

NARRATIVE & LAW

Old Testament Narrative

1. Determine boundaries and interpret episodes.
2. Remember: God is always the main character.
3. Identify the other main characters.
4. Distinguish descriptions and prescriptions.
5. Summarize the main conflict.
6. Summarize the main message.

Law

1. Identify the kind of law.
2. Describe how the law fits into its larger context.
3. Ask, "What does this passage reveal concerning God's character and values?"
4. Ask, "What does this law reveal about human nature?"

BIBLICAL POETRY

Psalms

1. Read whole psalms.
2. Consider how a psalm relates to surrounding psalms.
3. Discern the structure.
4. Follow the logic.
5. Ask, What does this psalm reveal of the nature and character of God?
6. Ask, What does this psalm reveal of the nature and character of man?
7. Focus on Jesus.

Proverbs

1. Proverbs apply to specific occasions.
2. Proverbs often address ultimate truths.

Job & Ecclesiastes

1. Connect the passage to its surrounding context and the book's conclusion.
2. Ask about the speaker.
3. Ask about God.
4. Ask about the wisdom of Christ.

PROPHECY

Old Testament Prophets

1. Discern and interpret whole oracles.
2. Identify the historical setting.
3. Consider the covenants.
4. Look out for "the day of the LORD."
5. Focus on Christ.

GOSPELS & ACTS

Gospels

1. Discern the boundaries and interpret episodes.
2. Compare accounts.
3. Pay attention to the author's editorial comments.
4. Focus on Jesus, especially his death and resurrection.
5. Discern the main point of a parable.

Acts

1. Determine boundaries and interpret episodes.
2. Focus on Jesus.
3. Distinguish between descriptions and prescriptions.
4. Note how the church grows.
5. Summarize the main conflict.
6. Summarize the main message.

Genre

Interpretation Keys



EPISTLES & REVELATION

Epistles

1. Read the whole letter.
2. Dig into the setting.
3. Exegete the introduction and conclusion.
4. Trace the logic.
5. Define words and phrases.
6. Pair indicatives and imperatives.

Revelation

1. Interpret the parts in light of the whole.
2. Identify symbols and interpret the symbols.
3. Heed its own instruction.



A Servant of the Author

Genre does not ultimately determine meaning. Genre is a servant of the author. Biblical authors used these literary forms to communicate their intended meaning, but they were not bound by these forms. Thus, genre helps us discover and enjoy what an author intended to communicate but does not ultimately define his meaning.



Genre and Truth

God's word is infallible (totally and always true) and inerrant (without error), historical, and theological. This truth applies across all biblical genres. Whether the Bible speaks in poetry or prose, narrative or proverb, it is totally true and without error.