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# The Postmodern Culture and Narrative preaching

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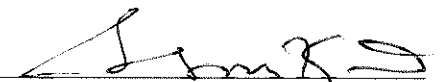upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

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# THE POSTMODERN CULTURE AND NARRATIVE PREACHING

**DISSERTATION**

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

**DAE YONG LEE**

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Abstract

The Postmodern Culture and Narrative Preaching

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School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

The communication methods of Christian preaching within a postmodern culture have become a new challenge for preachers and communicators in ministries. They must struggle to effectively deliver the truth of God to congregations whose *sitz im leben* is postmodern culture along with post-Christian ideologies. Today, preaching styles with absolute authority in propositional style with mechanistic hermeneutic have become an obstacle to communicating the meaning of the gospels to postmodern generations. In the view of postmodernism, an excessive dependency on modernist versions of Christian community has caused a decrease in the spiritual power of Christian churches. Christian preachers and communicators have been confident that God's truth always transcends and penetrates present culture, which influences human minds and ideologies. The modernist version of preaching and communication has become questionable due to its ineffectiveness delivering and applying the truth to human lives. Because of the postmodernist claim that relationship exists prior to language, the notion of absolute truth has become problematic in our culture.

Loss of story has become a big issue in communicating the Christian faith to postmodern generations. The story of the Christian faith has disappeared because Christian theology came to emphasize doctrine; thus, storytelling eventually was excluded through the history of the church. In contrast to first-century narrative preaching, Hellenistic churches were inclined toward sermons which reflected diversity and complexity, instead of letting scriptural narratives tell

their own stories.  Cultural sense and sensitivity in the socio-cultural spectrum is important in order to facilitate an incarnational communication in Christian preaching when preachers address the congregation. For Christian preachers to reveal Christ and his truth to listeners who live in postmodern culture and society, incarnationally engaging in the culture of congregation is a way to be an effective communicator in preaching in postmodern culture and ideologies.

In postmodern culture, Christian preachers as communicators and educators are called to communicate with listeners the story of God as metanarrative through narrative preaching. Christian preachers must experience encounters with God in their daily lives in order to witness the personhood of God through their narrative preaching and storytelling. When narratives stimulate the imagination and project possibilities for future action, they can have the greatest outcome for experiential learning with spiritual formation for evangelism and mission. Christian preachers live in the interim between God's story and this world's listeners. Every Christian needs to implement storytelling to express his/her faith story in community, because Christians are in a journey for storytelling toward heaven.  Utilizing narrative can be new creative lingual tool for narrative preachers to communicate with postmodern generations. It is essential to recognize that the Bible is written in literary forms and that God uses literary genres to communicate with human beings about their lives. Preachers as communicators and educators need to approach truth-telling events in the Bible as literary and cultural forms. God's true intention for biblical literature is to convey his heart toward people who are in various situations and life experiences. God wants to give people his life and comfort and conviction through Jesus Christ who showed the greatest faith story for human souls in human history.

Theological Mentors: Eun  Chul  Kim, PhD

Chi Young Kay, PhD

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Seog Sun Lee, my two daughters Ye Hyun Lee, Sung Hyun Lee, my parents Chil Jeong Lee, Bok Sun Lim, my parents-in-law Keun Ho Kim, Jung Ja Ahn, my brother Sang Yong Lee and my two sisters Bun Chul Lee, Bun Nam Lee, who supported me with patience and kindness, with prayers and sacrifices, and all whom I know in the Lord who have dedicated their lives for the glory of God in the love and the spreading of His Gospel.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## Motive of Study

Christian preachers and communicators currently face new challenges from postmodernism and postmodern culture. These challenges for Christian preachers and communicators from postmodern culture have become a cultural barrier as well as a new opportunity to implement an incarnational communication in ministry. Due to modernism's ideological and philosophical influences, Christian preachers and communicators for Christian ministries in Protestant evangelical and fundamentalist traditions have emphasized absolute truth in their communication with congregations. This kind of phenomenon in the communication within Christian ministries has been understood according to a modernist Western cultural construct. Christian preachers and communicators who have received modernist philosophical influence have been unaware and essentially uncritical of modernism's philosophical conceptual biases and errors.

In the view of postmodernism, an excessive dependency on modernist versions of Christian community has caused a decrease in the spiritual power of Christian churches.

Christian preachers and communicators have been confident that God's truth always transcends and penetrates present culture, which influences human minds and ideologies. The modernist version of preaching and communication has become questionable due to its ineffectiveness delivering and applying the truth to human lives.

However, Haddon Robinson claims: "Gone is the world of Greco-Roman rhetoric (proposition and 3 arguments); people in our culture know nothing of the Bible, don't take church seriously, and are anti-moral. We must be mission-minded, not professional."[1] He claims that present culture is oral, musical, visual culture; therefore, the use of narrative stories is primary in a post-literate age.[2] Because of the postmodernist claim that relationship exists prior to language, the notion of absolute truth has become problematic in our culture. According to Greer, postmodernism argues that individualized truths are grounded in the notion of language.[3] As he explains, "…the system of language formats our minds to receive and make sense of data. Since languages differ, the shaping of data correspondingly differs from culture to culture." [4] In this regard, the communication method of Christian preaching within a postmodern culture has become a new challenge for preachers and communicators in ministries. They must struggle to effectively deliver the truth of God to congregations whose *sitz im leben* is postmodern culture along with post-Christian ideologies.

Although the challenges from postmodern culture have become a burden for preachers searching for an effective communication style for preaching, these challenges surely bring to the Christian community an opportunity for spiritual renewal and in-depth

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[1] Haddon Robinson, "Preaching Has to Change," *Lifelong Learning* 1, no.5 (October 1990): 1.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Robert C. Greer, *Mapping Postmodernism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 6

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understanding of the truth of God. Therefore, there is a reason for Christian preachers to explore certain methods to bridge the gap between the belief in absolute truth and the listeners who live in a context of postmodern culture and ideology.

How to address postmodern listeners when communicating the gospel is an essential quest for Christian preachers seeking effective communication with their congregations. Because of the uncertainty due to this period of cultural transition, Christian preachers are getting confused and are becoming ineffective in approaching believers and non-believers. It is necessary for Christian preachers to persuade people who live in the present culture to transform their lives beyond their culture through the gospel truth.

Preachers and congregations, as disciples of the Lord, need an ability to discern the signs of the times as they minister the kingdom of God. In other words, Christian preachers and communicators need to develop and transform their communication methods for people in postmodern culture. For example, in Barack Obama's presidential campaign, his crew made use of several communication methods: "intellectual property of the digital world, active human one-on-one contact to get people to come out and vote for him, and disseminating their messages through all of today's media."[5] Therefore, when communicating the Word of God in this environment, it is crucial for Christian preachers and communicators to also use appropriate approaches for postmodern listeners.

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Rita Sue Siegel, "The Communications Design Business: Advertising and Graphic Design—Together Again," *Communication Arts* 51, no.1 (March/April, 2009): 154.

In relation to the missiological mandate of Christian preachers and communicators, McGavran argues that there has to be nurture and follow-up through narrative imagination for converts like the early churches. He claims that

> The quality of people-movement churches is uniquely dependent on post baptismal care. In these movements relatively large numbers of converts form new churches quickly. If they are neglected…a starved and nominal membership can be confidently expected….If new congregations are nurtured with imagination and faithfulness, in ways that lead their members to a genuine advance in Christian living, solid congregations of sound Christians will result.[6]

Today, preaching styles with absolute authority in propositional style with mechanistic hermeneutic have become an obstacle to communicating the meaning of the gospels to postmodern generations. Christian preachers have been struggling to find an effective communication for postmodern people, although postmodern media and all kinds of business have been successfully reaching the postmodern generations with a story-based and experiential culture.

Cultural sense and sensitivity in the socio-cultural spectrum is important in order to facilitate an incarnational communication in Christian preaching when preachers address the congregation. For Christian preachers to reveal Christ and his truth to listeners who live in postmodern culture and society, incarnationally engaging in the culture of congregation is a way to be an effective communicator in preaching in postmodern culture and ideologies.

According to Newbigin, "no rational thought is possible except by starting with something which is already given in some human tradition of rational thought and

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[6] Donald Anderson McGavran and Peter Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 247-248.

discourse."[7] Although preachers proclaim absolute truth in traditional rational thought and discourse, cultural and communicative effectiveness toward postmodern listeners is the most crucial element to establish a *kerygma* community which can culturally accept and proclaim the truth of God.

## Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore narrative as a preaching style in postmodern culture, emphasizing the importance of storytelling narratives in the Bible which have wonderful plots and realistic historical characters that communicate with listeners and congregations in postmodern culture. People can understand the heart of God in plots with messages and realistic characters in biblical storytelling narratives. People used to modernism's culture are strangers toward storytelling. People in contemporary culture think that storytelling does not work for adolescent youths or adult groups any more. This kind of concept became a barrier for Christian preachers and communicators practicing effective communication for learning truth through storytelling narratives.

According to Boomershine, "the problem is that telling biblical stories is foreign to the contemporary experience. We continue to read Bible stories to children. However, the assumption is that once we grow up and learn to think, we will stop telling stories and start telling the truth. In this case, parents wrongly practice that telling the truth became meaning through speaking in conceptual abstractions."[8]

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[7] Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 243.
[8] Thomas E. Boomershine, *The Story Journey: An Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 17.

Nowadays, many social science scholars observe that there is a great cultural shift which causes the decay of modernist culture and philosophy. The Western world is experiencing a cultural shift from modernism to postmodernism. This kind of shift is similar to the cultural -philosophical shift from the Middle Ages to the birth of modernism which consisted of innovations in cultural transformation.[9] On the case of Obama's election, Brooks asserts that "Obama's crew had the ferocious belief that people have the power to transform their own lives."[10] As such, there is a persuasive way for Christian preachers to reach people's hearts and minds. Through the storytelling narratives in the Bible, Christian preachers can intrigue and invite listeners by telling them about real life situations and cases in which real Bible characters experienced many plots.  It is necessary for Christian preachers and communicators to deliver the meaning of stories in literary form through biblical narratives for listeners in postmodern culture.

There is a reason that Christian preachers and communicators tell stories. According to MacIntyre, "Unless they are told in narrative and story, people cannot understand truths and lessons from it because of story's pre-existence nature. We all live out narratives in our lives because we understand our own lives in terms of the narrative that we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others."[11]

The communication role of narrative is a motive for my study on narrative preaching. As Bradshaw states, "Narratives assist us in discerning the things that are important by communicating the truths about life's mysteries through metaphor and

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[9] Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 2.
[10] David Brooks, "The Biggest Issue," *New York Times*, July 29, 2008.

symbol."[12] The purpose of storytelling in the Bible is to inform people about true happenings with human mistakes in real life situations and plots. To intrigue listeners and congregations through storytelling, the genuine study and practice of storytelling techniques is required for Christian preachers and communicators. By implementing storytelling as narrative preaching, the solid storytelling strategy on God's redeeming grace and approaching the heart of people can strengthen the impact of salvation history on people.

I came to explore narrative as a preaching style in postmodern culture because it is essential for Christian preachers and communicators to do sufficient research on the cultural life of the congregation who are in postmodern culture when preparing sermons. Preaching that is involved in the conscious presence and power of a congregation is an effective form of communication to use in approaching a congregation in postmodern culture and society. Employing the inspiration from God toward biblical writers is essential so that Christian preachers and communicators reinterpret and recontextualize Scripture in order to apply it to the specific situations of the listeners in the postmodern, post Christian world. Being aware of this difficult task of understanding people in their life experiences can enable Christian preachers to proclaim the gospel to unreached people.

One of the purposes of this study is to develop a narrative preaching style and method for postmodern culture. Since Christian preaching has a problem in approaching

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[11] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 212.

[12] Bruce Bradshaw, *Change Across Cultures: A Narrative Approach to Social Transformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002), 21.

listeners in postmodern culture incarnationally and inclusively, getting transformational results among the congregation is necessary. Realizing that listeners and congregations are deeply embodied by postmodern culture can help Christian preachers as Christian communicators to communicate the life-giving God's Word with congregation in postmodern culture and post Christianity society. The perception that significant ideological shifts are affecting humanity is crucial for Christian preachers and communicators to connect with and challenge postmodern listeners. Even though Christian preachers may have to reject pluralism, on some level, they must recognize and address the diverse cultures and ideologies in this pluralistic society. People listen and respond to the gospel based on their own cultural and religious experiences. An effective approaching and communicating with postmodern listeners could better help Christian churches and thoughts to grow in depth than we can in a mono-culture community.

This study will explore how Christian preachers handle various literary elements of the Bible. It is important for Christian preachers to know that the Bible demands a literary approach because its writing is literary in nature. Christian preachers must know that the Bible is an experiencing book that conveys the concrete reality of human life in order to apply the stories of biblical characters to the existential experiences of congregation. The Bible communicates its message through the full evidence of literary artistry and beauty in the form of literary genres. It also makes continuous use of literary resources that Christian preachers can use for narrative preaching.

The purpose of this study is to explore narrative preaching as a postmodern preaching method to equip Christian preachers to prepare adequate preaching style for

the listeners in postmodern culture. Christian narrative preaching with spiritual preparation is vital so that preachers and communicators can fully expect God to bless it.

## Scope and Method of Study

This study will reveal how postmodern people can be reached by culturally and ideologically sensitive, open-minded Christian preachers. It will explore an interpretive process of knowing to conclude the truth by studying narrative preaching style and method in relation to biblical revelation. Furthermore, this study will reveal philosophical insights into how modernity's rigid certainty is countered by postmodernity's profound openness. It is important to recognize that postmodernity returns value to faith and affirms the nurturing of our spiritual being as vital to humankind. This study will explore real life experiences within the plots and characters in the Bible to seek truths which may be applied to listeners' existential experiences in a pluralistic world. Christian narrative preachers can thereby clarify their preaching on salvation in terms of postmodern culture and phenomena. This study will shape the crucial issue of finding a relevant preaching style and method in a postmodern and pluralistic world.

There is a problem of communication with those outside the church. This problem of communication is the greatest threat to the gospel today in Western postmodern culture. Churches nowadays are facing the breakdown of community affected by a changing worldview which has precipitated the church's failures to communicate with postmodernists. However, there is still a possibility that the church can recreate this community and come to understand postmodernism in relation to narrative preaching and dialogue. This study, therefore, will explore the question of whether preachers must

engage for the post-everything generation in order to practice community - based teaching and discipline using narrative preaching to proclaim God's truth and gospel.

My study will concentrate on relational preaching through narrative to effectively reach people in postmodern society. Christian preachers are not to compromise the truth of God's Word; however, getting it over to postmoderns in a way to which they can relate is essential in implementing narrative preaching. This study will pursue getting help and insight for church members to be trained to establish personal relationships so as to share Christ. Using this study, Christian churches can eventually equip the Christian congregation for the task, of equipping believers to share biblical truths experientially in narrative style. Through culturally appropriate narrative preaching, the problems in communication due to community breakdown and the loss of older community values in postmodern culture can be dealt with. My study will explore how to prepare biblical sermons like narrative preaching that connect with our culture of the post-everything world. Through narrative preaching, the concept of the union and the glory of God in the grace of God and righteousness in redemption can be practiced through postmodern preaching.

