

# SCRIPTURE READING/STUDY | WEEK 2

**Read** | Meditation—thinking deeply about a text

Meditation, at its core, is thinking deeply about a text. The most helpful analogy I've heard is that of root growth. A plant doesn't "find" more food by moving around to different patches of soil. Rather, it pushes more of itself—more roots, more leaves—into the soil and air so that it can draw more nutrition from the same amount of space. In the same way, meditating on Scripture is pushing my thoughts and questions into a text so that I draw more and more out of it. Charles Spurgeon could preach a whole sermon on one verse (or even part of a verse!), in part because he meditated so fruitfully on Scripture that he found a sermon's worth of material in even small portions.

This week, for the purpose of understanding a passage better, we're going to look at **Bible genres**.

## Understanding genre

A quick flip through the Bible will show that not every passage reads the same: some of it is straightforward story, some reads like an essay, and other parts have line breaks like a poem. For a great and fuller text on how to read genres well, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart is my favorite reference, but here's a crash course in New Testament genres (we'll look at Old Testament next week).

1. **Gospel narrative.** By word count, the bulk of the New Testament is *gospel narrative*—stories of how God acts in the world through Jesus and then through the Church (we'll distinguish this from Jesus' teachings). Gospel narratives, at root, are about *how God's kingdom is breaking into the world and how people respond to the kingdom and its King*.

Usually, the structure of a gospel story is built around what Jesus does and says; His actions show something about what God's kingdom is or will be like, and His words explain something about the kingdom to people.

When you study gospel narrative for structure, try to ask, "What is God doing to show or explain His kingdom? And how do

people respond to it—do they see it or miss it, accept it or reject it? What do their actions show about who does and doesn't 'get' the kingdom?"

2. **Gospel teaching.** Within the Gospels and Acts there is a lot of *teaching*—Jesus gives an extended lesson or parable, or the apostles give a sermon. When you study Gospel teaching, ask, "What does this explain or illustrate about God's kingdom?"
3. **Epistle.** Most of the rest of the New Testament (we'll look at Revelation next week) consists of **epistles**, letters to specific churches, groups of churches, or even individuals. Epistles are probably the genre we're most used to interpreting.

A passage from an epistle is usually either 1) making a theological point, or 2) calling for an action in light of God's truth. A passage might explain, illustrate, or make a case for one of those, but the structure will center on that main point or that main action.

## THIS WEEK'S READING PLAN

Day 1: Colossians 3:1-11

Day 2: Colossians 3:12-17

Day 3: Colossians 3:18-4:1

Day 4: Colossians 4:2-6

Day 5: Colossians 4:7-18