

THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

When you talk to someone you want that person to immediately understand you. So, you choose a way to express yourself that will make your ideas clear.

In other words – you know that what you say and how you say it will work together

Like speech, literature or writing is effective when the writer states his ideas clearly.

The writers of the Bible chose their words and arranged them to fit their purposes

Let's list some of the written communication forms we are familiar with from the Bible

Biography

Letters

Sermons

History

Genealogy

Law

Poetry

Proverbs

Prophecy

Parables

Gospels

Apocalypses

Tonight we are going to sort through the many ways that people can communicate and talk about some of the ways the Bible communicates to us.

1. The diff. between literal and figurative language
2. 6 ways bible authors organized their thoughts
3. 4 style of writing found in the bible

1. LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

(write headings on chalkboard – **literal language and figurative language**)

What does literal language mean to you?

- Natural
- Normal use of language
- Plain meaning of words
- Self-evident meaning

What does figurative language mean?

- Words that express something other than a literal meaning
- Words that bring pictures to your mind to illustrate ideas

God wants us to understand the truth that he gave to us

He did not have the writers write a book of unreal things...They wrote about reality...and most often they used language that was literal or factual.

So, we can know what the Bible means by accepting the natural meaning of the words

Literal

Luke 6:12

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

But some of the language of the Bible is Figurative

John 1:29

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Jesus is not a lamb, but he is like a lamb which in the OT was sacrificed for the sins of people

Figurative language is figures of speech that help us understand something hard to explain or relate.

- One of the keys to recognizing figurative terms is the word **LIKE**

Rev. 16:15

"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

- Jesus used figures of speech in his stories to compare and explain the kingdom of God
- Some figures of speech are symbols which represent truth

Light, salt and sheep = Christians

Bread and the cup = death or body and blood

Just to practice and get a handle on these difference I want to give you a worksheet.

(Give worksheet – literal or figurative)

2. 6 WAYS THAT WRITERS ORGANIZED THEIR THOUGHTS

When we write we are careful to organize our thought.

the following are 6 ways biblical authors organized their thoughts.

1. **REPETITION.** Examine 2 Cor. 8:1-15 – what is Pauls main point in this passage. Has he convinced you?
2. **PROGRESSION** – progression creates a sense of forward movement by adding detail to detail. Read Acts 8:26-40...What we see is a progression of details of Philips ministry
3. **CLIMAX** – A series of statement built on one another leading to a truth 2 Tim. 1:1-14 – which is the climactic statement of faith...(VS 12)

2 Tim. 1:12

That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

4. COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

The writer brings together two opposites to emphasize their good and or evil.

– Psalm 1 – what is being contrasted? (godly men, evil men)

HOW ARE THEY COMPARED?

Godly men are compared to trees bearing fruit.

Evil men are compared to straw being blown away

HOW ARE THEY CONTRASTED?

The righteous man stands

The wicked will not stand

5. MAIN POINTS

The writer uses turning points in a progression of ideas..These points are necessary to the particular outcome of a story – or the meaning of the passage

– Ruth

Ruth’s providential meeting with Boaz 2:3

Events leading up to critical meeting 4:17-22

The spiritual lesson of this story is that God guides the steps of the righteous.

6. REASONS AND RESULTS

The writer arranges ideas to show relationship between a certain result and the reason for it.

Result

Col. 1:3

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,

Reason

Col. 1:4

because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints--

Col. 1:8

and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

Col. 1:9

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

3. 4 STYLES OF WRITING

1. HISTORY

History is primarily recorded in the form of stories in the OT.

What are some of your favorite historical books or stories.

2. PROPHECY

To understand prophecy we must understand the threefold function of the prophet.

1. He declares God's word to His people

Exodus 20 – Ten Commandments

2. Speaks about Israel's covenant relationship with God

Jeremiah 31:33

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the Lord.

"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people.

3. Exposes sin, calls people to repentance, warns of coming judgement if there is no repentance and promises a future age of blessing

Isaiah 35:10

and the ransomed of the Lord will return.

They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads.

Gladness and joy will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Almost all Old Testament prophecy fits into this pattern

It was always written down before it was proclaimed. –
consider the 10 commandments

There is prophecy in the NT also

What is it's main subject
1 thess. 4:13-18

3. POETRY

this is writing that uses patterns in lines and rhythm to express deep emotion.

While history tells the actual event poetry reveals what man thinks and feels.

Poetry cannot be understood the way history is understood. It is filled with figurative terminology to help express emotion

To give rhythm to ideas the Hebrew writers often related two lines of thought to each other in what's called **PARALLELISM**

Psalm 5:1-2

For the director of music. For flutes. A psalm of David.

Give ear to my words, O Lord,
consider my sighing.
[2] Listen to my cry for help,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.

Other forms of poetical rhythm are comparison and contrast and the practice of **ADDING ONE THOUGHT TO THE NEXT**

Psalm 145:1-2

I will exalt you, my God the King;

I will praise your name for ever and ever.
[2] Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.

4. LETTERS OR EPISTLES

Letters are easily identifiable as they begin with a greeting. They generally contain guidelines for our faith and life in Christ. The writers of the epistles are Paul, Peter, James, John and Jude.

Some were written to very specific audience like 1-2 Cor. And Ephesians

Others were intended for a general audience like Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter

When reading an epistle it is important to keep in mind the occasion, particular problems they were facing, questions being answered

When you read Philemon – what is its occasion

CONCLUSION