

How to Read the Bible

“Show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.”

Psalms 25:4

Five types of Bible Literature:

1. **Historical Narrative**, or stories... (*Genesis through Esther, the four Gospels and Acts*)
2. **Wisdom**, or poetry... (*Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon*)
3. **Didactic**, or coaching/learning... *New Testament epistles (Romans through Hebrews)*
4. **Prophetic**... *Five major (Isaiah through Daniel) and twelve minor (Hosea through Malachi)*
5. **Apocalyptic**... *part of Daniel, part of Ezekiel and all of Revelation*

Wisdom and Poetry:

The Hebrews understood ‘wisdom’ to mean ‘skill in living’. The wise man is not the one with the most knowledge or education, but the one who consistently makes godly choices in life. The wisdom (poetic) books fall into three main types of poetry, within which the authors used a number of different literary devices to communicate God’s message...

Three Forms of Hebrew Poetry:

1. Lyric:
 - a) Written to be accompanied by music.
 - b) *Psalms* is lyric poetry; it appeals to our emotions.
 - c) *Psalms* means ‘book of praises’.It is a prayer and song book (plus much more).

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Three Forms of Hebrew Poetry (continued):

2. Instructional:

- a) To teach principles of living through pithy maxims.
- b) *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* are like this. They contain not promises or mandates, but general principles for living; common sense wisdom, gained by observing life.
- c) A collection of sayings that show how a life of wisdom and righteousness should preempt a life of foolishness and unrighteousness.

3. Dramatic:

- a) A narrative that tells a story in poetic form.
- b) *Job* and *Song of Songs* are this form...
- c) *Job* deals with God's sovereignty and our suffering. It documents the internal struggles of Job and a series of debates with his three friends as they try to gain a perspective on Job's suffering. Though Job's questions are never answered, he willingly submits to God and his fortunes are restored.
- d) *Song of Songs* deals with God's perspective on married love.

Types of Parallelisms - Matching Ideas, Not Words:

1. **Synonymous** ~ ideas presented are similar. (*Psalm 25:4*)
2. **Synthetic** ~ second thought completes the first thought. (*Psalm 23:1*)
3. **Antithetic** ~ second thought contrasts with the first thought. (*Psalm 1:6*)
4. **Emblematic** ~ first line uses a figure of speech to illustrate the idea in the second line. (*Psalm 42:1*)
5. **Climactic** ~ second line repeats the first line, but adds more. (*Proverbs 31:4*)
6. **Formal** ~ both lines of poetry must exist for a complete thought. (*Psalm 2:6*)

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Figures of Speech - Creating Visual Ideas:

1. **Similie** ~ comparison between two unlike things, using the words 'like' and 'as'.
(*Psalm 17:8*)
2. **Metaphor** ~ a comparison in which one thing is said to be another. (*Psalm 23:1*)
3. **Hyperbole** ~ deliberate overstatement for the sake of emphasis. (*Psalm 6:6*)
4. **Rhetorical question** ~ asking a question for the purpose of making a statement
(*Psalm 106:2*)
5. **Personification** ~ assigning the characteristics of a human to a lifeless object.
(*Psalm 104:19*)

Lessons in Proverbs:

Watch for contrasting issues, such as foolishness and wisdom, laziness and diligence, adultery and faithfulness, and true and false friendships. Also look for principles of building strong marriages, parenting, and relationships on the job. Pay close attention to the differing outcomes of those who follow God's wisdom, and those who don't. The Hebrew word for 'fool' is morally deficient or morally lacking....

"Listen, my son,
to your father's instruction
and do not forsake
your mother's teaching.
They will be a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck."

Proverbs 1:8-9

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LESSON 2

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Praying the Psalms:

Each Psalm is to be read as a complete unit, unlike other chapters in the Bible. By reading all of it, you get the 'flow' of it and can understand it better. Psalms are intended to appeal to our emotions and to stimulate a response from us. In Israel, Psalms were sung to bring a believer closer to God in their corporate or home worship service...

Psalms are intended to:

1. Help us express ourselves to God.
2. Help us consider His ways.

The Psalms are, therefore, of great benefit to the believer who wishes to express joys and sorrows, successes and failures, hopes and regrets to God.

The three basic benefits of Psalms are:

1. They help and guide us in worshipping God.
2. They show us how we can honestly talk to God.
3. They show the importance of reflection / meditation upon God's Word, the Bible.
Also, how we can experience God's peace through meditation on His Word.

**"If the Lord delights in a man's way,
He makes his steps firm;
though he stumble,
he will not fall,
for the Lord upholds him with His hand."**

Psalm 37:23-24

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Seven Types of Psalms:

It is possible to group the Psalms into seven categories. Though these categories may overlap somewhat, they will serve to guide us in using them.

1. **Laments** ~ the author expresses his emotions, but always comes back to trusting God in the end.
 - a) **Individual** ~ *Psalms 3, 22, 31, 39, 42, 57, 71, 120 etc...* helps us to express struggles, suffering, or disappointment to the Lord.
 - b) **Corporate** ~ *Psalms 12, 44, 80, 94 etc...* can do the same for a group such as parents, a connection group, a nation, a church, etc.

2. **Thanksgiving** ~ being thankful for something that has gone well.
 - a) **Individual** ~ *Psalms 18, 30, 32, 34, 40, 66, 92 etc.*
 - b) **Corporate** ~ *Psalms 65, 67, 75, 107, 124 etc.*

3. **Praise** ~ *Psalms 8, 33, 66 etc...* praising God for who He is.

4. **Salvation history** ~ *Psalms 78, 105, 106 etc...* how God has worked in our life.

5. **Wisdom** ~ *Psalms 36, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133*

6. **Songs of Trust** ~ *Psalms 11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131*

7. **Celebration** ~ *Psalms 2, 20, 50, 89, 93, 122 etc.*