Since preachers tend to concentrate on biblical studies and exegeting texts for preaching through biblical homiletic interpretation, my study will compare preaching styles of narrative preaching and propositional preaching. Through narrative preaching, preachers can employ a community interpretation rather than an individual interpretation for their sermons. My study will reveal the claims and methodologies of narrative preaching by comparing theories of scholars in relation to an effective approach for postmodern listeners. My study will note that developing preachers' preaching method

and style is essential, in order to impact the people in society and to lead cultural phenomena. My study will concentrate on advancing the thought of preachers to have the ability to lead listeners into a transforming position within the societal elements. My study will also focus on the relations between preaching content and the missiological purpose of postmodern preaching.

My study will further explore an authentic expression of the meaning of the gospel and the mission of the church in the midst of a plurality of cultures and religions. My study will address how Christian preachers can find an appropriate preaching style and method to assertively affirm our faith in the intellectual climate of postmodern culture. My study will work to bring clarity while suggesting narrative preaching style as a solution to postmodern culture issues, and will help in equipping Christian believers for the mission of avoiding separation from socio-cultural phenomena.

My conclusion will contribute on reinstating to preach the gospel of the Kingdom in narrative preaching style is to issue a call to conversion and to equip Christian preachers and communicators among the congregation to implement a narrative style of communication. According to my study, the narrative preaching method and style in postmodernism still concentrates on the fact that the gospel assures us that the futuristic kingdom of God will certainly come and the grace of God is the supreme element that people can rely on.

CHAPTER TWO

GOSPEL IN CULTURE

The current cultural transition and ideological paradigm shift toward postmodern ideology and culture demands that Christian preachers and communicators use a creative and appropriate approach to communicate the gospel truth and metanarrative for postmodern people. In his book, *The Truth about the Truth,* Walter Anderson writes that a much larger change and transformation, even a paradigm shift, lies beneath these changes.[13] Although many scholars agree that the postmodern era is emerging as a paradigm shift and cultural transition, the definitions of postmodernism and postmodernity are not clearly clarified. To define and clarify this cultural shift in philosophical academic terms, a research on what is responding to this cultural transition is more accessible to define it in reality. This shift, according to Harvey and Anderson,

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[13] Walt Anderson, *The Truth About the Truth: De-Confusing and Re-Constructing the Postmodern World: A New Consciousness Reader* (New York: Putnam, 1995), 2.

can be described as the situation in which the world finds itself after the breakdown of the Enlightenment project, which underpinned the modern era.[14]

It is important to explain the distinction between postmodernity and postmodernism. Postmodernity is the time or condition in which we find ourselves, while postmodernism is a title for the various schools and movements that it has produced.[15] It is impossible to define postmodernity by its manifestations or cultural similarities, or schools of philosophy, art, and architecture. Rather, postmodernity has resulted in these schools and manifestations as culture itself. People try to look for the origins and causes on which the principles of postmodernity were founded in postmodern philosophers such as Derrida, Foucault, and Rorty. This quest is not an accessible approach for the real answer because these scholars are results of postmodernity in the academic sphere. Their influences and contributions are limited in the whole societal cultural realm in transitions. Although the responses of these scholars on modernism's deconstruction were serious reactions, the scholars did not define it. Even in the situation in which the world has found itself after the breakdown of the Enlightenment project and the undefined postmodern culture, the gospel must continue to relate to culture in society. Power states,

> The Word of God resonates within a social situation. It relates to a people's vision of life and to the values which they hold, which are inherited from culture but are always shifting with changes in living conditions and with the kind of relations one society has with another.[16]

Since the Scriptures are interpreted within the context of the historical and social framework of a particular culture, the gospel takes place in the listeners' culture.

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[14] Ibid., 4.

[15] Anderson, *The Truth About the Truth,* 6.

[16] David Power, *The Word of the Lord: Liturgy's Use of Scripture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 75.

McGrath claims that postmodernism insists that all claims to truth are intellectually valid, and no single vantage point can decide between right and wrong. All belief systems are declared equally plausible in the world of postmodernism and popular culture. Even though epistemology and the understanding of truth have changed, the Christian gospel still proclaims to be a true story.[17]

In the past, revival movements were used to implement evangelism. However, in the postmodern era, the role of the church in implementing genuine evangelism with transformation is an issue. Practicing an incarnational approach within a particular culture is essential. It is important for Christian preachers and communicators to understand the cultural variations in their audiences to make people receptive to the gospel. Inasmuch as the world view of the audiences can be different from preachers' worldview, it is esssential that Christian preachers present the gospels accurately without compromising with secular ideas. At the same time, however, preachers should understand and prepare the spiritual and cultural necessity of the people who are listening to the presentation of the gospel. Each audience has specific cultural variations and spiritual needs. Although the truth can transcend all cultures, preachers' duties are to consider the particular needs of people and tribes.

Since there are no absolute criteria to criticize a particular culture, as Newbigin states, Christians are called to neither a simple affirmation of human culture nor to a simple rejection of it.[18] To implement an ideal preaching method in postmodern culture,

[17] Alister E. McGrath, *Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 180-192.

[18] Newbigin, *Pluralist Society*, 195.

Christian preachers are to avoid the temptation to absolutize a particular position on culture for their methodological convenience.

Newbigin emphasizes the gospel as public truth since he is sure that "the Gospel cannot be accomodated as one element in a society which has pluralism as its reigning ideology."[19] He also states, "To be faithful to a message which concerns the Kingdom of God, his rule over all things and all peoples, the Church has to claim the high ground of public truth."[20]

According to Niebuhr, Christian responses to and decisions about culture largely depend on the particularities of historical and cultural situations. He states, "We must make our decisions, carry on our reasoning, and gain our experiences as particular men in particular times and with particular duties."[21] Even though Niebuhr states that "relative duties" in Christian living, he emphasizes that Christians should not be relativistic: "So also the performance of our relative duties in our particular times, places, and callings is far from being relativistic and self assertive when it is carried out in obedience to the command of the Absolute."[22] According to Goldberg, Niebuhr proposes narrative theology:

Although many religious thinkers had noticed that much of what the Bible has to say is–cast in story form, Niebuhr was among the first explicitly to address the significance of that feature for theology… History becomes not just many stories, but our

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[19] Newbigin, *Pluralist Society*, 222.
[20] Ibid.
[21] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 2001), 237.
[22] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 239.

story. In Niebuhr's view, a justifiable theology ultimately does not merely read biblical narrative: it confesses it.[23]

Certainly, the theme of narrative theology resonates through the work of G. E. Wright, who saw a biblically based theology as "first and foremost a theology of recital, in which Biblical man confesses his faith by reciting the formative events of history as the redemptive handiwork of God."[24] Hans Frei's book, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative,* which may be considered a foundational work of the narrative theology movement, shows how the Enlightenment reduced theology to general principles which could be established by reason.

Christian preaching is essential for presenting an inclusive Christian witness to non-Christians in Western postmodern culture, and for implementing inclusive communication of the gospel to non-Christian postmodern societies.[25] According to Newbigin, irrelevance and syncretism are two factors in which theology fails. If theology neglects the world in which it is set, the world may not practice it. Newbigin states that theology could fail "by allowing the world to dictate the issues and the terms of the meeting."[26] As a result, "the world is not challenged at its depth but rather absorbs and domesticates the Gospel and uses it to sacralize its own purposes."[27]

Loss of story has become a big issue in communicating the Christian faith to postmodern generations. The story of the Christian faith has disappeared because

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[23] Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 147,150.

[24] Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative*, 152.

[25] Wilbert Shenk, "The Culture of Modernity as a Missionary Challenge," in George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder eds., *The Church Between Gospel and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 184.

[26] Newbigin, *Pluralist Society*, 152.

[27] Newbigin, *Pluralist Society*, 152.

Christian theology came to emphasize doctrine; thus, storytelling eventually was excluded through the history of the church. In contrast to first-century narrative preaching, Hellenistic churches were inclined toward sermons which reflected diversity and complexity, instead of letting scriptural narratives tell their own stories. According to Wilson, the early chuches avoided narratives because narrative preaching came to be identified with the Gnostic heresy. Early Christian Platonists like Clement and Origen introduced philosophy into Christianity, effectively cutting Christianity off from its Jewish roots in order to make it more palatable to pagans. When Christianity became the religion of the state, it was of utmost importance that the doctrines of the faith be clearly uniform in order to fight heresy. When martyrdom was no longer something to which one could aspire, the stories of the martyrs were no longer told.[28]

Christian preachers must recognize that the Bible is a story which communicates human values and human cultures. Preachers can therefore interpret the Bible as one concrete simple message about saving people and restoring the whole universe. As the most expressive and realistic book, the Bible has unique elements which remind us of God's message, and can be unified into a story of human salvation and sanctification. Currie "views humans as narrative animals, *homo fabulans* – the tellers and interpreters of narrative."[29]

Even though contextualization can strategically contribute to communicating the gospel within particular cultures, the interpretation of the gospel can be shaped by people's perceptions, which are formed by the cultures in which they live. Despite the fact that there is tension between the gospel and culture, it is important for Christian

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[28] Paul Scott Wilson, *Imagination of Heart* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 155-157.

preachers to find a way to engage cultures that is both relevant and truthful; otherwise, a distorted preaching of the Gospel will not lead to a fresh commitment to follow Jesus in challenging the domination of evil.[30]

In relation to this matter, most messengers usually consider that they only need the story landscapes and a storyland. Above all, the messenger's storyland to know messenger's history and to discern the messenger's social environments is more crucial to deliver the genuine message in narrative to listeners. Christian preachers must also recognize that every culture and every worldview has worthwhile values. Analyzing mutual socio-cultural environments to evangelize nonbelievers is necessary for preachers as messengers.

The Spindlers are committed to developing a processional model of culture by conceptualizing the relationship between culture and the individual, and they are dedicated to understanding cultures by making cross-cultural comparisons. Their view is that "Teaching is cultural transmission." [31] Preaching is communication between preachers as educators and listeners as learners. Because learners have formed their identities through their relationships within their communities in the primary culture, it is necessary for Christian preachers as educators to recognize that listeners and their societal situations have their own cultural backgrounds, and that both are greatly influenced by a society's dominant culture.

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[29] Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory*, 1998. 2.

[30] Leslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 73.

[31] George D. Spindler, *Education and Cultural Process* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1987), 52.

George Spindler maintains that "the signal contribution from a rekindled anthropological interest in learning may come not from the recognition of the inevitability of acquiring one's culture but from the remainder that human social learning is essentially a process of active rediscovery. As an intercultural educator, adapting a process to experience human social learning is necessary. Education without socio-cultural interaction is ineffective in developing learning skills and learning environments."[32]

On culture and learning, Trice and Beyer say, "human cultures emerge from people's struggles to manage uncertainties and to create some degree of order in social life."[33] Similarly, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner note that "culture is the way in which a group of people solve problems and reconcile dilemmas."[34] Schein, on the other hand, defines culture as "a pattern of basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." [35] Through these definitions, the fact that the culture of community evolves through how they socialize and learn with resources and process to solve their daily problems in their participating can be developed. These three definitions are related to the Spindlers' concept of learning as a cultural process, such as Knowles' adult learning, and can be applied to the experiential learning of a congregation within a community.

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[32] Spindler, *Education and Cultural Process*, 53-76.

[33] H. M. Trice and J. M Beyer, *The Cultures of Work Organization* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 1.

[34] F. Trompenaars and C. Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 6.

According to Guy, culture can be defined as the common beliefs, values, language, images, symbols, and behaviors shared by a particular social group.[36] Human knowledge and experiences—including spiritual experiences—are formed through cultural expressions like language and symbolism. Human beings acquire knowledge and meaning through symbols, metaphors, and rituals--what faith development theorist James Fowler refers to as "symbolic" and "unconscious structuring process."[37] Even knowledge gained through spiritual experiences may evolve through this process of knowing. In many cases when knowledge is processed symbolically and unconsciously, learning has cultural aspects. Through the cultural identities of learners, spirituality can contribute to a culturally-related learning process. Christian society tends to emphasize the individual aspect of spirituality but not the cultural aspect of spiritual experiences. The cultural aspect, however, can affect spirituality, and spiritual aspect also affects culture.

As educators, Christian preachers can create spiritual experiences that are both culturally relevant and transformative through the contact point and connection between spirituality and culture. There is a place for spirituality in culturally relevant and transformative education efforts, even in narrative preaching in postmodern culture. By engaging listeners as learners on the personal, cultural, structural, political, and the spiritual levels, there is a greater chance that narrative preaching can be transformative both personally and collectively, for both congregations and communicators.

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[35] E. H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 13.

[36] Talmadge C. Guy, ed., *Providing Culturally Relevant Adult Education: A Challenge for the 21st Century*. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 1999), 399-403.

[37] James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), 103.

Preaching is sharing the heavenly news that God reigns among people within human history, and it is a manifestation of spiritual confidence in the Christian faith. Preachers' spiritual confidence is founded in the fact that "God reigns and his reign is revealed and effective in the incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus."[38] Christian preachers are required to approach people in postmodern culture with a positive attitude toward the culture. The faith that Christ as the Lord and regenerator of human history will transform human minds and culture is necessary for Christian preachers and communicators. The Lord Christ can lead Christian communities and congregations through his resurrected way in culture and society. Since preaching the genuine gospel can give postmodern culture in society true answer, "the demand for freedom of thought and expression must itself rest on some firmly held belief about the origin, nature, and destiny of human life."[39]

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[38] Leslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 155.

[39] Newbigin, *Pluralist Society*, 244.

# CHAPTER THREE

# POSTMODERNITY WITHIN EXPERIENCE AND COMMUNITY

The postmodern movement gained increasing acceptance and credibility from the mid-1970s onward, with the publication of Jean-Francois Lyotard's *La Condition Postmoderne* in 1979. [40] A French philosopher commissioned by the Council of Universities of Quebec in the late 1970s, Lyotard wrote about systems of knowledge and science from modernism that are dependent on metanarrative, or grand discourses about the main direction of history. Stories of mythic proportions are metanarratives. Metanarratives are great enough to unify and direct art, science, philosophy and politics. In Lyotard's view, the story of the implemented will of God in history and the story of enlightenment as rational progress toward building an ideological utopia are good examples of metanarrative. According to Tomlinson, there is a consensus that the "contemporary disillusionment with the great epics of modernity can be traced back as far as World War I, which, with its unspeakable horrors, shattered the dream that

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[40] McGrath, *Passion for Truth*, 163.

scientific man could grasp his own destiny and create a utopia, and it has become clear that the big epics have run out of credible storylines."[41]

Eventually, metanarratives also became unpopular in because people in society were already exposed to many metanarratives. When people resided in relatively isolated communities, they experienced single metanarratives. As people experienced a variety of cultures, the traditions and hereditary beliefs of many cultures came to known to them. As a result, people in multicultural societies felt uncomfortable toward the authoritative and exclusive assertiveness of any one metanarrative. In Lyotard's view, there are many centers, and no single one of them holds up. As people encounter diverse and contradictory fragments of stories, the arts and the sciences go their various ways.[42]

Postmodernity is a period in which Descartes' paradigm is greatly criticized and forsaken. As Newbigin says, the assumptions Western society has inherited from the Enlightenment are being deconstructed, and the collapse of confidence in modern Western culture marks the beginning of postmodernism.[43] Ward explains that a narrative alongside postmodernity is an "overarching story which can supposedly account for, explain, or comment upon the validity of all other stories, a universal or absolute set of truths which is supposed to transcend social, institutional or human limitations."[44]

Because postmodernism does not belong to a specific ideology, it has many dimensions. However, postmodernity is unified by the rejection of the assumptions of the Enlightenment, which formed the ideas of the modern era. As Grenz describes, Francis

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[41] Dave Tomlinson, *The Post-Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 77.

