies on historical and literary context. This process is called biblical exegesis, and even though this guide is not intended for intensive exegetical training, it will provide some valuable research principles and methods.

Your initial preparation will require some research on your part, and it will take additional preparation before each game session. Internet searches can provide a lot of valuable resources to help you learn a passage's historical context, and biblical commentaries are a great way to study the meaning behind the text. If you're using this game as a volunteer or staff member for your local church, your pastor or the head of your teaching ministry may have resources available, as well. Even if you're not running this game as part of your church's ministry, it's never a bad idea to ask spiritual leaders in your life for resources to help you better understand Scripture.

Preparing the Campaign
Before the First Session
Take time to discuss the game's focus with the players. Will this be an ongoing game with no planned end, or will it be limited to a few weeks or months with a focus on a single book of the Bible? If this is your first time leading a Bible-focused game, it may be best to pick a single, short historical section to reference, such as Ezra 1-3[1] or Acts 13-16[1]. Or, if you'd like to study one of the epistles, you could research the historical context behind the book you choose and let your players create PCs who live in the local church receiving the letter.

It's important to remember that all 66 books of the Bible were written over

the course several centuries. Cultures, economies, and governments changed significantly, and this will affect what types of characters your players will create. As the GM, you'll need to help your players understand the historical culture into which their characters will step. In the Sources and Notes section at the end of this guide you'll find some free resources that should help you get started[2, 3, 4], and many commentaries provide significant historical background information on the books they cover, as well.

During your group's first meeting, spend time discussing the historical background of your setting. Provide your players with an overview of the themes you'll be exploring, and help them create characters who would exist at the time your campaign takes place. This will be your "Session 0," and it's helpful to use this as an opportunity for your player to get to know each other if they've never met before.

Exegetical Method[5]
Keep in mind that this is not an extensive lesson on biblical exegesis, but this method will not only enhance your players' interaction with the setting and story, the skills can improve your understanding of Scripture and, as a result, improve your relationship with God. Before following the steps below, make sure you take time to pray for wisdom and understanding. Never forget that first step.

Step 1: Start by reading the entire book you're planning to use so you're aware of your selected passage's literary context. Even if you're only using a single chapter for your game, it's important to read the entire book from beginning to end, preferably all at once.

Step 2: Re-read the selected chapter or passage, then read the passages before and after, looking for key words that would link those passages to your selected text. Look for words like "and," "but," and "so," as well as transition words like "therefore."

Take notes throughout this process so you're prepared to research anything you don't understand. Never be afraid to ask questions of your pastor or other spiritual leaders in your life.

Step 3: In order to understand the passage's historical context, consult a Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia[2, 3, 4]. Look for answers to questions like, "Who were the intended, original readers of this text?" and "What was their significance in the grander scheme of history?"

To practice these steps, try studying the literary and historical context of Ephesians 1:3-14[1].

Step 4: If you have the resources available, like a concordance or Bible dictionary, research key words in your selected passage to find out what they

meant in the original language. In the Ephesians 1:3-14[1], an interesting word to research would be "predestined." This is a controversial term for the Church today, so studying what the Apostle Paul meant could help you understand the message he had for his readers.

Step 5: Based on the information you've gathered so far, write down two or three sentences that summarize what the passage means. Not for you, not for your friends, but what the original readers were expected to understand.

Step 6: Considering the cultural and historical differences between the original audience and today, ask how the passage's meaning can be applied. Respectable biblical scholars all agree that the meaning of Scripture never changes (see Isaiah 40:8[1]), but the application may not be the same today as it was two hundred years ago or two thousand years ago. This step is always important, but it is especially critical when studying the Old Testament because Jesus' sacrifice adjusted how Old Testament doctrine is applied, even though the meaning never changes.

Step 7: Confirm your interpretation (Step 5) and application (Step 6) by reading what the experts wrote. Look for reliable commentaries, sermons, and articles[3, 4] to find out what other students of Scripture learned. Look for several different authors to make sure you're able to synthesize an unbiased

perspective. If your understanding matches theirs, that likely means you interpreted the passage accurately. If your interpretation and application are entirely new, there's a chance that more research is needed.

Within your game, the biblical doctrine(s) you learn from your research will help you know when to award your players new Faith Rolls. It will also help you structure the plot arc(s) and narrow the focus of each game session. The more research and planning you do before your first game, the easier your regular pre-session prep will be later on. It will also help you present accurate, authentic biblical truth without having to rely on memory when questioned about the purpose of the game session or a scriptural passage.

