

Handling the Word

How to Study the Bible Faithfully

Lesson Six Leader Guide

Genre - Reading Each Part of the Bible Properly

Private leader document

This guide follows the participant conversation notes, but keeps prompts, cautions, summaries, and prayer points brief enough to use during the session.

Lesson Overview

Main question: What kind of writing am I reading?

Main idea: Faithful Bible study notices the kind of writing in front of us so we read poetry, wisdom, parables, letters, and visions carefully, rather than forcing every passage to work the same way.

Key text: **Psalm 23**

Supporting passages: **Proverbs 3:5-6; Luke 15:11-32; Romans 5:1-11; Revelation 21:1-5**

Suggested length: 60 to 75 minutes. Let one or two passages breathe rather than rushing every question.

Intended outcomes

- He understands that genre means the kind of writing he is reading.
- He sees why poetry, wisdom, parables, letters, and visions ask for different reading questions.
- He practises reading several genres without turning the lesson into a technical lecture.
- He keeps the whole Bible story centred on God's redemptive plan in Christ.

Leader emphasis

Keep this simple and practical. Genre is not a specialist word to impress anyone. It is a way of asking, "What kind of writing has God given here, and how should I listen to it?"

Helpful phrase to repeat

Genre helps us ask better questions of the passage in front of us.

Recommended Session Flow

Time	Section	Purpose
5 min	Welcome and check-in	Begin with grace; review pre-reading briefly.
2 min	Opening prayer	Ask God for understanding and careful listening.
8 min	Question and principle	Introduce genre as kind of writing.
18 min	Psalm 23; Proverbs 3:5-6	Poetry and wisdom: images, prayer, instruction.
15 min	Luke 15:11-32	Parable: story revealing sin, repentance, and the Father's heart.
15 min	Romans 5:1-11; Revelation 21:1-5	Letter and vision: doctrine explained; hope pictured.
7 min	Pull together and practise	One simple weekly practice and prayer.

Leader Posture

- Avoid making genre sound academic. Use everyday examples: poetry, instructions, story, letter, vision.
- Teach one simple question: what kind of writing is this?
- Let him notice how the passage works before you explain too much.
- Keep returning to the goal: clearer listening and faithful response.
- With Revelation, avoid speculation. Stay with the main pictures in the text.

1. Welcome, Prayer, and Check-In - 7 minutes

Aim: Begin relationally, remove pressure, and connect this lesson to interpretation.

Questions/prompts to use

- How has your week been?
- How did you go with reading **Acts 8:26-35**?
- What did Session Five help you understand about interpretation?
- How did you find the Session Six pre-reading?

Listen for / draw out

- Any growing habit of asking what a passage means before applying it.
- Any concern that genre sounds technical or confusing.
- A thought from one of the pre-reading passages.

Brief teaching summary

Session Five helped us ask what a passage means. Session Six adds another helpful question: what kind of writing is this passage?

Pastoral note

If he did little or none of the practice, begin with grace. Keep the first minutes relational, not corrective.

2. Today's Question and Genre Principle - 8 minutes

Aim: Introduce the core question: What kind of writing am I reading?

Questions/prompts to use

- What do you think the word genre means?
- How would you read a poem differently from instructions?
- What could go wrong if we read every part of the Bible in exactly the same way?
- Why might noticing the kind of writing help us read more carefully?

Listen for / draw out

- Genre simply means the kind of writing.
- Different kinds of writing communicate in different ways.
- Noticing genre helps us ask better questions.
- This is about careful listening, not clever terminology.

Brief teaching summary

Not every part of the Bible is written in the same way. Genre helps us receive each passage as God gave it, rather than forcing one kind of writing to behave like another.

3. Poetry and Wisdom - 18 minutes

Aim: Use **Psalm 23** and **Proverbs 3:5-6** to show that poetry and wisdom both teach truth, but not the same way.

Questions/prompts to use

- **Psalm 23** - What pictures or images do you notice?
- What does this psalm teach us about the Lord?
- **Proverbs 3:5-6** - What commands are given?
- How is a proverb different from a guarantee that life will always be easy?

Listen for / draw out

- **Psalm 23** uses images: shepherd, pastures, waters, rod, staff, table, house.
- The psalm teaches the Lord's care, guidance, presence, protection, and goodness.
- Proverbs 3 calls us to trust the Lord, not lean on our own understanding, and acknowledge Him.
- A proverb gives wise instruction. It is not a mechanical formula that removes all difficulty.

Brief teaching summary

Poetry often teaches truth through imagery, emotion, prayer, and worship. Wisdom gives instruction for living before God. Both are true and useful, but they ask us to read in ways that fit how they are written.

Pastoral note

Do not turn this into a technical discussion about Hebrew poetry. Keep it practical: images help us feel truth; wisdom guides our steps before God.

