

## Determining Genre for Inductive Bible Study

<b>Genre</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>How to Study</b>
<i>Apocalyptic</i>	Dramatic descriptions of visions received by a prophet; fantastic images of angels and animals; often written in poetry rather than prose; concerned with final judgement and the end of history	Note hope and warning. Ask, "who is being judged and why?" and "What are the marks of the righteous or faithful?" Read for impact rather than details. Use imagination to fill out images and note their emotional impact.
<i>Architectural/Design Instructions</i>	Descriptions of various materials, measurements and instructions for assembly.	Convert units of measurement into modern equivalent. Sketch or imagine the object. Ask, "What emotional or cognitive impact would this object have had on those who saw it?"
<i>Census</i>	Lists of names, clans, tribes; use of numbers.	Summarize numbers in a table. Identify pattern used. Note standouts or places where pattern is broken. Consider the significance of the standouts.
<i>Epistle</i>	Author(s) and recipient identified; often includes greetings, blessings, exhortation and benediction.	Reconstruct the problem being addressed. Distinguish universal statements from particulars of situation.
<i>Genealogy</i>	List of names; description of relational connections.	Identify pattern or structure of list. Note changes or exceptions. Read about key individuals in surrounding narratives.
<i>Greco-Roman Biography</i>	A narrative that follows a person's public life; extensive description of their death; meant to entertain, honor a hero and teach.	Imagine yourself as a disciple of the protagonist. Pay attention to what the hero teaches through actions and words. Ask, "What does how they died reveal about their character?"
<i>Greco-Roman Historiography</i>	A narrative that includes genealogical records, speeches, travel narratives and instruction give in the context of meals.	Discern the significance of the events. Pay attention to teaching and action of key characters. Ask, "What values and practices are promoted?"
<i>Hymn/Creed</i>	Often poetic; focused on God's character and activity.	Imagine singing the hymn in a first-century house church. Ask, "What does this hymn/creed claim about Jesus?" and "How is the author using it to advance his argument?"
<i>Instruction/Law</i>	Begin with "do" or "do not," etc.; verbs are in command form.	Note promises and consequences of various behaviors. Consider how obedience would have affected individual and communal life. Ask, "What are the underlying values expressed through this command?"
<i>Myth</i>	Stories set in remote past; traditional stories that represent the worldview, beliefs, principles and fears of society.	Read for meaning rather than facts. Identify transcendent truth communicated through the story.
<i>Narrative</i>	Stories with a plot line; major and minor characters.	Follow key characters. Pay attention to what God says and does. Note tension and resolution in the storyline.

<i>Parable</i>	Short stories about everyday life; often begin with "The kingdom of God is like..."	Identify one main point rather than allegorize every element of the story. Interpret the points of reference for the original audience. Notice the unexpected turn in the story. Highlight the central action and primary characters.
<i>Poetry</i>	Composed in verse, not prose; uses images and metaphors; often uses parallelism.	Read out loud. Fill out the images. Pay attention to how it affects you emotionally.
<i>Prophecy</i>	Often poetic; spoken on behalf of God.	Research historical context. Notice warnings and promises.
<i>Proverbial Wisdom</i>	Collection of short sayings; practical advice about people and their behavior; themes interwoven rather than arranged in logical or sequential order.	Think of a modern situation where the idea is applicable. Ask, "What is the wisdom communicated here?" Identify the themes in a collection of proverbs rather than focusing on individual sayings.
<i>Speculative Wisdom</i>	Often poetic; reflections on experience.	Consider the motivations of the speaker. Be aware that the speaker may not speak for God; thus not everything found in speculative wisdom is true. For example, we know from Job 42:7 that God rebuked Job's friends for speaking wrongly about him, thus sections in Job recording speeches by his friends are speculative wisdom.
<i>Speech</i>	Speaker and audience identified; quotation marks around multiple paragraphs.	Identify context of the speech. Envision being a member of the audience hearing the speech. Ask, "How might the speaker have delivered various parts of the speech?" and "What response was the speaker hoping for from the audience?"

Olesberg, Lindsay. *The Bible Study Handbook* (InterVarsity Press Downers Grove, IL 2012), 191-194.

### **Suggested Resources for Defining Words and Concepts:**

biblehub.com

- Online Bible study resource (including Strong's Exhaustive Concordance)

blueletterbible.com

- Online resource tools for in-depth study of God's Word through an online reference library