ABSTRACT

EXPLORING A MODEL FOR EQUIPPING COLOMBIAN PASTORS

AND LAY LEADERS IN THE SKILL OF NARRATIVE PREACHING

by

Juan Carlos Mejía

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of a training experience consisting of a workshop, a follow-up meeting, and a focus group for fifteen pastors and lay leaders of three churches at the Christian Fellowship Church in Bogotá, Colombia.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the workshop in terms of the knowledge, attitude, and practice of participants' narrative preaching, the project for this study used an Explanatory Mixed-method design. It used both qualitative and quantitative approaches where participants completed questionnaires before the workshop. Subsequently, with the help of a focus group, I tracked the knowledge and practice of narrative preaching for two weeks after preparing one sermon and again, two weeks later with the questionnaire and a focus group after preaching one narrative sermon.

The main results of this research were that (1) these pastors and lay leaders defined narrative sermons as a way of preaching where a story is told based on biblical text; (2) most of the participants had never received formal training in narrative preaching before the research and did not think they were sufficiently prepared to preach in this way; (3) the participants expressed that the reasoning behind narrative preaching was to better keep the audience's attention and to improve communication with the congregation; most of the participants believed that narrative sermons are very well

received; (4) most of the obstacles to preaching narrative sermons were found in acquiring enough practice in creating and constructing them; and, (5) without exception, all of the participants want to include narrative sermons in their future preaching ministry.

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

EXPLORING A MODEL FOR EQUIPPING COLOMBIAN PASTORS

AND LAY LEADERS IN THE SKILL OF NARRATIVE PREACHING

presented by

Juan Carlos Mejía

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

Asbury Theological Seminary

_____   _____
Mentor   Date

_____   _____
Internal Reader   Date

_____   _____
Representative, Doctor of Ministry Program   Date

_____   _____
Dean of the Beeson Center   Date

EXPLORING A MODEL FOR EQUIPPING COLOMBIAN PASTORS

AND LAY LEADERS IN THE SKILL OF NARRATIVE PREACHING

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Juan Carlos Mejía

May 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Introduction

Latin America is a land that has given rise to great writers and novelists. Several of them

have received the Nobel Prize for rich and innovative forms of storytelling. Among them, the

Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez and his world-famous novel, *One Hundred Years of*

Solitude, is an example of the Latin American narrative and other in-depth topics mixed with

fiction, hyperbole, and magical realism that are characteristic of the author. The argument of the

novel seems simple: the various vicissitudes of the Buendía family in a fictitious village called

Macondo. This simple method allows a description of the depths of the heart of the coastal towns

in Colombia. However, all these rich narratives are generally absent from Colombian church

pulpits. Sometimes when one hears the word *preaching*, the general expectation of the believer is

to be lectured on bad behavior occurring during the week with no expectation of hearing a

message or story that can change the course of his or her life.

In Colombia's small towns and city parks, one can commonly find characters known as

storytellers, sharing their stories and speaking about important events that are happening in the

community and around the nation. In just a few minutes, they are surrounded by a crowd of all

ages and backgrounds who listens to these stories with fascination, joy, and empathy. At the end

of the performance, many storytellers receive money from grateful onlookers, thankful for

sharing their time and stories. As a preacher, I would like to have that kind of attention and

participation by the members of my church.

One characteristic of this generation is a postmodern fascination with micro-stories and

images; however, preaching in churches is full of abstractions, as well as topics and subtopics of

theological conceptualizations. People are losing interest, relevance, and, consequently, the hearts of the parishioners.

Although narrative preaching is not something new to the subject, it is not yet part of the ministry tools that preachers in Colombia have, especially in the Christian Fellowship Colombia (CFC). Having the knowledge and practice of this approach to preaching can transform ministry and the way pastors and lay preachers communicate with their congregations.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of a training experience consisting of a workshop, a follow-up meeting, and a focus group on the knowledge, attitude, and practice of narrative preaching for fifteen pastors and lay leaders of three churches at the CFC in Bogotá, Colombia.

Research Questions

The following three research questions helped direct this project.

Research Question #1

What were the self-reported knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding narrative preaching of the pastors and lay preachers prior to the workshop training?

Research Question #2

What other factors may have influenced the self-reported changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices of the participants regarding narrative preaching?

Research Question #3

How did the participants evaluate the quality of the narrative preaching training?

Research Question #4

After participants preached narrative sermons in their churches, how did congregation members evaluate these sermons?

Definition of Terms

In this study, the following terms require definitions.

Narrative Preaching Knowledge

Narrative preaching knowledge refers to the understanding of the definition, elements, and models of narrative preaching, including the preparation and presentation of a sermon.

Narrative Preaching Practice

Narrative preaching practice refers to participants' past experiences with narrative preaching, identifying how often they use this instrument in their ministries, how they feel about preparing a narrative sermon, and what results have been observed when they preached using this practice. Narrative preaching practice also includes knowing how participants learned this form of preaching or previous instruction received in this regard.

Pastor and Lay Leaders

The participants of this study are full-time ministers, part-time senior pastors, and pastoral team members in various ministries such as evangelism, training, youth, men, women, counseling, worship, and children. In addition to the pastoral team, participants included unpaid lay leaders who preach occasionally and are involved members of these churches. They are volunteers with gifts in the ministry of preaching and are from three CFC churches in Colombia where the churches established well-known schools for preaching to prepare their own preachers, using a three-year program. The emphasis of this program is discipleship in the spiritual life,

homiletics, and exegesis. These preachers meet once a month in their own churches in small groups. The three churches have a great retreat with all students once a year.

Ministry Intervention

This study was conducted in Bogotá, Colombia, in three CFC churches where a group of fifteen pastors and lay preachers participated. The process began with the voluntary recruitment of participants through their respective churches and schools of preaching. Each participant attended two workshop sessions. All participants attended the workshop simultaneously, in the same place, from 7 to 9 p.m. on a Friday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on a Saturday. They filled out the Narrative Preaching Questionnaire (NPQ) before the workshop session began (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to prepare a ten-minute narrative sermon according to what they had learned during the workshop and read it two weeks later during the follow-up meeting in their focus group. This time was to be used to resolve questions and concerns that the participants had about this experience in preparing a narrative sermon and later to make changes in order to improve their narrative sermons. One month after the workshop, participants met again in focus groups to deliver their narrative sermon, fill out the NPQ, and draw conclusions from this experience.

Context

This study was carried out within a denomination of Wesleyan and Methodist backgrounds. The roots of the CFC Colombia, date back to the first missionary work in Colombia directed carried out by OMS International, an American mission originally known as the Oriental Missionary Society. It was founded in Tokyo in 1901 by a group of telegraph operators from the Christian Union Action in support of fulfilling the Great Commission in Japan through two of its members. The vision for the evangelization of this island nation led Charles

Cowman (OMS founder) to devise one of the first evangelization plans in the modern era: saturation (i.e., to share the good news to every house in a place).

Due to the global conflict in the forties, and in response to God's leading, human and financial resources were sent to Colombia as a Latin American entry point for OMS. This effort of evangelism brought forth the Biblical Seminary of Colombia in 1944 in Medellin, the Association of Inter-American Churches in Colombia, and later the Christian Fellowship Church of Colombia. Today the denomination is composed of twenty-seven churches planted in several cities. Most churches are located in two major cities: Medellin and Bogotá.

Participants in this study are members of three churches in the city of Bogotá, Colombia. These churches minister primarily to the middle class in Bogotá and are recognized within the denomination for their spiritual health and quality of ministry from the pulpit. These are the *Unicentro* Christian Fellowship, *Colina Campestre* Christian Fellowship, and *Ciudad Salitre* Christian Fellowship. All participants have been students in the three-year preaching schools established in every church, with a common vision and purpose: to train expository preachers.

Methodology

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of workshops in terms of the knowledge, attitudes, and practice of participants' narrative preaching, the project for this study used an explanatory mixed-method design, including a qualitative and quantitative approach where participants completed a questionnaire before the workshop. Subsequently, I tracked for two weeks after preparing one sermon and again two weeks later with the questionnaire and a focus group after preaching one narrative sermon.

Participants

The participants consisted of fifteen pastors and lay preachers; five people per church voluntarily participated in the workshop. They were men and women of various ages, with university degrees and high ministerial commitment. All had received previous training in preaching.

Instrumentation

All participants took the Narrative Preaching Questionnaire both before and after the workshop to identify what they already knew about narrative preaching and the characteristics of its practice. Each individual completed these questionnaires on-site on the day of the workshop and again one month later in the focus group meeting.

The focus group with five questions was held with fifteen participants. They were selected two and four weeks after the workshop. This tool aimed to determine the impact on the lives of the participants after each preached one narrative sermon during this monitoring period.

Five people from each church filled out the MEF one month after the workshop. All the participants preached their sermons at their own churches where they were evaluated.

Variables

The independent variable was the workshop and the focus group intervention two weeks after aimed at the understanding and practice of narrative preaching. The dependent variables were the changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practice in the participants involved in the study. The potential intervening variables were the possibilities of defections from the group during the focus group section, participants not feeling free to express the impact of the workshop on their lives because of their close relationship with me, and any problems that may arise in these churches or resistance to that style of preaching.

Data Collection

Data collection was carried on as follows. First, surveys of knowledge and practice at the beginning of the workshop session assessed preintervention measurements of the dependent variables. Two weeks later they completed the second part in a focus group where participants read the narrative sermons they had prepared and had the opportunity to ask questions and resolve any doubts concerning them. The NPQ was handed out two weeks after the first focus group (see Appendix A). Participants presented their sermons during the second focus group discussion, which was taped to transcribe the audio data from the five thematic questions and supply the data for the qualitative component.

Data Analysis

The research applied an explanatory mixed-methods design. For the quantitative analysis, I implemented a comparative analysis with descriptive statistics. For the qualitative analysis, I analyzed the content of the discussions.

Generalizability

This study is limited to pastors and lay preachers who have basic training in the area of preaching and already have a preaching ministry. It has potential applications to other populations, but a university degree would be required among participants because of the high level of information during the workshop. The development of the workshops encourages the use of media as support for this kind of preaching, and some communities may not have these resources readily available.

The results of this study, as well as the content of the workshops, are applicable to other schools of preaching in other denominations that exist in Colombia and with whom I have had contact in the past. This study will likely enrich and be enriched by other similar studies because

of the growing interest in narrative preaching in Colombia. The results of this study may be generalized to some extent in other churches with similar characteristics in Latin American countries.

Theological Foundation

Jesus of Nazareth is mainly presented as a narrated person but more often still as a narrated narrator; " while the disciples appear as listeners of stories, who in turn repeat them and continue narrating orally or in writing the stories heard. Thus, such stories have finally reached us ... Christianity is a community of storytelling" (Weinrich 212-14).

Narrative preaching is a way of communicating the Christian message. It emphasizes its historical and experimental character, and its ultimate reference point is the life of Jesus Christ while its application or practical dimension refers us to the life of believers of all times. For this reason, a narrative discourse is required as it adapts to communicate salvation messages and experiences that favor the experience of faith (Oviedo 958-59).

This expository method of preaching seeks to recover interest in narratives, in which the core of the Christian faith is expressed and tries to understand and study these narratives in order to present them again to the world today. Hermeneutics aims to discover the meaning of the story in order to touch the heart, the deepest part of humanity in the here and now. Narrative preaching arises from the rediscovery of the theology of revelation in Catholic and Protestant areas where one reflects upon God's action in: how to tell about faith and God (Agudelo 453-54).

Narrative preaching is rooted in the theology of Karl Barth, who says that salvation happens in history because God takes place in a certain space and time, and as in history, the only way to communicate this purpose is through storytelling. Therefore, God can be narrated because he intervenes in the lives of people (Siciliani 109).

Narrative preaching is based on Christology, which is the most fruitful field of application in the sense that it attempts to reconstruct the experience of Jesus based on an exegetical and historical research. Sacramental liturgy, moral theology, and spiritual theology are inspired in various ways by it (Oviedo 960-61).

Storytelling makes individuls think of God differently because it makes readers identify with the story, read themselves in it, and see it in a different way. That story requires interpretation, for the narrator did not build the narrative from nothing; instead, he or she underwent a process of interpretation of the facts or events expressed in the story.

One always accesses reality through language. An object or an event exists when it is spoken or named, as it acquires meaning in the human world. This fact, far from strengthening a subjective relativism, clarifies that knowledge is hermeneutical—events exist by the sense they bring. Christian faith is impossible without mediation.

Individuals do not know how to narrate God because they have not been taught to discover God in their lives. The Word of God is in and speaks of daily life. The climax/tension of the story is in the conflict raised by sin, which breaks the relationship between God and His creature ... this climax/tension originates because of the stubbornness of man in contrast to God's infinite love.

Narrative preaching says that the Bible is capable of generating an infinite number of new stories, so it is listed as metanarratives because it is based on the performative capacity of language where exegesis is fundamental. The Bible speaks not only of its narrative pedagogical function ... Jesus tells stories (commonly known as parables) to people of every condition with elements that are part of their everyday lives in order to make language more understandable. Jesus goes beyond the merely pedagogical reference. If the story was only the art of conveying

abstract ideas through imagined examples, That is the reason why Jesus tell a parable to an enlightened man like Simon. The theological reason is that God is in everyday life.

Preaching was for proclamation as done during the patristic period. Today arguments of belonging rather than those of authority are believed. The Church is at the service of humanity and should not be worried about humanity'survival. At the heart of narrative theology underlies the action of God in human life and history in how to tell about faith and about God himself. The soul of theology is Scripture, not dogma. The Bible communicates stories of faith, in which the faces of God and humanity are manifested. The narrative style does not replace other existing styles, nor does it reject the analysis that tries to determine the origin of a tradition, the originality of vocabulary, and thought of its respective authors through comparison with use in other periods of history or cultures (Aletti 9-11).

Furthermore, a narrative option confronts a story with those of its own time and with all times, but this comparison is made between the actors, the style of connections, or perspectives on the choice of episodes, and the pace of events. Characters, space, and time are the privileged instruments by which one enters into a narrative (Marguerat 32-34).

The biblical account uses a particular narrative model that relates categories of time, mode, and voice (Heras Oliver 16). Time, or the study of the temporal order of the story, focuses on the confrontation of the succession of historical events and their arrangement in the narrative. Its importance lies in that it allows observation of different forms of contrast or disagreement between the order of history and the story that is the narrative anachronisms, which are typical of a narrative that does not intend to be just a chronicle of historical events (51-52).

The mode, which regulates the narrative information, affects the amount of narration and the channel used. The mode manages information from the analysis of the distance or amount of

material reproduced in the story and the mimetic capacity of discourse employed. The mode also manages the perspective or point of view of the story, which is the physical place or situation or specific orientation with respect to the narrative events (Heras Oliver 93-99).

The voice, or narrator, who may be the actual or implied author, tells the story to a real reader, who will read the text through the times, or to an implicit reader, who is projected in the text and understands its message (Heras Oliver 181-83). The contact with the narrative voice will help the exegete discover the meaning behind the story.

In conclusion, narrative preaching brings greater understanding of the biblical accounts, since they are narratives. It also enhances its communicative quality, as it provokes thinking and commitment, elements that are fundamental to the preacher who seeks to update the revealed message by inserting it in a particular historical and cultural reality.

Overview

Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to narrative preaching and how to help students learn this style of preaching. It establishes the biblical and theological framework for the practice of narrative preaching. Chapter 3 includes discussion and explanation for the design of the study, research questions, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, variables, and data analysis. Chapter 4 delineates the findings of the study, and Chapter 5 provides a summary of the conclusions derived from interpretation of the data, as well as practical applications of the conclusions and further study possibilities.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

Introduction

The narrative shape of Scripture requires the use of the narrative form of preaching. Homiletical integrity and effectiveness, along with homiletical adaptation to hearers, also justify the exercise of the narrative form of preaching. If God chose a narrative way of communicating the predominant biblical shape of revelation in Scripture, Colombian preachers should follow that way as well, especially when preaching biblical narratives.

Theological Framework

Narrative preaching has a strong biblical and theological foundation. In fact, the biblical narrative and its theological interpretation form a very strong foundation for narrative preaching. The biblical narrative came into existence by God's actions. In other words, the action of God *is* the biblical narrative. God did not act in a vacuum. He acted in time and space to forge a relationship with his people and then commanded his people to retell his action to following generations. The commandment of retelling was for the purpose of educating future generations about God's actions on their behalf; hence, the children of Israel in their generation would accept for themselves the very actions of God. Therefore, the concept of retelling is pivotal to the relationship between God and his people, which was created through his action.

The Pentateuch Retelling

The story of God and his people is the message conveyed to the community of faith. God chooses the means by which to communicate his identity and will. The first five books of the Bible set the stage for the entire story of God. The central theme of these five books is the covenant God made with Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai. The covenant formulary is similar to

the treaties of the ancient world of the Hittites during the Late Bronze Age (Levenson 23-36;

Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush 72-75). The theme of God's covenant permeates the entire book of

Deuteronomy. By analyzing the acrostic structure of the book of Deuteronomy, Gary H. Hall

identifies the central core as "Covenant Stipulation" (23). Moses commanded Israel to read the

text during the Festival of Booths (Deut. 31:10-13).

       Preceding this instruction, the entire section of Deuteronomy 29-31 commands the

Israelites to know their story and to recite it. This retelling will be the ultimate cure and defense

against apostasy:

> Most scholars agree that these steps are (1) titulary, the suzerain identifies
> himself; (2) the historical prologue, stating the past action, one which the suzerain
> is entitled to form such a relationship, in the case of Israel, the deliverance of
> Israel from Egypt by God; (3) the stipulation, the terms of the treaty; (4)
> deposition of the text of the treaty and provision of the periodic reading of the
> treaty to the vassal; (5) the list of witnesses; and, (6) curses and blessings. (Lasor,
> Hubbard, and Bush 74-75)

The climax of the sermon is found in 30:15-20 where the text speaks of the choice presented to

Israel between "life and prosperity," and "death and adversity." The promise to Israel would be

"life and prosperity" if the people would love God and obey his commandments. Disobedience

and loving other gods would lead to adversity and death.

       The purpose of this retelling was to teach the people and the children of Israel in future

generations the story of God and Israel and the laws given to them. In so doing, the people of

Israel would continue their lives with total awareness of the identity of YHWH and his act of

redemption on their behalf, as well as Israel's identity grounded in this redemption. The divine

election was not arbitrary; in a sense God chose an already-existing nation while ignoring others.

God gave the work of redemption by calling for a new people, a new identity. God called

Abraham and formed a new nation through Abraham's family (Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush 120-

21). An awareness of this identity should have resulted in obedience to the stipulations of his covenant. Ancient Israel's faith was centered on the action of God in delivering them from Egypt and his covenant with them. Thus, the story of the deliverance, the making of the covenant, and all the details were to be told over and over again.

The book of Deuteronomy clearly declares that God commanded his people to tell their children the story of God, of how he rescued them from Egypt, and of his covenant with them. In the introduction to his commentary on the Pentateuch, John H. Sailhamer writes, "Historical narrative is the re-presentation of the past event for purpose of instruction" (25). God repeatedly commanded Israel to teach by retelling their children his story. Deuteronomy 5-11 focuses on the theme to remember where one is going and one's call: "'Listen!' so you will not fail." The theme of chapters 12-26 is to exhort Israel to recognize the rules, recite them, and memorize them as their source of life. The concept of remembering the past formed the present and determined the future of Israel. Such a concept was central to the memory of the people of Israel and helped to distinguish them from all their neighbors (Raney 15; Stemberg 31). Thus, the contents of the book of Deuteronomy, which focuses on remembering the story of redemption, were used to educate the people of God about who he is, who they are (past, present, and future), and what was required of them.

In several places, the book of Deuteronomy mentions the theme of teaching the children of Israel (the future generations) about the acts of God (4:9-10, 40; 6:7; 11:19; 32:46). Within the context of the Great Commandment (Deut. 6:5-7), the verb *talk* is used to convey the combination of two concepts. The first is to recite, and the second meaning is to teach incisively (Brown, Driver, and Briggs 1042). Both meanings indicate the action of carefully conveying the stories, actions, and deeds. Hall states that the verb *talk* "is better translated as 'repeat, recount.'

This world is parallel with talk and refers to the constant repetition for the benefit of the children" (139). In other words, the acts of God should be told and retold to future generations. Narrating the story of God is the means by which God's action is transmitted from generation to generation. God warned the Israelites that forgetting redeeming work eventually led to their destruction. The means of their preservation was through the telling of the story of God. The well-being of the people of God rested in totally loving him and completely obeying his commandments.

Storytelling was not to be a one-time event; the Bible teaches that this action of telling was to be done "when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way and when you sit down and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:7b). It was to be a lifestyle of continually recounting the hand of God at work in the world. The lives of his people were to reflect the story in all of its aspects. A good example is the commandment of honoring one's father and mother. God commanded Israel by saying, "Honor your father and mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged and that it may go well with you on the land which the LORD your God gives you" (Deut. 5:16 NIV). Parents were to be the vehicles through whom the story was to be retold from generation to generation. Peter C. Craigie comments on this commandment:

> Parents are responsible to teach their children concerning the covenant, and by so doing, both children and parents would prosper in the land (4:9- 10, 40) and see the fulfilment of the covenant promise of God. Although the primary significance of the commandment had to do with the continuity of the covenant, one of the fruits of the children honoring their parents was to provide a solid family structure for the Israelites. Since the father/son relationship (1:31) was analogous to the God/Israel relationship. (158-59)

One would infer from this commandment that retelling the action of God was strongly connected with their relationship to God.

The second aspect of the commandment that makes an analogous relationship equally important was the concept of the continuation of the covenant. Retelling a story that was not centered on the God of the relationship led nowhere. Israel was commanded to tell this particular story of their God with whom they had an intimate relationship established through his mighty acts; the identity of God was central to this story. The primary vehicle of revelation was the story, and his story was a revelation of his identity (Willimon and Lischer 343).

The covenant that God made with Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai differed in nature from any legal treaty between two unequal parties. Any contract, treaty, or agreement has what is called something for something or obligation for obligation. If either party fails to keep its obligation or uphold its side of the agreement, the other party is freed from its obligation and the deal is off. This agreement, however, is never the case with God's covenants. The biblical covenant is based on the element of love by taking it to a higher level of obligation. God chose Israel for no other reason than his love for them. He bound himself to his people by his covenant with them. Hall writes, "This is an act of God's grace and love. He chose them because He loved them (7:8); the covenant was an expression of His character, for through it He demonstrated His faithfulness, love, uprightness, and holiness" (27). Therefore, Israel needed to respond in a similar manner. The creed of ancient Israel was the Great Shema (Deut. 6:4-5) that speaks of loving the Lord with all your heart, soul, and might. Jesus saw this obligation, along with loving one's neighbor, as summarizing the entire law and the prophets (Matt. 22:37-40).

The element of love in the covenant was of utmost importance; the entire covenant relationship rested on it. God honored his part of the covenant relationship because of his love and because he is God. He may punish Israel for disobedience and may chasten a whole generation for disbelief, yet the covenant remained in force simply because of Yahweh's nature.

Israel was bound to keep the covenantal requirement, not to put Yahweh in debt to Israel but to behave according to their new identity as Yahweh's people (Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush 120). Thus, Israel was called to retell the story of the covenant, the story of redemption. The retelling of the story of God was based on the love relationship between God and Israel, resulting in the well-being of his people.

I have discussed the importance of the act of retelling God's story in order to maintain a healthy relationship between God and his people. The action of retelling comes from within the community of faith, the people of God, generation after generation, for it is also their story. They should retell it by their words, actions, and deeds. In fact, they are called to live out the story; the people of God are the embodiment of his story. Both the Old and New Testaments contain large numbers of particular people who lived out the story of God in unique ways. I am limiting my discussion of the concept of the embodiment of the story to two figures: Hosea and Jesus. I believe that these characters embody this reality in a more dramatic way. In both I found sacrificial elements in the Old and New Testaments.

The Retelling of the Story in the Prophets

The prophets used the metaphor of marriage quite often to describe the relationship between God and his people, Israel. Central to this relationship was the dialogue of love (Hall 27). The love relationship in the life of ancient Israel was seen in the realm of marriage as well (Levenson 75). The prophet Hosea took the story of God and Israel to a deeper level. John D. Levenson correctly states in this sense:

> The career of Hosea testifies to a tradition in Israel to the effect that what happened on the mountain in the ancient days was the consummation of a romance, a marriage in which YHWH was the groom and Israel (although a man's name) was the bride. (76)

This story was embodied by Hosea's marriage relationship. The story of Hosea is in itself an enactment of the story of God with his people (Morgan 8; Chisholm 336; Smith 32). In this enactment, one ought not to think of Hosea as a solitary figure. He considered himself entirely linked to the chain of the prophets of Yahweh (Wolff 12). Embodying the story was not reserved for certain people. God called his people to embody and enact the story he was unfolding. Hosea was a unique example of this embodiment, requiring a fair amount of attention for the purpose of this work. God commanded Hosea to marry a woman whose reputation was questionable. Gomer was a prostitute who had borne children from her prostitution. The prophet Hosea symbolized YHWH, the God of Israel. His wife symbolized the nation of Israel during the time in which the prophet lived (Smith 45). Bruce C. Birch states, "Hosea's experience with Gomer is to become a metaphor for God's experience with Israel. Gomer's unfaithfulness to Hosea dramatizes Israel's unfaithfulness to the Lord" (20). In this case the story is the center of the message.

Moreover, the names of his three children carried three prophecies concerning the people of Israel. The first child was called *Jezreel*. Though the meaning of the name is God plants, it became associated with the violent event in the valley of Jezreel where Jehu viciously and selfishly punished and slaughtered the house of Omri and seized the throne of Israel for himself (2 Kings 9-10). Hosea preached that God's judgment on the dynasty of Jehu was largely because of the sin of idolatry; thus, Jezreel, the first son, was a walking reminder of Hosea's word from God. Jezreel was the fate of idolatrous Israel in any generation (Birch 21; Smith 47; Chishohn 340).

