

# Bible Study

Week 9 - Literary Styles of the Bible



Opening Question:

What type of stories  
do you gravitate to?

# Last Week Recap:

- The Bible can be sectioned into 6 parts that tell a unified story that leads to Jesus
  - Creation
  - Rebellion
  - Covenant (and breaking of covenant)
  - Jesus and the Kingdom of God
  - Spreading the Gospel
  - Return of the King

## Objectives for today's Bible Study

- ❖ Understand the different literary styles the Bible is written in
- ❖ Understand how the different literary styles teach us different things about God's Word



# Main Types of Literature in the Bible: Narrative

- ❖ The three main types of literature in the Bible are
  - Prose/Discourse, which makes up 24% of the Bible
  - Poetry, which makes up 33% of the Bible
  - Narrative, which makes up 43% of the Bible
- ❖ Which means that nearly half of the Bible is written in a narrative, or story, format, which makes sense as a literary device
- ❖ Think of the stories that are told to children, like fairy tales and aesop tales. According to many neurologists, the reason why we remember them is because our brains are always looking to make sense of things, and our brains have been trained to make sense of stories by taking events and putting them in a sequence that is easy to understand.

# Main Types of Literature in the Bible: Narrative

- ❖ A story will have a character or characters who wants something, and through those characters, the author can explore life's big questions like "Who am I?" or "What do I want?" or "Where IS Waldo?"
- ❖ A story will also have some sort of conflict or challenge that needs to be overcome, which can force you to think about your own challenges and what you can do about it.
- ❖ A story will usually end with some kind of resolution or conclusion, which can give hope for our own stories → it's why people usually like stories with happy endings.
- ❖ Question: What is your favorite story not found in the Bible?

# Main Types of Literature in the Bible: Narrative

- ❖ Do Bible stories operate the same way? They tend to be, when you present them to children.
- ❖ In reality, most Bible characters are deeply flawed (everybody wants to dance like David danced but not sin like David sinned), but we are supposed to see ourselves in them or how we can behave like them at times, which helps us to see our lives from a new perspective and challenge us to change
- ❖ There are three types of narrative in the Bible
  - Historical narrative
  - Narrative parables
  - Biographical narratives

# Main Types of Literature in the Bible: Poetry

- ❖ One out of every three chapters in the Bible is poetry
- ❖ Poems mainly speak through creative language, linking together images to help us envision the world differently. Poems use lots of metaphor to evoke your emotions and your imagination
- ❖ What good poetry can do is get you to think differently in a way that logic and reasoning cannot, and you to see meaning in different ways.
  - Songs and rap can count as poetry. Think of songs full of meaning and imagery, doublespeak, code words, etc.
- ❖ There are different types of poetry in the Bible
  - Songs, better known as psalms
  - Reflective poetry
  - Resistance poetry

# Main Types of Literature in the Bible: Prose Discourse

- ❖ Prose Discourse makes up about a quarter of the Bible
- ❖ These are speeches, letters, or essays. Their focus is to make an argument or to state a position, and give the reader or listener, an opportunity to respond
- ❖ Prose Discourse can be a dialogue, as seen in Job, but is much of the prose discourse we see in the Bible is part of a dialogue, like the Epistles. We are invited into part of the dialogue but don't have the whole story.
  - For example, what did the Corinthians do to get a letter the first time? How did they respond to Paul's first letter? What did they say or do in their letter that got Paul to write a second letter? Is that even the 2nd letter? Is 1 Corinthians even the first letter he wrote?
- ❖ The different types of biblical discourse are
  - Law collections
  - Wisdom literature
  - The Epistles

# Main Types of Literature in the Bible

- ❖ Most books in the Bible have a primary literary style, but then will have other styles embedded in it.
- ❖ For example, Exodus is mainly historical narrative, and it also contains law collections and different kinds of poetry.
- ❖ Almost every book in the Bible has its own combination of literary styles, and in order to recognize and understand them, we become familiar with those literary styles and how they work.

# Weekly Action Item:

Read 2 Samuel 1 and note the literary styles in the chapter and what purpose(s) they serve