

How to Read the Bible

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

Matthew 7:24-25

Five types of Bible Literature:

1. **Historical Narrative**, or _____ (*Genesis through Esther, the four Gospels and Acts*)
2. **Wisdom**, or _____ (*Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon*)
3. **Didactic**, or _____ / _____ *New Testament epistles (Romans through Jude)*
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*

Historical Narrative:

1. *Two things are happening:*
 - a) _____ are being recorded.
 - b) There is _____ on those events. (*see Genesis 15:1-6*)
2. *Two things to ask ourselves:*
 - a) Why is this story recorded?
 - b) Why are these details recorded?
3. *Two things we learn from this:*
 - a) What the author really meant; _____.
 - b) How the people _____; either good or bad.

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Historical Narrative (continued):

4. Two things to look for:

- a) _____
- b) _____ (see Joshua 1:6,7,9,18 "Be strong and courageous")

5. Remember these things:

- a) We're not always told at the end of the narrative whether what happened was _____ or _____. We are expected to be able to judge that on the basis of what God has taught us directly and categorically elsewhere in the Bible.
- b) All narratives are _____ and _____. Not all the relevant details are always given. What does appear in the narrative is everything that the inspired author thought important for us to know.
- c) Narratives are not written to answer all our _____ questions. They have particular, specific, limited purposes and deal with certain issues; leaving others to be dealt with elsewhere in Scripture, in other ways.
- d) In the final analysis, _____ is the hero of all biblical narrative.

6. Three cautions:

- a) Be careful not to _____ a story. An example: in Genesis 15, don't go into all of the ramifications of what a 'shield' is or does... The main point of the story is in verse 6. A 'shield' will be more fully defined in other Scriptures.
- b) In reading a biography of a person, be careful not to _____ one part of their life and read into it what is really not there.
An example: in Luke 6:24-26, this doesn't mean that 'rich people' cannot be comforted by God. Remember, individual stories are part of a bigger narrative. In the case of Jesus' life in the gospels, reading many stories about Him will give you a good idea of what He is like, instead of just concentrating on one or two stories –
"trying to discover what they're really saying".
- c) You will not fully understand all the stories in the Bible... and that's okay.

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Historical Narrative (continued):

7. *This week, try reading a few chapters in Genesis and / or Luke (see 'Application' handout)*
8. *This week, using the 'Examples of Narrative, Poetry and Epilogue in Scripture', follow the Scripture references to see examples of these writing styles and how they tell the story...*
9. *This week, use the 'Patterns in Historical Narrative and Poetry' to guide you in understanding how a story is told in Scripture...*

*We recommend the book: How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth
by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart; published by Zondervan*

*"My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
Bind them upon your heart forever;
fasten them about your neck.
When you walk, they will guide you;
when you sleep, they will watch over you;
when you wake, they will speak to you."*

Proverbs 6:20-23

Lesson