The second child was given the name *Lo-ruhamah*, which means "uncompassionate" (Brown, Driver, and Briggs 520). The term *compassion* is of high importance in prophetic literature, which characterizes God's care and regard for his people, particularly the northern

kingdom, Israel (Chisholm 431). In Hebrew, the noun is related to the word *womb*. It suggests

that the compassion of God encompasses and nurtures Israel as does the mother's womb for her

child. This child's name was scandalous to Israel: God would not have mercy on his people. The

time for forgiveness had passed and the time of punishment was approaching. The name of the

child was a public reminder of the reversal of divine mercy (Birch 21-22; Smith 47).

The third child was given the name *Lo-ammi*, which means not my people. In the making

of the covenant, God offered Israel the opportunity to become his own treasured people (Exod.

19:5-6). Israel understood that its identity as God's people was based on the closeness of the

covenant relationship. The name of the third child of Hosea functioned as God's announcement

of the undoing of such a relationship. This child was a living reminder that the covenant was

undone. God declared the covenant void because of Israel's sin, and Israel was rejected (Birch

22; Morgan 10).

The relationship between the prophet and his wife represented the larger picture of God's

story with Israel. The prophet had lived with the pain of rejection. His wife had run away with

her lover, and Hosea had to bring her back. This act of restoration is recorded in Hosea 3.

Chapter 2 speaks of God, who restores his people and calls them *Ammi* instead of *Lo-ammi*. The

order of these two chapters is important; God pledged forgiveness to his people and then to the

prophet. The implication is that this forgiveness did not come naturally. Those who experienced

God's forgiveness would, in turn, forgive others (Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush 262).

The prophet preached a sermon on love and forgiveness based on his own life

experiences. His life's story became the message of God for his people. The prophet was called

to bear a cross. Hosea came to understand the heart of God as he lived out his own story. He

experienced the suffering heart and redemptive love of God when the people of God sinned: "He

was admitted, through the mystery of his own tragedy, into a comprehension of what the sin of the nation meant against the heart of God" (Morgan 11). Living out the story took the people of God into a deeper understanding of their relationship with him. Hosea's obedience of God led him to drink a bitter cup. Lasor wrote poetically about the meaning of this story: "His home was his Gethsemane. In bending to a will not his own, he not only left a poignant illustration of divine love but prepared the way for the One who perfectly embodied this Love" (Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush 262). This illustration is a powerful example of the purpose of one narration.

Jesus Christ fully embodied the story of God and Israel. Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman, III see the strong connection between the book of Hosea and the Gospel of Matthew. They base this connection on Hosea's words, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son" (11:1), which matches the prophecy in Matthew 2:15 that speaks of the return of Jesus from his short sojourn in Egypt. The story of Jesus should be viewed through the lens of belief in the New Testament: "Jesus was the righteous Son of God who, unlike the Israelites, was obedient to His heavenly Father. Thus, much of the Gospels, particularly the Gospel of Matthew, are a reflection of the book of Exodus" (362). While referring to Matthew's Gospel, John R. W. Stott says that Jesus' identity as the Son of God connotes Israel. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was called the son of God, both through God's activities and his firstborn, the object of God's fatherly love (Ladd 159).

Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1, which originally is found in Exodus, as being applied to Jesus. In his opening chapter, Mathew presents Jesus as the one who steps into the shoes of Israel. Jesus repeated the experience of Israel. After he was rescued from Herod, the hostile king, Jesus was called out of Egypt. He then passed through water into the wilderness of the temptation and eventually to the mountain where the word of God was heard. However, the

difference of the experiences is great. Whereas Israel failed in the wilderness (Deut. 8:5), Jesus succeeded; whereas Israel received the word of God, the Son spoke it (Stott 43; Thielman 95-96). The parallels are quite clear. Jesus took upon himself the role of Israel in order to reform the people of God. Jesus claimed the story of God and Israel for himself; thus, the story of God and Israel became his own story. Jesus' story is also the continuation of ancient Israel. Donald Senior maintains that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, of God's past promises to Israel, and as the inaugurator of the kingdom of God (29). In Matthew, Jesus is presented as having deep roots in the Old Testament.

Matthew explores the vital relationship between Jesus' life and the history and hope of God's historic engagement with Israel. By locating the beginning of Jesus' biography (1) in the identification of Jesus in relation to David and Abraham (1:1), (2) in his rehearsal of Jesus' ancestry as a Jew (1:2-17), and (3) in the affirmation of Jesus' status as the Jewish Messiah and Son of God (chs. 1-2), Matthew avers that the event of Jesus' career cannot be understood adequately apart from the grand story of God's interaction with and promises to Israel (Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson 89). Matthew's concern with Jesus' relationship to ancient Israel springs from his concern for the church's identity. For Matthew, the community around Jesus was solely the continuation of the story of God's people.

The changes the Gospel wrought should not be seen as a betrayal of Jewish tradition but as a fulfillment of Jewish Scripture and a continuation of God's people (Thielman 84). The fundamental coherence between Israel and the church is seen via the biography of Jesus. The most obvious level of such continuity is guaranteed by the gathering and teaching of his disciples and even more so by the narrative episodes of the resurrection and appearance of Jesus in Matthew (Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson 90). Thus, the embodiment and the continuity of

God's story that Jesus took upon himself was to reform the people of God into a new reality, the kingdom of God. The legitimacy of Jesus being the embodiment of God's story positioned him in conflict with the leaders of the religious institution of Israel because they assumed such right as belonging to the nation of Israel under their leadership. In the person of Jesus and his words, actions, and identity, he proposed a new and true embodiment of the story; thus, he challenged the people of Israel and provided opportunities for them to align with or against him, which ultimately means aligning with or against God.

The Story in Mark's Gospel

The continuation of Israel through Jesus did not go smoothly. The narratives of the Gospels present Jesus as the one who had great conflict with the leaders of Israel. Mark 12:1-11 shares a parable in Jesus' own words, and along with Mark's comment on it in verse 12, they sum up the entire story of continuation and conflict. In verse 1, Mark mentions that Jesus began speaking to them—chief priests, scribes, and elders—in parables. Jesus then continued to speak a parable to his hearers. Verse 12 makes this variation clear: "They understood that He spoke the parable against them." In his commentary, Ralph Earle alludes to the variation between verse 1 and verse 12 concerning the number of parables (142). He refers to the Gospel of Matthew in order to prove that Jesus indeed spoke more than one parable on this particular occasion, but he fails to mention the reason why Mark chose to present his account in such a way.

The parable is a story that aims to teach religious truth. It is usually fictitious. Parables communicate a theological truth. Jesus drew his parables from nature and the domestic, social, and political life of his time (Taylor 495). Narratives, in general, and Mark's narrative, in particular, do well in three areas. Narratives encourage their audiences with a sense of affinity and identification with the central character(s). In the Gospel of Mark, the reader is invited from

the very beginning to side with Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Juel 39). Narratives are capable

of indicating strong interrelations in the many factors that shape the experiences of humans in

concrete life situations. Narratives also work in drawing the audience into their world so the

shared values, imagination, and views of the audience might be undergirded or challenged

(Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson 124).

All three functions are present in the parable of the wicked tenants, although the second

function is not presented as strongly as the first and third. The second function is at work behind

the scenes of the parable. The attitude and position of the chief priests, scribes, and elders are

shaped by the religious institution of Israel and its understanding of the coming role of the

Messiah. The other two functions are strongly presented and interwoven within the material of

the parable. In the telling of the parable of the wicked tenants, drawn from the material in Isaiah

5, in addition to speaking of the unfaithfulness of the leaders of Israel, Jesus brings himself into

the picture.

The entire story of God, Israel, and Jesus is captured in these few verses. Jesus, as the

Son of God, not only assumes the role of Israel, but he also brings to his role and identity a new

meaning to the story, thereby challenging the worldview of his hearers. Israel thought of itself as

the chosen people of God, and such an election served as security for Israel. The inner plot of the

parable shows the following:

> The tenants, however, turn out to be not only the objects of the messengers'
> journey but also the opponents of the plan; this precipitates the tragic nature of the
> inner story, the fact that its conclusion will carry a sad irony. (N. Wright, The
> New Testament and the People of God. 74)

Jesus speaks of the fate of the tenants based on their acts/attitudes: "Within the scope of the

parable the inevitable consequences of rejection of the son were decisive, catastrophic judgment"

(W. Lane 419). Jesus' words of judgment are highlighted in verse 9. The element of judgment

serves as a futuristic aspect of the story that the hearers applied to themselves: "The parable therefore stands on its own feet as a dramatic story, inviting a judgment from the hearers, and the application of the judgment is clear enough without any allegorizing of details" (Dodd 130-31). The hearers of the parable understood its implications and were challenged by it. Jesus told the parable hoping that the hearers would take sides and decide whether they were aligned with God's plan, being unfolded through the Son, or were in opposition to his plan. In order to reach this desired end, Jesus "deliberately appealed to Isaiah 5:1f. to force His hearers to draw the conclusion that the parable concerned their abuse of the position they had assumed. It was told for the purpose of being understood, and Mark underscores this fact in verse 12" (W. Lane 417). The identification with Jesus is seen both positively and negatively. Verse 12 says that the chief priests, scribes, and elders could not seize Jesus because they feared the people. The implication is that the people in the temple (i.e., the audiences for Jesus' action and teachings Mark 11:18 and consequently the secondary audiences of the teaching of the parable) had identified themselves with Jesus. The negative identification is embodied in the attitude and position of the leaders who represented the entire nation of Israel and that led them to kill Jesus through Gentile executioners. Therefore, God punished them by destroying Jerusalem in AD 70. Their spiritual privileges were given to the new people of God, the Church. Siding with Jesus was based on the historicity of the events.

In drawing a moral lesson from this parable, Earle writes, "But do not miss the lesson of warning for men today. They have a vineyard to tend. They must render the proper fruits to the Owner of the vineyard, who will expect them in due season" (144). The story of God is not an imaginary folktale drawn from the folklore of a group of people without a place or time. One of the unique features of the story of God is that it indeed happened in time and space. God entered

the history of humankind and made history. The story of God is recorded as the Scripture of the

Holy Bible. The recording of the story cannot be perceived as pure history in the modem sense,

which is based on observation and is recorded as objectively as possible. The Scripture is the

record of the story as seen through the lens of God's redemptive intervention on behalf of his

people. For the limitation of this study, my discussion of the record of the story is restricted to

the work of Luke.

Luke's Report

In his two-volume narrative, Luke aimed to present the timeline of the history of the

people of God that must pass through the person of Jesus and his disciples. The purpose of his

historical presentation was to strengthen the Christian movement in the face of opposition. He

called them to continuous fidelity as well as to be witnesses by their service to the kingdom of

God, thereby making Luke's focus ecclesiological. He was concerned with the history and

practice that defined the community of the people of God and provided an invitation to

participate in the redemptive acts of God.

Luke's emphasis on God's purpose served his interests in the identity of that community

along with the interpretation of events and Scripture. The coherence between the redemptive aim

of God and the ministry of Jesus Christ was of utmost importance to the identity of the Christian

community (Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson 149-50). Therefore, Luke claimed to have the

correct interpretation of "things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by

those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (Luke 1: lb-2). Joel

B. Green defends the dynamic of communicating truth in narrative:

> In narrative, the narrator is typically concerned to communicate that his or her
> version of the story is "true." For a work like Luke's, this was accomplished with
> reference to firsthand knowledge of the subject matter through intimacy with the
> tradition as well as research and/or personal experience. (*Gospel of Luke* 34)

Moving in the same direction, Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson say, "In fact, it is not too much to say that Luke's narrative both expresses and itself engaged in a battle of interpretation. Who understands God's purpose? Who interprets the Scriptures faithfully?" (150). Luke saw that the event of Jesus was rooted in the ancient covenant with Abraham and the promise of a Messiah through the lineage of David. Jesus' ministry was wholly according to the promise and intention of God.

In the prologue of his first volume, which is similar to the prologue of the second, Luke indicates that the purpose of his writing was to present the exact truth about the things that were "accomplished among us" (Luke 1:1). The way Luke prefaced the prologue (1:1-4) indicates that his work differs in genre from that of Matthew, Mark, and John. According to N. T. Wright:

> His [Luke's] formal and rounded prologue (1:1-4) evokes the literary openings of several works of the Hellenistic period, including, interestingly, two of Josephus' books. He is intending this book to be placed ... within the general world of serious Hellenistic writing, not least history-writing. (The New Testament and the People of God, 378)

Luke's narrative places his work in the historical genre of his time, which was dominated by the influence of Hellenistic writing. Sharon H. Ringe calls Luke's prologue a statement of purpose and method much the same as the common statements found in other historical and scientific work found at the time when Luke composed his work. Ringe argues that the function of the prologue is not an academic exercise but an accurate presentation and interpretation of the event of Jesus (16). Frank Thielman believes that Luke's purpose was to assure recent converts, such as Theophilus, of the certainty of the faith to which they had adhered (111).

Commenting on the matter of truth found in Luke's prologue, Green, Ringe, and Thielman see that the purpose of Luke's writing is not an academic exercise of a historical

presentation. Based on the element of truth or certainty, Green draws a strong relationship

between narration and proclamation:

> Luke himself raises the question of "truth" or "certainty," and suggests that a primary ingredient that will lead to certainty for Theophilus is the order of the narrative. Luke's purpose was apparently not to provide an historical foundation for the Christian message. Subsequent writers have struggled with the relationship between kerygma and history, but this does not seem to have been Luke's problem. For him, the narrative is not the basis of proclamation; rather, narrative is proclamation. For Luke, an "orderly account" is concerned above all with persuasion. He has "ordered" the events of his narrative so as to bring out their significance, to persuade Theophilus—who is not so much concerned with the issue, Did it happen? as with queries, What happened? and What does it all mean? By providing a more complete accounting of Jesus in his significance, Luke hopes to encourage active faith. (*Gospel of Luke* 36)

In Green's book *Gospel of Luke*, the discussion of the issue of the narrative's function centers on

proclamation. In other words, narrative's purpose is not to report history but through persuasive

interpretation to proclaim the good news of God's works in Jesus (19). The overarching purpose

of Luke was to encourage the community of faith. Therefore, he presented an account that goes

beyond mere historical presentation. Henry J. Cadbury argues that the genre of Luke's Gospel is

not history, though it is nearer to history than biography. He sees Luke's Gospel as a *story* that

was shaped by a tradition and less of Luke's own composition (127-39). However, based on his

prologue and the genre of the writings, Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson classify Luke's work

as historiography.

Historiography could be understood as the science that makes stories about how

humankind has made history over time, especially if one takes into account that the methods,

forms, objects of study, and interests have changed in every age and space (Ruiz 12). Referring

to the concern with the truth residing in Luke's interpretation, Green argues that "historiography

imposes significance on the past already by its choice of events to record to order as well as by

its inherent effort to postulate for those events an end and/or origin" (*The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*.19-20).

In general, historical writing has a broader set of purposes than recording events in the form of a chronicle: "With historiography, four interrelated benefits of the past are put forward: validation, continuity, identity, and pedagogy" (Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson 152). These four elements were accomplished by indicating that the story of the church (the community of faith), as presented in the book of Acts, was written into the story of Jesus Christ, and the story of Jesus Christ was written into the story of Israel. These three stories are written into the story of God's ancient purpose for his people. The result is a seamless continuous story of articulation and realization of God's plan. Luke's narrative draws a uninterrupted line from the Scripture of Israel through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The line continues from Jesus to the community of faith. In so doing, Luke gives the community of faith continuity with Israel and provides for people at church an identity within the redemptive purpose of God. Thus, Luke teaches his audiences concerning their new identity and how they ought to live (153).

Though these four benefits of historiography are accomplished through the work of Luke, he presents them on one single occasion: the sermon Stephen uttered as recorded in Acts 7. Before he was stoned, Stephen preached a sermon in narrative form commencing with the calling of Abraham by God. He highlighted the important events throughout the history of Israel up to the building of Solomon's Temple. By so doing, the elements of vitality and continuity were established. In verse 52, Stephen related the entire story to the person of Jesus Christ and brought the opponents into the picture. Luke relates the story in the world of the narrative itself (Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*,6). The identity of Jesus, the community of faith (represented by Stephen himself), and the opponents were emphasized. The pedagogical element

was established alongside the application. He made the application of his story in a story of Jesus and his opponents (Bruce 151-52).

Using Stephen's words, Luke brings the application of the event to the present time—here and now. The redemptive purpose of God comes to realization and completion in the event of Jesus Christ and the mission of the church. The historicity of the story of God, the Bible, was created by the fact that God entered into the history of his people. The story was formed though his actions. Thus, I argue that if the story is the action of God, then he becomes the central character of his own story. The cumulative events of the story revolve around him, by which his character and will are revealed.

The Central Character of the Story: God

W. T. Purkiser, Richard S. Taylor, and William H. Taylor write, "New Testament thought, just as Old Testament thought, is theocentric. God is both the Subject and the Object of the written Record. He is the principal Actor in the story" (207). Similarly, Green writes,

> If the 'main character' of the Bible is God, then it is God himself and God's purpose that unifies the Old and the New" 187 Students of the Scripture cannot understand Jesus and the significance of His mission if they have no realization that God is the author of Jesus' story. ((Re-)Turn" 24)

The entire Bible, then, is YHWH-centric. Therefore, knowing the main character of the Bible is of utmost importance in the preaching of Jesus.

Ancient Israel did not understand God in philosophical and ontological concepts, which are based on observation and contemplation. In discussing the nature of Israel's worship, William Sanford Lasor, David Alian Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush write that the Israelites "knew Him from their experiences with Him. God had delivered them from Egypt and, consequently, demanded their complete devotion. Their faith was the result of an experience and not the conclusion of abstract logic" (119). Brevard S. Childs takes the argument even deeper

than the mere forming of faith of the Israelites. He focuses on the identity of God revealed

through His work in history. Childs writes, "Israel learned of God's identity through His active

intervention in history for His people which evoked faith (Exodus 14:31)" (*Biblical Theology of*

the Old and New Testaments 352). The identity of God revealed through his work is the

foundation of the faith of his people. Therefore, understanding the person of God is the best

theological foundation for narrative preaching. In other words, understanding God through

examining his actions and purpose for his people will provide a solid foundation for narrative

preaching.

The question that naturally surfaces in this discussion concerns how God makes himself

known. The knowledge of God resides in his own initiatives. Humans cannot know God through

their own efforts. Writing in opposition to those who hold to revelation in nature, Childs

responds, "To say that God reveals Himself in His creation is not to say that God is known

through nature. To try to discover God by scanning the sun and the moon can just as easily lead

to idolatry and superstition" (*Old Testament in a Canonical Context* 31). Childs argues that God

is known through creation. The Bible does not speak of God who was and then acted, "but of

God who makes known His nature and will in His action" (31). The identity of God cannot be

separated from his action. The biblical understanding of the person of God is in the way he acts.

The being of God is equal to the action of God. Childs argues that God revealed himself in

creation, wisdom, history, and name. These four elements are found in the historical narrative of

the Bible that centers on God (28-33). The revelation of God in the narrative recorded in the

Bible and the text of both New and Old Testaments encompasses disclosure in creation, wisdom,

history, and name. The biblical record is the revelation of God. The revelation of God in history

is based on the text of the Bible. Sailhamer rightly argues for such a position:

A text-oriented approach to the OT would insist that the locus of God's revelation is in the Scriptures themselves, the text. There is no reason to discount the fact that God has made known His will in other ways at other times. But, given the theological priority of an inspired text (2 Timothy 3:16), one must see in the text of Scripture itself the locus of God's revelation today. Thus, on the question of God's revelation in history, the sense of history in a text-oriented approach would be that of the record of past events. The history in which God makes known his will is the recorded history in the text of Scripture. When formulated this way, evangelical biblical theology is based on revelation that consists of the meaning of a text, with its focus on Scripture as written document. (16-17)

The narrative of God, then, is the text of the Bible. Consequently, the question that should be asked concerns the content of the Bible about God.

The book of Deuteronomy provides an excellent synopsis of God's purpose and action for Israel. It contains many influential thoughts for both Jews and Christians. The dominant theological thoughts are related to God's action in history. His action is his story and the story of his people. The picture of a God who acts is presented in the book of Genesis through the stories of creation, the flood, and the covenant with Abraham. The same is seen in the story in Exodus where God overcomes Pharaoh and his army. The action of God became the basis for the book's point of view.

The instruction of Moses to the Israelites related to God's claim on them both before and after they entered the Promised Land. Moses reminded them of all that God had done for and on behalf of them in order to ensure their future behavior in the Promised Land. Moses said, "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him?" (Deut. 4:7). Such a question required the answer, "None." God's action is related to his commandment of not making any graven image, drawn from the experience of the Israelites at the foot of Mount Horeb:

And when you look up to the heavens and see the sun, the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, do not be led astray and bow down to them and serve them, things which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples everywhere under

heaven. But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron-smelter, out of Egypt, to become a people of His very own possession, as you are now. (Deut. 4:19-24)

God created the sun and moon for all people, but his work of deliverance from Egypt was on behalf of Israel.

The concept that God actually enters into history is a unique doctrine not found in any other religion or the literature of ancient people. The God of creation and the God of the covenant led his people out of Egypt, gave them the Law, and provided for their needs (Lasor, Hubbard and Bush 119-20). Israel must never forget Yahweh's story with them; forgetting has dire consequences. The story of God's intervention on behalf of Israel is the story of their birth and identity. The identity of Israel is rooted in the identity of God. God made clear the obligations of his people dwelling in the land of Canaan. He spoke of the past, present, and future, which formed the concept of history in relation to the church. God's action in the time of Abraham is not merely a lesson for the Church today. His action determines the future relationship of the community of faith with him. God has revealed the nature of his ongoing activity by which he will fulfill his redemptive purpose. The basic conviction of the biblical writers was that God interacts in human history to fulfill his saving purpose (Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush 125; Lodahl 17).

The biblical concept of history is unlike the Muslim concept of Kismet, the fatalism of Islam. Kismet is the predetermination by Allah of the fate and history of the people. The biblical view of history is not even close to that of karma, the deterministic cause and effect of Hinduism and Buddhism. God created every individual with a free will; therefore, each is responsible for choices made. God is pictured as One who, at times, becomes frustrated with human activity, but in the end his purpose prevails. He brought his people out of Egypt in spite of opposition from

Pharaoh. He led his people through the wilderness to the Promised Land despite the unbelief of many. He gave victory to his people and turned curses into blessings. God wrote history through his mighty acts and "to God's people, history becomes His story" (Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush 125).

God's actions in history are the story of his redemption. Nevertheless, the climactic point of the New Testament story is the cross. Jesus' coming "was a historical event which was the climax of God's working since the creation. All former history had its goal in Him because God had so directed it" (N. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God,* 56). Luke's two volumes are classified as historiography. The Gospel of Luke is a narrative drawn on words from the Old Testament. This continuity is linked with the history of God's actions and centers on a God who governs all. His purpose prevails even over the opposition of kings and other rulers. He is known as the Savior/my Savior. God has entered into the history of humankind. The external indicator of the purpose of God is shown in the text, "The Evangelist uses a constellation of terms to express God's design— 'purpose,' 'it is necessary,' 'to determine,' and others" (Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson 150). These words indicates that the actions of God prevails over any authority.

God has accomplished his purpose through the Spirit-anointed ministry of Jesus. In both *Jesus and the Victory of God*, N. Wright states that central to Jesus' ministry is the "kingdom of God, and, in Jesus, God declares the end of the spiritual exile. God has returned to His people and declared Himself their King, the Royal Messiah" (*Jesus* 489-98; *Challenge* 34-53). Wright makes strong use of the parable of the Prodigal Son, found only in the Gospel of Luke, to indicate that in Jesus' ministry God's purpose was accomplished. The return to God provided the community of faith its identity. They became the renewed people of God (*Challenge* 43).

The emphasis of Luke on God's divine purpose served as his understanding of the mission of church. "The Christian community struggled with its own identity, the coherence between God's aim and the ministry of God" (Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson 150). In the Gospel of Luke, through the work of Jesus Christ, God completed his ancient purpose for his people. This completion was presented as narrative and, as such, provided a strong invitation to God's people for discipleship by aligning themselves with Jesus' mission (Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke,* 22-36). The Church should take on the mission of Jesus Christ and become a transforming agent in the world by inviting others to enter into God's purpose.

I have examined the presentation of action in the Old Testament, gleaning information from the book of Deuteronomy. God worked through this story; the author called the people of God to keep the story alive in order to keep their relationship alive. For all generations, this relationship with God is built on this story. In the New Testament, my presentation came from the Gospel of Luke. The story of God reached its culmination in the coming of Jesus. The people of God are called to embrace the story of Jesus, for it is the story of God and must become their story.

The story of God is an element woven throughout the entire Bible. It is recorded through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspired all authors as they wrote the individual books of the Bible. In fact, the true authorship of Scripture should be attributed to the Holy Spirit; however, one cannot deny that the human element was present. God still calls people to be part of this story. The drama of God continues to unfold and move toward the culmination of time. Believers are called not to sit as spectators but to take an active role in this drama. The community of faith is the story of God. The Church participates in the story of God through its proclamation and incarnating the life of Christ.

The Narrative Sermon

Narrative preaching stands on a firm, biblical theology of what the pulpit is and what the pulpit does. While the narrative sermon is not the be-all and end-all of pulpit proclamation, it is a very powerful form that should be appreciated and practiced from the sacred desk. Not all sermons should be preached in the narrative style, but a greater number of them should be. In this chapter would be helpful, first, to define narrative preaching. What is it and what is it not? Next, this research will define the value of narrative preaching. What are some precautions when preaching narratively? Afterwards, chapter two will look to the types of narrative preaching. There are several different models of narrative presentation, and explaining what they are will give the student more resources and options when it comes time to enter the homiletical side of sermon preparation. To see how they work from the pulpit, the chapter will examine how these different types would look if applied to a particular passage of Scripture.

A Definition of the Narrative Sermon

In this chapter, it would be helpful, first, to define narrative preaching by clarifying what narrative preaching is not: "Narrative preaching is not telling a string of stories threaded together while assuming that the audience will comprehend it. Narrative preaching is not an extended illustration tucked away in a three point precept-driven sermon" (Jimenez 25). Finally, narrative preaching is not a chance for a pastor to attempt acting. Preaching is not Sunday morning at the movies. Pastors are not performers, dramatists, or entertainers. They must not get in the way of their message. Congregants must never leave the preaching event mumbling, "We're not sure what the sermon's point was, but it sure was entertaining!"