Preparing a Story Arc
After you select a passage or book to use as your inspiration, plan out at least five major plot points. These will be the transformative moments in the story that will let the players know that their actions have influenced their personal story, and it will let them know how the world around them is changing. These are also the points in the game where Players will increase their Faith Level and improve one Trait.

A potential plot arc following the book of Ezra[1] can be found below, but it only covers narrative points that drive

the players' adventure. If you choose to use this example for your group, make sure you take time to research the context and meaning following the steps above.

Plot Point 1: Ezra 1-3[1] introduces the players to the scenario. They are exiles returning to Jerusalem to help rebuild the temple at the decree of Cyrus of Persia. Their journey will take them along dangerous roads filled with challenges they will have to overcome. When they arrive in Jerusalem, they will face the reality that Solomon's splendid temple has been utterly destroyed, and there is no place to adequately worship God. They will witness the rebuilding of the altar by Jeshua and Zerubbabel, at which point the players will be able to assist in the rebuilding of the temple. Remember, the PCs shouldn't be people who appear in the pages of Scripture, so their actions will take place on the outskirts of the biblical narrative.

Plot Point 2: Ezra 4:1-16[1] presents the players with factions who oppose the rebuilding of the temple. They will need to navigate conflicts with groups who are actively trying to stop their progress. The PCs could try to negotiate with small bands of agitators who are trying to stop the temple from being built, defend shipments of goods, or fight off small war-bands harassing the people in and around Jerusalem.

Plot Point 3: Ezra 4:17-24[1] contains a letter from King Artaxerxes ordering construction to stop. The players now have a life in Jerusalem or the surrounding area, so this is an excellent time for them to explore the region, build homes for themselves, perhaps take on work protecting Non-Player Characters (NPCs) or doing odd jobs to build relationships.

Plot Point 4: in Ezra 5-6[1], King Darius allows the temple construction to continue, so players will need to continue to aid in any way they can. This will provide opportunities for roleplaying, but you may offer them a chance to engage in various challenges that require them to use Talents, including combat. This section ends with the celebration of Passover.

Plot Point 5: Ezra 7-10[1] contains genealogies and several difficult lessons the people learned, including reminders of how God expected his people to follow him in the promised land. The players can continue to settle in the land, but they have the opportunity to learn from Ezra's message and help purify the land of sin and rebellion against God so that they are not exiled a second time.

More plot points may be available, and if you can't think of at least five points that are available in the biblical narrative you select, try to develop some that take place away from the text that will allow your players to apply the lessons they're learning.

Consider exploring a PC's Background or a relationship they developed with an NPC. Note that this is an important part of developing a campaign, so this will help you keep your players engaged even if you find more than five plot points to focus on.

Preparing and Running a Session
In the first part of this guide, players were provided with rules to help them use Traits and Talents to overcome challenges set by the GM. If you haven't read through that section, yet, please make sure you familiarize yourself with the player mechanics.

Below, you'll learn how to determine when players should roll their dice and whether or not those rolls allow PCs to succeed at their Talent Rolls. You will also find instruction on how to develop NPCs for the PCs to interact with. Finally, you'll receive tips on how to decide which part of the story the players will engage in for each session.

Setting Challenge Difficulties
RP² should focus on narrative roleplaying as much as possible, but sometimes players will want to attempt to do something that their PCs may not be able to accomplish. Before deciding what challenges the players will face, it's important to remember which Traits and Talents they have. If you have a group of players who all focused on improving their Mind without developing any Body— particularly combat—Talents, focus on

challenges that will allow them to use their Mind Talents. If you put them in a combat situation, try to allow them an opportunity to win the battle, or warn them of a significant chance of failure. It's best practice to give them some say in whether or not the full party can die in a single session. Metaphorically taking the gloves off can be fun for some, but not all players want to risk PC death.

Remember that, in the beginning, the worst possible outcome for a die roll will be a 2, combining a result of 1 on the die and a 1 for any Trait that does not include a Talent bonus. A player who spent Trait Points to increase a Trait to the maximum starting level of 3 can get a maximum possible die result of 10 if they are using a Talent without the benefit of an Item bonus.

Use this table to determine the difficulty level for your newest PCs.	
Result	**Difficulty**
4	Very Easy
5	Easy
6	Fair
7	Challenging
8	Hard
9	Very Hard
10	Preternatural

The preceding table can help you remember how challenging a task will

be for an average PC. If you want to push your players to use Faith Rolls or work together to combine their Talent Rolls, consider increasing the difficulty over the Preternatural difficulty, but be prepared for failure.