[42] Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Theory and the History of Literature V.10* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

[43] Leslie Newbigin. *Signs and Rubble: The Purpose of God in Human History*, 61.

Bacon set the stage for the Enlightenment with idea that people can discover the secrets of nature in order to master it. On the other hand, Rene Descartes prepared the philosophical foundation with his emphasis on his affirmation of Augustine's dictum, *cogito ergo sum*: defining that human nature as a thinking substance, and the person as an autonomous rational subject. Isaac Newton laid a framework for science, describing the world as a machine regulated by laws that the human mind could understand.[45]

Because of these theoretical developments, these philosophers and scientists who constructed modernism concluded that knowledge should be objective and certain. Without the scientific process of reason, human beings can not have access to each other or even to truth. However, in this scientific process of seeking objective truth, the intuition and emotion of humans have been ignored. One assumption of modernism was that it was possible and desirable to be an objective observer, who could acquire access to universal knowledge. Modernism also believed that knowledge should be recognized as inherently good for human welfare and that scientific discovery could answer all the questions in the world. With the help of scientific development, education could contribute to the healing of social problems. As modernists developed reason and freedom in their thoughts and ideology, they wanted to exclude obstacles such as all beliefs and external authority which could obstruct the progress of reason.[46] This thought became an axiom for the Enlightenment which needed sole mean and sole answer for universal question. "From this it followed that the world could be controlled and rationally ordered if people could only picture and present it rightly. But this presumed

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[44] Ward, *The Origins of Postmodernity*, 157.
[45] Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 3.
[46] Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 4.

that there existed a single correct mode of representation which, if people could uncover it (and this is what scientific and mathematical endeavors were all about), would provide the means to Enlightenments ends."[47]

Modernism largely affirms that "all knowledge is based on logic alone." [48] Modernism is based on the empirical scientific method, such as the objectivity of facts, the primacy of reason and rationality, and the ability to communicate these truths to others propositionally.[49] Grenz and Franke define foundationalism as "an approach to knowledge that will provide rational human beings with absolute, incontestable certainty regarding the truthfulness of their beliefs,"[50] and they claim that Descartes believed that humans can apprehend the truth definitively.[51] Because of the emotional, experiential, and relational expressions in narrative which are difficult to prove scientifically, modernists do not rely on narrative to form knowledge. In this regard, Goldberg emphasizes the importance of giving attention to narrative in theological study:

> An adequate theology must attend to narrative. There are, however, a number of ways that contention can be misunderstood. It is not, or instance, the assertion that the systematic theological task must itself be done in story form, as though discursive reasoning and expository writing were now to be abandoned, Rather, it is the claim that a theologian, regardless of the propositional statements he or she may have to make about a community's convictions, must consciously and continuously strive to keep those statements in intimate contact with the narratives which gave rise to those convictions, within which they gain their sense of meaning, and from which they have been abstracted.[52]

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[47] Anderson, *Truth*, 4.

[48] Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey: A History of Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 347.

[49] Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 25.

[50] Stanley J. Grenz and John R Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2001), 23.

[51] Ibid., 96.

[52] Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative* (Nashvilel:Abingdon,1982), 35; James McClendon, *Biography as Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974),178.

In the modernist view, since human beings have objective rational capability, knowledge can be acquired. However, postmodernity disagrees with the modernist notion that human beings have the capability to objectively access knowledge.[53] According to the postmodern view, the culture of humans consists of identity and capability of people. Since people can not verify their prejudices, accessing knowledge is affected and limited by their situational surroundings such as specific culture and place. Thus, there are problems for faith in accessing and acquiring truth through knowledge. As Tomlinson describes, "people are suspicious of certainty and distrust claims of objectivity."[54]

Postmodernism can be defined as "the denial of personal objectivity, the uncertainty of knowledge, the death of any all-inclusive explanation, the denial of the inherent goodness of knowledge, the rejection of progress, the supremacy of community-based knowledge, and the disbelief in objective inquiry."[55] Hence, ideas about the individual reasoning have been altered, and subjective reflection on experiences to access knowledge has been encouraged. On the other hand, "postmodernity could be characterized by a suspicion of all claims to universal truth, and this claim on suspicion presents in the idea of deconstructionism that states claims to universal truth have to be deconstructed."[56] D.A. Carson claims,

> The majority view, however, is that the fundamental issue in the move from modernism to postmodernism is epistemology—i.e., how we know things, or think we know things. Modernism is often pictured as pursuing truth, absolutism, linear thinking, rationalism, certainty, the cerebral as opposed to the affective which, in turn, breeds arrogance, inflexibility, a lust to be right, the desire to

[53] Grenz and Franke, *Foundationalism*, 8.

[54] Tomlinson, *Post-Evangelical*, 78.

[55] Millard Erikson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 19.

[56] Leslie Newbigin, *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt, and Certainty in Christian Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 27.

control. Postmodernism, by contrast, recognizes how much of what we "know" is shaped by the culture in which we live, is controlled by emotions and aesthetics and heritage, and can only be intelligently held as part of a common tradition, without overbearing claims to being true or right. Modernism tries to find unquestioned foundations on which to build the edifice of knowledge and then proceeds with methodological rigor; postmodernism denies that such foundations exist (it is "antifoundational") and insists that we come to "know" things in many ways, not a few of them lacking in rigor. Modernism is hard-edged and, in the domain of religion, focuses on truth versus error, right belief, confessionalism; postmodernism is gentle and, in the domain of religion, focuses upon relationships, love, shared tradition, integrity in discussion.[57]

In the view of postmodernity, story is an effective means to communicate truth. Postmodernist values knowing as holistic mean to view the relationships within the factors of knowing. Narrative in postmodern times has interwoven relational ideas which can form people's cultural identities. Life has many factors which are valued as cultural elements, and transferred to the community. Stories have metaphoric factors which reflect the truth in real life situations. Siegel asserts that "even advertising and graphic design, together again at last, have been building a community through collaboration to provide people with experiences, ideas, and frameworks to better manage and enjoy every aspect of their lives."[58]

In the modern era, with the development of objective and scientific communication, propositional communication was recognized as the most effective communication. People accepted knowledge and truth through logical reasoning which could understand facts from scientific observation. However, story as oral tradition pre-exists the idea that "truth was derived from observation, reason, and science developed

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[57] Donald A. Carson, "Faith a La Carte?" *Modern Reformation Magazine* 14 (July/August, 2005): 4.

[58] Siegel, *Communications Design*, 154.

into the ultimate source of knowledge and truth."[59] Before modern times, story was a strong communication tool for truth-telling within the community. With the development of modernism, however, truth-telling was "removed from a community setting, where relationships and common history gave it veracity, and was placed in the hands of experts."[60] Even if proposition truth-telling has been recognized as best communication tool to deliver truth and objective facts in modernism, the postmodern generation has discovered narrative as the most effective communication tool to deliver faith and truth through experiences and emotions within community settings.

## Experience

Researchers have discovered that the brain functions better in story form when receiving facts holistically within relations for knowledge, "the human brain has an uncanny ability which receives knowledge in big picture than details, and seems to best receive information that relates together. Further, any mind responds quicker to image than logic,"[61] Sweet said. Christian communities and churches have greatly relied on reason and reason-based methodology for learning and communicating God's words. Although Christian churches may feel threatened by postmodernism, the postmodern rediscovery of narrative can be an effective communication tool for them in a time cultural shift and methodological transition. Bever states that "language is transferred from short term memory to long term memory not as a literal recollection of words but as

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[59] Webber, *Younger Evangelicals*, 96.

[60] Leslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 19.

[61] Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami: Sink or Swim in the New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 203.

shorthand recoding of their gist, which normally erases from memory many of the individual words."[62] In addition, "our imaginative, symbolic right side of the brain is at least as important as our rational, deductive left side. We reason by pictures and stories as much as with raw data."[63] In that regard, modern scholars on brain research argue against the effectiveness of traditional preaching style which has concentrated on exegetical study and preaching.

In Kolb's view on experiential learning, experiences are greatly valued and learners are honored in the learning process. Learning as process to acquire knowledge occurs when people interact in real life situations. Through experiential learning, people achieve a holistic process through means such as conceptual bridges, and adaptive activities, in which people adapt themselves to their social environment in a lifelong learning process.[64]

In Kolb's view, knowledge occurs when social knowledge as cultural experience interacts with personal knowledge as subjective life experiences. When people intend to transform their perceptions through experiences in life environments, knowledge can be acquired.[65] Transformation occurs when learners internalize concrete apprehensions with symbolic comprehensions through internal reflection on their experiences. Transformation can also occur when the uniqueness of learners can be cherished in the

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[62] E. D. Hirsch Jr., *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (New York: Random House, 1988), 35.

[63] Burke, *Business Leadership and Culture*, 25.

[64] David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984), 31-36.

[65] Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 34-36.

cooperative community. Hence, learners can choose meaningful perspectives for interpreting experiences in their intuitions.[66]

Narrative is the most valued in the model of experiential learning as people reflect on their experiences through their lifetimes. Through sharing and transfering knowledge over a lifetime within a community environment, story-telling is the best communication tool to convey truth and facts and achieve learning.

To accomplish a community-based reflective learning process, sharing experiences of individual uniqueness is essential. As Mezirow states, "reflective learning involves assessment or reassessment of assumptions" and "reflective learning becomes transformative whenever assumptions or premises are found to be distorting, inauthentic or otherwise invalid."[67] Through reflective learning, learners in a community can develop a creative understanding which overcomes the biases in oral traditions. Current learning theory helps educators invite learners to paticipate in any story form to express any intellectual elements. It is important for educators to know that "story engages people intellectually and emotionally at the same time, and narrative stimulates peoples' imaginations which is the human capacity for image-making and image-perceiving."[68]

People can have a better capability to respond to truth in faith because narrative facilitates imaginative power and intellectual elements in holistic comprehension by means of experiences. "In the postmodern context, the value of story is in the fact that story literature could allow readers to create worlds for themselves," Grenz and Franke

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[66] Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 50-60.

[67] Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1991), 6.

[68] David S. Dockery, et al, *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 361.

said.[69] They also state that "the ultimate purpose of theology is not simply to establish right belief but to assist the Christian community in its vocation to live as the people of God."[70] For preachers, narrative is a useful and powerful communication method to help congregations to follow the Lord in their holistic life experiences. Postmodern thought values stories that explain true life experiences and can guide people to the truth of God and genuine facts. For educators, story can greatly contribute to educational purposes such as critical thinking for reflective learning, and emotional stimulation for moral development. Smedes states,

> The story is a cognitive device that shows us at least a glimpse of the world through other eyes, a glimpse that would not otherwise have been possible. And once the imagination is committed, once the process of transference begins and we are inside another skin, we are compelled to believe in that life, at least for as long as the story goes on. Stories, then have the unique power – more than Plato's reason, more than Medawar's science – to compel belief.[71]

Narrative communication in preaching has an experiential nature. When preachers want to implement biblical spirituality through preaching to a postmodern audience, it is imperative that they be aware of the need for the congregation to respond to the presence of God. Preachers must also facilitate an encounter with God through their sermons. To engage a spiriuallly challenged postmodern generation, preaching should not to focus on ethical responsibilities.

Knowledge of God's Word is an experienced knowledge, as Barth says: "Since knowledge of God's Word is available, an experience of God's Word is also available so

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[69] Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 78.
[70] Ibid., 127.
[71] Lewis Smedes, *Theology, News and Notes*, (Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary Press, 1991), 16.

that human beings can be what they are as determined by God's Word."[72] Without the recognition of human existence, people can not acquire knowledge. In this respect, a statement of Barth is critical that "knowledge and experience are based on existence. Knowledge begins with recognition of objective existence."[73] When an individual person encounters reality by participating in real life environments and communicate and interpret it with subjective determination, there is experience. In this existential knowledge process, people acquire experiential learning. Christian preaching can emerge from experiential learning through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in order to implement transformation in the congregation. In postmodern culture, there is a tendency to recognize an interpersonal interaction as a divine-human experience which can transcend human experiences.

Hilkert tries to locate preaching inside a sacramental imagination, implicating the preacher as one who mediates, namely, naming grace.[74] According to Hilkert, naming grace is bound within three qualifications: "(1) The experience to be named is human experiences in its depth dimensions; (2) in the contemporary world situation, most people's experience of God is in the face of, and in spite of, human suffering; and (3) the interpretative keys to identifying grace in human experiences are locaated in the biblical story and the basic symbols of the Christian tradition."[75]

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[72] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God* vol. 1, pt. 1, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh, UK: T.T. Clark, 1980), 198.

[73] Ibid., 187-8.

[74] Mary Hilkert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 32-33.

[75] Hilkert, *Naming Grace* 49.

**Faith and Experiential Learning**

The integration of Christian faith as trust and experiential learning is essential in order that Christian communicators can investigate the relationship between the content of the educators'(preachers') instruction as communicated through their teaching methodologies and the learning process of the learners. The possibility to influence on learning process by this relationship is requested to develop a communicative tool for Christian preachers and educators. Faith is the most crucial element in the Christian church in order for a person of God to devote him/herself to ministry for the kingdom of God by relying on the power of the Scriptures. Furthermore, to establish a sound Christian community, preachers must "interact with faith as content" in various ways with evident meaning. Since there is great misunderstanding that faith is "mere belief" or an emotional experience among Christian believers, the concept of faith as trust in theological articles is explored below. The research for this chapter was conducted through examining both selected biblical passages and journal articles on the integration of faith and learning.

Theological Survey: Dictionary Article on Faith

*Faith as Trust*

According to Bromiley faith is to be demonstrated in works so that faith can justify itself and operate in love (Gal. 5:6). Faith also requires obedient action (He. 11).[76]

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[76] G. Bromiley, "Faith," in G. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia(ISBE)* in Logos Bible Software 2002.

James 2:26 says, "Faith without deeds is dead." This declaration is essentially the same as Paul's statement, "Faith without works is not faith at all, but its opposite" (cf. Gal. 5:6; 1 Tim. 5:8).[77] Packer notes that sometimes, by a natural transition, in the second century, the standard usage of "the faith" signified the body of truths that comprised Christian beliefs. In the New Testament, as the sense of the body of Christian truth implied in faith, "the faith" has been referenced, not faith itself for the meaning in Rom. 1:5, in spite of the fact that the preferable translation from some expositors were "the obedience of faith" (RSV) to "obedience to the faith" (AV). In Gal. 1:23; 1 Tim 4:1, 6; and Jude 3, the meaning for translation is surely natural sense. It is certain that between "faith as a body of beliefs and the living, personal reality of trust in God, there is no conflict." Since trust has an intellectual element, a belief that trust is "mere emotional and mystical experience"[78] is avoided.

### Faith as Trust: Right Belief about God

In Ladd's view, "believing and accepting the truthfulness of the witnesses to the person and mission of Jesus" is foundational to the Johannine concept of faith. Such faith means acceptance of Jesus' messianic mission. "Faith means complete commitment and personal union between the believer and Christ is evident from other terms that are equivalent to faith", Ladd states. Ladd notes that "to believe means to receive him ((Jn. 1:12; 5:43; 13:20), to receive the testimony (3:11), to receive Jesus' words (12:48;

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[77] J. I. Packer, "Faith," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 431-434.

[78] J. I. Packer, "Faith," G. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia(ISBE)* in Logos Bible Software 2002.