I define a narrative sermon as a biblical message in a preaching event that employs the use of story and plot to communicate inductively the author's main thought of what would

ordinarily be a biblical narrative. Narrative preaching deals with words such as tension,

induction, and resolution. Several authors have contributed their own definitions of the narrative

sermon. Calvin Miller says, "The narrative sermon, rather than containing stories, is a story,

which from outset to conclusion binds the entire sermon to a single plot as theme" ("Narrative

Preaching" 103). In Miller's understanding, there may be subplots or other deductive principles,

but they are encompassed by a story line. The narrative message, Miller says, begins with "once-

upon-a-time" and ends with "happily ever after" (103).

Eugene L. Lowry uses a crisper word than just story; he emphasizes plot. In movies,

plays, or novels, something is off-kilter, something needs to be fixed. In communications there is

a tension or disequilibrium,"and the author or the playwright had the responsibility, or in this

case, the preacherdoes, to bring resolution:

> Likewise, a sermon is a plot (premeditated by the preacher) which has as its key
> ingredient a sensed discrepancy, a homiletical bind. Something is "up in the
> air"—an issue is not resolved. Like any good storyteller, the preacher's task is to
> "bring the folk's home"—that is, resolve matters in the light of the Gospel and in
> the presence of the people. Plot! This is the key term for a reshaped image of the
> sermon. Preaching is storytelling. A sermon is narrative art form. (*Doing Time* 15)

In Lowry's view, the narrative sermon may not necessarily involve a narrative passage from the

Bible, but the sermon itself must contain a plot:

> A *narrative sermon* is any sermon in which the arrangement of ideas takes the
> form of a plot involving a strategic delay of the preacher's meaning. Typically,
> narrative preaching will embody a story- like process, moving from opening
> conflict, through complication, toward a peripeteia or reversal of decisive turn,
> resulting in a denouement or resolution of thought and experience. This plotted
> movement, nuanced differently depending on the particular text, theme, and
> sermonic purpose is shaped toward maximizing a growing sense of expectancy
> and culminates in the final experience of the sermon on the part of the listeners.
> Such a sermon may or may not actually involve any particular story. (Willimon
> and Lischer 342)

Preachers can note that in a sermon they always find any kind of plot.

Although Fred B. Craddock does not define it as a narrative sermon, he explains the inductive process as a story where the preacher recreates or retells the journey taken to arrive at the sermon's big idea. He argues that the preacher has gone through the exhausting journey to arrive at the main point:

> Why not take the congregation through this journey? Why not on Sunday morning retrace the inductive trip he took earlier and see if his hearers come to that same conclusion? It hardly seems cricket for the minister to have a week's head-start (assuming he studied all week), which puts him psychologically, intellectually, and emotionally so far out front that usually even his introduction is already pregnant with conclusions. It is possible for him to re-create imaginatively the movement of his own thought whereby he came to that conclusion. (*Preaching* 57)

Finally, Haddon W. Robinson says that a narrative sermon is much like a three-act play. He says, "First, get your hero up a tree. Then put a bear underneath the tree. Finally, get your hero down out of a tree—if you can" (*Biblical Sermons* 82). This is also an example of sermon plot.

The Value of the Narrative Sermon

The narrative sermon is a very powerful way to communicate God's Word for several reasons. First, it helps communicate the intent of Scripture in a way that parallels how the author wrote. If the passage is narrative, the expositor can move toward making the preaching of that passage narrative. The preacher should let the homiletics of the sermon reflect the genre of the passage. This practice is not an absolute norm, yet it is sensible. It forces the preacher to consider a variety of vehicles in which to carry the big idea and frees the preacher from boring preparation. Many minutes (hours) have been wasted while the preacher tries to alliterate that third point. A preacher should value which is more important: rhyming words or sharing "truth through personality" It is not important for the audience to learn the preacher's alliterative outlines but to track the preacher's thought process. The narrative sermon parallels the narrative

passage until it hits the author's intended meaning headfirst. As Grant R. Osborne explains about

the relationship between hermeneutics and structure :

> Biblical narratives contain theology, and … there are principles or themes that are intended for the reader. At the same time, however, they are still primarily stories and therefore should be proclaimed as such. If the task of the preacher is always to enable the hearers to be drawn into the world of the text and to feel its evocative power, this is doubly true of narrative, for which this is its primary purpose. (172)

When Osborne says that "biblical narratives contain theology," he means that biblical narratives

are written with a theological intention. God wants the reader to understand the theological truth

the narrative carries.

Another value of the narrative sermon is its ability to involve listeners. God's people

have gathered on Sunday morning to embark on a tour of his kingdom. As the listeners open his

word, the preacher explain it in such a way as to reveal the awe and majesty of God for what it

really is. The narrative sermon involves listeners by inviting them to join the speaker on an

unforgettable trip to a kingdom not of this world.

I want to mention an example of this listener involvement. The next narration in an

example of the language that preachers can use to add suspense in their preaching: Once upon a

time there was place where people lived and talked and shared life. And the land where they

lived was filled with clouds. When they talked, it was dull and sleepy and gray. But there was

one person who lived in the land and sometimes showed up when people talked. One minute, a

mother would be speaking to a child at night before bed, and suddenly, this person would appear

and begin to speak. Every time he spoke ears would perk up, eyes would lighten up and bodies

would lean forward. This happened all over the land. It happened between mothers and their

children. It happened between old men and young boys. It happened between school teachers and

students. He would magically appear, speak colorfully, and suddenly leave. And when he

appeared, he was like a candle in a dark room. Nothing else was noticed nor heard, only him. Out of nowhere this happened, and it happened everywhere: over the neighbor's fence, in the barber's shop, and occasionally in a preacher's sermon. Who is this wonderful, magical, and mystical guest? Well, his name is Story.

Lowry calls this type of narration the "drama of discovery" (*The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*. The "complexity of causality" moves the speaker to explore "dead end clues" until the "decisive one is disclosed" (41. The journey is the key to the destination.

A third benefit to the narrative pulpit is how it facilitates change in the lives of those who listen. Preaching must be more than informational; it must be transformational. This characteristic does not mean inserting sharp illustrations within a three-point, propositional format. Rather, it means using narrative as a vehicle to help the listeners realize God's truth in a way that would be prevented otherwise. Narrative slips behind the listener's defenses in stealth and implants God's Word in a way that does not come across as authoritarian or heavy-handed (Lowry, *Doing Time* 69-74). Certainly, for instance, Nathan's parable of the slain lamb comes to mind as he told this story to King David to make him realize the seriousness of his sin. Through story, truth is easily invited into the heart of the hearer. Once the door of communication is closed, it is too late. "Thou are the man!" The expositor should remember, Nathan was not trying to be clever or cute. His purpose was neither to lecture nor weave tales. His role was spiritual—to lead King David toward the path of repentance:

> When we listen to a story we think we are attending to some fictional life out there; we are swept into the plot without our defenses up. Then we discover that it is *our* [original emphasis] life that is being displayed and addressed—but alas it is too late to prevent hearing. (68)

The narration of the Old Testament brings to the preacher many examples of ways to preach the story.

Belden C. Lane reminds to the preacher that through story, the speaking event appeals to the right brain instead of the left: "As the sun of the twenty-first century peeks upon the landscape of the earth, it sees an accelerated world. Our left-sided brains want computers with larger hard drivers, bigger RAM sizes, and record-breaking giga-speeds." The faster they make them, the more people want them. The left brain says, "Just give me the stuff!" It hollers,. "Get on with it!" all the while the right brain starves. It pleads, "No! Take me on the path that Abraham walked with Isaac. Tell me what they said the night before while staring at the campfire. Don't show me the ram in the thicket too soon!"

B. Lane says that too often the sermon outlines "tame God right out of the story." A lack of speed does not necessitate a lack of interest but a lack of story will. A fourth value of narrative preaching is the way in which it relates to culture. People groups from diverse eras and locations possess their stories. B. Lane tells of the Jewish rabbis who taught that storytelling has a spirit or a soul called *dabar*. *Dabar* is a living event—"the word that travels through the air to do what it was meant to do." Rabbis define in this way story telling.

I once heard the Gospel of Mark presented by a Christian dramatist. By my own definition and the performer's admission, this practice was not narrative preaching, yet it was *dabar*. For almost two hours, I felt transported to another world as Mark's Gospel was quoted and reenacted in the *Reina Valera* Version. The presenter made this reading a point to say how the *Reina Valera* Version was an oral version of the Bible. It was written for the ear, not for the eye.

B. Lane moves through the history of the desert fathers, the Middle Ages, Luther's Table Talk, John Bunyan's "tickling the fish to snare them," and finally into the pubs where Tolkein and Lewis told wild fascinating stories of Narnia and the Hobbit. In other words, narrative preaching is not a modern communication fad. It is rooted in Bible, history, and contemporary culture. As moviemakers release anywhere from two to three major motion pictures every week, now is the time to let Story speak on Sunday morning:

> Literally, thousands of new novels, movies, plays, and teleplays are released every year. All of these proclaim our age as the age of the story! In such a story-soak adage, the narrative sermon will naturally find a cultural acceptance which the precept-oriented or the exegesis sermon might never find. Typical congregations nourished on years of television, dramas and popular video releases have been groomed to relate to the narrative sermon. (Miller, "Narrative Preaching" 104)

People at church thinks in images they perceive life like videos.

This observation leads to a fifth value of the narrative sermon: the use of narrative and metaphor to engage audience attention more effectively. Since contemporary culture is story-soaked, such saturation has bred impatient and childlike attention spans. The speaker has perhaps three minutes to convince the listener that what is about to be said is worth hearing: "Story snags interest and, like a child who will not be ignored, it grasps the parent's chin and pulls the face straight with the face of the narrator" (Miller, "Narrative Preaching" 104).

This point leads to a final benefit of the narrative sermon: its ability to be preached extemporaneously and the power of such approach. Andres Lopez, a Colombian comedian, through his stories about daily life gets his listeners to live the reality of B. Lane's power of story ("Pelota de letras, Llegar a amarte"). I agree with Ralph L. and Gregg Lewis and David L. Larsen that the inductive/deductive combination is ideal in the narrative experience, but if Colombian preachers apply Lopez's oral skill to certain biblical passages, they will certainly

agree that in Genesis, the story of how Joseph revealed himself to his brother needs to relive the drama and emotion of that unveiling before moving onto lessons about grace and forgiveness. Because it is story, it is easier to remember and thus should be preached note-free. "Extemporaneous preaching is thinking in the presence of the audience which evidences a preacher's involvement with his people and at the same time encourages their involvement with him in the thinking process of his inductive sermon" (Lewis and Lewis 153).

Cautions of the Narrative Sermon

Having extolled the virtues of narrative preaching, there are some precautions to consider. Narrative preaching is a powerful form of pulpit communication. Narrative sermons can have some possible weaknesses or ways in which it can be misused. First, and most obviously, in any form of pulpit address, the narrative sermon is weakened when the preacher improperly interprets the biblical pericope. Walter C. Kaiser's warning to preachers stresses the danger of drifting toward some extremes in preparation for narrative preaching. The narrative experience is not an oral recount of a running commentary: Something happened and then something else, followed by a third thing. Kaiser calls this extreme the "Ebionite" drift in narrative preaching. It is a "dry, detached, [and] so-called scholarly" method (203). I Consider Kaiser's humorous, Ebionite example of Jack and Jill:

> Verse 1: Jack and Jill went up the hill, to fetch a pail of water. The word "and" presents some difficulties which are not apparent to the casual reader. There is considerable doubt in the minds of most scholars as to whether Jack was actually accompanied by Jill in the sense that the phrase is intended to record an historical event. In the setting out upon this expedition, which was apparently undertaken for a specific purpose, or, at least, with some definite object in mind, it seems likely that Jack was stimulated to undertake his mission by a basic need for water. Since most functions in the home involving water, such as cooking, washing clothes, scrubbing floors, etc., are normally undertaken by the distaff side, it is widely held that the force of "and" in this context probably means that Jack set out with a strong picture image of Jill in his mind, and several existentialist

> scholars also insist that her parting words were undoubtedly ringing in his ears. (200)

Kaiser assures that this kind of narrative preaching goes on in pulpits today.

Another drift is what he calls "Docetic":

> If the Ebionite method errs in exposing every skeletal bone in the preaching event, the Docetic drift denies that any bones exist at all. That is, the historical dimensions of the text are rejected and jettisoned in favor of allegorizing. (199)

This kind of preaching focuses more on the moral of the story. Whether Christ actually arose is beside the point. The importance is that his teaching and his Spirit or legend lives on. Osborne refers to Hans Frei's realistic reading of narrative:

> For Frei the narrative *is* [original emphasis] its meaning; there should be no search for the event behind the text, but only a close reading of the text itself. Yet this fails to do justice to the texts themselves. Frei fails because the event itself— its historicity and time-space reality—is the launching pad against which the sermon's rocket thrusts. (164)

The Biblical text guides and controls all the process of the exegesis.

Larsen infers that the Gospel writers did not intend for the colt of Christ's triumphal entry to be symbolic of people's lives. The title of that sermon should not be**,** "Who is driving you today" (176). The big idea of a narrative sermon must reflect authorial ; otherwise, one's hermeneutics is simply, "What does the text mean to me?" The narrative preacher must be aware of dangerous hermeneutical drifts.

A second caution of the narrative sermon concerns its inductive style. Such induction is considered a strength in that it brings the listeners on a guided tour, a journey. The danger is that they may never reach the destination. The audience may leave the worship service saying to themselves, "What a fascinating trip. Where did we go?" H. Grady Davis warns that too much preaching can destroy the impact of induction in the narrative sermon, the preacher ought best err that way rather than leaving the audience unsure of what is it or how they are to respond to

God's Word (161). Sometimes narrative sermons need explanations or structure in order to find

the main idea:

> Rorschach's ink blots prove that no two of us see or tell stories to the same
> conclusion. While this may be a freeing quality of the narrative sermon, is it
> possible that the Word of God may not come to any real encounter in the auditor's
> life? If *the Word* [original emphasis] is missed, has real preaching occurred? (108)

This generalization could be one of the main danger of narrative sermons. Everyone has his or

her own message.

Still another limitation or weakness to the narrative sermon is that it, like many other

preaching styles, can be overused. A good preacher must be able to take God's Word and process

it through a consistent and reproducible method of exegetical study in order to determine the

author's intended meaning. Having completed that process, this same preacher ought to be able

to determine what homiletical vehicle would best communicate God's intent to today's hearer.

This determination depends on the structure of the text and may depend on where the hearers are.

There are seasons when "Thou art the man!" should be spoken at the beginning of the sermon as

well as times when it should conclude it. "Lowry's loop" may not be best appreciated if used

every Sunday (Lowry, Homiletical Plot, 18). Sometimes the best way to communicate God's

Word is to employ Stuart Briscoe's simple outline: I. What? II. So what? III. Now what? There

are a variety of homiletical vehicles and preachers would do well to master as many as they can

(Litchfield 162-74). Davis warns, "The story is not for everyday use as the form of the entire

sermon. It is not suitable for every kind of text or theme" (151-52). Preachers need to deliver

different kind of sermons, according to the text and audience.

Furthermore, narrative preaching may not be suitable for every kind of audience; there

are audiences those who are less oriented toward story form. Sometimes Christians who have

been attending a number of years at churches with a formal liturgy are not conditioned to

thinking imaginatively and thus might not consider the narrative sermon intellectually or spiritually challenging enough. Some might mistake a first-person narrative sermon on the Acts 2 event of Pentecost as a one-person theatrical show. These are fair concerns. The sensitive and attuned preacher will take note of them and not try to force-feed what the congregation perceives to be baby food. If pastors know their flocks, they will also discern how and when to feed them something new.

Types of Narrative Sermons

Assuming a balanced understanding of the benefits and cautions of narrative preaching. Donald Sunukjian has done a list of the different types of narrative sermons. Thorough job at answering this question. In his course on contemporary preaching, he surveys the four major types of narrative sermons: (1) the pure narrative sermon, (2) the simple narrative sermon, (3) the cyclical narrative sermon, and (4) the deductive narrative sermon (23).

The pure narrative sermon. The pure narrative sermon is in essence a retelling of the biblical pericope. It may involve a first-person narrative account of a section of Scripture. Sunukjian gives an example of how Acts 2 affords a wonderful opportunity for a first-person narrative of the day of Pentecost. Portraying Peter is a possibility, pastors can preach from the perspective of one of the three thousand who came to Christ that day. The first movement of the sermon include what the day of Pentecost means from a first-person Jewish perspective and then what happened on that glorious day. The second movement focus on what Peter said, and the third on what the people did, especially what the preacher's character does. The final movement in the sermon will be the witness's appeal to the audience to "let yourselves be saved" (Sunukjian 39).

The beauty of this approach is that the listener eavesdrops on the message. The preacher is able to communicate directly in an indirect way. Before beginning the message, the congregation could receive a preview of what is about to happen. Perhaps the preacher or another could begin by saying,

> Today we'll be looking at the second chapter of Acts through the eyes of someone who was actually there. If you could imagine what it would be like to hear from one of the three thousand new believers on the day of Pentecost, what would be said? What would we hear? What would that be like? Today we'll find out. Let us pray.

Following the prayer, the preacher should begins the monologue. This kind of narrative should also be supported by an entire worship service planned around the Pentecost event.

In the pure narrative sermon, the message itself is in the story. Craddock favors this approach. He once told of a student in seminary who spoke during chapel. This student said he had a brother who "had this thing about trains" (*As One without Authority* ,97). This brother just loved trains. He went on to tell about the history of trains and how, because of the railroad, the spirit of America spread all across the continent. People were reached with goods and services. Families were connected in a way never before realized. Outreach and community occurred all over the country because of trains. Although some say that the train is outdated and outmoded, a thing of the past and no good for the future, "my brother, he has this thing about trains" (97). After fifteen minutes of this preaching, the student then said, "Now me, I have this thing about the church" (97).Then he sat down.

Still another example would be Sunukjian's "A Night in Persia" (71-83), which is a pure narrative message over the book of Esther. It is preached in the first person and the sermon's climactic line is the statement, "Those Jews—they sure are lucky!" (71). Sunukjian's big idea is just the opposite: God, not luck, controlled the events of Esther. However, the narrative is

preached in such a way that the hearer does not miss the Lord's sovereignty even though the

words, "God is in control," are never used. Robinson comments on the power of this pure

narrative approach:

> In developing the narrative, Sunukjian does not merely re-tell the story; he relives it. He employs dialogue to carry on imagined conversation with other characters and acts out both parts. Dialogue adds variety to monologue. At another place he engages in soliloquy in which he talks to himself. These devices demand that the preacher experience the story and put movements, gestures, and facial expressions into the presentation that paper and ink cannot capture. (*Biblical Sermons* 83)

I agree with Davis that this kind of preaching requires "more active listening" than in the

deductive message:

> The hearer will not get the important message unless he identifies himself with the characters in the story, lives through incidents with them, understands their motives, and renders his own verdict on their opinions, character, and actions. Every hearer does this intuitively to some extent. But there is always the chance that *he* [original emphasis] will hear nothing but the more superficial action of the story. Yet the teller of the story must trust the story to convey its meaning. (161)

I would suggest that preachers do more than merely trust the "story to convey its meaning"

(161). I would proclaim its meaning even if doing so means speaking in character. The preacher

must not let the audience leave without arriving at the crossroads of submission or insurrection.

In terms of delivery, the preacher must lose all self-awareness and not get out of

character. If the preacher pauses midstream, satisfied by how effectively this method is reaching

the congregation, all is lost. The preacher must get comfortable with the kind of role playing that

goes with this approach. Ethel Barrett puts it this way:

> If you are not absolutely sold on your story, you cannot sell it to others. The I-don't-care attitude gets an I-don't-care response. Your listeners will be sold according to the degree that you are sold. If your whole attitude says, "this is an amazing story! It's so good I can hardly what to tell it!"—then they can hardly wait to hear it. (55)

The preacher needs to be convinced of the importance of the sermon. He or she must be sure of

the character.

The simple narrative sermon. Another style of narrative preaching is simple narrative. Sunukjian calls it so because of its uncomplicated structure. It begins in the narrative text. It may be first person reliving the narrative. It may be a third person retelling what happened, but following the story comes a deductive point. The following outline of Acts 6:1-7 is an example of a simple narrative sermon:

> Introduction
> 1. We would all like to be part of a growing church—examples
> 2. We think this would solve all our problems—examples
> 3. But problems arise even within a growing church, sometimes because of the growth itself
>   a. Example
>   b. Example
> 4. When problems like these arise, how should we solve them?
> 5. For the answer, let's see how the apostles solved a problem within the growing church of Acts 6:1-7
> I. (The apostles solved the problem of growth by designating lay leadership)
>   A. The Jerusalem church was a growing church
>   B. The church had the problem of the widow's food
>   C. The apostles solved the problem by designating lay leadership
> II. The solution to the problems of a growing church is to designate lay leadership
>   A. Designating lay leadership will solve our problem of …
>   B. Designating lay leadership will solve our problem of …
>   ("Contemporary Preaching Syllabus" 53)

I Notice in the outline how the first part of the message focuses on the story itself. In the first movement, the text drives the message. The preacher simply needs to preach the story, moving through it until the end. Afterwards, the preacher reveals the big idea and then explains, proves, or applies it. A simple narrative sermon is effective with shorter sections of Scripture. It is also useful when the preacher wants to apply the conclusion of the passage to different areas of life. This conclusion occurs in the section, "Designating lay leadership will solve our problem of …" (53). The preacher could list several, though not too many, of these in relation to the congregation (51).

The cyclical narrative sermon. Still another style of narrative preaching involves cycling between the pericope's story and application. This method is extremely useful for longer narrative selections. Instead of an uninterrupted narrative, the preacher enters a movement of the text, preaches through it, and then pauses to explain it, prove it, or apply it. Resolution may or may not occur until the final movement, when the main idea is crystallized and declared to the congregation. Sunukjian's cyclical narrative outline of Acts 6:1-7 shows this resolution:

Introduction
1. We would all like to be a part ...
2. We think this would solve …
3. But problems arise even within …
4. How should we solve them?
5. For the answer … Acts 6:1-7.
I. This church, like ours, is a growing church.
  A. The Jerusalem church is a growing church.
  B. We are a growing church.
II. But problems arise in a growing church.
  A. The Jerusalem church had the problem of the widows' food.
  B. We have such problems as …
    1. Example
    2. Example
III. The way to solve these problems is to designate lay leadership.
  A. The Jerusalem church solved …
    1. Apostles proposed.
    2. People accepted.
    3. Problem solved.
  B. The way to solve our problems is for us to designate lay leaders.
  ("Contemporary Preaching Syllabus" 53)

I Notice that in this outline, the big idea is unveiled in III. The answer to the question, "How should the church solve problems of growth?" is held off until later. In cyclical preaching, the speaker has one eye on the text and the other eye on the audience. There is movement between both. There are moments when audience hear the text the way the author intended it, immediately followed by relevant communication, exhortation, training, or even rebuking of the audience. In cyclical narrative preaching, the preacher whispers God's Word and shouts its

relevance (Craddock, *As One without Authority,* 60). Larsen expresses his preference for a more cyclical approach to the narrative sermon as he says, "We should use good running or continuous application rather than compact application at the end and … this application be skillfully woven into each narrative block" (68). The reason for this application is that as the message moves on, preachers "tend to lose steam toward the end, lose control of their data, and become diffuse and preach down as the sermon concludes" (98).

The Deductive Narrative Sermon

The first three narrative styles described are inductive: "There is a story to be told, a problem to be solved, a cause that has effects, or a subject to be completed" (Sunukjian,Contemporary Preaching Syllabus ,44). In this fourth pattern though, the big idea of the text is front-loaded in the sermon. It is spoken first and held out as what will be seen as the narrative unfolds: "There is an idea to be explained, a principle to be applied, or proposition to be proved" (44). In the Colombian-French movie, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, the film opens deductively: Santiago Nassar's death is announced and what follows is his story, circling back several hours later to his murder.

In a simple deductive narrative, the preacher clearly communicates the main thought of the passage and then follows with a movement through the text. The back half of the message, then, applies the main idea. I Notice how this model works when applied to the Acts passage:

> Introduction
> 1. We would all like to be part of a growing church—examples
> 2. We think this would solve all our problems—examples
> 3. But problems arise even with a growing church, sometimes because of the growth itself
>   a. Example
>   b. Example
> 4. When problems arise, the way to solve them is to designate lay leadership
> 5. This is how the apostles solved the problem of Acts 6:1-7

I. The solution to the problem of the growing Jerusalem church was to designate lay leadership.
    A. The Jerusalem church was a growing church The church had a problem with the widows' food
    B. The designation of lay Leadership solved the problem
        1. The apostles proposed
        2. The people accepted
        3. The problem was solved
II. The solution to our growing problems will be to designate lay leadership
    A. Lay leadership will solve our problem of …
    B. Lay leadership will solve our problem of …
(Sunukjian, Contemporary Preaching Syllabus, 52)

A cyclical deductive narrative is unnecessary because the preacher has already presented the big idea. This model is helpful when the preacher wants to ensure that the homiletical purpose of the pericope is clear to the congregation. It also allows more left-brained (i.e., analytical, linear-minded) congregations the opportunity to be exposed to the story form while at the same time allowing the preacher to structure the message according to their learning style.

Continuous application narrative sermon. Larsen's contributions to structuring the narrative sermon help preachers balance the standard outlines that have been seen thus far. In Larsen's mind, the preacher would take a narrative passage and divide it into sections or "sequential chunks of story" (98):

> While we do not use a syntactical outline for narrative, it is essential that we divide the text in preparing the sermon. The divisions are what Clyde Fant calls "thought blocks" and what I am calling here "narrative blocks." The preacher proclaims the message by moving from scene to scene, layering a precept or an application between each scene. We should use good running or continuous application rather than compact application at the end, and that its application be skillfully woven into each narrative block. (98)

In Larsen's mind, the preacher should divide the narrative into chunks without overtly emphasizing the main points. Preacher should not say, "And now for the first point of this passage, we see.…" Rather, the preacher should simply start telling the story:

> Come with me to the city of Ephesus where every night hundreds of temple prostitutes descended into the streets and where one's imagination could never picture the kind of filth which the Apostle Paul saw on his visit to this city. (99)

Larsen teaches, "We want to keep the story line going, and we want to be sure not to miss the meaning and application of the story" (99). One must not become overly "atomistic" and "so dampen the power of the story line" (100). An example of this case might be seen in Acts 19 and the Apostle Paul's ministry in Ephesus:

Introduction

1. Jesus said that when he built his church the gates of hell would not prevail against it. In this image, he is the aggressor, invader, and conqueror.

