

Getting all we can from Scripture - Session 4

Men's Bible Study at Park View

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Discipline #4

Consider the genre

Do expectations the original audience had as they read biblical poetry, narrative, etc. guide us as we read such genre?

Genre of Poetry

Only seven OT books contain no poetry

Expectations as we approach Hebrew poetry:

- We learn to appreciate parallelism
Hebrew poetry is characterized by parallelism

Example: Psalm 1:1-2,6

- A lot might be said in a few words

Example: Psalm 23:1

through skipping conjunctions
through using imagery

The Psalms require a slower pace of reading

Example: Psalm 131:2

- It tends to convey emotion rather than fact

Example: Psalm 139:15

Example: Psalm 91:9-10

The Psalms teach us to bring all our emotions, both positive and negative, to God.

Example: Psalm 13:1

"The language of lament is oddly the shadow side of faith. To whom do you vocalize the most intense, irrational, [inchoate,] anger? Would you do so with someone who could fire you or cast you out of a cherished position or relationship? Not likely. You don't trust them—you don't believe they would endure the depths of your disappointment, confusion. [The person to whom you bring your lament] is someone you deeply, wildly trust."
—Dan Allender, www.leaderu.com/marshall/mhr01/lament1.html

Genre of Narrative

Over 40 percent of the Bible is historical narrative

The biblical narratives are prophetic or theological history

Expectations as we approach Biblical narratives:

- They give witness to God's acts in history!
- We should go slow in basing our life and doctrine on them

Biblical narratives record what happened, not necessarily what *ought* to happen.

Example: Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6. Also 8:14-18

- Hyperbole is common in them

Example: Exodus 9:6 - "All the livestock of the Egyptians died" (compare vv. 20-21; 11:5)

Genre of Wisdom Sayings

Expectation as we approach wisdom sayings:

- A proverb does not guarantee what will happen when one chooses a certain course of action, but describes what is likely to happen

Example: Prov. 11:25; Prov. 16:3

Genre of Prophecy

Expectation as we approach prophetic sayings:

- Concrete images abound, rather than abstract concepts

Example: Isaiah 65:25

Questions for Table Discussion:

Share an idea that struck you during this session.

Imagine how ancient Hebrews would assess our poetry: they might see their parallel thoughts as superior to our rhyming sounds—that parallelism is similar to listening to music in stereo or viewing a scene through two eyes rather than one. Would you agree or disagree?

Are there times in life when you are more apt to voice “unsanitized thoughts” in your prayers? In what ways was it healthy for the Psalmists to do so?

List some biblical narratives that you think record what *ought* to happen.