Handling the Word

Lesson 6 - Genre: Reading Each Part of the Bible Properly
Conversation Notes

Today we are asking one simple question

What kind of writing am I reading?

The whole Bible is God's Word, but not every part of the Bible is written in the same style. Genre helps us notice how a passage has been written so we can read it carefully and respond faithfully.

Psalm 23; Proverbs 3:5-6; Luke 15:11-32; Romans 5:1-11; Revelation 21:1-5

A few things we are looking for today

- We learn that Scripture includes different kinds of writing.
- We ask better questions depending on the kind of passage we are reading.
- We remember that poetry, wisdom, stories, letters, and visions do not all work the same way.
- We do not force one part of Scripture to work like another.
- We keep the whole Bible story centered on God's redemptive plan in Christ.

Let's check in honestly

How did you go with the pre-reading for this session?

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Was there a passage or thought that encouraged you, challenged you, or stood out to you?

_____

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Before today, what did the word "genre" make you think of?

_____

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A kind reminder before we read

You do not need to master every kind of biblical writing at once. We are learning one simple habit: pause and ask what kind of passage this is. Genre is not meant to make Bible study harder. It helps us listen to each part of Scripture in the way God has given it.

A simple Bible study principle

Not every part of the Bible is written in the same way. A psalm is not read exactly like a proverb. A parable is not read exactly like a letter. A vision in Revelation is not read exactly like a historical report.

Genre simply means the kind of writing we are reading. When we notice the kind of writing, we usually ask better questions.

What could go wrong if we read every part of the Bible in exactly the same way?

A few kinds of writing in Scripture

- Poetry and song - often uses pictures, emotion, comparison, and prayer.
- Wisdom - gives wise instruction for living before God.
- Gospel narrative and parables - tell what Jesus did and taught, often through stories.
- Letters - teach, explain, correct, and apply doctrine to God's people.
- Prophecy and apocalyptic writing - often uses strong images to reveal God's message, judgement, hope, and future victory.

Read and talk together

Psalm 23

This is poetry. It teaches truth through images such as shepherd, green pastures, still waters, rod, staff, table, and house.

What pictures or images do you notice in this psalm?

What does this psalm teach us about the Lord?

How does the poetry help you feel and understand the truth?

Proverbs 3:5-6

This is wisdom. A proverb gives wise instruction, but we should not treat it like a mechanical formula or a way to control God.

What commands are given in this passage?

What wisdom or promise is connected to those commands?

How is a proverb different from a guarantee that life will always be easy?

Luke 15:11-32

This is a parable in a Gospel. Jesus uses a story to reveal truth about sin, repentance, self-righteousness, and the Father's heart.

Who are the main characters in the story?

What does each son show us?

What does the father show us about God's heart?

Romans 5:1-11

This is a letter. Paul teaches through explanation and reasoning, helping believers understand what Christ has done and what that means for them.

What truths are stated clearly about believers?

What does this passage say Christ has done for us?

How does the letter style help us follow Paul's teaching?

Future hope and strong images

Revelation 21:1-5

This passage uses powerful images to give hope. We read it carefully, remembering that apocalyptic writing often communicates truth through symbol, vision, and future-focused language.

What images or pictures are used in this passage?

What does God promise to make new?

How does this passage give hope?

A simple genre tool

When you read a passage, ask:

- What kind of writing is this?
- Is it telling a story, singing or praying, giving wisdom, teaching doctrine, or showing a vision?
- Does it use imagery, comparison, commands, examples, warnings, or promises?
- How should this kind of writing shape the way I read it?
- How does this passage fit with God's redemptive plan in Christ?

Pulling it together

Finish this sentence in your own words: Genre helps me...

_____

What is one kind of biblical writing you feel more confident reading?

_____

What is one kind of biblical writing you want to understand better?

_____

Today's simple takeaway

Genre helps us read each part of Scripture carefully.

The whole Bible is God's Word, but God has given it in different forms. We listen faithfully when we notice the kind of writing, ask better questions, and keep the whole Bible story centered on Christ.

This week - keep it simple

Choose one of the passages from this session and read it twice this week. Each time, write one honest sentence about how the kind of writing helps you read it carefully.

This passage is written as _____, and that helps me notice...

_____

_____

Prayer to finish

Lord, help me to read Your Word carefully. Teach me to notice how each passage has been written, to ask wise questions, and to see Christ more clearly in all Scripture. Amen.

Closing thought

The different parts of Scripture are not a problem to solve. They are gifts from God. As we learn to read each part carefully, we are learning to listen more faithfully to the One who has spoken.