



Find.
Train.
Support.

Interpreting Narrative Workshop
April 1, 2023
Fillmore, MO

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all the he has and buys that field.”
Matthew 13:44



Agros: Find, Train, Support Interpreting Narrative Workshop

Date: April 1st, 2023

Location: Fillmore Christian Church
310 N Florence St
Fillmore, MO 64449

Bring: There is no cost for this workshop. Bring your Bible with a pen or pencil. The workbooks will use the ESV translation, so feel free to bring a different translation if that would be helpful.

Purpose: To strengthen fellowship for the gospel in NE Kansas and NW Missouri by practicing interpretation of biblical narratives, sharing a meal, singing hymns, hearing biblical teaching, and praying for the advance of the gospel in our region.

Summary: The Bible is full of stories. Which means that, if we want to understand much of the Bible, we must be skilled at interpreting the meaning of stories. They're not as cut-and-dried as other kinds of literature. What does the story of Noah's drunkenness mean? What does the story of Samson killing a lion mean? Interpreting narratives requires specific study tools. This workshop will focus on sharpening those tools together. Our morning sessions aim to equip. We want church members to study the Bible more carefully, and we want pastors to preach narratives more confidently. Our afternoon fellowship aims to encourage. Our shared meal, singing, preaching, and prayer are meant to remind our hearts of the treasures in God's Word that are worth great sacrifices to study and share.

Approach: The training focuses on hands-on learning. Much of our time will be practicing concepts in this workbook with a small group. The afternoon will provide a break in the pace and give opportunities for more personal interaction.

Proposed Schedule (session topics are subject to change)

- 8:00 – 9:00... Registration and fellowship (w/ light breakfast available)
- 9:00 – 10:00... Session 1: The plot of a narrative
- 10:10 – 11:10... Session 2: The point of a narrative
- 11:20 – 12:20... Session 3: Every narrative within the gospel narrative
- 12:20 – 1:20... Lunch (provided at Fillmore Christian)
- 1:20 – 2:20... Singing and Sermon
- 2:20 – 3:00... Session 4: Co-laboring in prayer

Today's hymns

“I Will Sing the Wondrous Story”

I will sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me,
how he left the realms of glory
for the cross on Calvary.

Chorus:

*Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me,
sing it with the saints in glory,
gathered by the crystal sea.*

I was lost: but Jesus found me,
found the sheep that went astray,
raised me up and gently led me
back into the narrow way. [*repeat chorus*]

Faint was I, and fears possessed me,
bruised was I from many a fall;
hope was gone, and shame distressed me:
but his love has pardoned all. [*repeat chorus*]

Days of darkness still may meet me,
sorrow's path I oft may tread;
but his presence still is with me,
by his guiding hand I'm led. [*repeat chorus*]

He will keep me till the river
rolls its waters at my feet:
then he'll bear me safely over,
made by grace for glory meet. [*repeat chorus*]

Words by Francis H. Rowley (1886); music by Peter P. Bilhorn (1886);
Public Domain

“There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood”

There is a fountain filled with blood,
drawn from Immanuel's veins;
and sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
lose all their guilty stains (3x)
and sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
that fountain in his day;
and there have I, as vile as he,
washed all my sins away (3x)
and there have I, as vile as he,
washed all my sins away.

E'er since by faith I saw the stream
your flowing wounds supply,
redeeming love has been my theme,
and shall be till I die (3x)
redeeming love has been my theme,
and shall be till I die.

When this poor, lisping, stamm'ring tongue
lies silent in the grave
then in a nobler, sweeter song
I'll sing your pow'r to save (3x)
then in a nobler, sweeter song
I'll sing your power to save.

Dear dying Lamb, your precious blood
shall never lose its pow'r,
till all the ransomed church of God
be saved, to sin no more (3x)
till all the ransomed church of God
be saved to sin no more.