4. Gospel Parable - 15 minutes

Aim: Use **Luke 15:11-32** to show that Jesus uses story to reveal truth.

Questions/prompts to use

- Who are the main characters?
- What does the younger son show us?
- What does the older son show us?
- What does the father show us about God's heart?
- Why might Jesus teach this through a story?

Listen for / draw out

- The younger son shows rebellion, ruin, repentance, and return.
- The older son shows resentment and self-righteousness.
- The father shows compassion, patience, welcome, and joy over repentance.
- The setting matters: Jesus is answering grumbling over His welcome of sinners.

Brief teaching summary

A parable is not just a nice story. Jesus uses story to reveal truth, expose hearts, and call for response. Ask why Jesus told the story and what the story reveals.

Pastoral note

Keep the discussion close to the passage. The point is not to explain every detail, but to hear the main truth Jesus is pressing.

5. Letter and Vision - 15 minutes

Aim: Use **Romans 5:1-11** and **Revelation 21:1-5** to compare doctrine explained with hope pictured.

Questions/prompts to use

- **Romans 5:1-11** - What truths are stated clearly about believers?
- What does this passage say Christ has done for us?
- **Revelation 21:1-5** - What images or pictures are used?
- What does God promise to make new?

Listen for / draw out

- **Romans 5** explains justification, peace with God, access by faith, hope, Christ's death for sinners, and reconciliation.
- Letters often teach through explanation, doctrine, correction, and application.
- **Revelation 21** gives images of new creation, God dwelling with His people, wiped tears, no death, and all things made new.
- Apocalyptic writing uses vision and symbol to reveal God's victory, judgment, hope, and future restoration.

Brief teaching summary

Letters often state and explain truth directly. Apocalyptic visions often communicate truth through strong pictures. Both are God's Word, and both point us to the hope secured through Christ.

Pastoral note

With Revelation, avoid speculation. Stay with what the passage clearly reveals: God will dwell with His people, remove sorrow and death, and make all things new.

6. Pulling It Together and This Week's Practice - 7 minutes

Aim: Help him summarise the lesson and leave with one achievable step.

Questions/prompts to use

- Finish this sentence: Genre helps me...
- What kind of biblical writing do you feel more confident reading?
- What kind do you want to understand better?
- Which passage from today would be realistic to read twice this week?

Listen for / draw out

- Genre helps me ask better questions.
- He may feel more confident with story or poetry than letters or Revelation.
- A simple practice is enough for the week.
- The goal is steady growth, not mastery.

Brief teaching summary

This week, choose one passage from the session, read it twice, and write one sentence about how the kind of writing helps him read it carefully.

Pastoral note

End with encouragement, not pressure. A one-sentence reflection is enough.

If He Gets Stuck

Situation	Gentle response	Next step
Genre feels too technical.	Let us make it simple: what kind of writing is this?	Name the genre, then ask one fitting question.
He treats Proverbs like a guarantee.	Proverbs give wisdom for faithful living, not a machine for controlling outcomes.	Ask what wisdom the proverb is teaching.
He reads poetry too literally.	Poetry often teaches truth through pictures and emotion.	Ask what image is used and what truth it shows.
Revelation feels overwhelming.	We do not need to solve every detail today. Start with the main hope God reveals.	Notice the pictures, promises, and centre of worship.

Key Truths and Cautions

Key truths to reinforce

- Genre means kind of writing.
- Different genres ask different questions.
- Poetry uses images and emotion.
- Wisdom guides faithful living.
- Parables reveal truth and expose hearts.
- Letters explain doctrine and apply truth.
- Revelation uses vision to show victory and hope.
- All genres sit within the Bible story centred on Christ.

What to avoid

- Do not make the lesson sound like literary theory.
- Do not flatten every passage into direct instruction.
- Do not turn Proverbs into guaranteed outcomes.
- Do not over-explain Revelation or speculate.
- Do not miss that different genres are gifts from God.

Optional extra Scriptures

Psalms 1:1-3 - poetry and wisdom together. **Matthew 13:10-17** - why Jesus used parables. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** - all Scripture is profitable. **Hebrews 1:1-2** - God spoke in various ways, now fully revealed in His Son.

Suggested closing prayer

Father, thank You for giving us Your Word in rich and varied ways. Help us read each passage carefully, ask wise questions, and receive what You have said with humility. Teach us through songs, wisdom, stories, letters, and visions. Keep our eyes on Christ and help us respond with faith and obedience. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Leader Reflection After the Session

What encouraged him? _____

Where did he seem unsure, anxious, or confused? _____

What should I follow up next time? _____

Preparation for Lesson Seven: Lesson Seven will focus on application - what must I do with this? Session Six helps him read different kinds of passages properly before asking how he should respond.