Player failure is not always a bad thing, though. It gives the PCs a chance to learn, forces them to adapt, and it allows the GM to introduce story complications the players may not have expected.

Example: Tom's PC, Yosef, is sneaking into a Philistine camp to scout their military numbers. When asked to roll for Body/Sneaking, the GM set a Very Hard difficulty, requiring a total result of 9. Tom gets a total result of 8 but does not want to use a Faith Roll. The GM declares that Yosef attracted the attention of some guards.

Tom decides to make Yosef retreat, but the guards are still investigating. During a second attempt at Body/ Sneaking, Tom rolls high enough to keep Yosef out of view of the guards, but they have enough information to continue in Yosef's direction. Instead of leading them back to his own camp, Yosef decides to lead them in the opposite direction, further separating himself from the rest of his party.

The GM in that situation can provide new opportunities for the players to engage in the story, perhaps setting up an ambush for the guards or a daring

rescue attempt. It's also possible that Yosef will get captured or killed. In any case, depending on how the group adapts, this single failure could lead to unexpected successes.

Non-Player Characters
The PCs aren't the only people inhabiting the story. As mentioned previously, *RP²* strongly advises against making actual biblical figures into NPCs with whom the PCs can interact, but you are encouraged to follow the Character Creation and Advancement rules to create NPCs for the story. Those NPCs can be characters who reappear throughout the game or characters who only appear once or twice.

These NPCs will only get a Faith Level and Faith Rolls if they are followers of God. As a result, some NPCs will have lower Defense and Hit Counters than the PCs.

If you don't want to spend the time to create and advance NPCs for one-time encounters, such as a group of soldiers or a merchant playing a minor role, consider allocating a 3, a 2, and a 1 to that NPC's Traits and then give them one or two relevant Talents that they can use when the PCs interact with them. If they become important, flesh them out some more.

The Game Session
Using your exegetical research, you should have an idea of where the story

will begin. When planning for later sessions, remember the actions the PCs took in the previous session(s) and adjust their story accordingly.

Start with the next unused plot point from your text and then plan three encounters per hour of intended gameplay, making sure those encounters give the players an opportunity to advance the plot. Using the first plot point from Ezra, you could have your players encounter bandits on the road to Jerusalem. The players would need to engage in a physical or mental conflict to fight or negotiate their way past the bandits.

One or more allied NPCs might also disagree on the route they are taking to Jerusalem, or even their final goal. This could give the players an opportunity to engage in either a mental or spiritual conflict to convince or encourage the NPC(s) to continue on their journey to help rebuild the temple.

Other encounters could include multiple Talent challenges that allow the players the opportunity to build or repair items, find important locations or artifacts, or traverse difficult terrain, all to advance the story.

It's unlikely that you'll get to use all three encounters in a single hour, but if you only plan one encounter per hour and your players figure out how to avoid or complete them without difficulty, the remainder of the session could feel empty. Plenty of GMs throughout RPG history have spent hours preparing a series of events that they expected to take the players ten to twenty hours to complete only for the players to burn through the narrative in less than an hour. Good GMs remain flexible and reward players for their success or ingenuity when they do this through clever roleplaying, but it requires quick adaptation.

In general, the more opportunities you have to present the game world as living and real, giving your players organic challenges to overcome, the more fun everyone will have. Many GMs prepare encounters that their players will never experience, but by taking the time to prepare, GMs can ensure that the players never run out of story events to experience.

Before play begins, summarize the biblical text that inspired the game session. Give some history and share at least one doctrine for them to focus on. When players roleplay adherence to this doctrine, award a Faith Roll, as long as the player doesn't exceed their maximum number of rolls. It's also important to reward them for remembering doctrines from previous sessions, and if they can accurately explain additional doctrines that they are following, consider rewarding their research.

If a player actively violates biblical doctrine, you can remind them of the

game's focus by removing one of their Faith Rolls. Try to limit the penalty to instances when a player intentionally attempts to do something that is genuinely bad, like stealing, lying, or attacking innocent NPCs. This is an optional rule, but it can help players stay focused on God's role in their lives.

If you have maps available, reveal them when appropriate so that the players can see where they are in the world. Other visual aids, like pictures of buildings from the game's era or renderings of historical sites and artifacts, can add another dimension to the game, as well.

Don't forget to reward your players with money and items that may help them in the future. Their goals shouldn't include accumulating wealth, but providing resources will keep them invested in their mission because they're equipped for future success. Remember that some items should provide a +1 bonus to a Talent Roll, but maintain a careful balance with those particular rewards to make sure the game remains challenging and engaging.