Words by William Cowper (1771); Music by Lowell Mason (1830);
Public Domain

“All the Way My Savior Leads Me”

All the way my Savior leads me;
what have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt his tender mercy,
who through life has been my guide?
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort,
here by faith in him to dwell;
for I know, whate'er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well (2x)

All the way my Savior leads me,
cheers each winding path I tread,
gives me grace for ev'ry trial,
feeds me with the living bread.
Though my weary steps may falter,
and my soul a-thirst may be,
gushing from the rock before me,
lo, a spring of joy I see (2x)

All the way my Savior leads me -
O the fullness of his love!
perfect rest to me is promised
in my Father's house above:
when my spirit, clothed, immortal,
wings its flight to realms of day,
this my song through endless ages:
Jesus led me all the way (2x)

Words by Fanny J. Crosby (1875); music by
Robert Lowry (1875/alt. 1990); Public Domain

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Interpreting Narrative Workshop

Session 1 – The plot of a narrative

1. Why should we study what a narrative *is*?

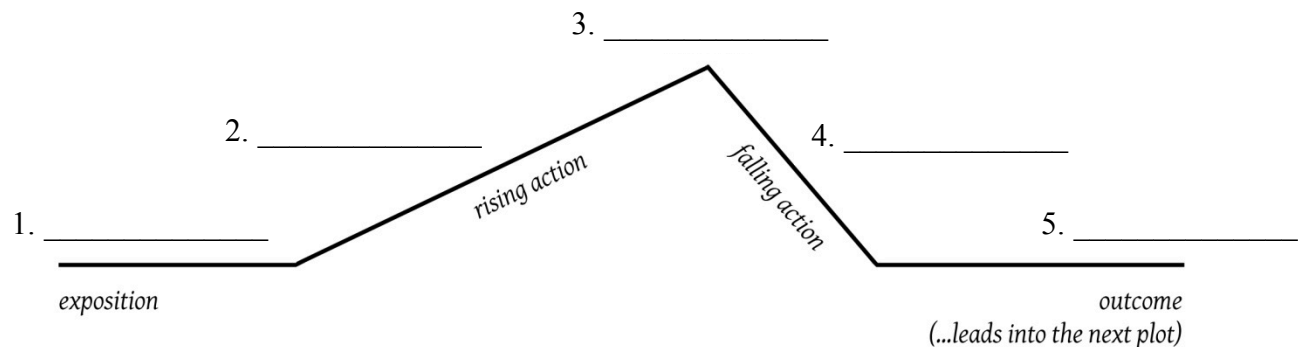
Read Genesis 9:18-29, and reflect on what the point of this narrative is...

- We could be misled by our _____ or our other _____
- Every text has a _____ that reveals an _____¹

2. What makes a narrative a narrative?

A narrative is a plot (i.e. storyline) of events with five elements. The image below depicts these elements, graphing an “arc” of the amount of action/drama in the narrative.

Plot Arc



- 1. _____ – Introduction to characters, location, time, and/or situation
- 2. _____ – Introduction and progression of a problem for main character(s)

Four kinds: _____, _____, _____, _____

Ask: What growing *problem* needs fixed? Where is *tension/conflict* continually rising?

- 3. _____ – Turning point of the conflict from which a change must come
- Ask: What is the problem’s turning point? What event causes conflict/tension to begin decreasing?

- 4. _____ – Resulting consequences of and/or responses to the climax
- Ask: What events are inevitable results of the climax? Where is action still present but decreasing?

- 5. _____ – Stabilized conclusion, possibly positive or negative

Three kinds: _____, _____, _____

Ask: What concluding information sounds like the “new normal”? Where has the action stabilized?

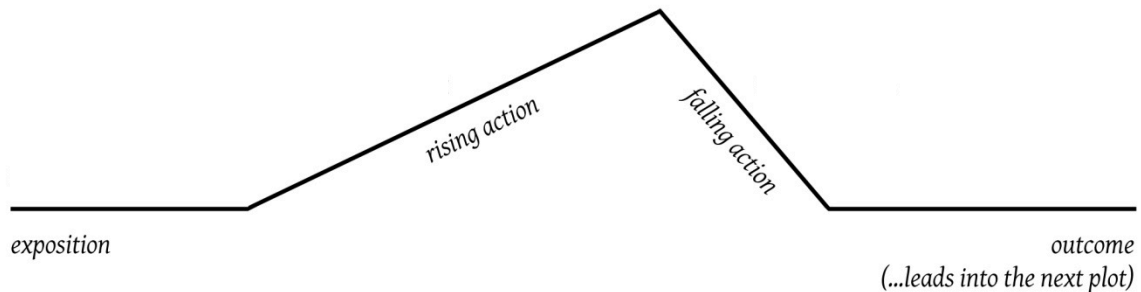
¹ This concept and the image below were taken from Robert S. Kinney’s article, “Narrative Structure in the Gospels and Acts”; borrowed with permission from Simeon Trust; <https://simeontrust.org/narrative-structure-in-the-gospels/>

3. Practice identifying the five elements of a narrative.

For the following three passages, using the plot arcs below, write the name of the element, the verses included in it, and your reason(s) for dividing the narrative at that point.

