

# GENRE INTEGRITY

You can't preach a psalm like a parable.

<b>PSALMS</b>	<b>NARRATIVE</b>	<b>PARABLES</b>	<b>PROVERBS</b>	<b>EPISTLES</b>
<p><b>How this genre is mishandled:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using an overly left-brain approach to a right-brain genre</li> <li>• A cerebral, static delivery lacking empathy with the text's emotions</li> <li>• Translating poetry into abstract propositions or imperatives</li> <li>• Excessively explaining metaphors</li> </ul>	<p><b>How this genre is mishandled:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forgetting that God is the protagonist</li> <li>• Exchanging plot for "points"</li> <li>• Assuming that the theology is self-evident to listeners</li> </ul>	<p><b>How this genre is mishandled:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imagining unintended allegories</li> <li>• Turning beguiling stories into bland commentary</li> <li>• Assuming we have to explain everything</li> <li>• Not trusting the listeners</li> </ul>	<p><b>How this genre is mishandled:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turning observations into promises</li> <li>• Preaching self-help</li> <li>• Forgetting the fear of the Lord</li> <li>• Not allowing listeners to ponder for themselves</li> </ul>	<p><b>How this genre is mishandled:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not seeing the whole argument (context)</li> <li>• Preaching duty ("do more, do better")</li> <li>• Neglecting motive (the love and example of Christ)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Distinguishing features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universals embodied in particulars</li> <li>• Concrete images</li> <li>• Intense emotion</li> <li>• Originally set to music</li> </ul>	<p><b>Distinguishing features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plot—a causally related sequence of events</li> <li>• Characters—the people in the plot, and God</li> <li>• Setting—the time and location the story takes place</li> <li>• Point of View—the perspective or attitude from which the story is told</li> </ul>	<p><b>Distinguishing features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analogy—earthly depictions with heavenly meanings</li> <li>• Realism—no talking animals or enchanted forests</li> <li>• Strangeness—no talking animals but uses exaggeration or something off kilter</li> <li>• Folk tales—formulaic plots and stock characters</li> </ul>	<p><b>Distinguishing features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations based on "case studies"</li> <li>• Authoritative without being authoritarian</li> <li>• Poetic language, parallelism</li> <li>• Humor</li> </ul>	<p><b>Distinguishing features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Truth applied to specific occasions</li> <li>• Presence in absence—the author is there ... but not there</li> <li>• Linear argumentation</li> <li>• Old Testament quotations and allusions</li> <li>• Orality—written for the ear</li> </ul>
<p><b>Effect on hearers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sparks the imagination</li> <li>• Moves from disequilibrium to resolution</li> <li>• Intensifies ideas, emotions, experiences</li> <li>• Causes hearers to slow down and ponder</li> <li>• Leads to meditation and prayer</li> <li>• Aids memory</li> </ul>	<p><b>Effect on hearers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspense—what happens next?</li> <li>• Identification—seeing ourselves in the characters</li> <li>• Imagination—entering the setting of the text</li> <li>• Reminder—of God's grace and redeeming power</li> <li>• Self-persuasion—thinking thoughts for ourselves</li> </ul>	<p><b>Effect on hearers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Causes us to ponder</li> <li>• Disarms resistance</li> <li>• Surprises us</li> <li>• Leads to confirmation or alienation, enlightenment or confusion—no neutral ground!</li> <li>• Lodges in memory</li> </ul>	<p><b>Effect on hearers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps people remember</li> <li>• Thoughts to ponder</li> <li>• Leads to self-persuasion</li> <li>• Submission to common wisdom</li> </ul>	<p><b>Effect on hearers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds attention through variety</li> <li>• Heightened sense of authority, mitigated by distance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Replicating this genre's dynamics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a metaphor as a refrain</li> <li>• Use self-disclosure</li> <li>• Use parallelism</li> <li>• Be expressive with your face and body and voice</li> <li>• Use visual or tactile elements</li> <li>• Tie in music before, during, or after the message</li> </ul>	<p><b>Replicating this genre's dynamics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Show" more than "tell"</li> <li>• Arrange the flow of thought like a plot</li> <li>• Preach narrative sermons (either third or first person)</li> <li>• Keep God central</li> <li>• Embody the moods of the text</li> <li>• Use modern narratives—testimony</li> </ul>	<p><b>Replicating this genre's dynamics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate meaning into contemporary culture</li> <li>• Leave your point implicit</li> <li>• Tell narratives, keeping plots and characters simple</li> <li>• Highlight "strangeness" to prompt pondering</li> <li>• Create your own parable</li> </ul>	<p><b>Replicating this genre's dynamics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preach observations, not promises</li> <li>• Use case studies, testimonials, statistics</li> <li>• Contrast biblical and worldly wisdom—dueling proverbs!</li> <li>• Use (or create) a proverb as your central idea</li> </ul>	<p><b>Replicating this genre's dynamics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use ethos—personal relationship with the listeners</li> <li>• Use dialogue (or at least dialogic style)</li> <li>• Apply theology to concrete examples</li> <li>• Unleash your left-brained, logical side</li> <li>• But don't forget the relationships, emotions</li> </ul>
<p><b>During prep time:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meditate, imagine</li> <li>• Read text aloud</li> <li>• Listen to text read aloud</li> <li>• Outline the sermon's emotional flow</li> </ul>	<p><b>During prep time:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slow down and use imagination and empathy</li> <li>• Chart the flow of the plot</li> <li>• Ask what the text teaches about God</li> <li>• Ask if the text presents characters as warnings or models</li> </ul>	<p><b>During prep time:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study cultural context</li> <li>• Understand the flow of thought</li> <li>• Look for contemporary parallels</li> </ul>	<p><b>During prep time:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider how experience illustrates what the proverb distills</li> <li>• Enjoy the poetry and humor</li> <li>• Group proverbs on same topic together to get a full picture</li> </ul>	<p><b>During prep time:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the occasions that prompted the epistle</li> <li>• Seek feedforward and plan for feedback</li> <li>• Outline the flow of logic</li> <li>• Map the flow of emotion</li> <li>• Understand all allusions and quotations</li> </ul>