Help your players remember to keep track of every Talent Roll that results in a 6 on the die (before any modifiers) so that they can advance their character's abilities. Any time the plot progresses to a new point, remind them to increase their Faith Level and a

Trait, as well as their Defense and Hit Counters.

As much as possible, narrate the world using active language. "A green field stretches out before you. The scent of wildflowers drifts on the morning breeze, warmed by the midday sun." Engaging the senses makes the world come alive, much more so than telling your players that, "It's hot, about noon, and the field in front of you is filled with wildflowers."

You can also increase player engagement by giving the NPCs their own voices. It may feel silly at first, but try to speak an NPC's dialogue instead of telling players, "They said…" Take on the NPC's persona and have conversations with the PCs to allow your players to build relationships in the world.

It's also important to allow the players to chat around the table. Their characters are the ones living the story, so they deserve to spend time strategizing how to proceed with the game. However, if their conversation goes on to the point that it prevents the story from moving forward, or if they're trying to "win" the game instead of treating it like a story—called metagaming—give them a deadline to make a decision or surprise them with a Talent Roll they have to make without delay. But make sure it moves the story forward and keeps the players in the game.

Final Notes

Character Flaws

To add some complexity, your players might consider adding a character flaw to roleplay. A stubborn PC and a lazy PC could provide additional conflict that allows players to further explore how their characters might respond to certain situations. For the GM, this can remove some of the pressure to manufacture external conflicts for the PCs to resolve, as well. However, it's important to make sure the flaws don't become the focus of any given encounter or challenge.

The Rule of Cool

Some players may want to advance their PC's Background, arguing that the Background is a relevant part of who their PC is in the game. Other players may want to improve their Traits more often or take on more Talents than the twelve Talent limit. If the group agrees that any of these are fun options and help the story, feel free to approve them. This is called a House Rule, and when it comes to telling great stories, allowing players to do something cool is more fun than limiting them to a box that keeps them from engaging in the story. Remember: this is everyone's game. Not just the GM's, not just the players'. Make sure you're doing everything you can to learn God's word and have fun!

Sources and Notes

[1] In **RP²**, we encourage people to read the Bible using an accurate translation that is also easy to understand. With that being said, the translation we use is the ESV® Bible. *The ESV® Bible* (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®*), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated into any other language.

[2] BibleOdyssey.org is filled archeological and historical articles, photos, and maps that provide a significant amount of historical data.

[3] BibleStudyTools.com offers many free Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, and commentaries.

[4] BibleProject.com provides word studies, commentaries, and lessons on books of the Bible.

[5] This is an extremely summarized and subsequently adapted exegetical method. While there are many resources that teach these steps, I learned it formally from J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (3rd ed.). (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012).

Sample Characters and Character Sheet

In the following pages you'll find the two sample characters mentioned throughout the first section of of this handbook for the example players, Mary and Tom. There are additional sample characters, as well, ready for you to print up so you can jump right into your first game session.

After the sample characters, you'll find a blank character sheet that you can use to create your own custom PC. Feel free to print up as many as you need and share them with your group.

RP² Character Sheet

Player Name: *Mary*

Character Name: *Hannah*

Background: *Levite Craftswoman (Weaver)*

Traits:

Body: *1*

Mind: *3*

Spirit: *3*

Defense:

Body: *2*   **Body Hit Counter:** *4*

Mind: *4*   **Mind Hit Counter:** *6*

Spirit: *5*   **Spirit Hit Counter:** *7*

Injuries:

☐ **-1** ☐ **-2** ☐ **Taken Out**

Faith Level: *1*

Faith Rolls: *1*

Talents (Circle Relevant Trait):

B   *Endurance*

B   *Sneaking*

M   *Crafting*

M   *Knowledge*

S   *Willpower*

S   *Wisdom*

B/M/S_____

B/M/S_____

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B/M/S_____

B/M/S_____

Inventory:

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Talent Advancement:

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RP² Character Sheet

Player Name: *Tom*

Character Name: *Yosef*

Background: *Soldier*

Traits:

Body: *3*

Mind: *2*

Spirit: *2*

Defense:

Body: *5* **Body Hit Counter:** *7*

Mind: *3* **Mind Hit Counter:** *5*

Spirit: *3* **Spirit Hit Counter:** *5*

Injuries:

☐ **-1** ☐ **-2** ☐ **Taken Out**

Faith Level: *1*

Faith Rolls: *1*

Talents (Circle Relevant Trait):