17:8)." [79] Trust or reliance is the essential meaning of the word "faith" in the New Testament. "The *fiducia* ("trust") aspect in faith," has been brought to us for this kind of usage as reliance or committal, more than intellectual belief. "True faith is confident attachment to the Jesus of the New Testament." [80] Faith is not a synonym for belief. Even though Christians believe in propositional truth, believers have "faith in or trust the glorified person of Christ," and believers commit themselves holistically, having rested their minds on the sufficiency of the evidence. "Faith involves an intellectual element-knowledge of the gospel, an emotional element-feeling the sufficiency of Christ's grace, and a voluntary element-trusting Christ as Savior and Lord." [81] Trust in God throughout the Bible rests on the belief of what authors have revealed about the characters and purposes in their texts, depicting faith in "the truth"(2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:22), and regarding orthodoxy as faith's fundamental element (cf. Gal. 1:8-9). [82]

### Faith as Trust Rests on Divine Testimony

"Faith should be trust without reservation, not belief without evidence": believing the gospel of the Good News, believers come to *trust* the Messiah who has been filled with the Spirit. [83] Since believers have confidence in the testimony of a God who "does not lie" (Titus 1:2) and is therefore utterly trustworthy, people do not rely on self-assured mystical experiences. [84] The Lord gave believers assurance so that they could be

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[79] G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 308.

[80] Bromiley, "Faith."

[81] Gordon Lewis and B. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 1996), 169.

[82] Packer, "Faith," in *ISBE*.

[83] Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology* vol. 3.,101-102.

[84] Packer, "Faith," in *ISBE*.

confident in their faith, because God have empowered the believers who are redeemed in faith in God.[85]

### *Justifying Faith as Trust*

Faith is able to receive the grace of God, and to accomplish the mandates in the gospel. (Rom. 4:16; Eph. 2:8). For believers, justification is a gift through the grace of God, and it has been received by faith through the grace of God (Rom. 3:24, 25). Faith itself is a genuine and thorough trust in the provision of God for the process of salvation. The main point here is that faith is not something received through dogmatic learning. Putting trust as the fundamental element in the atonement of Jesus' Cross is complete. Trust as the fundamental element should be genuine condition for salvation in justification. Without the faith alone to trust in the truth of the gospel, believers can not proclaim the grace of God in the Cross of Jesus to redeem people (1 Thess. 1:5-8; 2:13). In this respect, the community in early churches was formed by faith, and gospels were preached into the community being in early church environment.

Faith means the reality of trust in God rather than a set of beliefs. Since trust has an intellectual element, believers are to avoid the concept that trust is just an emotional and personal experience. Faith is trust, which comes from believing and accepting the truthfulness of witnesses. Faith means complete commitment and personal union between the believer and Christ.

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[85] Bromiley, "Faith."

*Summary on Theological Survey*

Following Paul's example for ministry in faith relying on the God-breathed Scripture and truths of the gospel is placed within the belief that God is faithful in Christ Jesus. Paul had to face many opponents in his ministry of proclaiming the gospel and defending the genuine message of God's truth. As Paul was experiencing God's presence and help for his ministry in a period of suffering and persecution, he had to encourage Timothy to guard the truth in every circumstance. In order to establish a foundation on the Scriptures and on faith in God, Paul and Timothy had to emphasize the authority and effectiveness of the Scriptures against the distortions and misconceptions of Gnosticism and their opponents. Paul commands Timothy and all the Christians to equip themselves with the empowering word of God and to rely on the Scriptures to accomplish the mandate of God to believe in the gospel even in times of suffering and persecution for the kingdom of God. The heart of it all is that faith is no mere acceptance of facts and doctrines. It is trust in Christ and His accomplished work as the only but all-sufficient ground of salvation.

*Interaction with Empirical Research*

To determine what students think integration of faith and learning means and how it occurs, Burton & Nwosu (2003) implemented earlier research on 44 student perceptions of the faith–learning integration process. In that research, the student respondents emphasized the role of classroom climate supported by the professor and their classmates for faith-learning integration process. The student respondents also identified a safe environment for free discussion can facilitate faith-learning integration through specific teaching methods such as cooperative learning, role play, and inquiry

training. Lawrence , Burton, and Nwosu[86](2005) conducted the research "to determine students' perceptions of the locus of faith-learning integration process," and "to investigate students' perspectives of integration of faith and learning and the locus of behaviors associated with integration activity." The authors tried to collect the lived experiences of respondents related to the integration of faith and learning. The authors used a survey instrument to collect qualitative data that conveyed students' perceptions. The sample was a mixture of graduate and undergraduate students. Thirty-one students were surveyed using an open-ended questionnaire. The research shows that the respondents "described or defined the integration of faith and learning in ways reflective of the content of the courses, which was teaching methods." [87] Most respondents described faith-learning integration as teacher actions rather than student actions. Respondents demonstrated that the integration of faith and teaching was stronger than integration of faith and learning by giving specific examples of teaching methodologies and instruction.

Le Cornu looked at "people's commitment to Christian faith content influenced their ways of learning."[88] The author's hypothesis was that "the authoritative dimensions of the Christian faith had the potential to influence people's learning."[89] Le Cornu explored the context of this research that consists of the process of internalization and externalization with theories of adult learning. Original work on this subject came from the work of Perry (1970) and Belenky et al. (1986), which "argued various dimensions of

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[86] T. A. Lawrence, L. D. Burton, and C. C. Nwosu, "Refocusing on the Learning in 'Integration of Faith and Learning,'" *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 14, no.1 (2005): 17-50.

[87] Lawrence et al., "Refocusing on the Learning in 'Integration of Faith and Learning,'"17-50

[88] A. Le Cornu, "People's Ways of Believing: Learning Processes and Faith Outcomes," *Religious Education* 100, no. 4 (2005): 425-446.

the Christian faith function as external authorities that have the potential to influence ways in which Christians learn their faith."[90] In semi-structured interviews, sixteen questions were provided to ask people about their relationships to and uses of Christian authorities. Twenty-one people were interviewed for information about the relationship between their faith content and their experience. Le Cornu maintains that the small sample size was appropriate for the qualitative research in this study. The author argues that his research was similar to Fowler's interviews, which formulated the idea that "faith was an aspect of people's relationship to authority and the consequent development of the self." Whereas Fowler studied the form rather than the content of faith, emphasizing that faith was "human universal the form of which was essentially independent of content,"[91] Le Cornu intentionally focused on the inter-relationship between form and content in a Christian context. Le Cornu's use of non-developmental typology suggests that "Fowler's and Perry's schemes may not represent either the developmental progression they propose or Fowler's forms of faith when specifically situated in a Christian context."[92]

Le Cornu notes that Fowler's *Stages of Faith* separates form and content in its concept of developmental stages of faith. In contrast, Le Cornu insists that faith is to be understood as "a form of interaction with content which contributes to and explains form in various ways."[93] Le Cornu maintains that as part of internalization, which is associated with the process, theological reflection is essential to celebrating the truth of people's

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[89] A. Le Cornu, "People's Ways of Believing: Learning Processes and Faith Outcomes," 425-446.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

faith. Through awareness and appreciation, there are transforming insights into their mental life and values. Le Cornu suggests that, for further research, "the link between reflection and the growth of the self, even the Christian self" should be studied "in the context of three identifiable forms of reflection: critical, receptive, and admirational" in both Western, and global contexts.[94]

Lawrence, Burton, and Nwosu's research results indicate that the integration of faith and teaching is stronger than the integration of faith and learning. Christian preachers and educators need to follow the example of biblical mentoring Paul practiced in his ministry by maintaining steadfast faith while experiencing suffering and persecutions for declaring the word of God through God-breathed Scripture and the gospel of truth. Most respondents in Lawrence, et. al.'s study described faith-learning integration as teacher actions rather than student actions. In fact, the role of mentors in trust is the most critical element for Christian mentors to show learners examples to make them to be steadfast. Learning faith as trust in God by practicing faith in the mentor's witness to the gospel is essential for Christian followers within the Christian community. Just as Lawrence, et. al.'s respondents gave specific examples of teaching methodologies and instruction which facilitated the integration of faith and learning, Christian educators and mentors must develop efficient teaching methods and instruction to pursue an effective learning process with their learners. As the result of this examination of student perceptions indicates that students may also make a high association of integration with teacher behavior or responsibility, teaching and mentoring following Paul's example could play important role in the integration of faith and learning. To define the

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[94] A. Le Cornu, "People's Ways of Believing: Learning Processes and Faith Outcomes," 425-446.

"integration of faith and learning," instructional strategies and procedures have been introduced. In that respect, Christian educators must implement teaching and mentoring procedures according to stages of human development and context to facilitate the learning process. Following Lawrence, et. al.'s focus on observing the way students were "processing academic content with a growing faith," Christian educators need to have a curriculum for theological reflection with biblical content, which also contains an intellectual element, to enable students to formulate a growing faith in their "Christian selves."

Since Le Cornu concluded that "faith is a form of interaction with content," to develop their learners' faith, Christian educators and mentors need to facilitate for their learners many interactions with the content of the Old and New Testaments and other theological writings. Without biblical content, there is no possibility to formulate good faith as a form, which is the reason Christian believers must train and discipline themselves through biblical instruction. Christian educators and mentors are called to provide learners with biblical content as a process of theological reflection. To interact with a form which facilitates transforming insights through the faithful trust on the witness of truths, Christian educators and mentors need to develop biblical content as a process of theological reflection. Paul actually did this himself when he reminded Timothy of Paul's own sufferings and persecutions for the sake of the gospel while putting his faithful trust in God. Timothy was encouraged to internalize Paul's faith as trust in God and in the gospel since Timothy had hesitated to follow Paul's example through awareness and appreciation.

To conclude, the integration of faith and learning occurs within learners' learning processes. Christian learners could put their faith, trusting on the instructors' teaching contents as biblical narratives and strategies to interact with learners with instructors' good behaviors and responsibilities with good interpersonal communication skills and Christ-like behaviors within faith stories. Christian educators as mentors are called to show exemplary life styles and witnesses in the form of narrative faith stories on the truths to impact on learners and followers. Christian preachers and mentors have a mandate to continuously inspire learners and help them to accomplish good works for the gospel and the truth of God. To develop a "Christian self" and Christian character, Christian preachers and learners are called to concentrate on biblical narratives to formulate faith as interaction. Christian learners are to be fully equipped for every good work through the power of the Scriptures. Christian ministries should develop curricula consisting of well-designed biblical training while implementing experiential practice with various discipleship methodologies within faithful communities. As Scripture is God-breathed, it is profitable and useful in every aspect of education to equip and mature the person of God to be faithful in distinguishing sound doctrines from false teachings. Therefore, it is necessary for Christian preachers and mentors to help learners to integrate their learning with their faith in order to develop sound Christian worldviews by using faith narratives from the Christian community.

## Community

By its nature, narrative has been related to emotional approaches for alternative applications in community involvement. In Scripture, stories of faith are fundamental,

describing the relationships individual experiences and community events have had with God and situations in history. In community, individual stories have had emotional involvement through close encounters with others in order to explore people's true identification. Miller claims that "Narrative keeps cognition, volition and feeling together. Stories are not merely perceptions – they are full of emotive clues. The narrative also has an intentional framework, a plot that holds the story together."[95] Gustafson explains very well the relationship between narrative and community:

> Narratives function to sustain the particular moral identity of a religious (or secular) community by rehearsing its history and traditional meanings, as these are portrayed in Scripture and other sources. Narratives shape and sustain the ethos of the community. Through our participation in such a community, the narratives also function to give shape to our moral characters, which in turn deeply affect the way we interpret or construct the world and events and thus affect what we determine to be appropriate action as members of the community. Narratives function to sustain and confirm the religious and moral identity of the Christian community, and evoke and sustain the faithfulness of its members to Jesus Christ.[96]

Emotions among community members are the fundamental constituents of community storytelling. Since human beings tend to make far more determinations based on emotions and other psychological reactions rather than from regard for truth and principles of right and wrong, the feelings and experiences of community members are crucial in maintaining good storytelling in the community.

According to Sheub, there are three kinds of emotions which form a genuine community story. To formulate a story, members of the audience, the tradition, and the experiences in the storyteller's are combined.. The audience responds to the imaginative

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[95] Donald Miller, *Story and Context: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press., 1987), 116.

[96] James M. Gustafson, "Varieties of Moral Discourse: Prophetic, Narrative, Ethical, and Policy" (The Stob Lectures, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI: 1998), 19-20.

images in the stories with their emotions, and these emotional responses are an essential element in the storyteller's work. Past experiences of stories with memories of emotional imagery is another source of emotion. This emotional imagery has been superficially involved with the tale which is constructive. A third source is from the emotional life of the storyteller. The historical, biographical, personal emotional world of  the storyteller takes form in the narrative performance.[97]

Narrative can be the most effective method to communicate with the various learning styles of individuals in a community. As Witvliet mentions in Satterlee's book that Christianity is a "first-person plural" religion, which has worship and fellowship in community- based activities. In this respect, to implement spiritual mandate given by God through spiritual instituition with church, forming individual faith and experiencing the presence of spiritual confession in community is essential.[98] Congregations need to accomplish a constant change in the manner of creative and positive deal in the process of negitiating change.[99]

Christian learning can be recognized as processing life application through the biblical framework. Through the impact of Bible knowledge over a lifetime, learners can develop their appreciation of the Bible.[100] Estep argues that congregational faith can build spiritual traditions which can accomplish the individual spiritual formation among communal faith developments. Faith belongs to the congregational confession, and it is

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[97] Harold Scheub, *Story* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 185.
[98] Craig A. Satterlee, *When God Speaks Through You* (Hernon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008), ix.
[99] Ibid.
[100] James Riley Estep, Jr., "Spiritual Formation as Social: Toward a Vygotskyan Developmental Perspective," *Religious Education* 97, no. 1 (2002), 160.

also an  individual phenomenon among congregation. Estep states, "when an individual internalize the content of their faith community, a more formalized faith begins."[101]

Vygotsky provides methods of spiritual formation for the Christian preachers as educators. He suggests that Christian preachers need to view spiritual formation from a new developmental perspective. He also suggests that the role of preachers should emphasize the importance of teaching, and education should focus on human development: "In so doing, preaching as education is not simply a response to the developmental process, but a component of it. Preaching as teaching is for spiritual formation."[102]

"There was no argument on the existence of God in the preaching of the early Christian church; rather it was primarily a simple recital of the great events connected with the historical appearance of Jesus Christ and a confession of what had happened to the community of disciples," Niebuhr states.[103] Newbigin proposes that the universal purpose of God needs to be represented by a particular community, saying: "truly local in that [the community] embodies God's particualr word of grace and judgment for that people. Truly ecumenical in being open to the witness of churches in all other places, and thus savedfrom absorption into the cuoture of that place and enabled to represent to that place the unicersality, the catholicity of God's purpose of grace and judgment for all humanity."[104] When God chooses a particualr community, he means for it to imlement a

[101] Estep, "Spiritual Formation as Social,"160.

[102] Estep, "Spiritual Formation as Social,"160.

[103] H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Story of Our Life," in Hauerwas, Stanley and L. Gregory Jones, eds. *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989), 21.

