

Tools for Understanding God's Word – Week 4

This week

- Tone and feel tool
- Vocabulary tool
- Genre tool

Tone and feel tool:

In addition to determining what is said, we should also pay attention to how something is said.

Example: Ps 98:4-6 Expresses more than just words – it engages our emotions.

Consider the 4 incidents in Mk 4:35-5:43. What tone is expressed by Mark's use of detail in describing these incidents?

In poetry, look for the use of simile and metaphor.

Simile - Comparison using "like" or "as"

"cute as a button", "work like a dog", Our God is like a mighty fortress

Metaphor - Using one word in place of another to suggest a likeness.

"Life is a highway", "blanket of snow"

Example: Ps 42:1-2, 3

Other *tone and feel* examples:

Is 55:12

Hosea 1:2 (what is the metaphor here?)

Jeremiah 2:13

Vocabulary tool:

Each field has its own distinctive vocabulary, and the Bible is no different.

1) Specific Bible words – use a Bible dictionary

Examples:

Redemption (Colossians 1:13-14)

Propitiation (1 John 4:10)

2) Don't assume that the Bible uses a word in the same way as we do.

Examples:

Hope (Titus 1: 2)

Sons (Gal 4:6)

3) Sometimes the Bible uses the same word to mean different things.

Example: The word "called".

Compare Jude 1:1; 1 Cor 1:23-24; Matt 22:14

Genre tool:

There are many different genres of literature in the Bible. Different ways to classify them. Here is a somewhat random list:

Songs	Prophecy	Proverbs	Laments
Visions	Poetry	Speeches	Parables
Historical narrative	Law	Epistles	Apocalyptic literature
Wisdom literature	Gospels		

Identifying the genre is very important to know how to properly interpret a passage!

Examples:

Ps 22:14 – David is not describing a miracle here.

Luke 24:1-3 The resurrection was not a metaphor!

There is no 100% sure way of determining the genre of a passage. Sometimes clear, other times not.

Once you have determined the genre, here are two principles to follow:

- 1) When something is presented as historical fact, pause to consider that it really happened.

The Exodus, for example

Healing of the blind man in Mark 8

Both have theological significance, but they were nonetheless historical events.

Don't lose sight of the fact that the Gospels are eyewitness accounts: 1 Jn 1:1

- 2) When something is presented as imagery/metaphor, don't base crazy predictions of the future on its being literally and physically true.

There are other genres that we need to take figuratively. Parables, for example.

Mark 4:1-20

Most difficult genre to interpret: Apocalyptic – Rev, Dan, Ezek, Zech

Example from Rev. 21:2

Exercise: Identify the genre of the following passages:

Judges 9:8-15

2 Samuel 12:1-6

1 Kings 17:8-16

Matthew 5:29-30

Matthew 14:6-11

Exodus 8:22-24; Revelation 16:21