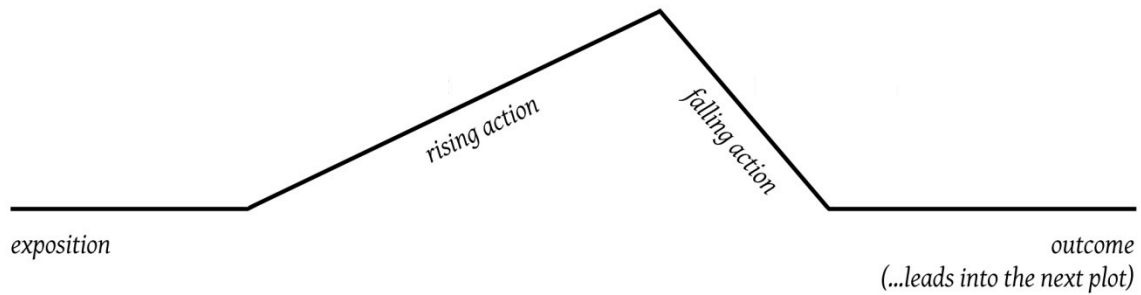
Passage #1: Mark 5:1-20

Plot Arc



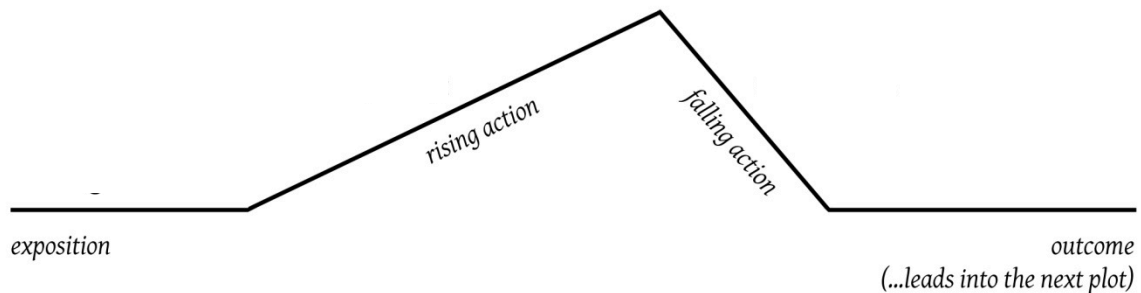
Passage #2: Ruth 1:1-22

Plot Arc



Passage #3: Ruth 1:1-4:22

Plot Arc



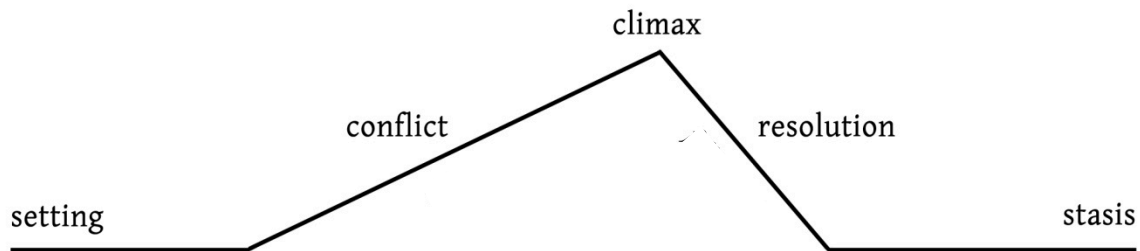
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Session 2 – The point of a narrative

1. Use the plot to find the point of a narrative.

Plot Arc



– It guards us from _____ the setting/stasis of the plot.

– It gives _____ to all other elements of the narrative.

Ask: How and why are the five elements of this narrative related to its emphasis?

– It hints at the _____ perspective.