[104] Newbigin, *Pluralist Society*, 152.

sacred mandate of the gospel "as the body of the secret of God's reign through world history according to socially embodied rationality."[105]

The sacred mandate that the Lord Jesus Christ gave to a particular community is to practice sacred living in daily experiences. Through evangelical preaching, this mandate can be a sacred influence in the world, and it can take part in the kingdom of God as the effective mean for evangelism than social action program. "Proclamation in preaching, however, is the only option to tell the Gospel story, Newbigin says."[106] Newbigin says that communites need to develop their roles as sacred institutions to experience the fruitful works of God as their valid identification: "True contextualization happens when there is a community which lives faithfully by the Gospel and in that same costly identification with people in their real situations as we see in the earthly ministry of Jesus. When these conditions are met, the sovereign Spirit of God does his own surprising work."[107]

In the postmodern culture, as people used to confuse with their own identities, people became more anxious in societal environment. Thus, people try to negotiate their identities within relationship with community. As Hall[108] notes, "Identity is not already there; rather it is a production, emergent, in process. It is situational--it shifts from context to context". Identity is reshaped in meaning and images by interacting through discourses within communities. Every community has reworked to shape discourse with its culture and identity. By interaction through discourse, community members can

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[105] Ibid., 86-87.

[106] Newbigin, *A Word in Season*, 154.

[107] Ibid., 154.

[108] S. Hall, *Elusive Culture: Schooling, Race, and Identity in Global Times* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), xi.

continuously reshape and negotiate their identity for the community. Members in a community try to redefine the community with new theories and concepts of identity. By reflecting on their own identity through discourse and incorporating new strategies into their practices, people can renegotiate their identities. To implement effective ministry, a sense of community in the responsible relationship is necessary. A genuine spiritual community with true life sharing is critical to have spiritual purpose in life. To empower a congregation in community in postmodern culture, Christian preachers need to proclaim the reign of God and the kingship of God.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# METHOD FOR POSTMODERN PREACHING

## Contextualization of Preaching

It is critical that Christian preachers to be sensitive to their listeners' level of comprehension and awareness of the gospel in order to communicate effectively the truth of the gospel and the kingdom of God. The gospels, contain examples of contextualized preaching in which Jesus uses a dialogical method to share his message with his listeners.

Shenk defines contextualization as a process. When gospel message encounters a specific culture, a faith community forms as an authentic cultural community[109] In this regard, Newbigin insists, "the gospel is addressed to the human person as a human person in all uncountable varieties of predicaments in which human beings find themselves"[110]

As Newbigin says, human beings exist as members of communities which share a common language, customs, ways of ordering economic and social life, ways of

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[109] Shenk, "Missionary Challenge," 56.

[110] Newbigin, *Pluralist Society*, 152-153.

understanding and coping with their world.[111] As the recipients of the gospel, human beings exist in a particular cultural context. In this regard, Mckinney argues that "education from the west should not try to make all of the world's peoples into linear thinkers. They will encourage global thinkers to communicate through stories, proverbs, poetry and epoch drama. They will not insist that they learn to preach homiletical sermons"[112]

Preaching should make a bridge between the truth of the gospel and the real situations of human beings in a particular cultural context. As Buttrick states that since people are children of a particular time and place, of a cultural environments, a conscious cultural shape in worldviews has been implemented.[113] Hence, preaching method and style are the creative work of a Christian preacher for a congregation in a particular environment.

The challenge in preaching is to bridge the historical-cultural gap so that the message is as relevant in the present as it was in the past, letting the word of God address people today just as explicitly and concretely as it did in biblical times.[114] Greidanus also states that although preachers should not display their exegetical tools in the pulpit, sermons should bring out very clearly that texts are being understood in the context of the scope of this universal kingdom history.[115] The Bible is a holistic, sacred book of stories. The Scriptures present God's grace.. Preachers need to proclaim the truth through their

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[111] Newbigin, *Pluralist Society*, 141.

[112] Lois Mckinney, "Contexualizing Instruction: Contributions to Mission from the Field of Education," *Missiology* 12, no. 3 (1984): 317. .

[113] David Buttrick, *Homiletics: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 296.

[114] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 159.

[115] Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text,* 100.

personal stories, in which God has been in their sacred experiences and encounters with him.

## Transforming Communication Style

Currently, there is large cultural shift which requires faith and preparation for the unknown future. Churches today are uncertain about how to transform themselves in this difficult cultural shift. Since distrust of reason and science disappointed people in modern society and culture, in the cultural shift toward postmodernism, people are looking for new sources of authority. The pursuit of these sources in turn affects the response of the culture to communication styles. Since those communication methods are distrusted in modernism, postmodern communication methods are endeavering to redevelop storytelling and non-linear thinking nowadays.

Although society is experiencing a large-scale cultural change today, together with the  constant cycle of generational change, the communication methods of the churches have naively focused on a single foundational, authoritative, unchangeable method of ministry for communicating Christ within a particular culture based on the questionable ideas of modernism. In modern churches and theological academies, the dominant communciation style considered as the most effective and biblical method has been propositional, exegetical preaching.

Since churches in the modern era have been presenting God's whole salvation story in pieces and theological categories, postmodern generations are having difficulties in approaching God's salvation story in a way they can comprehend holistically and experientially. There are discrepancies between God's story and their own life

experiences. Paul found himself in a particular culture whose people had analytical and dichotomistic thinking patterns, so he argued using abstract, often difficult logic to convince his readers of his point. He used the verbal, abstract, and rational thinking which was characteristic of Greek philosophy rather than the pictorial, concrete, and emotional thinking which was characteristic of the Hebrew prophets.[116]

In postmodern culture, intellectual claims and requests on truth are effective in the process of discovering truth. It is claimed that there is no absolute truth to discern right and wrong. The Christian gospel should be proclaimed as a true story in the confusing world of  postmodern culture. When Christian evangelicals experience the postmodern deconstructionist challenge to the absoluteness of God's story, they should respond using methodology that can convey the absolute truth to a generation influenced by postmodern cultural philosophy. [117] The response to this question could be an apologetic witness which is community-based, story-based (an interwined narrative of person, community, and gospel) and spirit-based through which the web of beliefs of a non-believer shifts over time due to accounts of reality presented by Christians both as individuals and within their community.[118]

Communicating the eternal truth of Jesus Christ to postmodern generations requires an effective narrative preaching using both factual description and fictional story telling. It is important for preachers to explore the nature of proposition and narrative conflict and its impact on communicating the absolute truth of God in the time of cultural transitioning from modernism to postmodernism. Modernism represents a rational,

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[116] Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), 60.

[117] Kevin Ford, *Jesus for a New Generation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 121.

propositional communication style, postmodernism represents a relational, narrative, story-based culture. Using narrative preaching to communcate with postmodern generations requires a resolution which will elevate it to be an esential method of truth telling while avoiding degrading propositional truth telling.

The stories in the Bible show an interaction between God and his chosen people through oral communication. This made the Bible story trustworthy because in biblical times narrative was the supreme means of communication. Even in modern times, stories have life. Story encourages people to find unltmate answers which guide them to faith. Narrative is a very effective tool to communicate the truth of Christ in a postmodern culture. Since stories carry the life of God in the Bible, God can speak to human minds and hearts through experience and mystery. In stories, mystery helps people imagine God as God. Through stories, people can incorporate their hearts and experiences into their realities and worldviews.

To define the theology of preaching, preachers need to clarify the the method to deliver the word of God in the world to apply its principle and lesson to the persons who are in postmodern culture. Craddock says, "A theology of preaching sustains and nourishes the pulpit with a constancy that survives the ebb and flow of the feelings of the one standing in it as well as the smiles and frowns of those who sit before it.[119]

For Craddock, the inductive method of preaching is a homiletic form in which the content of the gospel and the nature of the Christian faith are incarnated..[120] According to Craddock, for effective communication, the method is as important as the content, "The

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[118] Ford, *Jesus for a New Generation,* 120-125.
[119] Fred Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 48.
[120] Fred Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 3-4.

method is message, so it is with all preaching: how one preaches is to a large extent what one preaches."[121] The inductive method moves from the particulars of experience to general truths and conclusions, and it begins with ideas in situations which need to be interpreted through the content of the gospel. In this way, the method of proclamation and the method of preparation can be well suited to each other. Craddock describes the inductive method as "beginning with an interpretation of human existence today and then moving to the text."[122] Since the inductive approach is fundamental to contemporary postmodern culture, inductive preaching could be the most effective method for the congregation to experience the message of the gospel.[123]

Holistic thinkers want to examine total circumstances. They believe that each situation is unique and are uncomfortable with standardized procedures and rigidly applied rules. They resist being pinned down to a particular position on an issue or to a particular social role. [124] Because they are aware of various thinking patterns and development issues in particular cultures, they believe that critical attitudes or evaluations are inappropriate while using an incarnational model in cross-cultural ministry. The empathy of Jesus and Paul are great examples for incarnational ministry and preaching, experiencing pain of weakness and shame and sorrow at failure. Christian ministers are to bear with the failing of the weak and build them up.[125] Empathy could be the key communication tool which embodies the love and grace of God in pastoral ministry and which preachers can adapt to fit their congregations.

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[121] Ibid., 52.

[122] Ibid., 3.

[123] Ibid., 55-58.

[124] Lingenfelter, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, 65.

[125] Lingenfelter, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, 115.

Christian preaching can be defined as a means of communication style to persuade the congregation. Through preaching, the congregation is transformed by biblical truth in language. Preaching will be more effective if the message is culturally relevant in congregation's consciousness and expereicnes. Christian preachers are called to prepare and proclaim the sermon to accomplish spiritual transformation through the word of God.[126] As mediators between church and the world, Christian preachers are required to develop preaching styles and methods which can implement new creative paradigms to transform ministry in relation to culture and society.

To implement the most effective approach to engage a postmodern generation in spirituality, preaching should become "dynamically theocentric."[127] Preaching can most effectively transform postmodern generations by facilitating an encounter with God. The experiential dynamic that can encourage a faith response can result from the exploration of what God has done for people beyond their human limitations. The language of preaching should be imaginative and descriptive to inflame the soul and to create experiences for the postmodern listeners. Lischer anticipates the postmodern critique that Christianity simply tries to replace imperialistic narratives with its own. He suggests that the Christian story is not imperialistic because it is told from the margins, has at its center a symbol of vulnerability and humility in the cross, and is "unfinished."[128]

To be a creative preacher who can engage an illusion for language, Schmit recommended that a preacher be like a poet: "when a sermon as words create images in

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[126] Ray Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 51.

[127] Paul Scott Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 1-20.

[128] Richard Lischer, *The End of Words: The Language of Reconciliation in a Culture of Violence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 101-102.

audience's resonation, it becomes a presentational form as imaginative words."[129] When

preachers can use descriptive language to relate familiar concepts from concrete

environments with abstract concepts, the potential is there to create lively images which

can develop conceptual relationships. To convey a purposeful image through imaginative

language, preachers need to deliver messages with specific usages of words. Verbs can be

used to create environments which can guide the listener into purposed scenes of the

story. However, in terms of narrative preaching, Lischer did not want to exclude the

possible language selection for decisive language which separates a teller from a tale.[130]

According to Lischer, because storytelling is a battle, a poet-storyteller sometimes needs

to prepare for a transformative role as a prophet in the atmosphere of competition in

narrative.[131]

Experience is one key that can persuade postmodern generations of the truth of

the gospel. Churches need symbols or images to foster an experiential moment. In a

postmodern culture it is critical that preaching engage the mind as well as the heart and

soul of a congregation. Addressing personal testimony to a skeptical postmodern

generation is effective in bearing witness to experiences of people who have found a

relationship with God and Jesus through the gospels. As far as praxis is concerned,

Anderson states that "the production of a sermon manuscript and the mere verbalization

of its content do not constitute praxis, for praxis necessarily involves the realization of an

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[129] Clayton Schmit, *Too Deep for Words: A Theology of Liturgical Expression* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 87.

[130] Lischer, *The End of Words*, 95.

[131] Ibid., 101.

intended result or effect. Praxis includes the effect of the Word as well as a presentation of it".[132]

Most evangelical preachers rely heavily on exegesis for a solid foundation in sacred interpretation and proclamation; however, preachers should also develop their preaching structures through studying contemporary materials to understand the environment of the congregation. Capturing the attention of their congregations by intersecting the sermon with their listeners' daily lives is essential. To implement participatory questions in a sermon, sharing experiences is critical. Because God has already cultivated human minds to understand absolute truth through stories in history over and above any cultural shifts, postmodern generations can discover God's redemptive story of love and grace by interacting with his creation.

Even though there are cultural shifts affecting the value of universal truth or metanarrative, Christian preachers are obligated to proclaim the gospel message in God's revelation which is most rational for Christian witness to engage personal commitment in faith. Transforming the ministry of preaching in postmodern culture is essential in order for younger generations to experience the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

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[132] Anderson, *Practical Theology*, 50.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# FUNCTIONS OF STORY AND NARRATIVE

## Defining Story and Narrative

There is a significant paradigm change in homiletics as preachers move from traditional deductive, propositional discourse to adopt a narrative method of preaching. Since propositional theology has difficulty showing how faith can enter a believer's life and practice, faith becomes separate from action.[133] Metaphors told in story and acted in ritual must empower the imagination and action of Christians.[134] Contemporary preachers are developing their narrative preaching styles to produce more creative and imaginative preaching which can stimulate and improve the imaginative powers of their listeners.[135] Because postmodern generations focus on image and story, these elements in experiences can be powerful means for truth-telling. There is a peril that contemporary churches and preachers rely on presenting truth in propositional ways which rely

[133] Terrence W. Tilley, *Story Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1985), 4.
[134] Ibid., 16.

on the authoritative style of modernism with reason-based faith. Story functions well in postmodern culture because preachers need to share stories in many communities to get a source of authority other than reason and logic.

In postmodernism, relating with experiences or events of people's lives as factual or fictional, story is essential. The story of human lives can be best communicated by the structure of narrative and fiction. In modernism, propositional communication engages non-narrative elements. And the events and experiences of individual lives need to be factual and verifiable. In the story of God, however, narrative and story of individual life are inseparable.

## Story / Narrative

The most common way human beings communicate with others is telling stories. The form of narrative is fairly effective for understanding the behaviors of others. Even in the educational field, due to the natural communicative means like didache, the effectiveness of story-telling as narrative has been recognized. Through story, metaphor can function to develop new insights and creative sources for new meaning in human lives. McFague claims that "metaphor as an ultimate as thought follows the way human works as a poetic device for the creation of new meaning. Since all human discoveries are evolved by metaphor, metaphor is and can be the source for new insight."[136] When writers want to describe human lives and experiences in their writings, metaphors are good writing tools. As Volger states, "the mythological approach to story boils down to

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[135] George Bass, "The Evolution of the Story Sermon" *Word and World* 2, no. 2 (1982):186.

using metaphors or comparisons to get across your feelings about life"[137]

Peoples' stories reflect their experiences of the universal human condition in particular situations. Therefore, stories can be metaphors which generalize from peoples' specific experiences to convey archetypal qualities. Ryken defines archetypes as "recurrent images such as light, darkness, water, and crowns, plot motifs such as journey, initiation, rescue, or transformation through ordeal, or character types such as hero, villain, trickster, or innocent victim. Archetypes are the building blocks of the literary imagination."[138]

Using metaphors and characters with archetypal qualities, stories can embody real life situations that deal with universal experiences as sources for new insights on life and meaning. When archetypal qualities are present in the story, there can be real learning to universalize experiences. On this matter, Volger explains that "every good story reflects the total human story, the universal human condition of being born into this world, growing, learning, struggling to become an individual, and dying." [139] Furthermore, Volger states, "Stories can be read as metaphor for the general human situation, with characters that embody universal, archetypal qualities, comprehensive to the group as well as the individual."[140]

Through the unique construct of Christian stories, the content of Christian faith has been endowed to the next generation. Stories of Christian experiences have been maintaining a strong faith-community in this world. Steffen states, "Christianity means

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[136] Sallie McFague, *Speaking in Parables* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975), 157.

