

Growing Deeper

The Good Book: Unlocking the Good News of Scripture

Week One: *The Many Styles of Scripture—Understanding Genre*

Matthew 13:1-23; Matthew 8:23-27

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Have you ever seen an article from The Onion that made you think it was real at first glance? If you're not familiar with The Onion, it is a satirical digital media company. Here's a sample headline from 2015: "*Study: Employees Happiest When Pretending To Work From Home.*" Why is knowing that the source of a headline is satire important for understanding the intent of the article?
2. What types of feelings might this article evoke if you did not know it was satire?
3. The Bible includes many different genre and literary types. How might understanding the genre of a particular passage you are reading help give clarity?
4. Read Matthew 13:1-23. What genre does Jesus mention in the passage? (v. 3)
5. A parable is a short story or illustration that occurs in many literary forms. They can be allegories, maxims, fables, comparisons, etc. Most of Jesus' parables included a practical truth that also held a deeper meaning. When studying a parable in the Bible, does whether or not the story actually happened impact the truth the parable is trying to teach? Why or why not?
6. Look again at Matthew 13:1-23. Why did Jesus say he talked in parable?
7. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to have eyes that see and ears that hear as we continue to study the importance of genre this week.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Look again at Matthew 13:1-23. What did Jesus do after telling a parable? (v. 18)
9. The Bible contains many types of genre. Even a single book can contain multiple types. What would happen if you tried to read a bit of scripture with the assumption that it was an incorrect genre? To help solidify this concept, choose a few genres below and explain how it could be misunderstood if read as if it was one of the other types.
 - a. History
 - b. Poetry
 - c. Wisdom

d. Prophecy

e. Letters (Epistles)

f. Apocalyptic Lit/Revelation

10. Giving and receiving feedback is very similar to genre. When used incorrectly, the message is muddled. Feedback author Sheila Heen says that there are three kinds of feedback: Evaluation, Coaching, and Appreciation. How does misinterpreting coaching as evaluation confuse the intended message? How is using a combination of all three types useful in giving and receiving feedback?
11. How is using a combination of all of the types of genre in the Bible able to give us a richer, fuller picture of the blessings we receive from rightly reading the Bible?
12. As you close your FIFTEEN in prayer, ask God to help you grow and experience the blessings he offers you through the many types of genre found in the Bible. Then meditate on Isaiah 40:28-31, a beautiful example of poetry found in the Bible.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

13. This week we have been looking at a parable that Jesus told. Now we are going to look at a clear narrative in the Bible, a real-life event. Read Matthew 8:23-27. Summarize the events in your own words.
14. What do the events of this story say to you about Jesus and his power?
15. Now read Matthew 7:24-29. What type of genre would you classify Jesus' story as? (Hint: notice the phrase "is like" in verse 24.)
16. Jesus often uses parables to make comparisons—in this case to contrast two different kinds of hearers of his word. How does this short parable speak to you?
17. How can we use parables as a learning tool when we read them in scripture?
18. How is this different or the same as what you can learn from a portion of scripture that is clearly a true narrative?
19. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to continue to help you grow in understanding as you read the Bible.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

20. Maybe one of the easiest genres to define is wisdom literature. Read each of the following proverbs and summarize the wisdom they contain:
- a. Proverbs 11:22
 - b. Proverbs 15:17
 - c. Proverbs 17:28
 - d. Proverbs 20:14
 - e. Proverbs 26:11
 - f. Proverbs 26:3
21. Some of these proverbs are kind of funny, but they all contain wisdom. How is reading this type of scripture helpful?
22. How can it be harmful if read in an incorrect way?
23. Read Ephesians 2:8-9. How are we saved?
24. What does the Bible say about our works?
25. What is the spiritual harm we experience when we confuse wisdom literature as works necessary for our salvation?
26. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to help you remember to keep the grace he offers us through Jesus first and foremost in your mind as you study the scriptures.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

27. For our final day this week, we are going to look at an Epistle (also known as a letter.) What is the one thing that distinguishes a letter from other kinds of writing?
28. A letter is typically directed toward a specific person or group. In the case of the Epistles in the Bible, sometimes that group was a whole church, or sometimes it was specifically its leaders. How might knowing who the author is and for whom it is written help you understand *what* is written?
29. Now read 3 John. It's an entire book of the Bible, but do not worry. It's less than 300 words. How is it obvious that it is a letter?

30. As you read it, what stuck out that you can apply to your life?

31. What seems to apply to only the recipient?

32. Reading the Epistles offers us a glimpse into the lives of the earliest believers in Christ, wisdom to live out our own God-directed journey, and comfort, just to name a few. As you finish your final FIFTEEN this week in prayer, ask God to help you to continue to make spending time in his Word a priority in your life.