2. The book of Acts is about how Jesus Christ prevails against the gates of hell, as he has been using ordinary people to seek and save the lost.

3. Jesus used Paul in his missionary journeys, and this week we see the weapons Christ used to lay siege against the city of Ephesus.

4. Ephesus was a dark fortress of Satan in the first century. How did Christ overwhelm the prince of darkness?

I. Narrative block #l—Jesus Christ overwhelms Satan with truth (Acts 19:1-10).

   A. Teaching point—Paul's aggressive teaching ministry in Ephesus.

   B. Application—Our need for aggressive teaching and learning in the Word.

II. Narrative block #2—Jesus Christ overwhelms Satan with faith (Acts 19:11-17).

   A. Teaching point—The authentic faith of those who were healed versus the fraudulent faith of the Seven Sons of Sceva.

   B. Application—Our need to have an authentic faith.

III. Narrative block #3 Jesus Christ overwhelms Satan with purity (Acts 19:18-20).

    A.   Teaching point—The Ephesians burned their scrolls.

    B.   Application—What needs to be destroyed that would bring us closer to Christ?

<div align="center">Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon</div>

In this section I suggest a methodology (i.e., steps from text to sermon) for putting together a narrative sermon. Many contemporary preachers use a number of different methods for narrative preaching. Nevertheless, every effective preacher goes through some common steps, whether consciously or unconsciously, in preparing his or her sermon. Accordingly, I will introduce a narrative sermon methodology for Colombian preachers based on nine common steps, using Paul's message to the Athenians in Acts 17:16-34.

Step 1—Determining the Biblical Pericope

The first step in preparing an expository narrative sermon is to decide the passage of Scripture pastor intend to preach. From the book of Acts, I sugest to spend some time alone with the Bible in hand and read through Acts in one sitting. It might be best to begin with the Gospel of Luke and read both Luke and Acts together to see the narrative flow. Sidney Greidanus points out that Luke and Acts are part of the same pericope:

> Luke-Acts, therefore, seeks to tell one continuous story. Norman Perrin notes [that] "the careful parallelism of the journey motif of Jesus to Jerusalem and Paul to Rome, and the great significance of the teaching of the risen Jesus (Luke 24:46-49**;** Acts 1:8)." (283)

In this sitting, several questions may surface: What does Luke have to say about Jesus, the mission of his disciples, the ministry of the Church, and the Holy Spirit? How does the book of Acts develop Luke's reason for writing to Theophilus? The preacher live in the Word of God, exposed to its wisdom and message. I advise to read it aloud. Preachers need to hear Peter's message on the day of Pentecost to appreciate the flow and power of this Apostle, who only a

short time before this event had denied his Lord. A pencil and paper should be nearby in case

any questions or insights arise (Gallagher and Hertig 3-10).

The reader needs to be able to see the narrative parts that are happening. It is as if a play

is taking place and several questions are asked, "What portion of the narrative ought to be

divided into a scene?" Which scenes, when put together, constitute an act? Will the narrative

sermon be about a particular scene or a series of scenes in an act? Will the narrative sermon be

the entire play? The preacher would then begin to mark off narrative divisions. Attention can be

given as to how some of the major translations divide these paragraphs, but one should not trust

the editors too much. Pastors could possible to misinterpret a passage by improperly dividing it.

Expertise in the original languages will help mark off narrative pericopes for preaching. In the

book of Acts, Luke cues the reader in Acts 1:8 that his sequel has three major acts: (1) the

ministry in Jerusalem (1:12-7:60); (2) the ministry in Judea and Samaria (8:1-40); and, (3) the

ministry to the ends of the earth (9:1-28:31; Greidanus 283).

Another way to see the major scenes in the book of Acts is biographically. While Acts 1-

12 centers primarily on the apostolic ministry of Peter, Acts 12-28 focuses upon the life of the

Apostle Paul. From these acts, the preacher then can block off the various scenes within each.

Luke helps demarcate these scenes by expressions such as, "then," "in those days," "on that

day," "now there were," and "meanwhile." Sometimes Luke uses geographical cues to determine

scenes within one of the three major sections. For instance, in Acts 14 he uses the phrases "at

Iconium" and "in Lystra." In Acts 16 he writes, "from Troas," and, "once when we were going to

the place of prayer." to begin a narrative block.

In Acts 7, Luke uses Stephen's speech as a pericope within the broader pericope of his

brief biography. This A/B/A pattern is known as "inclusion" (Greidanus 291). Elsewhere in Acts

8, Luke uses the life of Philip to set the boundaries of a narrative piece. Greinadus refers to these

boundaries as "repetition" (296). Repetition occurs as a unit of thought and is wrapped with a

recurrent phrase or character. For instance, Acts 8 renders the account of Philip's preaching to

the Ethiopian official. This pericope begins with Philip (8:26), involves Philip throughout the

scene, and ends with Philip (8:40). Philip is a natural marker, informing the reader when an

individual narrative moment begins and ends. Osborne writes about exegesis:

> The exegete must identify the various literary devices used to present the material, then see how these techniques deepen the plot structure and highlight certain aspects within the narrative. We must look for chiasm or inclusio (framing techniques), repetition, gaps, antitheses, symbol, irony and other literary traits. Each will add a different nuance to the passage. We should also study the individual stylistic tendencies of the author and see which of those are at work in the individual periscope. (169)

Figures of language can help preachers to divide the text in different parts.

Another factor in demarcating narrative scenes is the consideration of the larger context

of the entire narrative piece. Greidanus explains the importance of marking the scenes:

> It will help us understand the function of an individual scene if we understand how it is linked with other scenes which reinforce, enrich, and modify its implications, so that it becomes part of a larger developing portrait of Jesus and His contemporaries. (285)

Preachers should read the entire chapter and book in order to determine the context with clarity.

Robinson reminds preachers that the goal in determining a biblical pericope is to "base

the sermon on some [natural] unit of biblical thought" (*Biblical Preaching,* 55). This unit of

thought is no easy task, and the preacher would do well to schedule strategic blocks of time

throughout the church calendar to think through pericope division. Calvin Miller suggests that

the week between Christmas and New Year's Day is prime time for such a task. The

congregation is at rest during Christmas break and the pastor can spend some relaxing mornings

in uninterrupted study (*The Empowered Communicator,* 204).

Step 2—Developing a Passage Outline

Having chosen the narrative text, the preacher needs to spend some time with it. If at all possible, the original languages should be explored so that the preacher might appreciate the freshness of Greek or Hebrew words and phrases. In this portion of study, the preacher does everything possible to absorb and understand the Scripture. The translation should be written out so that the chapter and verse divisions are not evident. Again, this step is in an attempt to catch the narrative flow. While trying to follow this flow, two very important questions need to be asked about the select passage: What is Luke talking about in this pericope, and what is Luke saying about what he is talking about? (Willhite 37). In order to get at these questions, a passage outline needs to be written. This example is simply an historical outline based on what the passage itself says: "The passage outline uses historical statements to show the concepts and structure of the verses in terms of the original author and recipients" (Sunukjian, Contemporary Preaching Syllabus, 6). The passage outline explains what the text itself says. For instance, Acts 17:16-34 records Paul's fascinating encounter with the Athenians. Here is a translation and passage outline of the Acts 17:16-34 narrative:[1]

I.   While the Apostle Paul was waiting in Athens for Timothy and Silas, he was very disturbed to see that Athens was full of idols.

A.   To be distressed literally means to be angered, bothered, or provoked.

II. He, therefore, went to the synagogue and to the marketplace in order to reason with those who were there.

A. Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to argue with him.

1.   They said, "What is this babbler trying to say?"

---

[1] (Note that in the following translation of Acts 17:16-34, the pericope is framed by "While Paul was waiting for them in Athens" and "After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.")

2. Others said, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods."

    a. They made this statement because Paul was speaking about Jesus and the resurrection.

III. Then, these philosophers took Paul to the Areopagus.

    A. They asked him to explain to them about Jesus.

        1. The Athenians and foreigners spent their lives in Athens talking about the latest philosophies and ideas.

IV. So Paul stood up in the meeting and began to preach.

    A. He told them that he thought they were a very religious group because of all the idols in the city.

    B. He told them he even noticed an idol made to the "unknown god."

    C. He said that he is about to proclaim to them what they worship as unknown.

        1. The unknown god is the God who created the universe.

            a. He does not live in a temple made by hands.

            b. He gives life to all men.

            c. He made all the nations.

            d. He desires that all men seek him and find him. "We are your offspring."

        2. The unknown god is the One who commands all to abandon idols, repent, and seek him.

            a. The unknown god is the One who has set an appointed time in history when he will judge the world.

            b. The unknown god is the One who will justly judge the world by "the man he has appointed," Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ will judge this world.

      c.   The unknown god is the One who has proved all this by raising Jesus

         from the dead.

    D. When the Athenians heard about the resurrection, some sneered.

      1. But others wanted to hear more of what Paul had to say.

        a. Some of them included Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, Damaris,

          and others.

The end result of a passage outline is to see the flow of the text itself and how it unfolds before the reader. The outline helps the reader track the unit of thought within the pericope. The outline should be written in proper sentences with no fragments. Outlines deal with complete ideas not incomplete concepts. Outlines organize the text into major chunks, showing that the preacher understands what the author says in the text.

When preacher structure the text according to the emphasis of the writer, preacher will seek to capture that emphasis in an outline. What preacher discern as big bones (i.e., major parts) will fall toward the left side of the outline. The smaller bones (i.e., subordinate parts) will fall toward the right side of the outline. Preacher outline sequence should look like this example:

    I.
       A.
          1.
            a.
              (1)
                 (a)
    II.
       A.
          1. (Ramesh 58-59)

From the passage outline, the preacher should be able to derive the main idea of the text. Two questions must now be considered after the passage outline is written: What is Luke talking about in Acts 17:16-34? What is Luke saying about what he is talking about in Acts 17:16-34?

The answers to these questions constitute the "CPT," or the central proposition of the text (Ramesh 67). The CPT is what the text says in a single sentence. In the case of Acts 17:16-34, the CPT is the following: Paul articulated the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Athenians in a powerful way that was full of grace and truth. This proposition answers the two questions: What is Acts 17:16-34 talking about? (i.e., articulating the gospel to the Athenians, and what is Acts 17:16-34 saying about what it is talking about? (i.e., articulating the gospel to the Athenians in a way that was full of grace and truth).

At this point, preachers may find themselves writing more than just one sentence about the big idea of the pericope. This writing is what Sanford Kaye calls writing "provisional theses" (13). Many thoughts and sentences pertaining to the outline and the passage of Scripture may be generated. The preacher should have provisional sentences, yet, when all is done, there must still be a single sentence that says what the text says. It must be a complete sentence that summarizes the paragraph of Scripture. When the passage outline is complete along with the CPT, the preacher is ready for the next step.

Step 3—Developing a Theological Outline

From a passage outline, the preacher is prepared to make principles from what has been written about the pericope. This comes in the form of a principle or theological outline. There are some differences between a passage outline and a theological outline. First, a passage outline deals with the original language of the biblical text itself. It has to do with the recipients whom the authors had in mind when they wrote. It is a factual, historical restatement of what the text says. It leads to a one-sentence CPT or a textual big idea. In a theological outline, there are principles about the pericope derived through proper hermeneutics. These principles are written in a way that they could relate to any audience at any time. There is logic, simplicity, order, and

clarity to the theological outline. This stage is crucial and is the "bridge-building" of which Stott

speaks (18). It uses principles to help connect the chasm of the biblical world with the

contemporary one (178). The preacher "moves up the ladder of abstraction. 'Meats offered to

idols' becomes 'questionable things'" (Sunukjian, Contemporary Preaching Syllabus, 13). I

Notice how the theological outline of Acts 17:16-34 develops:

    I.   God's people often find themselves in a marketplace of individual ideas.

        A. Those who hold these individual ideas believe every philosophy or thought has

            equal merit.

            1.   This philosophy is called relativism.

        B. This idea can be disturbing to believers, who need to stand ready to defend the

            gospel and speak out in the hope that lost people may come to know Jesus

            Christ.

    II.   God's people need to stand ready to defend the gospel in the marketplace of

        relativism by excelling in two areas.

        A. First, they need to season their speech with salt.

            1.   Paul said, "I see you are very religious," and was not judgmental of them.

                a. In fact, he was disturbed or distressed. There needs to come a time

                    when we feel disturbed by the lostness of others.

                b. Do we remember our own lostness? Have we become too familiar with

                    our own conversion?

            2.   Believers need not be argumentative with people.

        B. Second, they need to speak the truth.

1. Paul refutes the notion that all ideas are equal by subjecting those ideas to the claims of Christ.

    a. There is a God.

    b. He has set a day of judgment.

    c. Jesus, whom God raised from the dead, is the Judge.

2. Believers need not be intimidated by the hollow rhetoric of relativism.

According to this outline, the main idea is the following: The response to relativism is a prepared believer who speaks for Jesus in a way that is full of grace and full of truth. Ideally, preachers have completed the exegetical preparation at this point. Preacher should remember that a commentary has not yet been lifted from the shelf. The preachers have simply done their own work using a Bible, pencil, and paper, provided their exegetical work is accurate.

Step 4—Checking the Work

It is now time to see using the scholarship of reputable biblical writers, time for the preachers to review their exegesis. Sunukjian believes that preachers need to look at three different kinds of commentaries. First, a critical commentary will bring to light some of the major textual issues in a given pericope. Its approach is rather technical, expounding on the original tongues of the text. It should also speak to any manuscript differences that might have bearing on how the text is translated and understood. The second kind of commentary is a synthetic, expositional, or thematic commentary. This selection provides a running commentary of what the text itself means without the technicalities of critical commentaries. In addition, the preacher would be wise to consider the third kind of commentary—the homiletical or sermonic commentary (Contemporary Preaching Syllabus, 6).

The point of all this practice is to ensure that what has been translated and configured in both the passage and principle outlines is accurate. The preacher should check if text and passage outline say what God's Word says and does this theological outline mean what God intended His Word to mean. By doing one's own work first, these books are used in a way they were intended—as reference materials. It would bode well to tell the student to pay attention to the scholar's background as well. Not all biblical commentators may share the preacher's views on biblical inerrancy and the authority of Scripture. This issue is an important issue that needs to be carefully thought through when selecting commentaries.

Step 5—Writing the Sermon in One Sentence

At this point the preacher should be able to write a clear and concise sentence that summarizes what the Scriptural pericope says. Again, this sentence should answer two questions: What is this passage talking about? What is this issue saying about what this issue is talking about? In the Acts 17:16-34 pericope, the big idea is that God wants preachers to speak the gospel in a way that is full of grace and truth. I notice the simplicity of this sentence. Almost every word contains but one syllable; it is clear and crisp. It deals with a subject (i.e., speaking the gospel) and it deals with a complement (in a way that is full of grace and truth).

Step 6—Determining the Homiletical Outline

Once the sermon has been summarized in a clear and concise sentence, the preacher makes a major move from exegetical preparation to homiletical preparation. The preacher could give a lecture on what has been learned thus far but this lecture would not constitute preaching. What happens next is bridge-building: The preacher connects the world of the Bible with the world of the audience by writing the homiletical outline. Next, the preacher must determine what homiletical model will be used to communicate the big idea. Will this message be deductive or

inductive? If deductive, then it will be a simple deductive. If inductive, will it be pure narrative, simple narrative, cyclical narrative, or continuous application? A questions to consider: how long is the pericope? If longer, I consider an inductive message that is pure narrative or cyclical narrative. If it is a shorter pericope, I consider a simple narrative approach or a simple deductive style. With a pen and paper in hand, the preacher should write some preliminary outlines, using one or more of these styles. The preacher is mapping out the message and sketching the direction of where this sermon will go. The work done in the exegetical portion of study serves as a foundation. The preacher may see glimpses of a homiletical vehicle in the theological outline. The sermonic or homiletical outline for Acts 17:16-34 appears as the following:

Introduction

I.   (In this world, you will meet others with different ideas about God or life).

A. Paul met a group of philosophers while he was in the city of Athens (Acts 17:16-20).

1. Paul encountered what could be called *relativism*.

B. What is true about Athens is true about our culture.

II.   These views can be very disturbing to those who know the truth of Christ.

A. Paul was disturbed.

1. Paul saw Athens for what it was—not this glorious bastion of intellectual genius but a spiritually dead, idol-infested metropolis.

B. When we see relativism for what it is, it can really disturb us.

III.   It is important for believers to be able to articulate the gospel clearly in a world where relativism reigns.

A. Paul displayed a spirit of tolerance before sharing the gospel with them (Acts 17:22-3).

B. As believers, we need to display a spirit of tolerance before boldly sharing the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: God wants us to share Christ in a way that is full of grace and full of truth.

This particular message is a cyclical narrative. Because of its length, the preacher will go back and forth between Paul's world and the audience's world. Furthermore, it is inductive. The big idea of the message is not fully revealed until the very end of the message, although the message has been leading up to it. Additionally, some of the main points are stated in a deductive manner, while others are approached inductively. The first main idea was stated inductively, which is why it is wrapped in parenthesis in the outline. The preacher does not actually say, "In this world you will meet others with different ideas about God or life," until cycling out of Paul's world. Elsewhere, the sermon flows better if the other main points are given deductively. As the preacher works through various drafts of the outline, draft should become clear which of the main ideas are better presented deductively and which should be preached inductively. The final thesis—the proposition, the big idea— is very clearly pronounced as the message concludes. This idea is what God's Word says: "You need to share Jesus gracefully and truthfully!"

Step 7—Developing the Outline into a Full Manuscript

At this stage, the preacher is ready to flesh out whatever outline best fits. When a main section of the sermon is being developed, there are only three choices. The preacher must explain the thought, prove the thought, or apply the thought. What is done depends on the audience. In the previous outline, the phrase, "Paul met a group of philosophers while he was in the city of Athens," needs to be explained, telling where he met them, what the meeting was like, and who

these philosophers were. The phrase, "What is true about Athens is true about our culture,"

probably needs explaining in addition to providing a definition of the word *relativism*.

The second main the phrase, "These views can be very disturbing," will need more than

an explanation; it will require persuasion. The listener needs help to believe what the preacher is

trying to say. This explanation means considering issues such as discovering the objections the

audience may have to this sermon and finding out against what would they protest. The preacher

needs to raise the issues that are most likely to surface in the audience's mind and address them.

Again I draw upon the wisdom of Sunukjian to think through what it takes to persuade the

audience:

> Sometimes the audience does not buy it because they do not see the connection.
> And so the listener needs to see the connection in any cause/effect statement that
> contains or implies such language as "leads to," "results in," "produces," "follows
> from," "brings about." Sometimes the audience does not buy it because it seems
> contrary to real life. These hidden objections or unspoken obstacles must be
> addressed so that the ultimate reality or the truth behind the biblical statement is
> understood and accepted. Sometimes the audience does not buy it because
> something else is more important. Therefore, the preacher must surface the
> competing beliefs or attitudes so that the listener can feel their full force, and then
> show why acting on the biblical statement is even more desirable.
> ("Contemporary Preaching Syllabus" 27-31)

Preacher should communicate in different ways the main idea and connections between the

different parts of the sermon.

A third way to develop a complete thought is to apply it. For instance, the phrases, "It is

important for believers to be able to clearly articulate the Gospel in a world where relativism

reigns," and "God wants us to share Christ in a way that is full of grace and full of truth," need to

be applied. The audience needs to see how this truth appears in real life. "Relevancy occurs when

the listener senses, 'This message has some bearing on my life. I can see how it applies to a

specific situation" (Sunukjian, Contemporary Preaching Syllabus, 32). Given these

developmental methods, the preacher should have no problem filling in the sermonic outline with explanatory, persuasive, and/or relevant material.

Step 8—Developing the Introduction and Conclusion

Once the meat of the message has been fixed, the preacher should determine how the message will begin and finish. Michael Duduit's *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* has two very good chapters on introductions (Ogilvie) and conclusions (Harbour). These chapters argue that good introductions will arrest the audience's attention. A well-phrased introduction will let the hearers know if this preacher is worth hearing. The introduction must include preview statements (Ogilvie178). These sentences help communicate to the audience what is coming in the message so that they can organize what they will hear. Concerning conclusions, the most effective ones will simply conclude. Harbour explains, "Being the last part of the sermon the listener will hear, the conclusion needs to summarize, restate, illustrate, or apply the sermon in such a way that the listener can take home the essence of the message. Effective preaching demands an effective ending" (216). Like a good story the end determines great part of the impact.

If the preacher uses the wise approach in planning sermons by writing a calendar of message texts, themes, and titles, then these subjects can be kept in mind as the preacher lives and ministers day to day. Reading the newspaper or weekly periodicals can suggest stories or illustrations appropriate for introductions and conclusions. It would be wise to also think through them in light of the programming of the worship service. As for the introductions, where will the listener be when the preacher approaches the pulpit? Sermon can be delivered after communion, a musical piece, or a prayer time. As for the conclusion, the preacher may want to ask where he

or she wants to leave the listener, benediction, closing song, communion, invitation to accept

Christ.

Step 9—Writing a Draft of the Message from Start to Finish

Though this writing may be the first draft, the preacher should have several pages of

outlines, notes, and well-developed points from which to synthesize all that has been written in

the sermon process. The key to a well-written manuscript is its orality because the sermon is

meant for the ear. Preachers need to read their sermons out loud while writing. Verbal crafting

needs to occur at this stage. The preacher must delete extraneous syllables, nouns, and adjectives.

If something can be said in six words, preacher do not use eight, for less is better. The expositor

should note if there is a logical flow and progression of thought. G. Robert Jacks has an excellent

book that should be on every preacher's desk, *Just Say the Word! Writing for the Ear.* This book

is about how to write sermon manuscripts in everyday language. His "rules for writing for the

ear" are well-worth repeating here:

1. Show—don't tell.
2. Make sure everything matches: your audience, your intention, your words.
3. Write the way you *talk,* not the way you *write.*
4. *Talk* to us rather than *preach* to us.
5. Be yourself. Be natural. Don't try to imitate someone else or someone else's style.
6. Active voice is more alive than passive.
7. Show more than you tell. Use visual images, pictures.
8. Don't use a [fifty cent] word when a [five cent] word will do.
9. Remove unnecessary occurrences of *that* and *which.*
10. Remove unnecessary or assumable information and get to the point.
11. "People" your ideas—use dialogue for added interest and life—reveal attitudes as well as imparting information.
12. Show more than you tell. Illustrate from life.
13. Don't waste words.
14. Use contractions where appropriate.
15. Know what's "correct" grammatically, but be free to bend the rules for the sake of natural, effective style.
16. Verbs are more alive than nouns.
17. Accentuate the positive.

18. Avoid the "literary" sound.
19. Show more than you tell. Speak to our senses.
20. Avoid clichés.
21. Remove forms of the verb *to be* whenever possible.
22. Give us stories—from life if possible.
23. Internalize the stories—relive them rather than relating them, so we can experience them rather than hearing *about* them.
24. Don't show us your homework.
25. Speak at least as much to our hearts as you speak to our heads.
26. Look for dull, outworn words and replace them with zingers.
27. Don't overuse adjectives or adverbs.
28. Where possible, replace adjectives with stronger, more colorful verbs.
29. Repetition can be effective in introducing new ideas, reinforcing important ideas, "nailing down" the end of an idea group.
30. Use rhetorical questions to convert a sermon "monologue" into a sermon "dialogue."
31. Use questions rather than conjecture—invite your listeners to think along with you.
32. Show more than you tell. Talk to us when we're "out of our minds."
33. Build in musical "tones" for your delivery— bright ideas and darker ones— leading to pitch variations.
34. Build in musical "dynamics" for your delivery, leading to variations in rate and volume.
35. Listen to the rhythm of your ideas— keep it varied.
36. Vary sentence lengths. Are sentences as easy to speak as they are to read?
37. Sentence lengths and rhythm: attention-arresting (short, staccato) or still-life (meandering, leisurely? Do you want to stun or describe?)
38. What's your perspective: in-scene (participating) or outside (observing)?
39. Don't spin wheels—keep thoughts moving.
40. Can you paraphrase scripture rather than quote it? (Give us familiar ideas in fresh words.)
41. Check your manuscript for redundancies.
42. Don't tell us what you don't need to tell us.
43. Don't ask permission or apologize—take charge.
44. Don't qualify everything.
45. Consider first person (we, I) rather than second person (you) for positive tone.
46. Consider first or second person (we, I, you) rather than third person (he or she) for a more personal tone (e.g., retelling a scripture story in character) .
47. Show us in God's story and under God's grace together.
48. Show more than you tell. Change abstract ideas into concrete examples.
49. Preach like Jesus—show more than you tell.
50. Preach Jesus like a beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. (92-95)

Just Say the Word! shows manuscripts in their original and then also in the rewritten version so that preachers can see the editing process and apply the lessons to their own sermons.

Step 10—Becoming Familiar with the Sermon and Then Preaching without Notes

At this point the preacher has been praying through, thinking about, studying on, and writing down outlines, notes, developmental sections, and the big idea for about fifteen hours. Before the preacher's eyes is a manuscript of the message. In sermon preparation now is time to become close friends with the sermon. Although some sections may need to be memorized word for word, the preacher is thinking about how the major hunks of the message flow. When there is a logical flow, the message will be easier to learn by heart. The preacher finds a quiet place and rehearses the message, speaking it out loud and becoming acquainted with the main ideas and their content. If a specific quote cannot be memorized or paraphrased, then the preacher can jot it down on an index card and tuck in the Bible for use when needed. Early Sunday morning, preachers would do well to "pray the message" before the Lord (Miller, *Marketplace Preaching: How to Return the Sermon to Where It Belongs*, 166). It is assumed that they have been dialoguing with God throughout the entire sermon process. The preacher's time with God before the Sunday sermon will open and unite his or her heart with the heart of God.

