

Storytelling – Principles

Introduction

The Power of a Story

The Bible as a Story

The purpose of the Bible

Different kinds of Stories

Christopher Booker – *"Seven Basic Plots – Why We Tell Stories"*

1. Overcoming the Monster

Defeating some force that threatens.

Examples: most Hollywood films, Star Wars, James Bond

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2. The Quest

Typically a group set off in search of something and (usually) find it.

Examples: Pilgrim's Progress, Indiana Jones

3. Voyage and Return

The hero journeys away from home to somewhere different and comes back having experienced something and maybe changed for the better.

Examples: Gulliver's Travels, Wizard of Oz

4. Comedy

Some kind of misunderstanding or ignorance is created that keeps parties apart which is resolved towards the end, bringing them back together.

Examples: Notting Hill, Pride and Prejudice

5. Tragedy

Someone is tempted in some way, vanity, greed, etc., and becomes increasingly desperate or trapped by their actions until at a climax they usually die. Unless it's a Hollywood movie, when they escape to a happy ending.

Examples: Hamlet, Devil's Advocate

6. Rebirth

Hero is captured or oppressed and seems to be in a state of living death until it seems all is lost, when miraculously they are freed.

Examples: Snow White, Die Hard films

7. Rags to Riches

As it suggests

Examples: Cinderella & derivatives (all 27,000 of them!)

Exercise

Categorise the following Bible stories into one (or more) of the above plot types. Make a note of the climax in each.

David & Goliath (1 Samuel 17)

Ruth (Ruth 1-4)

Jesus' Death and Resurrection

The 12 Spies (Numbers 13-14)

Naaman (2 Kings 5)

Balaam's Donkey (Numbers 22)

The Wise Men (Matthew 2)

Naomi (Ruth 1-4)

Solomon (1 Kings 11)

Gideon (Judges 6-7)

Sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22)

Prodigal Son (Luke 15)

Moses at the Red Sea (Exodus 14)

Wilderness wanderings (Numbers)

Samson (Judges 13-16)

Sending out the 12 disciples (Mark 6)

Paul in prison (Acts 16)

Jesus' temptation (Matthew 4)

Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27)

Joseph sold into Egypt (Genesis 37-41)

Healing the demoniac (Luke 8)

Storytelling – Preparation

Structure

- Beginning - tension
- Middle - turning point
- End - resolution

Elements within the Structure

- **Pace of the text**

Time factor outside the story can be as much as 20-100 yrs.

Within the story the pace also changes eg. Abraham

Think about the amount of text given to different aspects of the story

- **Narrator's comments**

Judges 21:25, John 4:9

- **Repetition** – words, concepts, scenes eg. Word of the Lord (1 Kings 17-19)

- **What is the mood?**

Tension, surprise, ending

- **Who dominates the stage?**
Protagonists (David), antagonists (Goliath), foils - those who enhance the central characters by contrast (Saul)
Eg. Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37) as a foil to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5)
- **Other characters**
Who knows what? e.g Disciples vs Mark 1:1 Empathise with character by trying to read it as if for the first time.
- **Other Bible references**
Is this story referred to somewhere else?
Hebrews 11 commenting on Abraham in Genesis 22
1 Corinthians 10:1-6 on the Exodus
- **Dialogue embedded in the story**
Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22:6b - 8
Elijah in 1 Kings 17:1
- **Repeated reading sheds new light**
Use a variety of translations

Remember:

- God is the hero of every story.
- Legalism and moralism lurk constantly at the door!

Exercise

Your assigned story is: _____

1. Read the story and identify the plot type (as per Session 1)
2. Where is the climax?
3. Break the story into scenes and summarise each in a single short sentence.
4. Make notes about the story based on the elements described in this session.

Storytelling – Presentation

StoryTELLING not storyREADING!

- **Eye contact**

- **Voice**
 - **Speed**
 - quickly for movement, to move story on
 - slowly to emphasise main point, build suspense (Abraham)

 - **Volume**
 - Rahab & the spies
 - God's anger (Exodus 3)

- **Facial expression**

Reflects mood – for better or worse!

Rehearse in front of a mirror!

- **Participation**
 - chant or repeat something

 - guess the mood with faces

 - thumbs up thumbs down

 - movement - geographic and dramatic

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- **Method**
 - Pictures; projector or flannel
 - Sketch and tell
 - Puppets or models
 - Drama and masks
 - Emotional engagement
 - Sensory engagement

Resources:

www.freebibleimages.org

www.eikonbibleart.com

www.biblemaps.com

www.storystack.co.uk