Ask: *How* is the conflict resolved? *Why* is it resolved in that way? What beliefs led to this climax? What loves drove this climax?

2. Practice using the plot to find the point of Ruth 1:1-22.

In your groups, open your Bibles to Ruth 1:1-22 and refer to your plot arc on page 5. Discuss the following questions.

Which verses contain the emphasis of the plot arc?

What would over-emphasizing details in the setting or the stasis sound like?

How does the emphasis of the plot give direction to all the other elements?

What hints about the narrator's perspective can you discern from the emphasis of the plot?

What do you think is the point of the narrative?

3. Consider the difficulties of narrative to sharpen the point.

– Consider whether this narrative is _____ or only _____.

Ask: Does anything confirm that the point is a prescribed or prohibited pattern?

– Consider the possibility of the main character's _____ or _____.

Ask: Is the point a change in the main character? Is the point a failure of the main character?

– Consider how the _____ uses words or concepts in your narrative.

Ask: How are these words/concepts used elsewhere in this book or by this author?

– Consider the authority of the _____ commentary or _____ commentary.

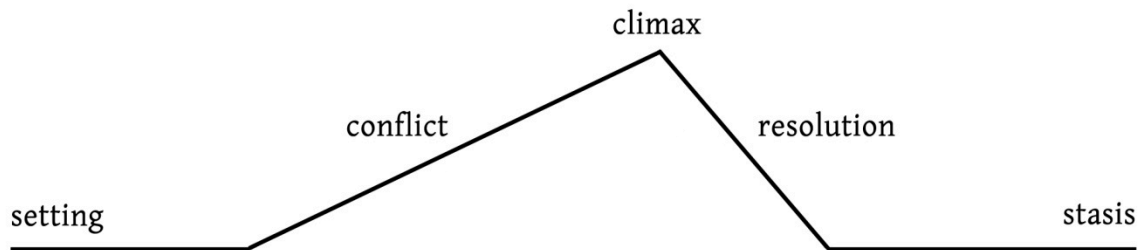
Ask: Does my point from the narrative depend on and agree with their commentary?

– Consider whether the point is confirmed or contradicted by _____.

4. Practice finding the point of Genesis 9:18-29.

In your groups, open your Bibles to Genesis 9:18-29. Briefly divide the narrative into the plot arc below, and then discuss the material from this session to try and find the point of the narrative.

Plot Arc



The point of Genesis 9:18-29 is...

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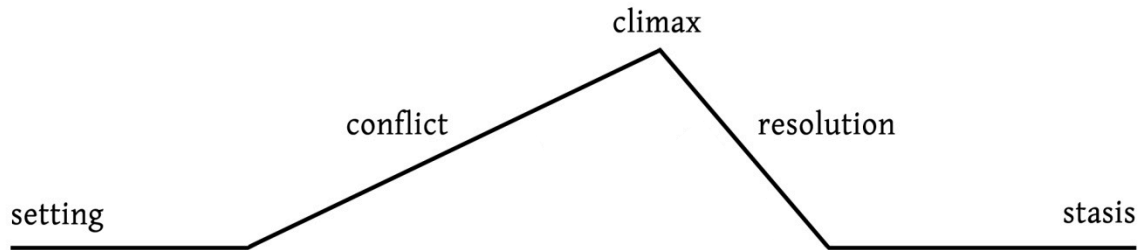
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Session 3 – Every narrative within the gospel narrative

1. What is the whole Bible’s narrative?

Using the plot arc below, discuss/write details for each element of the Bible’s narrative.