About fifteen minutes before the service, the preacher should do what Miller calls "breaking" (*Marketplace Preaching: How to Return the Sermon to Where It Belongs* , 75). Pastors should go meet people, greet them, visit with them, pastor them. Many pastors pray with the church leaders a few minutes before the service starts. I suggest that leaders can pray without the pastor, for when the flock gathers, it is time for them to see their shepherd. "By this breaking, I become human. I detach from my 'hyperkinetic' connection to my sermon and set myself free. My sermon becomes a human document as I become a human being" (Miller, *Marketplace Preaching: How to Return the Sermon to Where It Belongs,* 166). When the preacher stands and delivers God's message note-free, some of the manuscript's crispness may be lost, but the

intimacy and eye contact with the audience will more than make up for it as the preacher

confidently shares God's Word as his messenger. It is important to remember that as God's

messengers, preachers are "on" whenever they can be seen. The preacher should overdress rather

than underdress and remember that posture and stride matter. Michael Friedman describes the

importance of posture:

> If you've been slouching in a chair onstage, that's the first impression—the
> lasting one. Your… forceful talk will be diminished by this first image. You make
> your image before a group from the beginning: the way you sit, the way you
> interact with other people before you speak and afterward, and the way you walk
> or exchange handshakes… Sit, stand and speak in character. You are "on"
> whenever anyone in the room has the opportunity to watch you. (qtd. in Miller,
> *Empowered Communicator* 9)

Preachers should be very careful about posture all time in the pulpit.

Research Design

This research used an explanatory M\mixed-method design to answer the research

questions. In this design, a researcher collects quantitative data first and then collects qualitative

data to help explain the quantitative results. This design has two advantages. First, it establishes a

clear distinction between the quantitative and qualitative components of the study, eliminating

the need to integrate two types of data. Second, it incorporates the best features of both kinds of

data. The quantitative portion provides hard data on the target population; the qualitative

provides deeper insight into the data (Creswell 560).

Focus groups are group interviews where a moderator leads "the group interview during

which a small number of people talked about the characteristics and dimensions of the proposed

topic for discussion" (Morgan, DL. 5). The set of data and information that is extracted from the

group discussion is based on what participants said during their conversations. Usually the focus

group consists of six to eight participants who should come from a relatively similar context. The

moderator is usually a professional member of the research team who plans the focus group, qualified guide groups, and dynamics. "Focus groups are a way to listen to what people say and learn from the analysis of what they said. In this perspective the focus groups believe communication lines, where the first communication channel is established within the group, where there is a continuous communication between the moderator, and the participants and between the participants themselves" (Morgan,D.L., 6). Focus groups are primarily a qualitative research method, where the group discussion is used as a means of generating deeper understanding of the beliefs of the participants. Focus groups in this context are often used to learn about opinions or behavior of people about which one knows little or nothing. Focus groups allow the researcher to explore the dynamics of beliefs and attitudes of people, which are the basis of their behavior. Thus, enriched perceptions and attitudes regarding information becomes available. The high quality of the information comes from the group interactions that take place within the focus group (Mella 3-8).

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

God commanded Israel/the Church to retell the story of his deliverance and providence continually. He wanted his people to embody and live out his story. Their well-being was dependent upon obeying and teaching future generations the story of God. The knowledge and understanding of who their God was and what he had done and continued to do for their sake was not an intellectual or an academic endeavor. In remembering their past, present, and future, their identity was transformed. Narrative preaching was the means by which these truths were conveyed to the people of God, for it was compatible with the nature of his story. Thought narrative preaching the story of God became reality, one which His people dwelt. One of the

most important facts to keep in mind is that a narrative sermon should be centered on the character of God. The different kinds of narrative sermons must be theocentric.

A narrative sermon is a biblical message in a preaching event that employs the use of story and plot to communicate the author's main thought of what would ordinarily be a biblical narrative inductively.

The preacher of a narrative sermon should be careful of some extremes in preparation for narrative preaching. The narrative experience is not an oral recount of a running commentary. A second caution of the narrative sermon concerns its inductive style. Such induction is considered strength in that it brings the listeners on a guided tour, a journey. The danger of this tour can be that they may never reach the destination. Another limitation or weakness to the narrative sermon is that it, like many other preaching styles, can be overused.

There are many different methods for narrative preaching. Nevertheless, every effective preacher goes through some common steps, whether consciously or unconsciously, in preparing his or her sermon. These steps are (1) determining the biblical pericope, (2) developing a passage outline, (3) developing a theological outline through the exegesis, (3) checking the work, (4) writing the sermon in one sentence, (5) determining the homiletical outline, (6) developing the outline into a full manuscript, (7) developing the introduction and conclusion, (8) writing a draft of the message from start to finish, and (9) familiarizing oneself with the message and then preaching note-free.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purpose

Latin America has given rise to great writers and novelists. Colombia, as part of this context, has a long tradition of storytellers, and this is common practice within the nuclear family of most of homes. However, it seems that all these rich narratives are generally absent from Colombian church pulpits. The general expectation of the believer is to be lectured for bad behavior in the week while not expecting to hear a message or story that can change lives. One characteristic of this generation is a postmodern fascination with micro-stories and images. However, in Colombian churches preaching is full of abstractions, as well as topics and subtopics of theological conceptualizations. Churches are losing interest, relevance, and the hearts of the parishioners.

Narrative preaching is not new to the subject, but preachers in Colombia, and especially in the CFC denomination, do not yet use it as a ministry tool. Having the knowledge and practice of this approach can transform the ministry of preaching and the way pastors and lay preachers communicate with their congregations.

Preachers are not losing interest and relevance because they are not well equipped. In fact, more than ever before preachers have been trained well in biblical interpretation and preaching. Most of the preachers are graduates of conservative theological seminaries that teach biblical and reformed theology. Thus, many of them know theology, the Bible, how to expound the gospel, and how to apply it competently to the hearers. The problem in this group of Colombian churches is not that servants of God's Word are not dedicated to proclaiming the

gospel; on the contrary, they are enthusiastic about preaching and diligent in their encounters with biblical text.

Today's preachers spend many hours each week in study and sermon preparation. They consult many available sermon aids, such as good Bible commentaries and dictionaries. In addition, they access Web sites that provide even more help. One of the problems with preaching, however, is that many sermons are not preached in a holistic manner. Most sermons are delivered only in a didactic form with deductive development, which appeals merely to the listeners' intellect. This is primarily due to the patterns observed by their teachers with backgrounds in the American missionary reality, which taught using only this style of preaching.

Another barrier to narrative preaching is that CFC preachers consider it a less serious form and not a very useful method to transform the lives of members in their congregations. It is considered an innate manifestation of a few preachers to whom the Lord gave this gift. A problem results when preachers use didactic forms while preaching biblical narratives, which are designed to be most effective in a narrative form. The hearers cannot easily be involved in the passage through this form of preaching and are unable to experience the gospel holistically. Such sermons surely are comprised of words but not *the* Word. The listeners hear sounds, but communication does not take place in a way that allows them to experience the gospel fully.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of a training experience consisting of a workshop, a follow-up meeting, and a focus group on the knowledge, attitude, and practice of narrative preaching for fifteen pastors and lay leaders of three churches at the CFC in Bogotá, Colombia.

Research Questions

The following three research questions helped direct this research project.

Research Question #1

What were the self-reported knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding narrative preaching of the pastors and lay preachers prior to the workshop training?

This question will be answered through the Narrative Preaching Questionnaire taken prior to the workshop.

Research Question #2

What were the self-reported knowledge, attitudes, and, practices regarding narrative preaching of the pastors and lay preachers following the workshop training?

This question will also be answered through the second NPQ taken following the workshop.

Research Question #3

What other factors may have influenced the self-reported changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices of the participants regarding narrative preaching?

This question will be answered through information gathered in the follow-up meeting held four weeks following the training according to the Focus Group Guide.

Research Question # 4

How did the participants evaluate the quality of the narrative preaching training?

This question will also be answered through information gathered in the focus group according to the Focus Group Guide. In addition, the participants will submit copies of their sermons and their sermon preparation notes for me to review their process.

Research Question # 5

After participants preached narrative sermons in their churches, how did congregation members evaluate these sermons?

This question will be answered by having five people from each church fill out the Message Evaluation Form (MEF) during the narrative sermon preached by each of the workshop participants.

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited from three different CFC churches in Bogotá. Five people from each church voluntarily attended this workshop. These churches, *Unicentro*, *Colina Campestre*, and *Ciudad Salitre*, are all recognized within the denomination for their spiritual health and high-quality pulpit ministries; they primarily minister to the middle class in Bogotá. All participants were men and women between the ages of 25 and 65 and were part of established schools of preaching in every church for more than two years, and each school had a common vision and purpose: to train expositive preachers. I extended a written invitation to each person in the group and expected each participant to attend the workshop and complete the NPQ both before and after the session.

Design of the Study

This study used both quantitative and qualitative research. A researcher-developed instrument used as a pretest/posttest (NPQ) measured participants' knowledge and practice of narrative preaching (see Appendix A). Participants' responses one month after the Narrative Preaching Workshop determined whether their participation resulted in increased knowledge of their concepts and attitudes toward this kind of preaching. In addition, a focus group with five questions questionnaire was held with fifteen participants two and four weeks later. This tool aimed to determine the impact on the lives of the participants after each had prepared and preached one narrative sermon (see Appendix B).

Instrumentation

All participants completed the NPQ before and after the workshop by in order to identify what they knew about narrative preaching and practice characteristics. These questionnaires were administered at the workshop site and again one month later during the focus group meeting.

The focus group questions from the Focus Group Guide was used with fifteen participants two and four weeks after the workshop. This tool aimed to determine the impact on the lives of the participants after preparing one narrative sermon in this monitoring period.

Five people from each church filled out the MEF after the participants had finished their sermons one month after the workshop. All the participants preached their sermons at their own churches, and they were evaluated.

Variables

The independent variable was the one-part workshop and the focus group intervention two weeks later aimed at the understanding and practice of narrative preaching. The dependent variable included the changes in knowledge, attitude, and practice in the participants involved in the study. The potential intervening variables were the possibilities of defections from the group during the focus group portion, participants not having felt free to express the impact of the workshop in their lives due to the close relationship I have with most participants, and any problem that may have arisen in these churches or resistance to that style of preaching.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability refers to the consistency of an instrument's measurements. A yardstick, for example, is a reliable instrument for measuring length if it yields the same measurements upon repeated use. If it yields different measurements in the presence of heat, cold, or humidity, or upon use by different persons, it is not a reliable instrument.

The NPQ can claim no reliability. Because it is a researcher-designed instrument, it has not been used in repeated trials in order to test whether or not it yields consistent results. Nonetheless, I sought to strengthen the instrument's potential for reliability by avoiding factors that often result in unreliable data. The instrument was administered in a uniform fashion: Every participant received the survey in the same place, at the same time, the same format.

Validity refers to whether an instrument measures what it is intended to measure. A yardstick is a valid instrument for measuring the length of a board or the width of a desk. It is not, however, a valid instrument for measuring weight or for measuring the volume of a liquid.

The NPQ has both face validity and content validity. "Face validity refers to the degree to which an assessment or test subjectively appears to measure the variable or construct that it is supposed to measure. In other words, face validity is when an assessment or test appears to do what it claims to do" (Williams 37). While not scientific, face validity is important because it lends credibility to the instrument. People are not likely to respond to a survey or other instrument if they cannot see how it applies to the subject at hand. I took care to construct the NPQ with clear, unambiguous questions. The careful wording of the instrument's questions helped to ensure its face validity.

Content validity refers to whether experts familiar with the subject matter would judge the items on an instrument to measure what they are intended to measure. In order to strengthen content validity for the instrument, I asked pastors, as well as educators and practitioners in the social sciences, to review the items. I also sought to ensure validity by using various statements to measure the same concept.

Data Collection

I issued a written invitation to members of the school of preaching through senior pastors for the voluntary participation of five people per church, fifteen in all, to participate in a workshop on narrative preaching, one follow-up session in a focus group two weeks later, and a conclusion in a focus group four weeks later. In addition, I notified participants that information gained from the questionnaires was part of my doctoral dissertation. Prior to the Narrative Preaching Workshop, I gave participants the NPQ. I administered this test again four weeks later during the focus group conclusion.

Each participant attended the workshop and the two sessions for the focus group. All participants attended the workshop simultaneously in the same place. The workshop was held from 7 to 9 p.m. on a Friday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on a Saturday. Participants had the assignment of preparing a ten-minute narrative sermon as learned during the workshop and were asked to be ready to read it during the first focus group. During this meeting the participants asked questions and resolved doubts about their sermons and the preparation process. One month after the workshop, all the participants got together again. They preached their sermons and had a focus group where they shared the final conclusions. Afterwards they filled out the NPQ to evaluate the impact of this teaching experience on their lives and ministry.

Data Analysis

The research applied an explanatory mixed-methods design. For the quantitative analysis, I implemented comparative analysis with descriptive statistics. I also enlisted a person who was proficient in statistics to assist me with this study. I utilized his skills in the tabulation and interpretation of the quantitative results of this study. The focus group provided me with additional insight into the impact of the ministry intervention. The different questions were

focused on obtaining information on what was helpful during the training, as well as what was not. I reviewed focus group transcripts to determine key phrases or trends that would provide information that would assist me in answering my four research questions. Finally, I compiled the results of the quantitative and qualitative research and recorded the findings.

Ethical Procedures

Respecting the rights of participants is an important ethical procedure. Participants have the right to know the purpose of the study and how the results of the study will be used. They have the right to full disclosure of the potential risks and benefits related to their participation in the study. Finally, they have the right to gain from the study itself.

This study respected the rights of its participants by providing a cover letter with the survey that clearly explained the purpose of the study. The letter specified that the results would be discussed in focus groups. I clearly identified myself as a Doctor of Ministry candidate and informed participants that they would have access to the results of the study when completed. The letter explained that no known risks were associated with participation in this study. The benefit, however, was the valuable knowledge gained for any pastor with a preaching ministry.

Another ethical procedure in this study was the care taken to protect the anonymity of survey respondents. In a similar fashion, the focus group operated under a rule of strict confidentiality. At the beginning of the focus group, I asked participants for permission to record the discussion and to quote or paraphrase their comments without revealing their identity. I assured them that I would not use their names in my report.

Full and honest reporting is another ethical procedure that was important to this study. I have made every attempt to present the study's findings as thoroughly and honestly as possible. The NPQ contained a statement of consent at the beginning of the questionnaire where I asked

participants for permission to include information in my dissertation that was gained through the

testing and the focus groups. I also explained the procedures and handling of the data collection.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Problem and Purpose

Despite the rich tradition of narrators in Colombia, there are not many to be found in church pulpits, either turning weekend sermons into reprimands for bad behavior or presenting abstract sermons that are far from the daily life of listeners. Many preachers know the Bible, theology, how to present the gospel, and how to apply it competently to listeners. However, this separation between the preacher and his audience is not a symptom of a lack of interest but of a lack of knowledge about the appropriate tools for preaching. In these conditions, the skill and practice of narrative preaching are able to transform preaching ministries and the way that pastors and lay preachers communicate with their congregations.

One of the problems with preaching, however, is that many sermons do not preach holistically. Most are presented using the didactic model and are developed deductively. This practice is principally due to patterns preachers have observed from their teachers. In these settings, listeners cannot feel involved by this kind of preaching, and are unable to experience the gospel holistically, as they only hear words. Authentic communication does not exist, leaving the listener without a true experience or the ability to identify with the gospel.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of a training session consisting of a workshop, a follow-up meeting, and a focus group about the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of narrative preaching within a group of fifteen pastors and lay leaders in three CFC churches in Bogotá, Colombia.

Participants

The group of participants was made up of fifteen pastors and lay leaders; five people from each church voluntarily participated in the workshop. The group consisted of both men and women of different ages. All of them had university degrees and a high commitment to ministry; all had received prior general preaching training.

Research Question #1

What were the self-reported knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding narrative preaching of the pastors and lay preachers prior to the workshop training?

Within the questions posed to the preachers before the training, several related to this research question. First, they were asked to define a narrative sermon, and the definitions given are shown inTable 4.1.

Table 4.1. Definitions of a Narrative Sermon Prior to the Workshop (N=15)

- Present a biblical passage freely, skillfully, and calmly, as if one were telling a story
- A sermon that tells biblical truths through narration after biblical study of the text (i.e., exegesis)
- The sermon that seeks to share the Bible easily and reveal the gospel through a historical and fluid method
- A recounted story
- A sermon based on biblical stories that recount an event or fact
- An expository, thematic sermon tells the story
- The ability to share biblical truths through stories
- One based on a narrative, a story that has an ending, a specific purpose
- Narrates an event, not in preaching style; shares the message starting from an event
- That which is presented in a narrative style
- An exposition that contains literary elements such as characters, events, places, and moments in which God teaches a truth or reveals himself
- A process to utilize narrative, telling stories and enlarging God's Word
- An exposition based on a story or narration, differing from a topical sermon or class
- A form of presenting God's word based on a good understanding of the text; presenting the text in a narrative story
- Telling a story

Second, they were asked about the kinds of sermons with which they were familiar, and their answers are recorded in Figure 4.1.
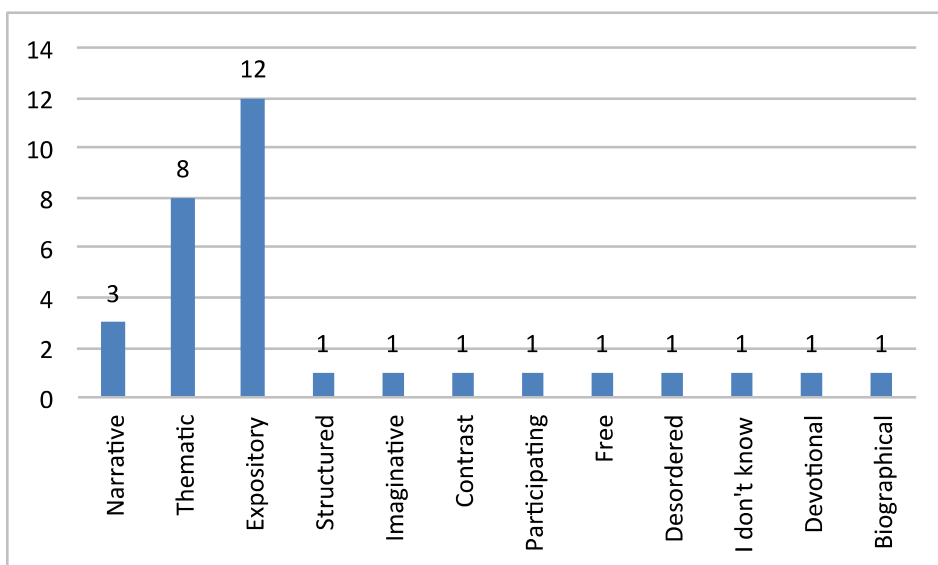
Figure 4.1. Sermons with which the participants were familiar.

It must be noted that expository sermons were the most well-known among the preachers, followed by topical sermons. Three of the preachers noted that they were familiar with narrative sermons.

Third, they were asked what steps they considered necessary to follow in preparing narrative sermons. Their responses are recorded in. Table 4.2

Table 4.2. Necessary Steps in Preparing a Narrative Sermon (N=14)

- Prayer, guidance from the Holy Spirit
- Exegesis, armed with the narrative, exposition
- I don't know
- Exegesis, historical development, message, progression of events, climax
- Selecting the biblical passage, knowing the audience to whom the sermon will be preached, carefully analyzing the context of the passage, reading the passage many times, learning the main idea, developing three main concepts
- Introduction

- Know the desired truth to be taught, organize the plot, and know how to direct the story
- Have a main idea, create an extraction of the story; prepare some clear aspects of the story that clarify and solidify the main idea; develop a conclusion that teaches a practical application for daily life today
- Know the historical background of the topic to be preached; start from the biblical or the general, practical application
- Pray; consider the need and/or the kind of audience; define the topic, document it, outline and present
- Exegesis—biblical content; teaching for listeners; application to current context
- Knowledge and perfect mastery, not only of the biblical text but also of the historical context of the passage and of today's life context; can present a biblical truth
- Know the story, transmit it, and use homiletic, hermeneutic, and exegetical tools
- I suppose that careful and repeated reading of the text is needed; memorize it, including its characters and events; include traditional sermons structures (e.g., introduction)

Fourth, they were asked about specific suggestions they would give a preacher presenting a narrative sermon. Their responses are recorded in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Suggestions for Preaching a Narrative Sermon (N=13)

– A clear speaking technique while sharing a narrative
– Full knowledge of the story; clarity, presentation
– I don't know
– Main message is well developed in the narration of the story; clear and faithful exegesis of the text
– Know the context of the selected passage very well, know the audience well, study the Word many times and find the main idea, base oneself on the selected verse or passage
– Must be clear, involve people, know contemporary culture
– Captivate the listeners' attention with the story, so that through the story, one can clearly reveal what is trying to be said; ground the teaching in a real application
– Really know the topic to be preached; manage audience; don't fall into the message's routine
– Be dynamic and interact as much as possible
– Be didactic, provide the listeners with a practical and simple application
– Be genuine, use common and natural language, and reflect the biblical message
– If this is based on a narrative, as I assume it is, I would like to hear a well-told story that is excellently transmitted
– I suppose that you should really know the text well

Similarly, I asked them to give three reasons why preaching narrative sermons is important. The answers to this question are recorded in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Reasons for Preaching Narrative Sermons (N=15)

– Concentrated time, connect with audience, facilitate recall
– Better recall, contextual reflection, emotional connection
– Easy to reach the audience, familiar to everyone, different while still remaining faithful to the text
– Grabs the audience's attention, involves the audience, relevant to contemporary context
– Stories draw the audience's attention, biblical narratives are easier to present, biblical narratives allow for good communication with the audience
– People are involved, better recall, many applications
– People like stories—they are captivating; stories refresh our traditional forms of preaching; stories allow us to more easily capture the teaching of the story
– Capture the audience's attention; an innovative form of sharing the message; do not get trapped by routine
– Teach, energize, and apply
– Get to know the character of God through the story; provide the audience with a clear description of the events and find relevant principles for today
– Closer connection to the audience; listener can identify with narrative; represents and involves audience with biblical truths
– Fully know the story, understand and help the audience understand the message, rescue stories by using their contexts
– Gives the ability to be much more exact in the presentation of the text

Referring to attitudes, I asked the participants if they believed that preaching narrative sermons required a talent or skill that only some preachers had, and I had them to explain their answers. Their responses are recorded in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. A Required Special Gift, Talent, or Skill (N=15)

- I think that it would be a gift from God for communicators
- No, training and skills are required, but those can be learned
- Yes, one needs to be a good speaker
- Yes, because one needs to have the ability to narrate the story in such a way that the goal is reached. Present the message
- Yes, the preacher must know the content very well and the context of the selected passage
- Yes, a special gift, it can be developed.
- Yes, a talent is required: it is a God-given skill; it must be developed by learning techniques and ways of doing it correctly
- No, we are all called to learn and apply new techniques in order to teach
- A specific talent is not required, but special preparation is necessary if one is not a storyteller
- Yes, but it is also clear that God equips those he calls
- I think that it is a form or technique that has to be nurtured and one has to be trained
- I believe that it isn't essential, but I think that it can be learned, an ability that is learned
- I don't think so. The preacher by nature is called, but I think that with training, he or she could preach narratively
- Yes. One must have a special talent

I can note that 57 percent of the preachers believed that a special talent or ability is needed in order to preach narrative sermons, and the remaining 43 percent believed that it was not necessary. However, many who mentioned that this skill or ability was needed admitted that it could be acquired through training and development. Once these answers were categorized,

shows the breakdown.
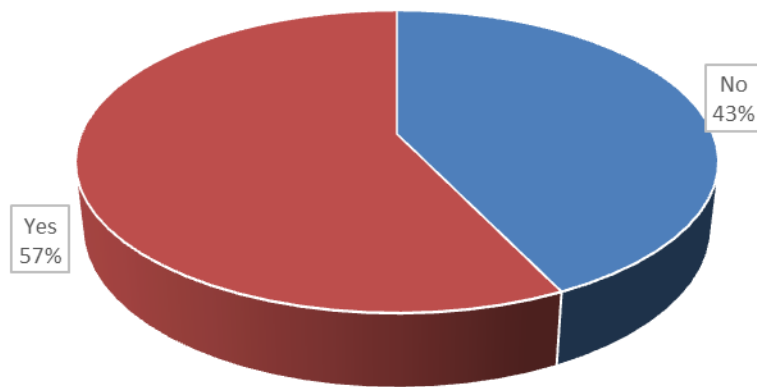
Figure 4.2. The need for a special talent or ability.

I then asked them about the frequency with which they hear narrative sermons within their context. I found that the largest percentage (60 percent) represented preachers who occasionally hear narrative sermons, followed by those who never hear them (20 percent). Only 13 percent expressed that they hear them frequently. Their answers are recorded in **Error! Reference source not found.**.
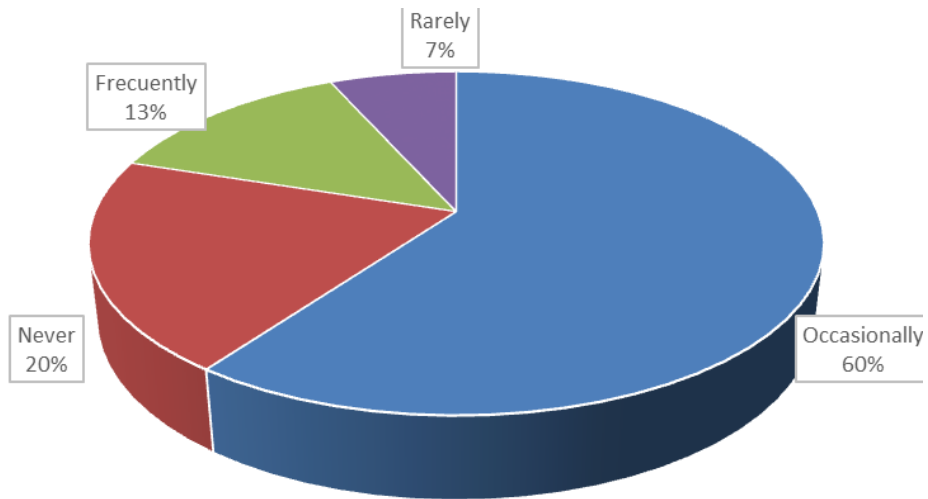
Figure 4.3. Frequency at which they hear narrative sermons.