[137] Christopher Volger, *The Writer's Journey* (Studio City, CA: Michael Wisie Productions, 1982), 82.

[138] Dockery, et al, *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker,1994), 64.

[139] Volger, *Writer's Journey*, 32.

Christian stories of faith, because Christian stories have provided the substance of Christian faith. Throughout the Bible and in Christian stories, symbol-based narrative constitutes reality," [141] and creates communication for community. In this case, symbolism without syncretism provides the pure contents of truth to the Christian community. As Hauerwas comments,

> When narrative theology first came out, some people pointed out that there's a lot in the scriptures that isn't narrative: the Psalms, the Wisdom literature, the pastoral letters. That's true, but everything said in the Psalms, the Wisdom literature, and the pastorals depends on the story; in a sense, the gospels have primacy over the other literatures…The narrative includes all the literatures that are not narratives in their first mode, and so you can find the interrelationship between those different kinds of discourse. And it's not just a question of narrative and everything else; the crossing between genres is an ongoing process.[142]

As a literary form, story or narrative can be defined as "the account by a narrator of events and participants moving in some pattern over time and space," as Fackre states:

> The recovery of imagination in the work of theology must not be juxtaposed to rational inquiry and conceptual formulation…story, metaphor, and visual symbol make their appearance alongside discursive exposition. Wilbur Urban, anticipating many of these modern developments in *Language and Reality,* argues for the complementary of 'symbolic truth' and the 'truth of the symbol.' The power of symbol and saga enables us to make our engagement (symbolic truth), and the latter is the conceptual assertion of the fact, not the fiction, of the One who comes (the truth of the symbol).[143]

It is crucial that the Christian community in postmodern culture define the purpose of its stories. In any story, there is basic quality of human experience which is true to our human life. Human beings embrace reality in concrete time and space, and narrative interprets historical events and experiences in literary form. Narrative can be the appropriate literary form to understand the behavior of other people in society.

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[140] Ibid.

[141] Steffen, *Missiology*, 1998.

[142] Joy Radford, ed., "A Conversation with Stanley Hauerwas," *Image: A Journal of the Arts and Religion* 32 (Fall 2001):105.

The stories and symbols of faith within the Christian community are the most important elements through which to pass on the Christian faith to postmodern generations, including those who are non-believers, because these stories can easily reproduce the community's previous experiences.

Storytelling enables the Christian community to render the existence of Christian faith in the most adequate words. Through the form of the story, believers can experience the meaning of God participating in the story plot of the Bible. Ultimately, storytelling reveals to believers the creation from God, human corruption, redemption by grace in the Cross, and the new heaven. Polkinghorne defines narrative as follows:

> Narrative is a meaning structure that organizes events and human actions into a whole, thereby attributing significance to individual actions and events according to their effect on the whole….The organizing theme that identifies the significance and the role of the individual event is normally called the "plot" of the narrative. The plot functions to transform a chronicle or listing of events into a schematic whole by highlighting and recognizing the contribution that certain vents make to the development and outcome of the story.[144]

Narratives and stories are always correct when the story culturally functions to transfer lessons and meaning to later generations. By stories, people can identify and construct a culture which is involved in a specific community. Through narratives, human beings can perceive and make moral choices and form world views. Narrative structure enables the community to maintain more cultural memory.  As TeSelle puts it, "We learn who we are through the stories we embrace as our own—the story of my life is structured by the larger stories (social, political, mythic) in which I understand my personal story to take place."[145]

[143] Gabriel Fackre, *The Christian Story* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 6.

[144] Donald E. Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 18-19.

[145] Sallie TeSelle, "The Experience of Coming to Believe," *Theology Today* 32, no.2 (July 1975): 160.

Within narratives and stories, the role of myths is also important as a way to understand the nature of the cosmos and the purpose of life. People pursue myths to justify specific cultural values that they can communicate and validate empirically. "Myths have a powerful impact on the subjective (mental) orientation of persons because they communicate and reinforce a particular world view,"[146] says Roberts.

Preachers tend to rely on linear and propositional sermons because of their preference for expository preaching as authoritative. Preachers have thoughts on hermeneutical methodology for expository and propositional preaching is more objective to have true textual meaning in preaching delivery. Although narrative writing style is more accessible for ordinary people, the subjective aspects of narrative are a hindrance for preachers who rely on authoritative proposition. According to Craddock, "Story is more than a preacher's illustration of a deeper truth, or a funny aside to win the listeners' attention again. Story is deeper truth."[147] Lischer advocates narrative preaching, offering his three modes which are different from the use of stories as sermon illustrations. He writes, "The illustrations in most sermons are dispensable, that is to say, you can leave a few out, and the sermon will not be destroyed; in fact, it may even prosper."[148]

Bryan Chapell, who is opposed to the effectiveness of narrative, notes: "Thought rooted in this [narrative, storytelling] soil presupposes that all truth is relative, personal and existentially related to one's own circumstances."[149] Chapell insists that story cannot be trusted to communicate objective, factual truth. Narrative can only illustrate

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[146] Roberts, *Religion in Sociological perspective*, 91.

[147] Craddock, *Preaching*, 204.

[148] Lischer, *The End of Words*, 119.

[149] Bryan Chapell, "The Future of Expository Preaching," *Preaching* (September-October 2004): 9.

propositional truth.[150] Chapell suggests that narrative preaching is a modern, even liberal,

preaching method. Chapell implies "narrative is capable of speaking to the heart but is

woefully lacking in addressing the intellect."[151]

 Narrative, however, is and always has been core to human and divine

communication. Story is a facet of God's communication to us we need to wrestle with,

understand, and use effectively. Discourse is different from story; Powell comments that

"discourse refers to the rhetoric of the narrative, how the story is told. Stories concerning

the same basic events, characters, and settings can be told in ways that produce very

different narratives. The four Gospels provide excellent examples of this." [152]

 Though Chapell is right that narative lays its foundation through experience

 and perspective, this does not make it completely relativistic. Postmodern thinkers

 do not ultimately abandon the authority of absolute truth; ,rather, they are willing

 to question the ability to apprehend absolute truth through human reason alone

 and therefore are beginning to search for a more tentative sense of authority found

 within the story of any given community.

Christian preachers and communicators from most churches and organizations are

now facing many kinds of challenges. In particular, they are asking how narrative

preaching can be used to encourage their listeners to be absorbed by biblical stories.

Narrative preaching presents the biblical text in the form of a story, which it follows to

completion. Postmodern preaching must rediscover the importance of story to effectively

communicate with the younger generation for the purpose of evangelism. Lischer claims

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[150] Ibid., 10.

[151] Ibid., 9.

[152] Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 23.

that "recent interest in story as a form of religious discourse has spread across the breadth of theology and church life with the result that no discipline or activity remains untouched by the vocabulary of story, storytelling, the narrative, or narration."[153]

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[153] Richard Lischer, "The Limits of Story," *Interpretations* 38 (1984): 26.

# CHAPTER SIX

# CLAIMS ON NARRATIVE FOR NARRATIVE PREACHING

It is important for narrative preaching to study the claims on narrative for narrative preaching. To trace the origins of postmodern theories of interpretation, Roger Lundin notes that while postmodernity emphasizes philosophical originality, the Christian quest has concentrated on certainty. Both views perceive texts as objects which can be maneuvered from isolated subjects without historical or traditional connection.[154] Lundin also describes Descartes who introduces the autonomous *Cogito,* as "an orphaned thinking agent…who is dependent upon nothing outside himself for the truth he has uncovered within himself."[155] For narrative interpretations, no readers are absolutely independent from the traditions and situations which surround them. Lundin, thinking of culture, insists that "there is no such thing as a completely isolated reader who is uninformed by the historical tradition in which he or she is situated. There is no Cartesian moment of 'self-fathering' in human understanding, for every reading of a text or human

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[154] Roger Lundin, Clarence Walhout, and Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 3.

action is grounded in the history of reflection and action that language unfolds."[156] In this regard, considerations about the cultural environments of readers have impacted the claims on narrative reading, narrative communication, and narrative preaching.

**Thiselton's "Readers into Biblical Narrative-Worlds"**

When readers experience the environments of texts, they can get advantage in the interpretation. Narratives project manifold segments of texts which are not provided from other means of texts. Thiselton claims that narratives are manifold in the world of pastoral theology as follows:[157]

*Unconscious receptive mode:* In case of the classic parable form, Nathan's parable of the rich man who took his poor neighbor's lamb (2 Sam. 12:1-6), narrative can entice readers into its world, and readers become unconsciously receptive to following the story lines. Through narrative, readers can experience the reverse of their expections which are their viewpoints according to their assumptions about the narrative in the story line. *Grasping personal identity:* Imagination and exploration of possible worlds can be stimulated through the process of story-telling. Because human stories have lively actions and characters which exist in time and space, self-involving speech and actions for personal identity in stories become active. This process in the minds of readers helps pastoral theology research further into theoretical exposition and practices.

*Participation in social solidarity:* Narrative and description are different categories. Narrative relies on plot and narrative-time, but description relies on natural

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[155] Lundin, Walhout, and Thiselton, *The Promise of Hermeneutics*, 3.
[156] Ibid., 57.

sequence and natural time. In these categories, readers can participate in "narrative-worlds" to accomplish transformation and to achieve personal identity. In this participation process, readers can create the conditions for transformation. However, according to Thiselton, in narrative theory "they operate in different ways: they may subvert, entice, create conditions for the possibility of identity and identification, stimulate imagination and project future possibilities, or project worlds which potentially set in motion illocutions. They may also convey self-involving descriptions from a point of view, nourish social solidarity by corporate rememberance and celebration, may affirm, challenging, or create pre-conditions for the next step in the process of understanding."[158]

**Richard's Hermeneutical Analysis and Homiletical Application of Narrative Texts**

Relying on Richard's theory, preachers need to facilitate interpretive discernment and sanctified imagination through the narrative preaching process. In Richard's theory, *authorial intent or purpose*, *authorial unity*, *theological analysis*, *anthropological analysis*, and *textual exposition* are explained as follows.[159]

*Authorial intent or purpose* considers the intention of authors in writing and reading. Readers need to view relationships and truth revealing lessons in reading. *Authorial unity* means fragmentation. When preachers interpret and preach narratives, they need to bring the pieces of story into interaction to create the big picture in a process that overcomes logical and emotional gaps. *Theological analysis* means that God's purposes in history are vividly revealed in historical providence. *Anthropological*

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[157] Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 566-575.

[158] Ibid.

*analysis* means "that human nature is caught in the powerful interplay of the double dialectic between design and disorder, providence and freedom. The unique responses of individual characters to the events must be considered." [160] In *textual exposition*, preachers do not need to worry about any discrepancy between biblical truth and homiletical truth.

Narrative is the essential element of biblical revelation in hermeneutics. Studying biblical narraives is important for Christian preachers and communicators when interpreting the Bible since narratives contain the message of the Bible and form the heart of the New and Old Testaments. Even though these narratives are not meant to explain theology, they can convey the truth explicitly or implicitly.

In comparison to Richard, Fee and Stuart say that an Old Testament narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine:

> An Old Testament narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere. Narratives record what happened – not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. Therefore, not every narrative has an individual identifiable moral of the story. What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Most of the characters in OT narratives are far from perfect and their actions are, too. We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what happened was good or bad.[161]

Kaiser's interpretive principle for Bible narratives is different; he explains that the critical placement of interpretive statements in the textual sequence is the interpretive principle of biblical narrative.

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[159] Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, Books. 2003), 165-171.

[160] Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons,* 165-171

[161] Golden D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 83-84.

**Lowry's Narrative Art Form**

Proposing a new sermon theory, Eugene Lowry emphasizes the importance of the narrative element in preaching as a narrative art form. As a practical approach, narrative can be used to convey culture and human experience, narratives in preaching can convey the theological world view of the faith-story.[162] In a narrative sermon the arrangement of ideas takes the form of plot involving a strategic delay of the preacher's meaning,[163] and the plot conveys the suspense of moving the story from disequilibrium to resolution.[164] Lowry emphasizes that a sermon needs to become "an event-in-time and a process,"[165] to work together for relational influences. This sermon will create a plot among the congregation to participate in the progressions of events between life experiences in time.

Though the plot may be complicated, its resolution can lead to revelation. In stories, the plot is a sequence of actions explicitly related through cause and effect. It can be influenced by primary human experiences. Its structure uses transactions within human stories and consequences in human experiences. The plot emphasizes primary conflicts that occur throughout the sequence of events.

Lowry looks at the preaching event as a process of discovering and communicating the plot of any given story that God wishes to have his servants proclaim and his people receive. Lowry's system features five movements loosely based on common literary stages: "upsetting the equilibrium" (the sermon introduction);

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[162] John McClure, "Narrative and Preaching: Sorting It All Out," *Journal for Preachers* 15 (1991): 25-27.

[163] Eugene Lowry, *Listening To the Word* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 342.

[164] Eugene Lowry, *Doing Time in the Pulpit: The Relationship between Narrative and Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 52.

[165] Eugene Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 25.

"analyzing the discrepancy" (the body and content for the sermon can be participatory); "disclosing the clue to resolution," (the inductive answer to the opening question); "experiencing the gospel" (how the gospel touches on the question); and "anticipating the consequences" (often the application).[166]

## Buttrick's Motion Picture Strategy

Having been troubled by scientific, rational preaching methods, Buttrick doubts that a rational, objective method can cope with bilbical language which is often figural, poetic, or narrative in form.[167] Buttrick argues that the composition for the picture, the narrative structure, and the movement of the story can be all ignored if rational homiletics treated biblical passages as still-life pictures which can be located.[168] For Buttrick, preaching is important since it shapes the character of the church, its spirit and purposes. He believes that the definition of preaching and the method of preaching are inextricably connected. He rejects all definitions of preaching that are based on models of authority that maintain an objective and subjective split, because he embraces a functional definition of preaching, stating "preaching is mediation."[169]

Buttrick's motion-picture strategy proposes that preachers think of biblical passages as film-clips from motion pictures.When people understand bilbical texts, there are movement for meaning in the motion of travel for understanding among community. Buttrick insisted that "sermon construction ought to travel through congregational consciousness as a series of immediate thoughts, sequentially designed and imaged with

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[166] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot,* 26.

[167] David Buttrick, "Interpretation and Preaching," *Interpretation* 25, no.1 (January 1981): 46.

[168] Ibid., 49.

technical skill so as to assemble in forming faith."[170] Buttrick also argues "that the hermeneutical work of preaching is twofold: we interpret revelation in light of being-saved, and we grasp being-saved in view of revelation."[171] To implement preaching, preachers need plotted scenarios to form a congregation's faith-consciousness: "A plot is never arbitrary but is formed in consciousness by an interaction of audience and the hermeneutic of a teller."[172] Even though preachers are not as skilled as poets, it is important for preachers to put word images together as they build a world for faith.[173]

## Clapp's Faith Narrative

Rodney Clapp believes that faith narratives can be a solid basis for implementing effective Christian apologetics and evangelism in the postmodern world. Clapp insists that there must be a God who engages people in history, which cannot be proven apart from faith. For Clapp, if faith is to be passed on to non-believers, there must be a faith community, which can show the gospel to be true in practice and in reality in a way the non-believers find relevant. Faith narratives are potentially compelling if they are coherent. To be compellingly persuasive, a faith narrative must successfully adapt to a variety of cultures, and it is more worthy of our consent if it is able to encompass a variety of life experiences and not deny experiences that persistently present themselves. Clapp claims that a faith narrative has more potential to persuade if it is able to hear

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[169] Buttrick, *Homiletics*, 225.
[170] Ibid., 74.
[171] Ibid., 261.
[172] Buttrick, *Homiletics*, 286.
[173] Ibid., 170.

representatives of other faiths honestly and allow for discoveries, insights or understandings previously not conceived in within it.

