

# **Preaching with Variety: Narrative, Poetry, and Discourse**

The Bible God has given us is overflowing with variety. It was written by over forty authors, in three languages, on three continents, over a couple of thousand years, and yet is united by the Spirit into a single masterful work that points us to Christ. The Bible is anything but dull. The Bible God has given us is what you might expect from the kind of God we find in it: creative, diverse, and fully united. It doesn't remain aloof and abstract, but engages with real life in all its fullness. This session looks at the main three types of literature in the Bible: narrative, poetry, and discourse. If we can rightly understand the types of literature, we can tap into their unique strengths to make our preaching the best it can be!

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## **I. Genre Sensitive Preaching:**

- A. Expanding our understanding of expository preaching
- B. Content & form cannot be severed
- C. A high view of Scripture demands attention to literary and rhetorical features
- D. Preachers in Scripture preached with variety
- E. Listeners benefit from variety

## **II. In Defense of Rhetoric**

- A. Definition
- B. Paul & Rhetoric
- C. Augustine & Rhetoric

## **III. Preaching Narratives:**

- A. Biblical Narrative

1. Historically Accurate
2. Theologically Driven
3. Artistically Sophisticated

B. Literary Features

1. Plot
2. Characters
3. Setting
4. Point of View

C. How to Preach:

1. Select the Text Carefully
2. Don't Lose the Plot
3. Create Identification
4. Show more than Tell
5. Participation more than Argumentation
6. Preach on Multiple Levels

**IV. Preaching Poetry:**

A. Understanding Poetry

B. Biblical Poetry

### C. Literary Features

1. Short & Concentrated
2. Dominated by Images and Figurative Language
3. Parallelism
4. Emotional Outline

### D. How to Preach:

1. Time to Ponder
2. Paint with Words
3. Restate, Rephrase, Reword
4. Replicate the Emotional Outline
5. Enjoy, Explore and Exploit the Figures of Speech
6. Get in tune with the tone of the passage

## V. Preaching Discourse

A. Familiar terrain for preaching

B. The spectrum from “letter” to “epistle”

C. Epistles as “occasional theology”

1. Grasping the occasional nature of the epistles
2. Grasping the theological nature of the epistles

D. Logical flow enriched by a miscellaneous of sub-forms & “citations”

E. Means of “re-representation” or “presence-in-absence”

1. The weight of the author’s ethos
2. Mitigated directness

F. How to Preach:

1. Grasp the narrative backdrop
2. Preach the epistles systematically
3. Anchor the imperatives in the indicatives
4. Explore, enjoy and exploit the sub-forms
5. Preach dialogically
6. Land the theology

***Suggested Readings:***

Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety: How to Re-create the Dynamics of Biblical Genres*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2007.

Greidanus Sidney, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988.

Steven W. Smith, *Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons like Scripture*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015.