The next question asked about the frequency with which these same participants preached narrative sermons within their own context. This time, the answers were less concentrated, and 36 percent expressed that they preach narratively infrequently, followed by those who never do at 29 percent. Fourteen percent shared that they preached narrative sermons frequently. Their responses are shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**.
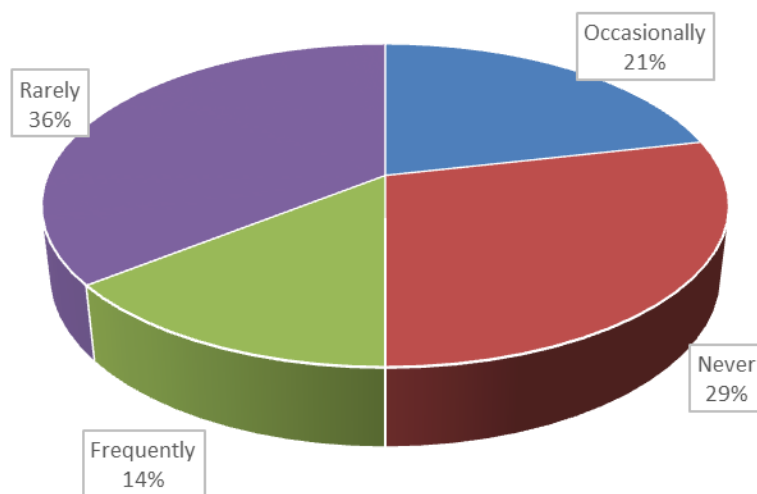
Figure 4.4. Frequency with which they preach narrative sermons.

The next inquiry concerned the emotions they perceived from the audience when listening to a narrative sermon. The large majority selected the option that they perceived very good reactions from the audience during these sermons. The remaining participants scored the reactions as powerful and impactful. The answers are recorded in

Figure 4.5. Emotions perceived from the audience while listening to narrative sermons.
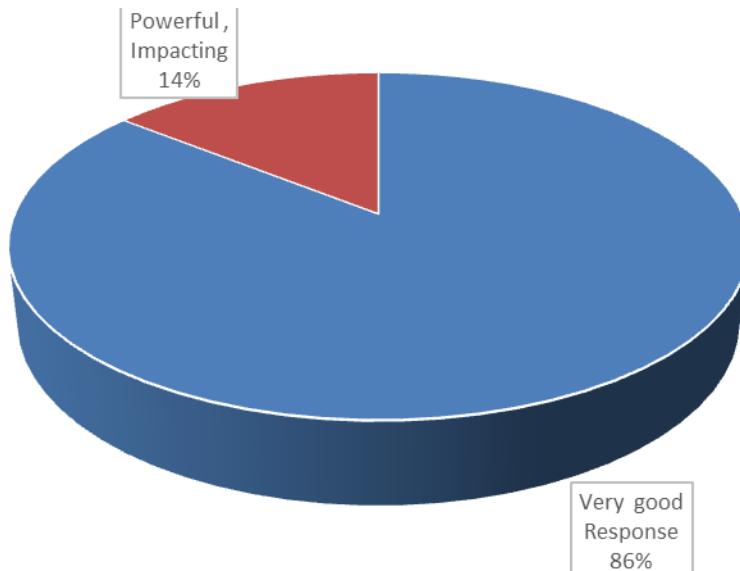
.

Figure 4.5. Emotions perceived from the audience while listening to narrative sermons.

The next request sought to learn about the meaning, preparation, and practice of narrative sermons the participants had previously received. Eighty-two percent of the preachers admitted that they had never received this kind of training while 9 percent had received basic training. Another 9 percent expressed that they had received formal previous training, as shown by **Error! Reference source not found.**.
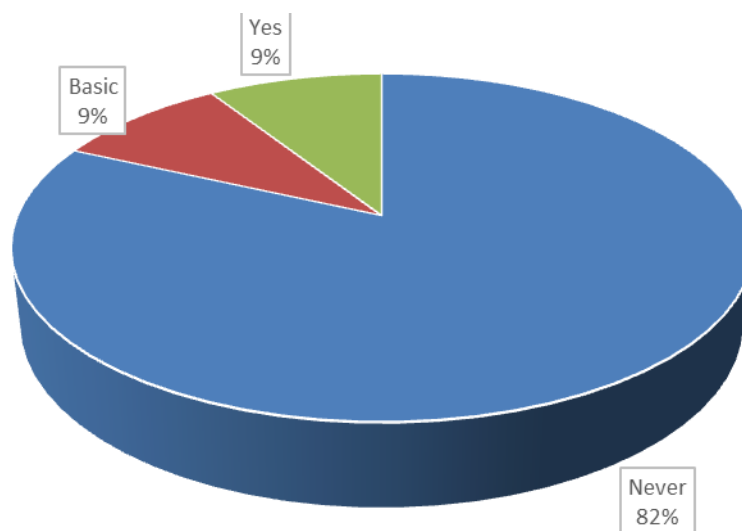
Figure 4.6. Previous training for preaching narrative sermons.

Following, I asked if they currently felt prepared to preach a narrative sermon. I can see that 64 percent felt poorly or not at all prepared while the remaining 36 percent felt somewhat prepared to preach this genre of sermons. Their replies are recorded in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7. Current preparedness to preach a narrative sermon.
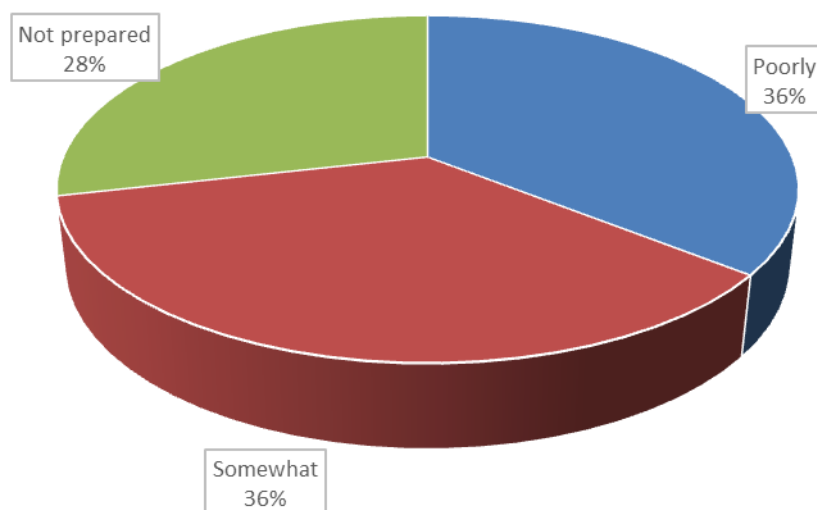
Figure 4.7. Current preparedness to preach a narrative sermon.

Next, I conducted the focus group prior to the training during which they discussed five questions. The first referred to the steps taken by preachers in order to prepare their narrative sermons. Their group responses are recorded in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

Table 4.6. Preparing a Narrative Sermon (N=15)

- Selecting the text, studying it in depth, searching for an argument, devising a plot, writing the sermon in a narrative fashion, memorizing it.
- I read the text, I graph the plot, write ideas. I take notes of the main principles and write the sermon.
- Define the topic, see the conflict, find the resolution
- Choose the topic, determine the extent, identify conflictive elements, and find the central theme
- Make a list of texts that grab my attention due to their narrative detail; pray before making a selection; find movement in the text (places, words, clues), find the central topic, define the sermon's goal. Find the natural divisions (plot)
- Select the passage; read various versions; frame the central topic, express the goal, develop the sermon; where it begins and where the conflict ends
- Pray, read the passage many times in different versions; use imagination and read the passage over many more times
- Pray, select the passage, study it deeply, main idea, frame the plot, write the sermon
- Read, divide it into sections, extract the characters, context, identify the problem and explain it, extract the theme, develop the plot
- Pray in order to select the story or passage; once selected, read it many times over in various versions, place the text or story in its correct geographical and historical context; use imagination; find the main topic or idea; label the scenes and identify each according to the verse
- Read the Bible in various versions, pray, complete an exegesis of the text, extract the main idea, build the plot, write the sermons as a story

The second question posed to the focus groups was about the workshop elements that they considered useful in preparing and presenting the narrative sermon. Their answers are shown in

Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. Useful Workshop Elements (N=15)

- Steps for preparing a sermon; the examples
- The plot was really helpful, because it helped me understand narration better and how this sermon works
- The examples and personal experience
- Think of narrating more than presenting actual points in the text
- Everything, the order was clear and natural
- Listening to the ways in which colleagues built the sermon; the concepts were much more grounded and the purpose was easier to understand
- After selecting the passage, I let my imagination loose and I placed myself in the place where the events occurred. Identify the conflicts.
- The examples, we were able to ask questions, develop a plot
- The material that was sent, the plot structure
- Elaborating the plot, discovering critical or crucial elements of a story
- Knowing the different kinds of sermons, knowing the steps to prepare a narrative sermon

Likewise, I asked for their opinions regarding the possible big obstacles in preaching narrative sermons and how they could be overcome. The answers they gave are recorded in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. Possible Obstacles in Preaching Narrative Sermons and How to Overcome Them (N=13)

- Knowing the technique, having a better bibliography, participating in workshops such as this one
- I think that many people would resist them because they aren't used to these kinds of sermons. These could be addressed gradually as an internal issue in the church. Improve in harmonizing so that reading the story isn't necessary; rather have true narrating can take place. It would be good to know about some resources on the topic.
- I think the danger of speculation is an obstacle. To address this, stick to the text
- Resistance from the audience. My personal limitations when narrating
- Maintaining the main idea or theme clear in the mist of descriptive details; the sermon's goal must be clear so that it will guide the narrative.
- In my case, many doubts arise regarding the construction of narrative sermons, seeing that I am only familiar with expository sermons and breaking out of that structure is difficult to do at the beginning.
- None; I like to converse and tell stories
- Lack of knowledge and of examples, longer preparation, shyness, some pastors don't enjoy this genre
- Faithfulness to the text, overcoming the embarrassment stemming from taking a position within the text
- Lack of knowledge of the context surrounding the selected narration. This obstacle is overcome by reading and knowing the historical, economic, and geographical context of the story that is to be preached
- We are unaware of the importance of this kind of sermon, a lack of innovation when preaching

Lastly, I asked if they would incorporate narrative preaching in their future preaching ministries. Without exception, all of the participants responded affirmatively, as shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9. Preaching Narrative Sermons in Future Preaching Practice (N=15)

- Yes, I would preach these now that I have more knowledge, and I am also working on my sermon
- Yes. I think these are windows into the souls of people who will eventually be impacted by a renewed contact with the word of God.
- Yes, they refresh the audience's imagination and engage me. It also helped me better comprehend the word
- Yes, as a challenge
- Yes, because they easily engage the heart and can be remembered well
- Of course, this is a novel and challenging tool that requires commitment and preparation
- Yes. It is a direct, simple, and entertaining way to engage people's minds through recall and later reach their hearts.
- Yes, I would preach narrative sermons
- Yes, this seems to be revolutionary within the preaching world; it is allowing the story to preach itself and not have one preach the story
- Yes, it is a practice that should be used seeing that the Bible has many stories with lots of characters; having a well-constructed plot allows the message to develop spontaneously
- Yes, I would do it in small groups where I serve and help within my church

Research Question #2

What were the self-reported knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding narrative preaching of the pastors and lay preachers following the workshop training?

Within the evaluation given to the preachers one month after the training, many of the questions related to this research question. First, they were asked to define a narrative sermon, and the definitions given are shown in

Table 4.10.

Table 4.10. Definitions of Narrative Preaching after the Training (N=15)

- As a tool, first and foremost, to help me meet with God and, through this tool, keep being used by God
- That which narrates biblical truths through a story
- A message where the story preaches itself and not a sermon that includes a story
- The tool used to take a biblical account and present it through storytelling
- Presenting the Word by telling a story
- Historical, anecdotal
- A sermon that makes the ideas available through story, as plot
- As a story that leads me to understand more deeply the love of God
- God's creative way of speaking.
- That which is based on a biblical story and is also presented as a story
- It is a sermon that narrates a biblical story and leaves the audience with a message
- Presenting God's Word in an entertaining, clear, and theological way
- It is the art of presenting the Word of God through narratives, whether it be through textual or personal stories

After comparing these answers to the ones the participants gave before the training (Table 4.1, p. 91), I noticed that participants had a much clearer concept of narrative sermons. This observation can be seen where they state that the story preaches itself, rather than a preacher telling a story within the sermon, or by stating the fact that the story itself is the plot; however, at the same time, some other unclear ideas remained and can be seen by the comment stating the possibility of preaching stories authored by oneself, rather than using purely biblical stories.

I also repeated the question regarding the kinds of sermons with which they were familiar. The most widely-recognized sermons continued to be the ones mentioned prior to the training (see Figure 4.1, p. 91): expository, narrative, and thematic. However, following the workshop, narrative sermons were mentioned among more participants (eight instead of three), and thematic sermons dropped down to being the third most mentioned (by six instead of eight). I also noticed that fewer kinds of sermons were mentioned than before the training, dropping down from twelve to eight. Their responses are seen in Figure 4.8.
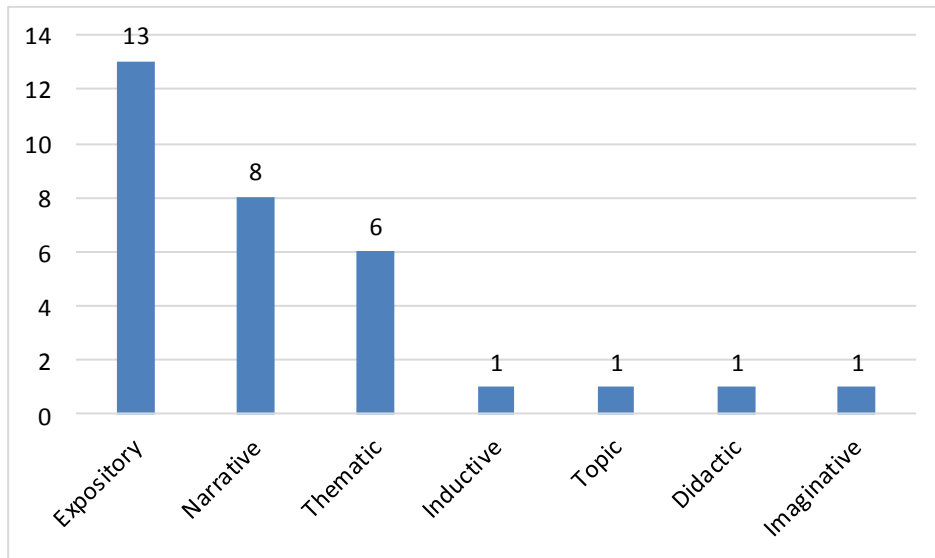
Figure 4.8. Sermons with which participants are familiar after the training.

The next question asked about the steps participants considered necessary in preparing a narrative sermon. Answers are recorded in

Table 4.11.

Table 4.11. Necessary Steps in Preparing a Narrative Sermon after the Training (N=13)

- Carefully read the text in order to find details, expand the context to help listeners best understand what the story teaches, prayer
- Pick topics, point of views, or the passage through which the story will be narrated, describe its reach, read the applied passage
- Read the text, complete an exegesis of it; extract characters, narrative plot, topic; write the story and learn it
- Pray, choose various biblical passages, evaluate, consider the possible concepts, apply and develop the guide
- Pray, prayerfully pick the passage, pray through the passage, read it in various versions, imagine the text, study it, present it
- Prayer, read it in different versions many times over, step away from it
- Select passage, interpret text, extract main idea, elaborate the plot, write the sermon, practice the sermon
- Study, complete a hermeneutic and homiletic exegesis of the plot and the story's path, construct and narrate it
- Study the text of the book, find what the author is saying, a good introduction and a good explanation
- Preparation, know the story you will be teaching, use of images
- Pray, read the selected story many times in different version, elaborate a plot and extract words or important ideas in each section of the plot, identify the climactic moments or problems in the story, develop a sermon, write it out
- Document myself well, pray, read, write, read, write, proofread
- Read the story well, research, establish the plot and write the narration in light of the passage's central idea

After comparing these answers with the ones given before the training (see Table 4.2, p. 92), I first noticed the confidence behind the answers. Before the training, some of the participants responded by admitting that their answers were assumptions. Moreover, in the initial survey, one of the preachers openly admitted to not knowing. Furthermore, this time around, some new elements surfaced that were not previously mentioned, such as the plot, the importance of following a more-or-less ordered sequence, and writing out the sermon and then proofreading it.

As to the specific suggestions they would give a preacher presenting a narrative sermon, the participants' responses after the training are documented in

Table 4.12.

Table 4.12. Suggestions for Preaching a Narrative Sermon after the Training (N=14)

- Feel like you are part of the story, passion for the story should begin with you
- Intensely live the story being told
- Get in character and take ownership of the role, set embarrassment aside
- Humility, integrity when dealing with the Word, preparation
- Good mental disposition in addition to the spiritual side
- Look at the audience, vary your tone of voice, don't use your notes
- Careful study, the context, good interpretation
- Clarity in language, let it be simple and understood by all
- Repeat the sermon many times, record images, don't break the pattern that began the narrative
- Maintain the same unity as the original story, as you narrate the story also reveal more teachings
- Be spontaneous, dynamic and clearly vocalize. Have a good understanding of the theme and of the audience
- Get involved in the narrative, see clearly and connect with the audience

Once again, these answers reflect a deeper understanding than what was expressed prior

to the training (

Table 4.3, p. 93), seeing that no assumptions were mentioned this second time. Likewise, they

mentioned techniques relating to a concrete presentation such as audience management, getting

in character, a good mental state, clarity of language, avoiding departing from the planned

sermon, vocalizing, and spontaneity.

The next question asked for three reasons why preaching narrative sermons is important.

Their responses are recorded in

Table 4.13.

Table 4.13. Reasons for Preaching Narrative Sermons after the Training (N=13)

Related with the Scripture
- The Bible is mostly a narrative, draws the audience nearer, transmits the message in a new way
- You can share God's Word through a current message that can replace our conversation with God's
- The Bible is mostly narration; people get more involved with stories; doesn't spoon-feed the message to the audience
- Present the word, introduce the audience to the topic, leave practical teaching

Related with the preacher
- Captures attention differently, don't get stuck in a monotonous routine, have a new plot to preach
- Presents the sermon creatively, develops and applies a biblical passage, interacts with the audience
- Connects better with the audience, better locates the passage to be developed, a new and varied approach to preaching

Related with the audience
- Connects better to the preacher, connects more to the audience, extends the opportunity to live the story
- People connect with stories, know the story better in a different way; they are different and reach the hearts of the people
- It is entertaining, reaches the audience better, allows one to teach and dig into topics
- We live in a culture of stories, entertaining; Jesus preached like this.
- Jesus did it this way; people like stories; it is possible to capture the attention of those who have yet to be reached
- Because these are events that really happened because it allows sharing one or more messages with the audience, because it takes the preacher into deeper study of the story and its geography according to the events that will be narrated

The previous answers revealed elements that were specifically shared during the training, such as the fact that the Bible is largely narrative and that Jesus preached using this genre. These are facts that were not mentioned before the training (see Table 4.4, p. 93).

Just as prior to the training, I asked if they believed that narrative sermons required a special talent or skill that only some preachers possessed. This time, answers are recorded in

Table 4.14

Table 4.14. Requirements for Preaching Narrative Sermons (N=15)

- No, this is a skill that can be developed (3)
- Yes, I believe that preaching in general is a gift, that we can enhance with our talent
- I think that some people have the gift of storytelling, but I think that everyone can develop this skill
- No, skill development is required
- I think that God imparts talent into the presentation. It is partly a gift and must be developed by the Lord
- Yes, you must have certain skills during the presentation
- I think that some preachers have a natural talent for storytelling, but this can be learned
- No, narrative preaching requires learning and the ability to communicate clearly
- No, I think that like every art, one must study it with discipline and practice it, so that we can tell the story that God has already told us through the Word
- No, the importance lies within the preparation, topic management, plot, and knowing the audience really well
- Yes, the preacher must have the ability to imagine situations that complement the sermon; he/she must skillfully bring the selected story into current situations
- It is not a talent just given to some. It may be easier for some than for others, but we are all capable of it
- Yes, but this is an ability that can be developed. I say this because narrating isn't easy and it requires abilities such as tonality, expression, among others

According to this figure, the percent of preachers expressing each opinion was similar to the percent before the training (see Figure 4.2, p. 95). However, this time I see a 3 percent increase in participants signaling that a special talent or skill is not necessary to be able to preach narrative sermons. In categorizing answers as affirmative or negative after the training, I came up with

Figure 4.9. Requirements for preaching narrative sermons.

.
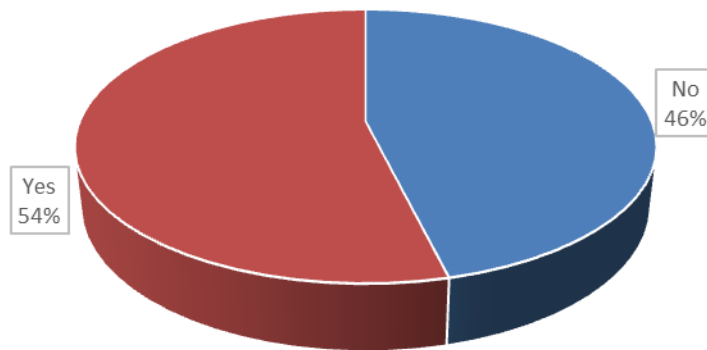
Figure 4.9. Requirements for preaching narrative sermons.

I then asked about the frequency in which they hear narrative sermons within their context. As I can see, 46 percent signaled that they infrequently hear these sermons and 39 percent hear them occasionally, while 15 percent said they never hear them. As Figure 4.3 shows, the *frequently* answer disappeared, which was previously selected by 13 percent of preachers and an increase was seen in the category of *infrequently,* which changed to 39 percent. Answers are shown in Figure 4.10.
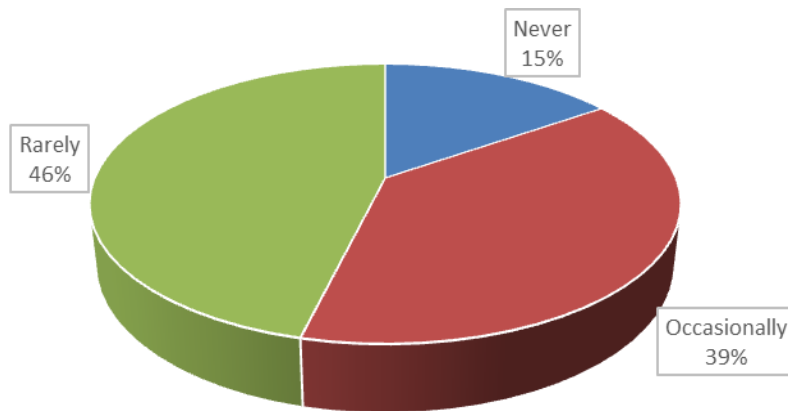
Figure 4.10. Frequency they hear narrative sermons.

The following question asked about the frequency in which participants themselves preached these sermons. Sixty-two percent of the participants answered that they never preach using narrative sermons, while 15 percent indicated that they infrequently do. Another 15 percent answered that they frequently preach narrative sermons, and 8 percent admitted to occasional narrative preaching. I can see that the percentage of preachers indicating that they never preached narrative sermons increased to 62 percent from the prior training when it was at 29 percent (see Figure 4.4, p. 97). The results come from the preachers now knowing how to identify better this kind of sermon; in the focus group the participants commented that before the training they may have been confusing it with other forms they used. Their responses are shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**.
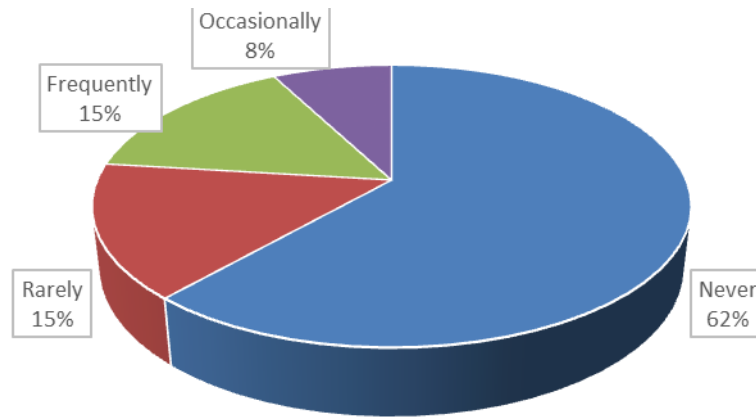
Figure 4.11. Frequency they preach narrative sermons.

Next, I asked them about the emotions they perceived in the audience when they heard or preached a narrative sermon. Eighty-two percent indicated that the perceived reaction was good, while 18 percent responded that it was powerful and impactful. After comparing these results with those obtained prior to the training (see Figure 4.5, p. 98), I see a 4 percent increase in preachers who perceived emotions as powerful and impactful, reflecting that they now have a more favorable perception of narrative preaching. This time their responses can be seen in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

Powerful, impacting 18%

Good reaction 82%
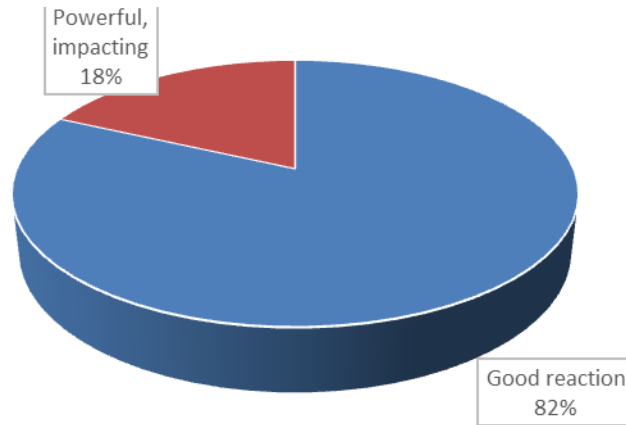
Figure 4.12. Emotions perceived from the audience during narrative sermons.