Wright believes that preachers need to take care in the process of preaching so that congregation can find their life styles through biblical narratives, rather than applying the lessons of biblical narrative into their lives.[174]

## Erikson's Christian Story as Metanarrative

The gospel of the Kingdom of God is the only valid universal metanarrative because of self-sacrificing love. Even though Christian preachers are facing challenges to universal truth from postmodern logic, Christian witnesses are required to continue proclaiming the universality of the gospel beyond the categories of modernity and postmodernity. [175] Carson explains the relationship between metanarratives and proclamation well:

> The Bible as a whole document tells a story, and, properly used, that story can serve as a metanarrative that shapes our grasp of the entire Christian faith. In my view it is increasingly important to spell this out to Christians and to non-Christians, as part of our proclamation of the gospel. The ignorance of basic Scripture is so disturbing in our day that Christian preaching that does not seek to remedy the lack is simply irresponsible.[176]

God surely seems to have intended to invent story for the people in the world, for without the redemption story, human beings are not able to approach him, nor understand his grace. It is essential to understand why God allowed stories in the Bible. The purpose of biblical narrative is to let human beings perceive God the creator, who has been

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[174] John W. Wright, *Telling God's Story: Narrative Preaching for Christian Formation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 40.

[175] Millard J. Erikson, *Truth or Consequences: The Promise and Perils of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 273-278.

[176] Donald A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 84.

working from the beginning among the people of God. Through biblical narratives,
human beings can have spiritual relationships which glorify God the creator, and they can
imagine how God provides and intervenes for his people. Biblical narratives provide the
ultimate lessons of the ways in which God's people rely on his grace in human history.

For a Christian narrative structure, it is necessary to have analogical relationships.
Miller explains the necessity of analogical relationship, saying that God seems to have
realized that *the process of analogizing is easier* from the specific to the general and back
again to the specific than if one starts from the general principles alone. Miller argues,

> The narrative structure of a story is constituted by the causal, intentional and
> analogical relationships between various events. The various elements interpret
> one another by a moment from beginning to end. The relationships of past
> moments in the story to the present and anticipation of future moments are seen
> by analogy. Therefore analogy is the principle of coherence for a story.[177]

### Engen's Mission through Narrative Theology

Narrative theology explains how Christians became a part of story in the
redemptive history of God's people. The story of God means that Christians have the
missional goal to accomplish the will of God in our generation. God invented story to
make Christians progressive agents for the gospel to lead people in God's redemptive
history. Engen states, "so the narrative continues in this interim time between Christ's
ascension and his return. It is the story of God's mission, and we are a part of story."[178]

Through biblical narrative, a faith community can guide a congregation into the
knowledge of the purpose of God, the nature of redemption, and the acts of God's agents

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[177] Miller, *Story and Context*, 132.

[178] Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 44-70.

in history. Van Engen states,"as the story of the faith community, one should not attempt to interpret the biblical text or biblical story apart from the faith community in which it was born, shaped, transmitted, and explained."[179]

Since *Missio Dei* is involved in all aspects of human life, narrative theology can be used to bridge and integrate them, especially to integrate evangelism with preaching and social action among God's people. Narrative theology can provide us with a way that people in diverse cultures can understand the gospel in one story. Evangelical movements have tended to ignore social responsibility in culture and society. Thus, secular people sometimes misuderstand Christians as hypocrites.

Narrative theology has benefits and applications for Christian preachers and communicators. In preaching and communication there is a tendency to use biblical stories and doctrinal abstractions to accomplish the task of theology. A crucial problem for Christian preachers and communicators is that they want to use biblical stories in a doctrinal style. If they respect the narrative character of biblical stories and literature, Christian preachers and communicators can achieve the theological task of overcoming contradiction and conflict.

Narratives can help Christian preachers and communicators achieve an effective communication. When preachers can intrigue listeners through interest in the story elements in the Bible, theologizing events in history can be available.

For example, preaching will be more effective when preachers deliver sermons with symbols and images in the story. Listeners can experience sacred lives when they reflect on stories through their intelligence.

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[179] Van Engen, "Narrative Theology," 55-56.

## Pasquarello's Narrative Reading for Narrative Preaching

Pasquarello suggests that preachers need to consider that believers are called as ecclesial pilgrims to practice their sacred identity in this world, and to experience the presence of God in the story of their daily lives:

Christians are the stories we inhibit, tell, perform, and celebrate. The purpose of Christian narrative reading and preaching is the formation of Christian identity and mission, of a people who indwell a real, substantial, living world in accordance with the scope and sense of Scripture's commands and promises, its will and wisdom. God is making a world of peace; for love of God and love of others the sense of which past, present, and future is congruous with the story of the universe told by Scripture.[180]

Lischer questions the goal and purpose of narrative preaching. He maintains that the purpose of every sermon is to proclaim the gospel of reconciliation between God and human beings. Lischer calls 2 Cor. 5:19 "the thesis sentence of the New Testament: God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation."[181] For Lischer, narrative is the preferred mode of preaching, and reconciliation is the essential content. To communicate the reconciliation message, Christian preachers and communicators need new communicational methods other than argumentative ones. The reconciling sermon is broadly narrative rather than persuasive or argumentive. Instead of starting from the errors of our enemies, the sermon narrates the Lord's truth as we know and practice it.

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[180] Joel B. Green and Michael Pasquarello III, *Narrative Reading, Narrative Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 177-193.

[181] Lischer, *The End of Words*, 133.

Our sermons need not demolish "the world," because the world is the same creation over which God grieves and the very same world for which Christ gave his life.[182]

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[182] Ibid., 162-163.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# IMPLEMENTING NARRATIVE PREACHING

According to Steffen, to implement narrative preaching, a task for preachers as story analyst is taking time to investigate the anthropological, educational, theological, and curricular elements. These elements also require the perspectives from messenger, message, and mariner, who is defined as an person in a spiritual group who seeks spiritual answers in the quest for his/her soul's resting place.[183] This can be a unique privilege to learn about other lives and cultures and worldviews. If preachers want to change the worldviews of non-believers, they must investigate these four elements to have effective communication in preaching and evangelism. Preachers must connect their faith stories with Bible stories so that they can transform others' worldviews.

Although regard for the Scriptures can be a strength in preaching, it can also promote the weakness of neglecting the listeners, Johnston claims. He maintains that a key element in Jesus' preaching was the recognition and involvement of the listener,.

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[183] Tom A. Steffen, *Reconnecting God's Story to Ministry* (La Habra, CA: Center for Organizational and Ministry Development, 1996), 20, 34-38.

Johnston argues that Christian preachers who "have a message" need to become communicators who care about the process of imparting information that involves both message and listener. Johnston proposes that Christian preachers explore the processes and practices of good communicators.[184]

## Engaging the Congregation

Narrative preaching can engage with various people groups beyond the level of intelligence. As Gadamer states, "The hearer is led into sharping presuppositions which allows fresh understanding and avoids a premature dismissal of ideas."[185] To implement effective narrative preaching, it is critical for preachers to analyze their sermons so they can be relevant to the real life situations of the congregation, and to be creative in giving the congregation spiritual insights to share. When preachers consider the biblical texts of their sermons and contexts of their congregations, there will be effective relevance for narrative preaching. Being familiar with the congregation is also an essential factor for narrative preaching to convey participatory questions. According to Stott, time spent in God's Word by a preacher will always uncover the truth about God's message and how he relates to us. Furthermore, time spent with the congregation can shed valuable light on what listeners are specifically feeling, thinking and doing.[186] When a congregation can identify their real life events in narrative preaching, and be engaged by the preachers' questions, narrative preaching accomplishes its ideal results, in which the congregation experiences the truth through Christianity's distinctiveness.

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[184] Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 150-151.

[185] Thiselton, "Drawing Readers," 1992.

When story is properly used in a multi-disciplinary manner, Christian preachers and communciators can experience its effectiveness. Stories can be useful in the psychological realm because human psychological factors cannot be explained sufficiently by direct propositional claims; rather they are comprehended through stories which effectively describe and explain the realms of human psychology such as *id, subconsciousness* and *super ego*. Narrative enables each person to construct an identity and locate one's place according to one's culture through narrative stories and events. Narrative explains and encourages people to realize that story is the real events and happenings which contain the whole reality of humanity such as failure, sorrow, redemption, and happiness by the grace of God.

God revealed himself and his grace to us through the form of story. When Christian preachers and communicators can see a narrative as a revelation from God, this perspective can be more effective for communication and storytelling. Integrative engaging with congregation could be more necessary to overcome contradictions which ministers can face in the future. Even though Christian preachers and communicators face the contradictory dualism of modernism, through narrative preaching and communication, they can resolve the contradiction. Narratives are practice for whole heart and mind in harmony with story itself.

## Dialogical Approach

In John 3:1-15, Jesus challenged the Pharisee Nicodemus to consider a creative way of relating to God. In this interesting dialogue, Jesus can be found asking and

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[186] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 180-209.

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answering questions. He looks beyond the superficial, sees the basic question, and helps

the learner find the answer. In John 2:12-18, after Jesus cleansed the temple, he was

asked for a sign to prove his authority. Jesus replied with a riddle: "Destroy this temple,

and I will raise it again in three days" (v. 19).

Johnston believes that preaching to the postmodern congregation rests on a

dialogical approach.[187] He suggestes that this practice involves the use of Socratic

dialogue which uses question-and-answer dialogues as a method of engaging pupils in a

learning exercise. Johnston notes that "listeners not only feel as if the message involves

them on a personal level, but the dialogical process allows them to work through the

issues intelligently, on their own."[188]

The key to effectiveness, Johnston argues, is in the fact that the preacher is not an

authority figure; rather preachers are guides leading people through the thought processes

on biblical issues. As preachers and communicators can implement communication

through a relaxed dialogue and demonstration of openness, they can put people in an

interactive and challenging atmosphere to have the joy of discovering the truth for

themselves. Preachers can develop their effectiveness when they understand the concerns

on the hearts and minds of their listeners and are able to recognize the issues and

problems which they face in a particular text. Preachers can develop stronger bonds with

their listeners when the listeners sense preachers' involvement with them. Hence their

sermons can invite listeners to engage in a conversation. Listeners seek preachers to

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[187] Johnston, *Postmodern World*, 149-175.
[188] Ibid., 150.

engage with their real life situations, not to speak at them concerning the things of God.[189]

## Inductive Preaching

In the preaching process, the important element in the congregation's experience of listening is participation or intimacy using effective distance. In this process, preaching requires inductive and narrative methods through the active participation of the congregation. As Swears suggests, authentic communication from the pulpit always exists in the tension between disclosure and distance.[190]

Lewis describes inductive preaching as "laying out the evidence, the examples, the illustrations and postponing the declarations and assertions until the listeners have a chance to weigh the evidence, think through implications and then come to the conclusion with the preachers at the end of the sermon."[191] Johnston claims that to deal with the inherent suspicions of the postmodern listener, the use of inductive preaching is effective. Since postmodern people want to have the ability to seek and prove ideas, the inductive approach can help seekers in postmodern culture.[192] The inductive message postpones the declaration of the big idea to a point later in the sermon so that the listeners have the opportunity to arrive mentally at the same conclusion. The effective use of inductive preaching is that it works from the particulars to the holistic, from the unknown to the known, and employs four valuable elements.[193]

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[189] Johnston, *Postmodern World*, 150-151.

[190] Thomas Swears, *Preaching to Head and Heart* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 49.

[191] Ralpf and Gregg Lewis, *Learning to Preach like Jesus* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1989), 43.

[192] Johnston, *Postmodern World*, 151-152.

[193] Ibid., 151.

The value of inductive preaching is that it involves the listeners in learning. Listeners in postmodern cullture are led to their own conclusions from the evidence presented. In the inductive preaching process, a sermon can be a part of the listeners' experience and their familiar inductive learning style. A listener can then reach a personal conviction through personal thought and experience.[194] Inductive preaching is effective because it takes on a dialogical form when preachers raise the right questions to stimulate the minds and hearts of their listeners. Johnston says that the practice of a more dialogical approach stems from the realization that people will resist accepting statements at face value before the claims have been tested.[195]

Inductive methodology has been successful when preachers share truth verbally with listeners. Inductive preaching can persuade listeners most effectively, especially those who are hesitant to receive the gospel. As biblical communicators, narrative preachers must not impose human and societal dilemmas upon the sermon text; rather they should address the human needs of the listeners. It is important for the effective inductive preacher to postpone declaring. Inductive preachers can effectively utilize an intuitive approach to authenticate the truthfulness of the Word, indirectly stating the human need for justice to approach God's holiness in experiential reality. Postmodern people are looking inward to find authoritative tenets when they see a harmony in the sermon with their own experience and insights. It is effective for inductive preachers to awaken a conflict that is real to the listeners, enhance listener participation by holding their interest, and then move to a resolution.

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[194] Lewis, *Learning to Preach*, 43.

[195] Johnston, *Postmodern World*, 152.

## Narrative Reading

God gave us the Bible mostly in the form of narrative: it is 75 percent narrative, 15 percent poetry, and 10 percent other literary forms. God has allowed human beings to interact with him through story. Scripture contains human stories, which are deeply related to human life and culture. The Bible does not primarily speak about theology or doctrine; rather, it speaks through a wider range of human experience. Story makes the Bible more beautiful, realistic, and powerful in its appeal to readers' attentiveness. Biblical stories can be alive when a person's story is connected with them. Green claims that the "Word" of God means both word and event:

> In Hebrew *dabar* means both Word and Event. It is not something you see in space, like a written word is "seen" on the page. This is important to the theologian trying to make sense of the interaction of God with the created order. For according to this oral cultural understanding, the incarnation of the Word is not so much the advent of an idea but a Word event – the Christ Event. In the oral culture, the Word is always an event.[196]

Reading with openness is the most essential element in implementing an incarnational organic approach to communicating through narrative, anticipating a holistic experience. In an incarnational hermeneutic, narrative is interpreted as continuously living. The experiences of people in postmodern culture can project the story of God. In this way, narrative preaching can let God project his story onto the preachers' lives. Through incarnational narrative, preachers can overcome the false separation between the believers' words and their lives, their actions and their faith.

