

Preaching with Variety I: Introduction & Narrative

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. In these sessions we will learn about the three basic types of Scripture: how they function and how we can both understand and effectively preach them. This session looks at biblical narrative. If we can harness the power of preaching narrative well, we can see lives transformed!

Huw Williams worked for 12 years as a conductor, working with orchestras, soloists, singers, and ensembles across the world. He then made the transition to pastoral ministry and is currently the pastor of the International Church of Torino in Italy. He is a passionate advocate of clear and understandable Bible teaching, particularly in cross-cultural contexts. He maintains a keen interest in classical music and opera, and continues to support and encourage Christian musicians as they engage their Christian faith with their artistic environment. He is husband to Alison and father to Kitty.

I. Introduction. The Necessity of Variety in Preaching.

A. The Nature of Revelation in God's Word

1. Variety of Genres

2. Particular Genre for the Particular Message

B. The Nature of Re-Presenting God's Word to Listeners

1. Multiple Genres but One Sermon Outline?

God's word is given to us with striking variety. Stories, poetry, letters, lists, songs, prophecies, history, wisdom, apocalypics and sayings all combine to give us rich tapestry of revelation.

Why such variety? Because God is a colourful and creative God, and because He always chooses the best form for all His messages.

If God chooses to reveal Himself in wonderful colour, our sermons shouldn't be flat and dull!

2. Variety in Preaching as Faithfulness to God's Revelation

3. Three Broad Genre Groups:

i) Narrative

ii) Poetry

iii) Discourse

While we tend to think in terms of seven biblical genres, it may be helpful to recognize three types of literature – narrative, poetry and discourse. These types occur proportionately in that order. Narrative is the most common, discourse the least.

In simplistic terms, narrative consists of people in plots, poetry consists of parallelism and imagery, and discourse consists of direct speech or correspondence.

II. Understanding Narrative. How do stories work?

A. Elements of Narrative

1. Setting

- i) Historical
- ii) Geographical
- iii) Situational

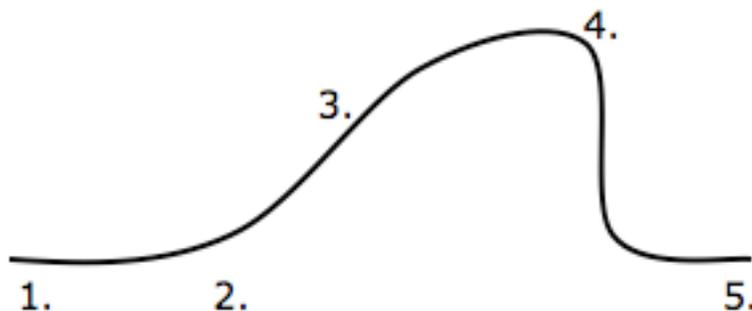
2. Narrator

- i) Detached observer
- ii) Theological commentator

3. Characters

- i) Perfect examples to follow
- ii) Perfect examples not to follow
- iii) Flawed humans

4. Plot – the unfolding story



Why did God give the majority of His Word in the form of narrative? Part of the answer lies in the incarnational nature of narrative. It is theology fleshed out in concrete. Real lives, real situations, real challenges, real responses. Narrative engages us, and that is exactly the way God would have it - because He seeks to engage us.

- 1. Situation
- 2. Tension _____
- 3. _____ Tension
- 4. Tension _____
- 5. Conclusion

B. Understanding Plot – the dynamics of an unfolding story

1. Setting: time and place – pace of change
2. Speech & thought – motives?
3. Movement and Action
4. Tension and release (conflict – crescendo – climax)
5. Resolution

III. Preaching Narrative. How do stories affect our sermons?

A. Telling the story

1. Trusting the storyteller
2. Re-presenting the story

C. Case Study – **Luke 7:1-10**

Luke 7:1-10

¹ After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ² Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. ³ When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴ And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy to have you do this for him, ⁵ for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue.” ⁶ And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. ⁷ Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸ For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” ⁹ When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” ¹⁰ And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.