The following question concerned the training received, in terms of meaning, preparation, and practice of narrative sermons. This workshop was the first training on this topic for 83 percent of the participants, while 17 percent reported having received prior training on the topic. As seen in Figure 4.6 (p. 99), the percentages of the answers remained practically the same for this question. This observation indicates that the preachers from before the training began were conscious of their knowledge level regarding this topic. The answers are recorded in Figure 4.13.
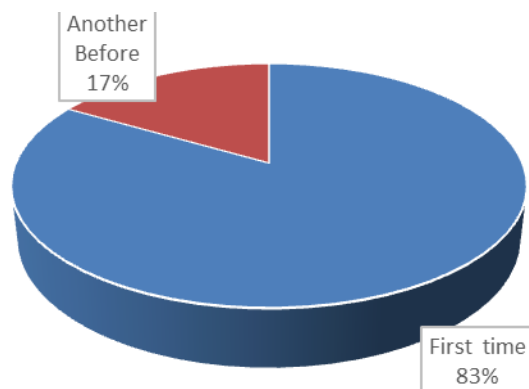
Figure 4.13. Previous training for preaching narrative sermons.

The next question was about whether or not they felt prepared to preach a narrative sermon. According to these responses, 61% felt that they are somewhat prepared for this kind of sermon, while 31% felt sufficiently prepared and 8% felt that they were poorly prepared. According to Figure 4.7 (p. 100), the percentage of those who believed they were poorly prepared dropped from 36 percent to 8 percent, and the percentage of those who thought they had no preparation disappeared completely, whereas it used to be at 28 percent. Their responses are recorded in Figure 4.14.

Poorly
8%

Sufficiently
31%

Somewhat
61%
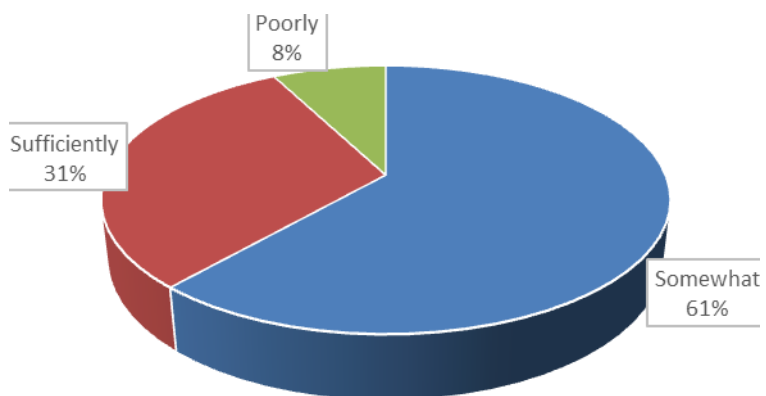
Figure 4.14. Perception of competency before the training.

In regards to the second focus group carried out after the training, the first question dealt with the steps that each participant took while preparing their own narrative sermons. These answers reflect more precision in some areas compared to prior to the training (see

Table 4.6, p. 101). For example, the importance of the context surrounding the text is emphasized, studying the exegesis, and reading the text after it has been written out also are emphasized. Their answers are presented in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15. Steps for Preparing a Narrative Sermon (N=15)

Includes observation, interpretation, application, and delivery
- Prayer, find different texts, prayerfully pick one, read it in different versions, imagine myself in the text, study it, present it
- Select a biblical story, know the story well, research the historical context that provides biblical support; focus on the topic in relation to the audience, provide an action moment for the audience during the sermon, the sermon development must be dynamic and not monotonous
- Study the hermeneutic and homiletic exegesis, imagine the story and decide on how to communicate it, it is based on the plot

Includes observation, interpretation, and application
- Pick the passage, observe it, delineate the plot, consult support texts, write the main ideas and points, write the sermon
- Read the text (places, time, characters, positions), topic (main idea), write the story's plot, write the story, memorize it
- Choose a topic, delineate the reach, choose a point of view or character from which the story will be narrated, deeply study the topic, live the message, apply it
- Pray, select the text, read it many times over in different versions, write it, read the written version many times
- Pray, read the selected story many times and in many versions, elaborate the plot, extract important words from each section of the text or plot level from specific verses, identify climactic moments or tensions in the story, develop the sermon, re-read it for edits and literary embellishments

Includes observation and interpretation
- Pick the topic, document myself, pray, notice the tension and its resolution
- Perform a good exegesis of the test, I try to observe what the author says, I elaborate the plot
- Read it more than once, extract all the details, find the topic, make your points flow through the text, enrich the context
- Pray, select the text, read it many times over in different versions, write it, read the written version many times

I also asked what the biggest obstacles in preaching narrative sermons would be and how they could overcome these obstacles. Their responses are recorded in

Table 4.16. After comparing these responses with

Table 4.8 (p. 103), the preachers no longer view knowing the technique as a perceived obstacle.

The responses also indicate the fact that up until this point, most of their knowledge regarding

sermons was related to expository ones. This answer can be observed when a participant

commented that expository sermons had been idolized as if they were the only existent option.

Table 4.16. Obstacles to Preaching Narrative Sermons and How to Overcome Them (N=13)

- The biggest obstacle and perhaps the most dangerous one is definitely the possibility of telling a story without a biblical basis; a personal story and not one from the Word
- I think fiction could be an obstacle and could become a problem if we don't know how to control it
- That people won't be familiar with this style and could reject it The way out is to begin preaching like this gradually. We have idolized expository preaching, forgetting that it is merely one way of teaching
- Fulfills the paradigm or habit of the church of listening to one model or type of preaching; expressing dynamism throughout the development of the sermon from the beginning
- Definitely the practice and discipline to study and develop it
- The embarrassment to preach like this, the work of elaborating it, and in regards to embarrassment, work on not feeling it anymore. Preparation and performance are obtained through practice.
- Naturalness, the ability to take hold of the story
- The tendency to prepare expository sermons, seeing that at the beginning, one could think that narrative sermons lack the depth that expository ones provide
- None
- Actually producing stories that capture the attention of people
- Finding the right connection between the message of the story and today's reality

Research Question #3

What other factors may have influenced the self-reported changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices of the participants regarding narrative preaching?

One of these factors that may have especially influenced the changes would be the limited time available for preaching. As some of the participants expressed, it would have been ideal to have more activities in class to secure the knowledge of each of the techniques and steps to follow in order to create and evaluate a better plot. I could have expanded on what one can or cannot do the original passage's text on which the narrative sermon is based because they expressed doubts about how to divide a biblical passage in different scenes.

It is probable that some of the participants will not be able to answer all of their questions regarding this technique. They may feel insecure about practice it correctly in their future preaching practice, even though they all expressed a willingness to practice it.

Research Question #4

How did the participants evaluate the quality of the narrative preaching training?

In order to answer this question, the final survey included the question, "What elements from the workshop were the most helpful in preparing and preaching the narrative sermon?" The results are recorded in Table 4.177.

Table 4.17. Most Helpful Workshop Elements (N=15)

- Observing the scene and beginning to diagram the intensity of the resolutions, choosing which person to develop the narrative
- The outline of the biblical narrative
- Understanding the plot movement and that sharing the application while you narrate is possible
- Knowing the necessary foundations to prepare a narrative sermon, having solid preparation and mastery of the topic, finding the plot and the sermon objective, application for the audience
- The class activities
- Elaborating the plot, the challenge of creating a narrative sermon
- The possibilities from which one can narrate, creating the plot, the accompaniment
- The practice portion of the workshop, the plot also helped a lot, the sermon's plot, this structure provides a very clear message
- The instructor, the practice, plot
- Understanding how it works, the way in which you can identify the plot and the course of action, the story construction
- The sermons that the workshop facilitator provided, learning how to elaborate a plot, the class activities

By summarizing these answers, I conclude that the participants found the practical portion of the exam most valuable. Regarding the workshop, I also asked the participants what parts they wished had been expanded, removed completely, or added. Their responses are recorded in Table 4.188.

Table 4.18. Parts of the Workshop That Should Be Expanded, Removed, or Added (N=13)

- In my opinion and due to my learning style, I would offer more practice or more examples of narrative sermons
- The theological focus because it seemed that we focused more on narrative and how to embellish it, but we forgot about the theological side

- I think that we should have delved more into how to create an outline of a narrative sermon so that we can preach without reading it
- I didn't know about narrative preaching, and I think it is a good way to interact better with the church. I thought it was a very productive workshop for me; it was definitely practical with good application.
- Each of the activities seeing that those encourage better recall
- I would have liked for the workshop to have more materials and more classes to acquire extensive concepts better. This would help us have a wider and more concrete mastery of the subject. We also could have had more exercises to allow us to practice the new information.
- I would have liked more time to prepare the sermon; because it was so new, I had a lot of questions
- I think we need more than one practice sermon to let what we learned sink in
- It was good
- Narrative during the interpretation, how to improve interpretation, place more emphasis on that part of the exercise
- Elaborating the plot, giving more tools or tricks to develop a good plot

Paradoxically, the areas that needed the most improvement were also the practical portions. Both of these responses coincided and reiterate, first, the participant's interest in the topic and, second, the importance of optimizing or expanding future opportunities, so that whenever possible, I can allot more time to empirical training.

Another question that deals with the fourth research question was made during the second focus group. I asked if in their future preaching practice they would employ narrative sermons. All participants responded affirmatively to this question as shown in

Table 4.19.

Table 4.19. Preaching Narrative Sermons in Future Preaching Ministry (N=15)

- It is a great way of keeping the audience connected to the main story
- Yes, it helped with understanding the message, and with what I learned here, I will feel comfortable preaching like this
- I think so because it can bring a sense of freshness to people and give them a new perspective on God's Word
- Yes, I think it is a new alternative to combine biblical stories, starting from the narrative and bringing the audience into an oral movie in order to reach a particular conclusion
- Yes, I believe that the simplest way of reaching the public; not just like a sermon but as a method of communicating the Word in the most creative way possible, but being mindful of not falling into stories that the author never penned.
- Yes, it is an important way to preach, especially, for example, in reaching youth
- Yes, because they encourage more connection and preparation on the preacher's end
- Yes, it is a novel way
- Yes, other than feeling good, I know that in many situations, they will better reach the audience
- They are definitely an extraordinary resource in communicating the gospel
- Yes, because it makes it easier for the preacher to give practical teaching messages, about what God wanted to leave us with his Word

All of the participants expressed their intention to use narrative sermons in their future preaching. This answer reiterates the attitude of acceptance toward the workshop by all of the participants.

Research Question #5

After participants preached narrative sermons in their churches, how do congregation members evaluate these sermons as church members?

In order to answer this question, I designed an evaluation composed of seven dimensions: authoritative, authentic, relevant, transformational, skill level, resonance, and engagement. The evaluators filled one out as they listened to sermons prepared by each one of the other preachers. Table 4.20 records the general results of each of the fifteen preachers who were part of the training. Each cell indicates the number of answers that were respectively selected. The meaning of the scale is as follows: (1) poor, (2) average, (3) good, (4) very good, (5) excellent. Eleven preachers had five evaluations each; three preachers had eight evaluations each; and, a preacher had seven evaluations. There were eighty-six evaluations in total.

Table 4.20 presents the results for the authoritative dimension. After analyzing these responses, the average score in this dimension was 4.1 out of 5.

Table 4.20. Authoritative Dimension

Statement	Scores (n)				
	1	2	3	4	5
The message was derived from Scripture.	0	2	1	43	40
The message helped you better understand the text.	0	2	19	38	26
The message revealed how God is at work in the text.	0	3	18	39	25
The message displayed God's grace in Scripture.	0	4	11	39	30

Table 4.21 presents the results for the authentic dimension. After analyzing these responses, the average score in this dimension was 4.1 out of 5.

Table 4.21. Authentic Dimension

Statement	Scores (n)				
	1	2	3	4	5
The preacher displayed deep enthusiasm for the message.	0	2	21	40	23
The preacher's demeanor showed conviction.	0	1	22	37	26
The preacher displayed honesty while managing the message/audience.	0	0	12	46	28
The message displayed profound sensitivity.	0	2	18	38	28

Table 4.22 presents the results for the relevant dimension. After analyzing these responses, the average score was 3.3 out of 5.

Table 4.22. Relevant Dimension

Statement	Scores (n)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Connected with the audience's worldview	0	2	21	40	23
Showed awareness of contemporary issues	0	1	22	37	26
Revealed grasp on situations that people face today	0	0	12	46	28
Visually connected with provocative imagery	0	2	18	38	28

Table 4.23 presents the results for the transformational dimension. After analyzing these responses, the average score in this dimension was 3.6 out of 5.

Table 4.23. Transformational Dimension

Statement	Scores (n)				
	1	2	3	4	5
The message reminded you that grace exists.	1	3	10	45	24
Offers reachable solutions for struggles	0	9	23	42	9
The message provided practical advice.	2	10	37	25	9
The message would make an unbeliever want to hear more.	0	6	27	36	14

Table 4.24 presents the results for the skillful dimension. After analyzing these responses, the average score in this dimension was 3.5 out of 5.

Table 0.24. Skillful Dimension

Statement	Scores (n)				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Speaker was organized, limited distractions.	0	0	25	37	21
Speaker used inviting facial expressions and gestures.	1	8	41	27	8
Speaker varied the rhythm, style, and intensity of the message.	1	16	24	35	7
Message structure was easy to follow.	0	2	19	48	14

Table 4.25 presents the results for the resonant dimension. After analyzing these responses, the average score in this dimension was 3.7 out of 5.

Table 4.25. Resonant Dimension

Statement	Scores (n)				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Points were rooted in the text.	0	2	11	36	30
The speaker avoided moralizing, psychologizing, or shaming.	0	2	18	39	23
Got people face-to-face with God rather than simply instructing.	1	4	27	37	13
The hearer's hopes, fears and problems were clearly understood/	2	2	23	41	14

Table 4.26 presents the results for the engaging dimension. After analyzing these responses, the average score in this dimension was 3.5 out of 5, according to the congregation members who evaluated them.

Table 4.26. Engaging Dimension

Statement	Scores (n)				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
The story stimulated your imagination.	0	2	20	40	20
The story led to moments of suspense.	2	10	29	29	11
The general story elements are easy to remember.	0	5	21	46	9
The story kept your attention.	0	6	11	49	14
I can retell the story in my own words.	0	3	26	41	10

Error! Reference source not found. summarizes the results of the evaluation in each of the dimensions considered. The overall results of the assessment show a good performance of the preachers to communicate the message through a narrative sermon. The elements of authority and authenticity showed a higher degree of skill, which shows that sermons maintain an adequate biblical and theological level.
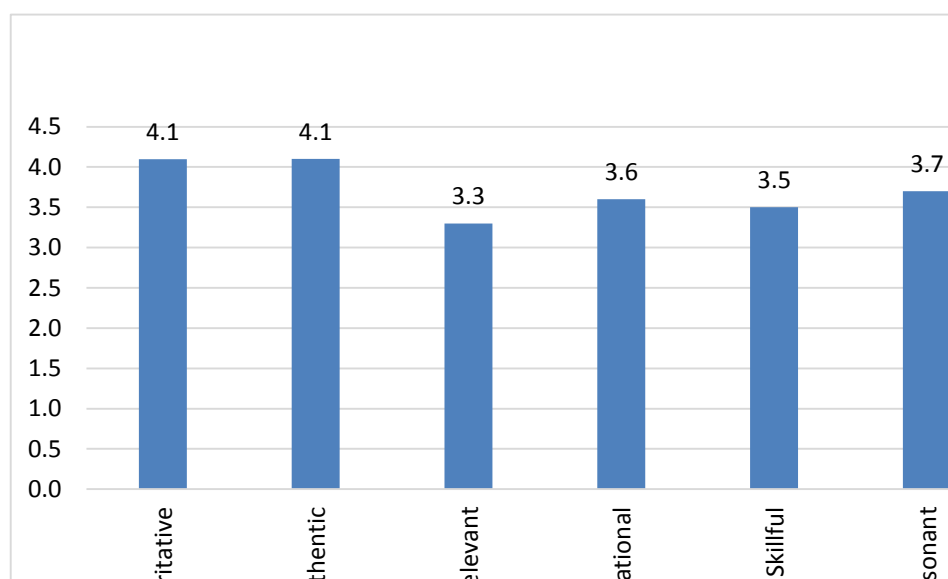
Figure 4.15. Sermon evaluations after the participants preached.

The engagement dimension is the one that is most important when dealing with narrative sermons and its average score was 3.5 out of 5. The average of all seven dimensions was 3.7. All evaluations were anonymous.

Summary of Major Findings

Having done the research and record the details of the results. I have summarized the main findings in the following five points.

1. Narrative sermons were primarily defined as a way of preaching where a story is told based on the biblical text.

2. Most of the participants had never received formal training in narrative preaching before and did not feel sufficiently prepared to preach in this way.

3. The participants expressed that the reasoning behind narrative preaching was to keep the audience's attention better and to improve communication with the congregation. Most believe that narrative sermons are very well received.

4. Most of the obstacles to preaching narrative sermons are found in acquiring enough practice in creating and constructing a narrative.

5. Without exception, all of the participants want to include narrative sermons in their future preaching ministry.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

The messages in pastors' sermons occasionally do not involve church members. This practice often occurs because most of these churches are didactic in style and follow a deductive model. These kinds of practices are the logical consequences of observing patterns from their teachers throughout the learning process. The absence of narrative preaching can also create a distance between the congregation and the content, as well as from the pastors. With observation in mind situations in mind, my research focused on training fifteen pastors and lay leaders, both male and female, across different age groups. They all had university degrees and deep commitment to ministry. They were trained to preach narrative sermons in order to improve the congregations' level of engagement and to reduce the discrepancy between sermon messages and the everyday life of listeners. The following findings were revealed after analyzing the responses of the systematic self-evaluation completed by the pastors and preachers who participated in the training, as well as evaluations by their corresponding congregations,

Narrative Sermons—Preaching a Story Based on the Bible

By defining a narrative sermon simply as preaching a story based on the Bible, the two main elements of narrative preaching are included: (1) the use of story as content and vehicle of this kind of preaching, and the biblical centrality as an essential characteristic of Christian preaching. Narrative preaching brings greater understanding of the biblical accounts as they are already written as narratives but also enhances its communicative quality by being thought provoking and committed. Narrative preaching is fundamental to the preacher who seeks to

update the message elements revealed by inserting the message in a particular historical and cultural reality.

The literature on narrative preaching reveals that the concept of narrative is not universal in its semantic interpretation. "Some understand a narrative sermon to be the re-telling of a Biblical story, others understand narrative preaching to include a story about life that explains Biblical truths. Illustrations, often used to confirm an expository sermon, as well as poetic language (such as metaphors and fantasy), the life-story of the individual, and authentic experiences are also considered by some to be narrative" (Pieterse 166). Lowry defines narrative preaching in such broad terms that he regards any sermon "that moves from opening disequilibrium through escalation of conflict to surprising reversal to closing denouement" as a narrative sermon, whether it contains a story or not (25-27). In fact, according to (Vos C.H.J.) , any approach that causes the sermon to be more pleasing could be called narrative (181-86). "Some writers even include the traditional style of preaching in a definition of narrative" (Hamilton 104). I describe narrative sermon as a biblical message in a preaching event that employs the use of story and plot to communicate inductively the author's main thought of what would ordinarily be a biblical narrative.

Participants Training

Most participants had no prior formal training in narrative preaching and did not feel sufficiently prepared to preach in this way. One of the reasons I chose this topic for my dissertation is that in my personal experience, and in the ministry of the schools of preaching in churches in Bogotá, students have never received this training. Finding confirms the need for kind of training.

Another main reason found in the literature for not feeling prepared is due to the very nature of this type of sermon. Authors such as Lowry stress: "the point that preaching (a narrative) is an art form and that preachers are artists (9). Any artist will tell you that "producing" a piece of art is a laboriously difficult task, with many failures and few successes. This could be sufficient proof that simply put, it is not easy to prepare and preach a good narrative sermon." According to Lowry, a narrative sermon is all about "the plot" (14). "Finding the plot in a passage of Scripture is a challenge, making narrative preaching quite difficult" (Hamilton 110). Furthermore, the plot is imbedded in the movements and structures of the sermon (Butrick 87). Venter asks whether every sermon can indeed be analyzed and explained in terms of movements and structures (9).

It is obvious that narrative preaching does not come naturally, at least for most of us. In this regard Lowry's understanding is different. He argues that, "although many may have doubts about their narrative skills, they will be surprised at their narrative skills in non-preaching activities. This, in fact proves that they have a natural and latent ability to preach in the narrative art form. It comes more naturally than preachers seem to think and it is in fact not such a rare ability" (74).

The information gathered in Chapter 2 provides the theoretical and practical aspects of the workshop. First of all, I wanted to show how the Bible itself is the account of God relating to his people. God makes himself known in history, and the Bible narrates these acts where God reveals his own nature and character and his purpose for humankind. The content in Chapter 2 also provides the theoretical framework to convey the definitions, characteristics, and types of narrative sermons to workshop participants. Finally, this chapter proposes steps to prepare a

narrative sermon based on the general knowledge of how to prepare a sermon, emphasizing the most relevant parts in order to construct this kind of sermon (see Appendix D).

Among the sources consulted, I did not find literature referring to a teaching experience similar to what was presented in this research. Additionally, I was unable to find books or articles in Spanish of an academic nature about my research topic. This reality has challenged me in my personal ministry to translate and summarize the most significant books and articles on the topic in order to offer them to people who have participated in the workshop and also for future teaching experiences.

Speaking from my ministry perspective, I went through a similar process as the students who participated in the research. By processing the information in Chapter 2 in order to turn it into a workshop, I was able to conceptualize more clearly what a narrative sermon is, what its components are. I also developed my ability to find different plot elements in a narrative and how to use them in order to prepare my own narrative sermons. Concretely speaking, I prepared two new narrative sermons to present during the workshop.

Advantages of Narrative Preaching

The participants expressed that the reasoning behind narrative preaching was better engagement and improved communication with the audience. Most believe that narrative sermons are very well received.

"Narrative preaching presents a wonderful opportunity to communicate the Gospel in exciting, new, and unexpected ways, enhancing the effectiveness of the communication. There are obvious advantages in using a narrative form of preaching" (Miller 104-106). A fertile benefit must certainly be that people of all ages love stories. According to Marquart, "The ear perks and begins to listen" when a story is initiated (137). The listener spontaneously leans

forward as he or she is drawn into the plot. Miller is of the opinion that "television dramas, novels, plays and movies have played an important role in preparing congregations for narrative preaching" (104). "This stresses the need for inductive preaching, because it attempts to transform the congregation from observers into participants" (Lewis and Lewis 80). According to Craddock, "Everyone lives inductively; not deductively," so we should also teach that way (60).

My motivation to continue teaching similar workshops to the one proposed in this research has greatly increased as I saw much growth in these pastors and leaders. They began with very little knowledge about the topic, and within a month I was able to see their growth to the point that each of them completely prepared a narrative sermon following the guidelines specified during the workshop.

Obstacles to Narrative Preaching

Acquiring enough practice in creating and constructing a narrative proves to be one of the biggest obstacles to preaching narrative sermons. The literature offers many possibilities for developing a narrative sermon and this can be unclear. Lowry, with his emphasis on plot, Buttrick with his emphasis on moves (23-79), and Craddock with his emphasis on inductive method, to name three; (Lowry 1997:15), reveal effective and noticeable opportunities. Personally, I find Miller's methodology (112-115) the most practical, merely because of its simplicity. Furthermore, this approach can in fact accommodate the main elements of other approaches, thereby enriching Miller's model. Miller uses the plot (like Lowry) as point of departure. The plot entails four movements: an introduction, events, a resolution, and a conclusion.

In the future, the preaching schools of which I am part of as the founder will include various, short, teaching workshops throughout a semester on narrative preaching. This teaching will allow more time for follow-up on practical issues with the students. It will also allow leaders to record medium-term impact of narrative preaching in the particular ministries of each of the participants.

Generally speaking, my own sermon preparation has changed in the area of exegesis. While I study and observe the structure of a passage, I also include and register the various elements that make up a narrative: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and dénouement. If the passage does not contain narrative elements after researching the literary, historical, and geographic context, I attempt to outline the story behind the text.

Commitment to Preach Narrative Sermons

Participants remain highly committed to preaching narrative sermons in their future ministries. There are many benefits of narrative preaching and the need for narrative preaching should be established. Venter agrees that: "narrative preaching opens up wonderful and exiting new possibilities, but stresses the point that this is only one of many possible approaches which is not sufficiently considered". Venter warns that: "the neglect of this diversity or over-emphasis of the narrative could lead to an undesirable under-exposure of the all kinds of preaching" (7-8).

The many possibilities of abuse are characteristic in all kinds of preaching. Narrative preaching is therefore not excluded. Miller recognizes some important dangers characteristic in narrative preaching, namely:

- "There is no guarantee that the narrative will cause the correct identification with the characters and events of the story.

- Narrative preaching may eventually cause the loss of teaching in the church.

- Narrative preaching may amaze, fascinate and entertain more than it may effect change in people's lives. The effectiveness of narrative sermons is bound by the creative capabilities of the listeners. I may add: it is also limited by the creative capabilities of the preacher" (107-09).

As a result of this learning experience, within the church where I serve as a pastor, our team of preachers is now much more prepared for this kind of preaching. Because of this experience, beginning next semester we are scheduling at least one narrative sermon every two months during weekend services.

General Conclusions in Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practice Surrounding Narrative Preaching

The research found evidence showing that the pastors and preachers had clearer knowledge of the concept of narrative preaching compared to their knowledge prior to the training. They were also able to find different kinds of existing sermons better. Additionally, I stayed able to verify that because of the training, participants more clearly defined the necessary steps to prepare a narrative sermon and were able to give specific suggestions to anyone preaching this kind of sermon.