Focusing on an analytic approach in a detailed study can lose the meaning or life in relations within a text. Since the layers in a text require readers to interpret the passage according to its various layered literary nuances, readers are required to apply alternative

techniques for different sections. According to Blomberg, parables are to be interpreted as allegory to allow the story to make more than one point.[197] Readers can analyze narrative details to confirm the message of a text, not to communicate it alone. Polkingborne claims,

> Narrative is a meaning structure that organizes events and human actions into a whole, thereby attributing significance to individual actions and events according to their effect on the whole. The organizing theme that identifies the significance and the role of the individual event is normally called the "plot" of the narrative. The plot functions to transform a chronicle or listing of events into a schematic whole by highlighting and recognizing the contribution that certain events make to the development and outcome of the story.[198]

In the view of Lundin, Walhout, and Thiselton, interpretation is an open activity practiced within the tension of "correctness and creativity."[199] The reader / text relation is a critical / dialogical one. The most appealing sections in the Bible are narratives which communicate through imagination and mystery. In most cases, communicators tend to ignore this fact, relying instead on reason and fact-value. It is essential to respect the nature of narrative in the Bible. The Bible consists of many narratives which reveal religious truths and human experiences with God in the form of events, images, and symbols. God wanted his people to listen to his stories through the Bible by reading its narratives to find his nature and heart. God prefers to use narratives rather than propositional and theological statements to convey his mind toward his people and to communicate through their imaginations. It is essential for Christian preachers and communicators to value the potential power of narratives in order to be confident in delivering Christian truth related to experiential events through people's imaginations.

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[196] L. Green, "Oral Culture and the World of Words," *Theology*, CII (809), (1999):331.

[197] Claig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 68.

[198] Polkingborne, *Narrative Knowing*, 18-19.

## Preaching Parables

Since parables are stories which use an episodical approach, Buttrick urges preachers to tell stories using contemporary language and images. Preachers for parables are required to hear and react to the unfolding plots of parable stories in a representative way.[200]

Buttrick proposes that "Christian preachers preach the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, not just preach on Jesus Christ. Parables are exciting and they are great fun to preach if preachers have homiletical craft." In the quest for the historical Jesus, there was a renewed interest in parables, because Jesus preached the kingdom of God in parables.[201] McFague defines a parable as follows:

> A parable is an extended metaphor. A parable is not an allegory, where the meaning is extrinsic to the story….Rather, as an extended metaphor, the meaning is found only within the story itself although it is not exhausted by that story.[202]

Parables are the best known of Jesus' instructional methods. The parables like the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son are conventional to understand. The stories in the parables were implied to describe meaning in truth. A parable has the intention of demonstrating a principle; for example, Jesus used the parable of the prodigal son to respond to the Pharisees' attacks against him for associating with sinners.

## Existential Proclamation

When preachers can deliver sacred and true sermons in extreme existential situaltions in the lives of listeners, this existential proclamation which encounters the

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[199] Lundin, Walhout, and Thiselton, *Promise of Hermeneutics*, 60.

[200] David Buttrick, *Speaking Parables* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 43-44.

[201] Ibid, 57.

hearts of the congregation in narrative preaching can inspire and generate faith through the sacramental function of preaching. As Drummond states, Genuine preaching therefore depends on the preacher's conveying the sense of the living, saving activity of God in Christ. All genuine declaring God's word and communication always precipates an encounter with the Holy Spirit, whether it is *kerygma* or *didache*.[203]

The Lord can encounter hearts of hearers in the preaching presence on a personal level. Farmers expressed that "God's 'I - thou' relationship with me is never apart from, is always in a measure carried by, my 'I - thou' relationship with my fellows. This is the position of proclaimer."[204] Unless preachers deliver sermons toward congregation in the awakening experiences in the presence of God, proclaiming sermons can lose value of encountering in preaching. In postmodern culture, preachers need to consider preaching situation with life experiences in congregation who need to follow the example of the Lord. Drummond states,

Narrative projects possible worlds which engage the imagination by providing strategies of projection for future action. They activate the eschatological call of Christian pilgrimage in community, in the sense of beckoning onwards toward new future action, or in some cases also warning readers of projected possibilities to be avoided. They provide a resource by which readers can transcend the present in existential situations in the lives of peoples.[205]

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[202] McFague, *Speaking in Parables*, 72.

[203] Lewis A. Drummond, *Reaching Generation Next* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 90.

[204] Herbert H. Farmer, *The Servant of the Word* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), 33.

[205] Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, 703.

**Paul's Use of Narrative: Paul's Usage of Imagery Narrative in Romans Ch.6-12**

Miller states that since the Scriptures are story in fundamental mode, both Torah and gospel are biblical narratives: "Even Romans must not be read as simply an abstract propositional statement of truth. The book is best understood within the story of Paul's missionary journeys." [206]

Since the goal of the whole redemptive process and the destiny toward which believers are heading is conformity to the image of God's Son and the final glorification, Paul uses images in his narrative persuasion for educational purpose in his preaching in Romans.

Paul uses progressive examples in his image narrative for explanation. To have effective persuasion, Paul forms plots and characters in his narrative. Paul uses comparison and contrast methodology in his image narrative to reach his educational goals more effectively.

Paul is telling story which forms the Bible as whole story to his listeners, recognizing their knowledge background of God's redemptive history in the Old Testament. Paul intends to communicate more effectively with his listeners by telling stories. Through storytelling, Paul takes his listeners into a more devotional motivation, and he achieves a dramatic effect by igniting their imaginative power and helping them understand better by using imaginative characters. Wright claims that Paul's writing is storytelling:

> The apostle's most emphatically "theological" statements and arguments are in fact expressions of *the essentially Jewish story now redrawn around Jesus*. This can be seen most clearly in his frequent statements, sometimes so compressed as to be almost formulaic, about the cross and resurrection of Jesus: what is in fact

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[206] Miller, *Story and Context*, 117, 128.

happening is that Paul is telling, again and again, the whole story of God, Israel and the world as now compressed into the story of Jesus. So too, his repeated use of the Old Testament is designed not as mere proof-texting, but, in part at least, to suggest new ways of reading well-known stories, and to suggest that they find a more natural climax in the Jesus-story than elsewhere.[207]

Paul explains chronological events in the Bible in his image narrative. In his image narrative, Paul is plotting sender, object, subject and receiver to make the whole story connected. He intends to describe God's image in his image narrative. He explains important and difficult theological doctrines through storytelling to achieve better understanding and effectiveness.

In Paul's image narrative, there are many characters which tell the Story of One God. Paul reconstructs God's story in the Bible through his image narrative, and reinterprets God's redemptive actions, and he builds and develops a holy community of God's children. In this respect, the image narrative is strongly suggestive to explain ways to make the Gentiles identify their status in the community.

**Narrative Storytelling**

"Storytelling is imaginative, a purposeful parade of images," says Fackre.[208] Narrative storytelling can be defined as an imaginative story with images created by the speaker's intention. Storytelling communication works for people who possess story and listeners who want to be possessed by storytelling. Storytelling is primary

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[207] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 79.

communication. When a person tells a story, the person conveys to the listener various things such as feelings, facts, and meanings. The listener interprets and responds to the story. Different type of stories exist, such as oral stories, written stories, acted stories, wisdom stories, and identification. Storytelling is the natural way of education and the universal form of pedagogy.

Narrative as storytelling is an essential tool in communicating with postmodern generations. The narrative format of the Bible is divinely intended to reach every heart from whatever background, and it is the essential style of communication in the gospels to convey absolute truth. Preachers should not give up on the story of Jesus Christ as the absolute truth, and narrative storytelling is critical for letting the listeners hear the gospels.[209]

Narrative preaching should be implemented through good stories which communicate a point or moral. Narrative preachers can rediscover and utilize the power of story to appoach their audiences with alternative and varying communication techniques.

According to Greidanus, many narrative features in the gospels are similar to Old Testament narratives since Jesus stood in the Old Testament tradition,. Many scenes in the synoptic gospels are "episodic," with no causal connection to other scenes, and they should be understood in a larger context in relation to other, similar scenes. For character evaluation, narrative criticism leaves the way wide open for a moralistic approach, which

[208] Gabriel Fackre, *The Doctrine of Revelation: A Narrative Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 166.

[209] Clayton Schmit, "Proclaiming the Gospel in Turbulent Times," in Russel Spittler, ed., *Fuller Voices: Then and Now* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary Press, 2004), 185.

proposes that characters can be isolated from the story and characters are models for the congregation to emulate.[210]

## Becoming a Storyteller through Narrative Preaching

Since biblical storytelling involves dynamic interpretation and expression of biblical texts, it can be a community activity which facilitates the internalization of community events. As Collins and Cooper say, "The storyteller provides the skeleton; the listener adds the 'flesh' of scenery, character, and so on. As such, the listener has to visualize what the character and setting look like."[211]

Through a story, preachers and communicators can explore the reality of life experiences and avoid confusion of existence. Stories can inspire people and their community to achieve social reconciliation. And stories also can mediate experiential knowledge through experiential engagement and identification to participate in social principles. Through storytelling, Powell says, "readers are most likely to empathize with characters that are similar to them (realistic empathy) or with characters who represent what they would like to be (idealistic empathy)."[212]

## Communicating the Faith Story through Narrative Preaching

Communicating faith stories are essential for Christian preachers and communicators in order to deliver truth through narrative preaching in postmodern society. It is important to explore how faith is communicated through stories in sermons.

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[210] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 1988), 285-290.

[211] R. Collins and P. J. Cooper, & M. Saxby, *The Power Of Story* (Melbourne, Australia: MacMillan, 1997), 11.

Kelber claims that "spoken words breathe life, drawing their strength from sound. They carry a sense of presence, intensity, and instantaneousness that writing fails to convey….They address hearers directly and engage them personally in a manner unattainable by the written medium."[213]

To communicate faith stories within narrative preaching, using symbols is necessary. Because people in the community have knowledge and lesson with expectations in community experiences, examples of solutions and negotiations for the ideal community need to be demonstrated through narrative preaching. Community participation in finding solutions and negotiations can be transformed and utilized as community symbols for ideal community experiences. Constructing each community member's faith story is necessary to be responsible for reassuring each community member's faith in real lives and experiences. Invitational participation in community story-telling can produce faith stories, which can communicate theology by sharing Christ. Each member of the community can experience opportunities for rejoicing and hope through faith stories which can make each member rediscover. Story structuring can be the last communicative frontier to face a conflict within worldview struggles. As each community member participates in telling faith stories with others, storytellers can experience being a rhetoric faith story teller in community. Darr insists that "the ultimate purpose of all this rhetoric is to transform the mere reader of the story into a bold re-teller of the story."[214] According to Robinson,

> There was a time in which apologetics had great force. I don't think that's as true today. In a postmodern age, to use that cliché, people aren't as impressed with

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[212] Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 56.

[213] Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, 18-19.

[214] John Darr, "Narrator as Character," *Semeia* 63 (1993), 51.

evidences that demand a verdict. That's not just my opinion. It's the opinion of a lot of people who are skilled at reaching non-Christians, who have, in the past, used apologetics. Usually apologetics are more forceful for those who have come into faith, and having come to faith, have all kinds of questions"[215]

However, experiential apologetics can happen when personal faith stories are communicated. Each person with a faith story in a community tries to find spiritual meaning in the community experiences, creating value in the process of telling the faith story. Since the person is a character in the community's experiences, the person's faith tale has more meanings within a context of many narrative stories. Communicating faith stories can be implemented through spiritual events with ideas and images from community experiences. Niebuhr states,

> The preaching of the early Christian church was not an argument for the existence of God nor an admonition to follow the dictates of some common human conscience, unhistorical and super-social in character. It was primarily a simple recital of the great events connected with the historical appearance of Jesus Christ and a confession of what has happened to the community of disciples…A history that was recorded forward, as it were, must be read backward through our history if it is to be understood as revelation.[216]

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[215] Haddon Robinson, "Evangelistic Preaching in the Local Church: An Interview with Haddon Robinson." Cited 12 May 2009. Online at http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/empoweringhearerstoobey2002/200202.41.html.

[216] Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, *Introduction to Why Narrative?: Readings in Narrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 21, 25.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

# CONCLUSION

In postmodern culture, Christian preachers as communicators and educators are called to communicate with listeners the story of God as metanarrative through narrative preaching. It is the mandate of Christian preachers to develop a communication methodology to establish the kingdom of God for faithful resolution in their communities and this world. Biblical history is filled with episodes, and it is important to see the total picture of Jesus Christ and his mission through narratives in the Bible. Christian preachers must experience encounters with God in their daily lives in order to witness the personhood of God through their narrative preaching and storytelling. When narratives stimulate the imagination and project possibilities for future action, they can have the greatest outcome for experiential learning with spiritual formation for evangelism and mission. Christian preachers live in the interim between God's story and this world's listeners. Every Christian needs to implement storytelling to express his/her faith story in community, because Christians are in a journey for storytelling toward heaven.

According to Gunn and Fewell, "the power of narrative lies in its ability to imitate life, to evoke a world that is like ours, to reproduce life-life events and situations, to recreate people that we understand and to whom we relate."[217] Knowledge is also an effective result of narrative:

> Knowledge sometimes comes better and affects behavior more permanently when it results from being involved *in* something…As you follow closely the action of Old Testament narratives, you naturally become involved vicariously…Narratives thus give you a kind of 'hands on" knowledge of God's work in his world.[218]

Modern preaching has largely tried to communicate logical abstractions using logical styles. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, communication can produce transformation. The problem with this approach is in the lack of connection between faith and works. When there are natural flowing connections within storytelling, people's brain functions for thinking and learning works better than in propositional statement. Modern sermons have problems in making connections between logical points which do not remain in listeners' minds. Stories are filled with connections. When we look the story in Jesus' model, there is an incarnational approach for truth-telling which interacts with Jesus' overall life, his individual episodes, and people's lives.

Preachers who use narrative preaching need to try find their inspiration in the community faith story experiences, not in dogma. Narrative preaching needs to consider historical events in the Bible to reach postmodern generations effectively. Narrative preachers as communicators and educators need to recognize that God shows his redemptive actions and providence in the form of stories of historical faith events with human characters. The story of God is appealing to postmoderns.

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[217] David Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press. 1993), 47.

To overcome conceptual abstactions in communication, preachers should communicate through storytelling to build solid Christian communities with shared personal faith stories which connect each member to the true kingdom of God. The true communication tradition of the early church told the story of the gospel; therefore preachers have mandates to implement the sacred socialization through the storytelling. Through storytelling, preachers can build sound, sacred communities. Training preachers to listen, however, is as important as storytelling.

As Witvliet emphasizes, preaching is ideally a communal act with the congregation as chorus; therefore, preachers must cultivate a much more intentional and deeper way of listening to worshipers.[219] When the congregation hears its faith stories shared through preaching, it can experience communal comfort and conviction.[220]

Christian preachers try to evangelize unreached people through telling the gospel story about the events in the ministry of Jesus Christ and telling about historical events in the Bible. Telling a faith story can be a very effective and powerful methodology which can connect the gospel storyline with a person's own story, enabling the audiences make new relationships to the story tellers and the biblical storyline. Christian preachers are inviting people to a new spiritual journey which requires new spiritual relationships with the Lord and the storytellers who will eventually disciple them.

Christian preachers and communicators in postmodern culture should allow new methods in communication by exploring Jesus' use of narrative teaching and the redemptive providence of God in historical events and experiences. Narrative preachers

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[218] Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 82.
[219] Satterlee, *When God Speaks*, xi.
[220] Satterlee, *When God Speaks*, xii.

in postmodern culture need to implement incarnational and harmonized communication which can be adapted to real life situations and experiences.

Utilizing narrative can be new creative lingual tool for narrative preachers to communicate with postmodern generations. It is essential to recognize that the Bible is written in literary forms and that God uses literary genres to communicate with human beings about their lives. Preachers as communicators and educators need to approach truth-telling events in the Bible as literary and cultural forms. God's true intention for biblical literature is to convey his heart toward people who are in various situations and life experiences. God wants to give people his life and comfort and conviction through Jesus Christ who showed the greatest faith story for human souls in human history.

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