B *Athletics*

B *Combat: Defense*

M *Awareness*

M *Tactics*

S *Conviction*

S *Intuition*

B/M/S_____

B/M/S_____

B/M/S_____

B/M/S_____

B/M/S_____

B/M/S_____

Inventory:

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Talents Advancement:

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RP² Character Sheet

Player Name: _____

Character Name: *Jonathan*

Background: *Textile Merchant*

Traits:

Body: *1*

Mind: *3*

Spirit: *3*

Defense:

Body: *2*　　**Body Hit Counter:** *4*

Mind: *5*　　**Mind Hit Counter:** *7*

Spirit: *5*　　**Spirit Hit Counter:** *7*

Injuries:

☐ -1 ☐ -2 ☐ Taken Out

Faith Level: *1*

Faith Rolls: *1*

Talents (Circle Relevant Trait):

B　*Endurance*

B　*Sneaking*

M　*Crafting*

M　*Mental Fortitude*

S　*Charisma*

S　*Willpower*

B/M/S_____

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Inventory:

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Talent Advancement:

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RP² Character Sheet

Player Name: _____ **Character Name:** *Joshua*

Background: *Shepherd*

Traits:

Body: *3*

Mind: *2*

Spirit: *2*

Defense:

Body: *4*   **Body Hit Counter:** *6*

Mind: *3*   **Mind Hit Counter:** *5*

Spirit: *5*   **Spirit Hit Counter:** *7*

Injuries:

☐ -1 ☐ -2 ☐ Taken Out

Faith Level: *1*

Faith Rolls: *1*

Talents (Circle Relevant Trait):

B   *Combat: Attack*

B   *Endurance*

M   *Awareness*

M   *Tactics*

S   *Intuition*

S   *Willpower*

B/M/S_____

B/M/S_____

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Inventory:

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Talent Advancement:

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RP² Character Sheet

Player Name: _____   **Character Name:** *Mariah*

Background: *Household Manager*

Traits:

Body: *2*

Mind: *3*

Spirit: *2*

Defense:

Body: *3*   **Body Hit Counter:** *5*

Mind: *4*   **Mind Hit Counter:** *6*

Spirit: *3*   **Spirit Hit Counter:** *5*

Injuries:

☐ -1 ☐ -2 ☐ Taken Out

Faith Level: *1*

Faith Rolls: *1*

Talents (Circle Relevant Trait):

B   *Athletics*

B   *Endurance*

M   *Awareness*

M   *Knowledge*

S   *Charisma*

S   *Wisdom*

B/M/S_____

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Inventory:

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Talent Advancement:

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RP² Character Sheet

Player Name: _____

Character Name: *Maximus*

Background: *Centurion*

Traits:

Body: *3*

Mind: *3*

Spirit: *1*

Defense:

Body: *5*   **Body Hit Counter:** *7*

Mind: *4*   **Mind Hit Counter:** *6*

Spirit: *2*   **Spirit Hit Counter:** *4*

Injuries:

☐ -1 ☐ -2 ☐ Taken Out

Faith Level: *1*

Faith Rolls: *1*

Talents (Circle Relevant Trait):

B   *Combat: Attack*

B   *Combat: Defense*

M   *Knowledge*

M   *Tactics*

S   *Conviction*

S   *Intuition*

B/M/S_____

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Talent Advancement:

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RP² Character Sheet

Player Name: _____ **Character Name:** *Miriam*

Background: *Baker*

Traits:

Body: *2*

Mind: *3*

Spirit: *2*

Defense:

Body: *3*   **Body Hit Counter:** *5*

Mind: *4*   **Mind Hit Counter:** *6*

Spirit: *3*   **Spirit Hit Counter:** *5*

Injuries:

☐ **-1** ☐ **-2** ☐ **Taken Out**

Faith Level: *1*

Faith Rolls: *1*

Talents (Circle Relevant Trait):

B   *Athletics*

B   *Endurance*

M   *Awareness*

M   *Crafting*

S   *Conviction*

S   *Intuition*

B/M/S_____

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Inventory:

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Talent Advancement:

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RP² Character Sheet

Player Name: _____   **Character Name:** _____

Background: _____

Traits:

Body:

Mind:

Spirit:

Defense:

Body: **Body Hit Counter:**

Mind: **Mind Hit Counter:**

Spirit: **Spirit Hit Counter:**

Injuries:

☐ **-1** ☐ **-2** ☐ **Taken Out**

Faith Level:

Faith Rolls:

Talents (Circle Relevant Trait):

B/M/S_____

B/M/S_____

B/M/S_____

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