

Understanding and Telling Narratives

Yellowstone Presbytery

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Some Kinds of Language

- Representative
- Emotive
- Actional
- Instrumental

Two Important Kinds of Language

- Naming – Bringing a world into consciousness
- Narration - Words that have sequence and meaning. Narratives unite God's past and continuing action with ours. Almost all narratives share a structure: Calm, conflict, turning point, and consequences
 - We need both naming and narration

Why Give Special Attention to Narratives?

- God is a narrative being
- God commands us to use narratives Deut. 6: 4-8; 1 Peter 3:15,16
- We, made in God's image, are narrative beings (Homo Narrans)
- Our identities are shaped by narratives

- Narratives appeal to both the logical and intuitive parts of humans
- The world is a set of stories from which we choose
- Narratives provide “reasons to believe” but not all stories are equally compelling.

What Makes Stories Persuasive?

- Narrative rationality – the provision of “good reasons” is a product of:
- Narrative coherence
- Narrative fidelity

Narrative Coherence

- Internal coherence – Do the parts of the narrative “hang together”?
 - Are the arguments probable?
 - Are the characters believable?
- External coherence – Is this story probable in light of other stories the audience accepts?

Narrative Fidelity: Assessing the Reasons

- Values – What are the implicit and explicit values being presented in the narrative?
- Relevance – Are the values in the message relevant the hearer?
- Consequence – What is the result of accepting the values presented?
- Consistency – Are the values confirmed in the personal experience of the audience, and in the life stories of credible others?

Identification: Finding commonality between persons through:

- Values and beliefs
- Personalities
- Experiences
- Goals
- Membership in a group
- Shared enemies
- Hardships and victories

Applying: In pairs consider the narrative of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

- × To what extent does this narrative have coherence (internal and external) for you and why?

- × To what extent does this narrative have fidelity for you (consider values, relevance, consequences, and consistency)?

- × With whom did you identify in this narrative and why?