

BIBLE 101 — Week 12

Letting the Bible's Most Beautiful Books Speak on Their Own Terms

Scripture Focus: Psalm 23 · Psalm 88 · Proverbs 22:6

KEY VOCABULARY — scan this before you watch

Term	What It Means
Parallelism	The building block of Hebrew poetry — the relationship between two _____, where the second echoes, contrasts, or builds on the first
Synonymous Parallelism	The second line says the _____ thing as the first, but maybe a little deeper
Antithetic Parallelism	The second line _____ the first — two ideas set against each other
Synthetic Parallelism	The second line develops or _____ the thought of the first
Lament	A raw, honest cry to God from the depths of pain — not weak faith but _____ faith

I. THE PROBLEM: WRONG TOOL FOR THE JOB

About a _____ of the Old Testament is poetry — but most of us were never taught how to read it.

We often come to Psalms and Proverbs the same way we'd read a legal _____ or instruction manual.

That's like trying to assemble IKEA furniture using a book of Shakespeare's _____ — it's the wrong tool for the job.

The fix: Stop forcing ancient poetry into a box it was never meant to fit in — learn the unique way it communicates _____.

II. HOW HEBREW POETRY WORKS: PARALLELISM

English poetry is built on _____. Hebrew poetry is built on parallelism.

The real meaning isn't in one line — it's found in the _____ between the two lines.

TYPE	HOW IT WORKS	EXAMPLE
Synonymous	Second line says the _____ thing, maybe deeper	"Why are you cast down, O my soul? / And why are you in turmoil within me?"
Antithetic	Second line _____ the first	"Hatred stirs up strife / but love covers all transgressions"
Synthetic	Second line develops or _____ the first	"The Lord is my shepherd / I shall not want"

The full meaning is always in the _____ between the lines.

III. MYTH #1: PROVERBS ARE PROMISES

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

— Proverbs 22:6 (ESV)

This verse sounds like a 100% ironclad _____. Do your part as a parent and your child is guaranteed to stick with the faith.

But for any parent whose child chose a different path, it can feel less like comfort and more like a crushing _____.

The crucial point: A proverb is not a promise — it's an _____.

- Wise counsel that describes a general _____ for how life usually works
- Not a legal contract that cancels out a child's _____ will
- When life doesn't follow the expected path, it doesn't mean you _____ or God broke His word

Wisdom literature isn't a cheat code for a perfect outcome — it's a _____ to help you navigate the journey.

IV. MYTH #2: STRONG FAITH IS ALWAYS CERTAIN AND HAPPY

We're often taught that complaining to God or showing anger is a sign of spiritual _____. But the Psalms tell a very different story.

Psalm 88 — The psalm that doesn't get better

- The writer feels completely _____ and forgotten by God
- Not a polite, buttoned-up prayer — a brutal, gut-wrenching _____ from the depths of despair
- It ends in _____ — no happy resolution, no sudden turnaround
- And it's in the _____

What is lament?

Far from being weak faith, lament is a sign of deep _____ relationship.

- Faith that trusts God enough to bring your authentic, _____, even angry self to Him
- It assumes God is _____ and listening — even when you can't feel Him at all

II PAUSE & REFLECT

Have you ever felt guilty for doubting or being angry with God? How does knowing that lament is actually a form of deep faith change that for you?

V. PSALM 23 WITH NEW EYES

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.”
— Psalm 23:1, 4 (ESV)

The central metaphor: The _____ — one image carries the entire meaning of the psalm

- A picture of deeply personal care, _____, and guidance

Poetry vs. textbook:

- A textbook says "God is reliable" — that informs your _____
- The image of God as your personal shepherd — that forms your _____

The crucial line:

The psalmist does not promise a life without dark _____.

The valley of the shadow of death is treated as a _____ — just part of the journey.

The real promise of Psalm 23:

Not the _____ of hardship, but the presence of the shepherd during the hardship.

"You are with me" — that's the _____ of the entire psalm.

VI. THREE STEPS FOR READING POETRY

- Step 1:** Slow down and see the _____. Let the metaphors do their work on you.
- Step 2:** Read Proverbs as _____ — look for general observations, not soul-crushing guarantees.
- Step 3:** Give yourself permission to _____. Your honest, raw pain is a valid prayer. God can handle it.

The bottom line: Reading biblical poetry on its own terms invites us into a more honest, more _____ kind of faith.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever treated a proverb like a promise? How does understanding the difference between an observation and a guarantee change how you read Proverbs?

2. Read Psalm 88 this week. How does it feel to encounter a psalm that doesn't resolve? What does its presence in the Bible tell you about what God welcomes in prayer?

3. Look at Psalm 23:4 again. What's the difference between a promise of no hardship and a promise of presence during hardship? Which one is more powerful to you — and why?