Another goal this research accomplished was that workshop preachers were able to identify specific reasons for employing narrative sermons in ministry. Likewise, because they participated in this activity, they understood that although narrative sermons require certain abilities or skills, these competencies can be acquired and/or improved through training and practice. After having participated in the training, and thanks to their increased knowledge regarding narrative sermons, the results show that pastors and preachers changed their perception of how frequently they listened to these kinds of sermons within their contexts.

In the same way, these results suggested that trained participants are better equipped to identify a narrative sermon when they hear it, whereas before the training, they may have confused narrative sermons with other sermons they used. Regarding the emotions these pastors and preachers perceived among those who listened to the narrative sermons, the research showed that these perceptions were even more favorable after attending the training, compared to what they were before. On a different front, and in line with the measurements taken, at the conclusion of the training, the pastors expressed feeling more prepared to preach narrative sermons than they had previously been.

Keeping in mind that part of the research's scope included focus groups two weeks after the training, the results of this activity reiterated an increased level of precision. Pastors and lay preachers were able to use more specific language regarding the concepts taught in the individual surveys about the necessary steps in preparing a narrative sermon. Similarly, the study confirmed that the lack of knowledge regarding necessary techniques ceased to be a barrier among the participants.

Additional Factors That Influenced the Changes in Perception

According to the research tools, the greatest factor possibly influencing the results was the limited time set aside for training. Many pastors and preachers expressed that they still had questions regarding the practical side of mastering narrative sermons.

Evaluating the training. According to the results, one of the positive factors highlighted by workshop participants was the acquisition of knowledge. Some areas of this knowledge were the importance of seeing the whole scene and beginning to diagram the intensity of the resolution, the selection of surrounding characters in the development of the narration, an understanding of the structure of the biblical narrative; identification of both the foundation to

prepare a narrative sermon and the objective of one, class activities, the elaboration of the plot

and the accompaniment, completion of practical exercises, and the importance of an outline that

clearly allows the message to shine through. At the same time, the participants wanted the

workshop to delve more deeply into practical aspects of narrative preaching.

Although I did not include a general quantitative or qualitative evaluation of the

workshop in the research questions, the answers to the questions posed still allow me to deduce

that the workshop helped pastors and preachers develop concrete competencies. All of the

participants responded to a specific question in the evaluation, indicating that they were

interested or willing to employ narrative sermons in their future practice.

Congregational evaluation of the sermon. Some people at church performed an

optional quantitative evaluation of the participants when they were preaching narrative sermons.

The results show that the dimensions of authority and authenticity received the best scores. The

dimension of resonance was in second place, while the lowest score was given to relevance. The

dimension of connection received a general score that placed it below the average of the other six

dimensions.

Implications of the Findings

The findings imply that, first, the training participating pastors and preachers received

was effective in increasing the levels of theoretical and practical aspects of narrative sermons.

Additionally, because narrative sermons create reasons for specific gain, they are recommended

in order to improve communication of the biblical message the preacher is trying to convey.

Listeners tend to have a very good response to narrative sermons; some even expressed that the

sermons were powerful and impactful.

Lectures and practical workshops can teach the abilities and competencies necessary for narrative sermons for pastors who have traditionally used other modalities of speech, in particular those that are didactic in form. The implication is that it is possible to transform the sermon experience for parishioners, offering more authenticity, relevance, and resonance. As pastors become more familiar with this genre through personal practice, and with the phases of preparation, and the presentation of narrative sermons, it is expected that they will improve each required dimension in preaching.

This training showed the importance of revising the schedule for future events to allow time for more practice. To the extent that more practice can happen, participants will feel more confident in their mastery of the different abilities needed for narrative discourse. However, even without changes to the schedule, the current training still allows participants to know the techniques required for future practice.

Because of the training, the pastors and preachers will be able to differentiate among different kinds of sermons by simply listening to them. This learning places them at a critical and necessary level to be able to train others to use this kind of sermon. The designed and applied research process gave workshop participants the opportunity to identify aspects they considered influential to success, both in the preparation and presentation of narrative sermons. This process allowed them to decide what they will include in their future practice.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitation expressed by the training attendees was the time allotted for practice. Another limitation was that the evaluation done by the congregations was only completed once. This research does not allow an evaluation of the impact of the training on medium or long-term levels.

Four external elements limited this study: (1) the relatively short training time, (2) the artificial setting for practicing narrative preaching, (3) the relationship between the participants and myself possibly yielding, to some degree, biased data, and, (4) the small number of participants.

Duration

The duration of the training experience was too short to create lasting change. I have said thus far that the participants demonstrated a certain extent of openness and change in their knowledge and attitude toward narrative preaching; however, I cannot be completely certain of change in their actual ministry contexts. These participants have been preaching in their own style for a number of years, and real change requires the process of unlearning and relearning. This training can be considered the first step in pursuit of lasting change.

Setting

All of the participants had to gather a congregation in order to preach their sermons. Because they did not have this activity scheduled before, the setting was a classroom at their churches where the preachers preached their narrative sermons. This context is artificial as it only mimics a Sunday morning. Thomas Long argues that in the event of preaching, four elements are present: congregation, preacher, sermon, and the presence of God (22-23). The element of *congregation* was absent in some ways. Primarily, the church congregation normally comes to the worship service where they hear music and a sermon. They come assuming that they will hear the Word of God, by which their lives should change and become more aligned with God's purpose. In this setting, the main purpose of the listeners (congregation members) was to hear, analyze, and critique the sermon preached by participants.

Relationship

The positive relationship between some of the participants and myself could influence to some degree the changes in the participants' attitudes. Perhaps the positive change was not as accurate as reported, and some participants could just be complimenting me.

Number of Participants

The small number of the group of participants limits the absolute generalization to the pastors and lay leaders of the CFC.

<div align="center">

Unexpected Observations

</div>

An unexpected finding of the research is related to the perceived sensation by some of the pastors and preachers who manifested that expository sermons had been idolized to a certain extent, as if that were the only existing option. This finding indicates that at least some of the pastors feel stuck in a routine in using this kind of sermon. By their comments, they seem to want to learn about other kinds of sermons. When this feeling is then shared with the congregation, and the feelings coincide, surely it is possible for sermons to become more vivid and productive for both parties by including another form of preaching, such as the narrative sermon.

The fact that the research detected this perception produces many favorable expectations regarding the receptivity that narrative sermons could have, not just by the congregation but also by the pastors and preachers themselves. If this perception is not only limited to a few of the participants but is shared by a significant number of them, attending new workshops such as the one used in this research would not only be a task or duty but also a welcomed opportunity.

Recommendations

The main recommendation stemming from the results is to widen the scope of the training to include more time for the preparation and presentation of narrative sermons. This improvement would allow more time for the knowledge to sink in and take root better within the pastors and preachers.

In future opportunities, I recommend using audiovisual tools, so that participants can see and hear themselves, accelerating the training process. Likewise, I recommend that in future similar events, one include a quantitative evaluation similar to what was used during the workshop. This evaluation would be completed before the pastors and preachers participate in the workshop. The purpose of an evaluation of this kind is to be able to count on a benchmark to compare the evaluation after the training. It allows us to evaluate concretely the improvement of various competencies of the participants. We would take into account that the ultimate goals are to improve precisely the quality of information and involve the congregation through narrative sermons.

By taking into account the observations made by the participants, I would recommend reiterating in future trainings the importance of rooting narratives in the biblical message, thereby guaranteeing their durability and avoiding their distortion.

I suggest that the pastors and preachers who attended the workshop become duplicators in the process of then training their colleagues. In order to do this duplication, a follow-up and support program could be created so that this group could acquire the necessary tools and abilities to accomplish this replication . This group would also help them improve as they practice their skills in narrative preaching.

Recommendation for the Application of Findings to Ministry Context

On the whole, this study found that this group of pastors, preachers, and leaders are open to preaching narrative sermons. The participants have shown change to a certain extent. Having examined the limitation of this study, I found that this change needs to be experienced in a real setting. Therefore, I recommended a few applications that would ensure changes within the ministry context.

First, I should visit the participants at their home churches. The purpose of these visits would be to encourage the participants to continue preaching narrative sermons in their churches. I am convinced that these visits would convey to the participants that my interest was not limited to their participation in the workshop for the sake of my personal research. On the contrary, my interest in their participation in the workshop was to see real change in their preaching style within each of their ministry settings. These visits would then motivate and inspire them to preach narrative sermons.

Second, I should seek more opportunities to be a guest speaker at their churches. I would make use of these opportunities to preach narrative sermons. My visits would motivate them to engage more with narrative preaching. Then they would see how narrative preaching is performed in real situations and how the congregation would react to such a style.

Third, I should invite the participants for two other workshops within six months to follow up on the way their preaching has developed. This gathering would create new opportunities to uncover the real challenges they are facing. I would encourage them carefully to seek their congregation's opinion about their new style of preaching. I believe if they were to receive compliments and encouragement from their congregation, the participants would surely increase their interest in narrative preaching.

Suggestions for Possible Contributions to Future Research

This study can function as a foundation upon which future research can be built. The participants exhibited an extent of change in their openness and attitude toward narrative preaching. The change was manifested by their willingness to practice narrative preaching and by willingly putting forth the workshop to nonparticipants (other pastors and leaders at church). Their willingness was preceded by exposure to the biblical and theological foundation of narrative preaching. This training has at least created an awareness of narrative preaching; thus, any future research would not start from ground zero. Future research would not focus on the extent of openness and change of attitude but on the extent of the practical usage of the narrative preaching style.

This study suggested the future engagement in narrative preaching by the participants. This reality requires further investigation regarding the implementation of narrative preaching style in real ministry settings. Future research would seek to answer the question of the extent to which participants in the narrative preaching module would continue to preach narrative sermons.

Postscript

Narrating God's story is the means by which God's action are told and retold. Therefore, the participants' engagement after the study should be regarded as narrating God's story to the community of faith. God warned the Israelites about forgetting his actions in redeeming them, eventually leading to their destruction. By neglecting to engage in narrative preaching, the churches in the CFC would face consequences. The means of preservation came through telling God's story. The well-being of the people of God hinged upon the matter of loving him fully and completely obeying his commandments, but not as a one-time event. The Bible teaches that this

action of telling should be practiced everywhere and continually (Deut. 6:7b). It became a lifestyle; the community of faith should not forget the story of God.

Through preaching, this story continues to be lived in, by, and through them. The lives of his people are supposed to reflect his story in all of its aspects. This reflection should be conveyed through narrative preaching and shared in the churches by preachers and future participants. The participants' love, genuine hearts, and true commitment to God and his people should compel them to engage continually in narrative preaching, both in their local churches and in the community as a whole.

In a personal way, this study impacted my ministry meaningfully. I believe that narrative preaching is needed in Colombian churches. Several of the participants spontaneously approached me and asked me about the next time I was going to offer another narrative preaching workshop in order to invite other preachers. They also asked for the second part of this experience. I have received some invitations to teach this workshop with other denominations. Some of my friends and parishioners have been saying that my preaching style has been transformed during the last months. I am thankful to God for the change.

APPENDIX A

NARRATIVE PREACHING QUESTIONNAIRE (NPQ)

1. What is your primary objective in attending this training?

2. What is your definition of a narrative sermon?

3. What kinds of narrative sermons are you familiar with?

4. What are the steps that you consider necessary to follow in order to prepare a narrative sermon?

5. What specific recommendations would you give a preacher while he or she is presenting a narrative sermon?

6. In your opinion, what are three important reasons for preaching narrative sermons?

7. Do you believe that preaching narrative sermons is a skill that only some preachers have? Why or why not?

8. How often do you listen to narrative sermons within your context?

- Never

- Rarely

- Occasionally

- Frequently

- Very often

9. How often do you preach sermons narrative within your context?

- Never

- Rarely

- Occasionally

- Frequently

- Very often

10. What feelings have you perceived in the audience when you listen to or preach a narrative sermon?

- Displeasure

- Indifference

- The usual

- Very good response

- Powerful, impacting

11. What training have you received in regards to meaning, preparation and practice of narrative preaching?

12. Do you feel prepared to preach a narrative sermon?

- Not prepared

- Poorly prepared

- Somewhat prepared

- Sufficiently prepared

- Fully prepared

13. What topics would you like to see covered or included in future workshops?

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

1. While preparing your narrative sermon, what steps did you take to prepare it?

2. What elements of the workshop were most useful for preparing and preaching this sermon?

3. With regard to the workshop, what issues should be further developed, removed or added? Please explain why.

4. According to your judgment as a preacher, what would be the greatest obstacles to preaching narrative sermons? How can they be overcome?

5. In your future ministerial practice, would you preach narrative sermons? Why or why not?

APPENDIX C

MESSAGE EVALUATION FORM

Speaker's Name: Evaluator's Name: Message/Date/Occasion of Message:

Instructions: *Review message using this scale*
(1) Poor   (2) Average   (3) Good   (4) Very Good   (5) Excellent

1. AUTHORITATIVE: Message delivered in an unquestionably, accurate, true, and firm manner:

Message content was derived from Scripture/authorities:	1	2	3	4	5
Message helped you understand the text better:	1	2	3	4	5
Message revealed how God is at work in the text:	1	2	3	4	5
Message displayed God's grace in Scripture:	1	2	3	4	5

2. AUTHENTIC: A deeply convicted display of truth, a believable commitment to living out this message, a sensitivity to and honest about the challenges people face:

The speaker displayed deep enthusiasm for message:	1	2	3	4	5
The speaker's demeanor showed conviction:	1	2	3	4	5
Speaker displayed honesty while handling the message/audience:	1	2	3	4	5
The message displayed profound sensitivity:	1	2	3	4	5

3. RELEVANT: An awareness of the culture, issues of the day, and particulars of a given audience:

Connected the audience's worldview:	1	2	3	4	5
Showed awareness of contemporary issues:	1	2	3	4	5
Revealed grasp on situations people face today:	1	2	3	4	5
Visually connected with provocative imagery:	1	2	3	4	5

4. TRANSFORMATIONAL: An internal change takes root that will result in real differences:

Message reminded you that grace exists:	1	2	3	4	5
Offers reachable solutions for struggles:	1	2	3	4	5
Message provided practical advice:	1	2	3	4	5
Message would make an unbeliever want to hear more:	1	2	3	4	5

5. SKILLFUL: Related to the actual leading and delivery of the message:

Speaker was organized, limited distractions:	1	2	3	4	5
Speaker made use of inviting facial expressions and gestures:	1	2	3	4	5

Observations

OBSERVE the speaker's solid grasp over the message:

OBSERVE whether the speaker makes you question if he/she really "walks the talk:"

OBSERVE the degree to which speaker connects with you, your world and your concerns:

OBSERVE the speaker's capacity to evoke conviction that leads to change for you:

OBSERVE the speaker's mastery of

| Speaker varied pace, pitch, and style in the message: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Message structure was easy to follow: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6. RESONANT: Speaker's ability to identify, empathize, connect with members' demands:

Points made were rooted in the text:	1	2	3	4	5
Speaker avoided moralizing, psychologizing, or shaming:	1	2	3	4	5
Got people face-to-face with God, rather than merely instructing:	1	2	3	4	5
The hearer's hopes, fears, and problems were clearly understood:	1	2	3	4	5

7. ENGAGING: Speakers' use of stories to help communicate God's Word:

The story appealed to different generations:	1	2	3	4	5
The story stimulated your imagination:	1	2	3	4	5
The story led to moments of suspense:	1	2	3	4	5
The general elements of the story are easy to remember:	1	2	3	4	5
The story kept your attention:	1	2	3	4	5
I can retell the story in my own words:	1	2	3	4	5

message mechanisms:

OBSERVE speaker's capacity to identify with you:

OBSERVE the speaker's ability to tell the story (stories):

In what ways did the sermon differ from sermons preached before for this speaker?

Source: Adapted from Sermon Evaluation Tool, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2014.

APPENDIX D

NARRATIVE PREACHING WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Friday 6:30 p.m. Registration

7:00 p.m. Workshop Begins

1. Welcome and Purpose Explained. Prayer.

2. Fill out consent form. Answer any questions.

3. Fill out the Narrative Preaching Questionnaire.

4. The Power of Stories. Show two videos to illustrate the impact of stories in the secular world. One of these, from the perspective of the arts, is sketch theater of shadows in Hungary and the other is a young Colombian adult presenting a social project.

   The workshop participants will share opinions about which elements of effective communication they found most important in the videos shown.

5. Jesus as a storyteller; each participant will examine two short passages and will write down characteristics that Jesus embodied as a preacher (15 minutes). Share findings.

6. The Bible as God's story. A meta-narrative.

   Explain the concept of retelling stories, giving examples in the Pentateuch, Prophets, and Acts of the Apostles.

7. Collective definition of the types of sermons. As a group, we will define expository, topical, and narrative sermons in general terms. (All participants already have previous training in preaching).

8. Closing prayer

Saturday 8:00 a.m. BEGIN PART TWO OF WORKSHOP

1. Devotional—Short narrative sermon: The Nocturnal Visitor (John 3:1-5) (Researcher's responsibility).

2. Definition and kinds of narrative sermons.

3. Steps to prepare a narrative sermon; will only emphasize aspects that are characteristic of narrative sermons.

4. The argument or plot; case study of Daniel 6. Group work.

5. Short narrative sermon—Gehazi: God's Miraculous Provision (2 Kings 6:8-23) (Researcher's responsibility). Afterwards, participants will identify the various elements of the argument

6. Homework for participants: prepare a narrative sermon. Answer questions.

7. Announcement of the Focus Groups two and four weeks later. Explanation.

Closing Prayer.

Note: The sessions will be accompanied by PowerPoint presentations. Each participant will have worksheets to fill out throughout the workshop.

WORKS CITED

Achtemeier, Paul J., Joel Green, and Mariaime Meye Thompson. *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

Agudelo, Diego. "Teología: su epistemología y los nuevos paradigmas." *Theologica Xaveriana.* Bogotá: Kimpres, 2004. 28-39. Print.

Aletti, Jean. *Il racconto come teología*. Roma: Dehoniane, 1996. Print.

Barrett, Ethel. *Storytelling—It's Easy!* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960. Print.

Birch, Bruce C. "Hosea, Joel, Amos." *Westminster Bible Companion.* Louisville: Westminster-Knox, 1997. Print.

Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon.* Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000. Print.

Bruce, F. F. *The Book of Acts*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988. Print. The New International Commentary on the New Testament.

Buttrick, D. *Homiletic Moves and Structures*. Philadelphia: Fortress. 1987. Print.

Cadbury, Henry J. *The Making of Luke-Acts.* Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999. Print.

Childs, Brevard S. *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993. Print.

---. *Old Testament in a Canonical Context*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985. Print.

Chisholm, Robert B., Jr. *Handbook on the Prophets.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. Print.

Craddock, Fred B. *As One without Authority*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981. Print.

---. *Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985. Print.

Craigie, Peter C. *The Book of Deuteronomy*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976. Print. The New

    International Commentary on the Old Testament.

Creswell, John W. *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative*

    and Qualitative Research. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson-Merrill-Prentice, 2008.

    Print.

Davis, H. Grady. *Design for Preaching.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958. Print.

Dillard, Raymond B., and Tremper Longman, III. *An Introduction to the Old Testament.* Grand

    Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Dodd, C. H. *The Parables of the Kingdom.* London: Nisbet, 1941. Print.

Duduit, Michael, ed. *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*. Nashville: Broadman, 1992. Print.

Earle, Ralph. "The Gospel According to Mark." *The Evangelical Commentary on the Bible.*

    Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957. Print.

Gallagher, Robert, and Paul Hertig, eds. *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary*

    Context. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004. Print.

García Márquez, Gabriel. *Cien años de soledad* [One Hundred Years of Solitude]. Mexico City:

    Editorial Diana, 2000. Print.

Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*.. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997. Print. New International

    Commentary on the New Testament.

---. "The (Re-)Turn to Narrative." *Narrative Reading, Narrative Preaching: Reuniting New*

    Testament Interpretation and Proclamation. Ed. Joel B. Green and Michael Pasquarello,

    III. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.9-18. Print.

---. *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print. New Testament

    Theology.

Greidanus, Sidney. *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

> Print.

Hall, Gary H. "Deuteronomy." *The College Press NIV Commentary.* Joplin: College, 2000. Print.

Hamilton, D. L. *Homiletical Handbook.* Nashville: Broadman, 1992. Print.

Harbour, Brian L. "Concluding the Sermon." Duduit 216-24. Print.

Heras Oliver, Gloria. *Jesús Según San Mateo, análisis narrativo del primer evangelio*.

> Pamplona: EUNSA, 2001. Print.

Jacks, G. Robert. *Just Say the Word! Writing for the Ear.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996. Print.

Jimenez, Pablo. *La predicación en el siglo XXI*. Colombia: CLIE, 2009. Print.

Juel, Donald H. *The Gospel of Mark: Interpreting Biblical Texts*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.

> Print.

Kaiser, Walter C. *Toward an Exegetical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981. Print.

Kaye, Sanford. *Writing under Pressure: The Quick Writing Process* (Oxford Paperbacks)

> Paperback – 13 December 1990.

Ladd, George Eldon. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

> Print.

Lane, Belden C. *Story Telling: The Enchantment of Theology*. 1998. Audio Cassette.

Lane, Wilham L. *The Gospel of Mark*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974. Print. New International

> Commentary on the New Testament.

Larsen, David L. *Telling the Old, Old Story: The Art of Narrative Preaching*. Wheaton:

> Crossway, 1995. Print.

Lasor, William Sanford, David Alian Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, and Background of the Old Testament.* 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996. Print.

Levenson, John D. "Sinai and Zion." *An Entry into the Jewish Bible*. New York: Harper, 1985. 22-38. Print.

Lewis, Ralph L., and Gregg Lewis. *Inductive Preaching: Helping People Listen.* Westchester: Crossway, 1983. Print.

Lodahl, Michael. *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1994. Print.

Litchfield, Hugh. "Outlining the Sermon." Duduit 162-74. Print.

Long, Thomas. *Preaching for Memory to Hope.* Louisville: Westminster-Knox, 2009. Print.

Lowry, Eugene L. *Doing Time in the Pulpit.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1985. Print.

---. *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form.* Atlanta: Knox, 1980. Print.

---. *How to Preach a Parable.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1993. Print.

Lopez, Andres. Pelota de Letras. DVD. Bogota, Sonny productions. 2002. DVD.

Marguerat, Daniel. *Cómo leer los relatos bíblicos*. Santander: Sal Terrae, 2000. Print.

Markquart, E.F. *Quest for Better Preaching.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985. Print.

Mella, Orlando. *Grupos focales técnica de investigación cualitativa.* Santiago: CIDE, 2000. Print.

Miller, Calvin.*The Empowered Communicator.* Nashville: Broadman, 1994. Print.

---. *Marketplace Preaching: How to Return the Sermon to Where It Belongs*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995. Print.

---. "Narrative Preaching." Duduit 103-16. Print.

Morgan, David L.. *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997. Print.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *Hosea: The Heart and Holiness of God*. Eugene: Wipf, 1998. Print.

Ogilvie, Lloyd John. "Introducing the Sermon." Duduit 175-87. Print.

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991. Print.

Oviedo, Lluis. "Teología Liberal." *Diccionario Teológico Enciclopédico*. Estella: Verbo Divino, 1995. Print.

Pieterse, HJC. *Communicative Preaching*, Pretoria: University of South Africa. 1987.

Purkiser, W. T., Richard S. Taylor, and William H. Taylor. *God, Man and Salvation: A Biblical Theology.* Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1977. Print.

Ramesh, Richard. *Scripture Sculpture.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995. Print.

Raney, Donald C., II. *History as Narrative in the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles*. New York: Mellen, 2003. Print.

Ringe, Sharon H. *Luke*. Louisville: Westminster-Knox, 1995. Print. Westminster Bible Companion.

Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. Grand Rapids: Baker. 1980.

---, ed. *Biblical Sermons: How Twelve Preachers Apply the Principles of Biblical Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989. Print.

Ruiz, Pedro. *La historiografía*. Madrid: Marcial Pons. 1993. Print.

Sailhamer, John H. *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992. Print. Library of Biblical Interpretation.

Senior, Donald. Matthew. *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998. Print.

Siciliani, José María. "Narratividad, cristología y comunicación de la fe." *Actualidades Pedagógicas de la Universidad de La Salle*. Bogotá: Publisher, 2009. 5-11. Print.

Smith, Gray V. *Hosea, Amos, Micah*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001. Print. The NIV Application Commentary.

Stemberg, Meir. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*. Bloomington: Indiana U, 1985. Print.

Stott, John R. W. *Between Two Worlds.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1982. Print.

Sunukjian, Donald. "Contemporary Preaching Syllabus." Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. 1997. *Microsoft Word* file.

---. "A Night in Persia, *Esther*." Robinson, *Biblical Sermons* 71-83. Print.

Taylor, Richard. *Diccionario Teológico Beacon.* The Paseo: Casa Nazarena de Publicaciones. 1995. Print.

Thielman, Frank. *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005. Print.

Venter, CJH. "Expository preaching". Paper published in *Practical Theology* in South Africa.

Vos, C. J. H. "The Composition of a Sermon." *Practical Theology* in South Africa. 1999.

Weinrich, Harald. *Teología narrativa*. Concilium 85. 1973.

Wenig, Scott A. "Biblical Preaching That Adapts and Contextualizes." *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching.* Ed. Keith Willhite and Scott M. Gibson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. 25-37. Print.

Williams, Yolanda. Psychology Courses. "Face Validity: Definition and Examples." Chapter 3, Lesson 7. Published on line. (http://study.com/academy/lesson/face-validity-definition-examples.html)

Willimon, William H., and Richard Lischer, eds. *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster-Knox, 1995. Print.

Wolff, Hans Walter. *Hosea.* Trans. Gary Stansell. Ed. Paul D. Hanson. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974. Print.

Wright, G. Emest. *God Who Acts: Studies in Biblical Theology.* London: SCM, 1969. Print.

Wright, N. T. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996. Print.

---. *The New Testament and the People of God.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.