





# How to Read the Bible

## THE PURPOSE OF LITERARY STYLES

Three Main Literary Styles:

Narrative – 43% of the Bible

Poetry – 33% of the Bible

Prose Discourse – 24% of the Bible

Why Use Different Literary Styles?

To allow us to view ourselves and the world in different ways

To challenge how we think

To shape the questions we ask

*The stories of the Bible help us view the world through a Biblical lens.*

## NARRATIVE

The Purpose of Narrative:

Narrative is story: character, plot, setting, conflict, resolution

Stories help us understand our world and experiences—they form and shape how we live out our own stories

Stories teach us about cause and effect, right and wrong, what's valuable

Making Sense of Our Own Stories:

The questions of Scripture are: Who should I be? What should I value? What should my desires look like?

Narrative invites us to ask questions that help us understand our stories in light of Scripture's story:

Who am I? What's my purpose?

Where's my life going?

What's wrong with the world and why? What's the solution?

*Our stories will be shaped by what influences us the most.*



## PURPOSE OF PROSE DISCOURSE

- Discourse leads you to think thoroughly about a topic, and then compels you to do something about it.
- Discourse literature is in both the Old and New Testaments
- In the New Testament, discourse letters make use of Greco-Roman rhetorical techniques, trying to persuade the audience through *ethos* (the speaker's moral character), *logos* (logical appeal), and *pathos* (emotions).
- As there was a low literacy level, these letters would have been read out loud to the churches.

"Readers need to pay attention to how the Bible, through imagery and argument, commands and metaphor, tries to persuade them to adopt a certain point of view or a particular form of behavior." - Michael Bird, *Seven Things I Wish Christians Knew about the Bible*

## Group Work

### A Closer Look at Poetry

Compare and Contrast Exodus 14:21-28 (narrative) & Exodus 15:4-10 (poetry)

### A Closer Look at Prose Discourse

See if you can identify these parts of Paul's letter to the Philippians:

- Greeting
- Prayer & thanksgiving
- Body
- Personal news
- Greetings and well wishes

What are some of the key ideas in the letter?

How would you summarize Paul's overall message in the letter?

## NOTES

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