Plot Arc

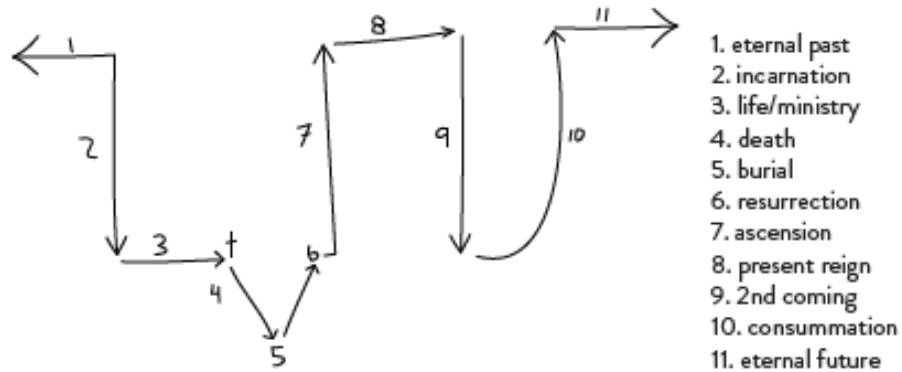


2. How might a narrative fit within the gospel narrative?²

- *Gospel Analogy*: A person/event/object with traits/functions that foreshadow _____
Example: saved through waters of judgment (Gen. 7:4-7; Exo. 14:26-29; 2 Kin. 5:9-14; 1 Pet. 3:18-22)
Ask: Do any characters, events, or objects in my text broadly anticipate the gospel?
- *Typology*: A kind of Gospel Analogy that specifically foreshadows _____
Example: the sacrificial lamb (Gen. 22:9-13; Lev. 16:20-22; Isa. 1:11; John 1:29; Heb. 9:11-14)
Ask: Do any characters in my text perform a specific function or hold a specific office that Christ fulfills?
Do any characters, events, or objects in my text have traits or functions that point me to Christ?
- *Historical Trajectory/Themes*: Events/priorities that _____ through the Bible
Example: the dwelling place of God (Exo. 29:42-46; 1 Kin. 6:11-14; Eze. 37:26-28; Rev. 21:1-3)
Ask: Where is my text in the storyline of the Bible? How does my text contribute to the story of the Bible?
Do I see any major biblical themes in my text that find fulfillment in Christ?
- *Gospel-based Teaching*: Keeping gospel truths as the _____ of our obedience
Example: Do not lie (Exo. 20:16; Deu. 19:16-21; Pro. 19:5; Col. 3:9-10)
Ask: What is the purpose of the commands in my text? Are they there to secure righteousness before God or bring glory to God, demonstrating my belief? Are any of the commands in my text repeated in the New Testament? How do these commands relate to justification and sanctification?
- *Gospel Aspects*: Truths that are closely _____ to Christ’s death & resurrection
Example: Christ’s incarnation (Heb. 2:14-15), second coming (1 Thess. 4:13-18), intercession (Rom. 8:34), and moral example (1 Pet. 2:21-23).
Ask: To what aspect of the gospel does my text connect?

² These concepts, diagnostic questions, and the image on the following page were taken from the article, “Principles of Exposition”; borrowed with permission from Simeon Trust.

The various Gospel Aspects as a plot arc...



3. What’s the rest of the story? From my narrative to the gospel narrative

In your groups, return in your Bibles to Ruth 1:1-22 and refer to your plot arc on page 5. Discuss the following questions.

If we did not put this narrative within the gospel narrative, what might be some insufficient or erroneous points to take away from it?

Where does this narrative fall within the whole Bible’s narrative? What significant events have already occurred that impact this narrative?

How does the climax of the Bible’s narrative—the gospel—give direction to the point of this narrative? That is, which of the gospel connections from point 2 are relevant to this narrative? How does following those connections to the gospel bring ultimate resolution to the conflict in this narrative?

Which of the 11 Gospel Aspects is(are) most particularly relevant to finding the point of this narrative?

What is the point of Ruth 1:1-22?

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Session 4 – Co-laboring in Prayer

List the churches represented in your group:

Pray for these churches by name. Use some or all of the categories below to guide your prayers. Consider reading the corresponding Bible passages aloud before making the specific request.

Pray for the **faith** of these churches:

More faith in God's faithfulness to finish the story – 1 Thess. 5:23-24

More faith in God's graciousness to finish the story – Rom. 5:19-21

More faith in the sufficiency of God's Word through the story – 2 Pet. 1:3-4

Pray for the **love** of these churches:

More love for the only true hero of our story – 1 Pet. 1:8-9

More love for the others who have been brought into our story – 1 John 4:19-21

More love for others' stories than our own – Matt. 20:26-28

Pray for the **witness** of these churches:

More witness of the gospel's glory over the world's narratives in our lives – Matt. 13:45

More witness to the true conflict and resolution of each soul in our words – Rom. 3:23-24

More witness that depends on the power of God through our prayers – Acts 4:31

More witness like God's grace can redeem anyone's story – Luke 4:25-26