

TEACHING SCRIPTURE IN THE EARLY YEARS

Jesus and the Gospels

OVERVIEW

- Exploring key stories in New Testament
- Key teacher background
- Ideas for early years religion program



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LK 19:1-10 ZACCHAEUS

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PERSPECTIVES GRID

| | Zacchaeus as | Crowd as | Jesus as |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Zacchaeus regards | | | |
| Crowd regards | | | |
| Jesus regards | | | |

BACKGROUND OF SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Two essential features to be considered for each scripture passage:

1. Textual features:

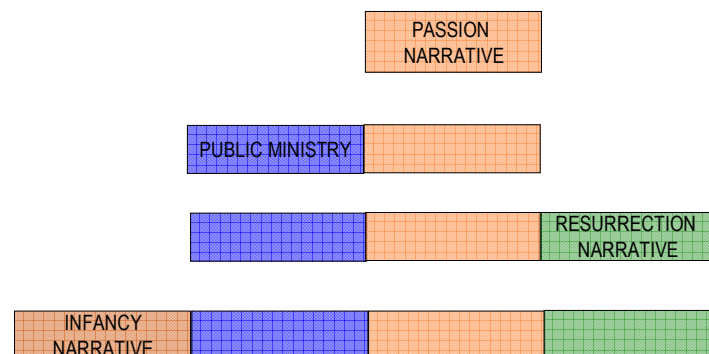
- Authorship
- Text type & structure
- Characters
- Plot
- Setting
- Specific language

2. Contextual features:

Images & objects;
Historical background & perspectives;
Cultural, social, religious, political & economic perspectives;
Themes.



DEVELOPMENT OF THE GOSPELS



THE FOUR GOSPEL WRITERS

Christians have made symbols to represent their beliefs. Each of the gospel writers has been given his own symbol. All four symbols have their source in Ezekiel 1:8-11.



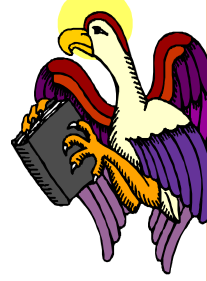
Mark begins his gospel by telling of John the Baptist: "A voice cries in the wilderness." Since a *lion* is heard in the wilds, the lion was taken to symbolise Mark.



Matthew is depicted as a *man* because he begins by relating the genealogy of Jesus. There the emphasis is on the humanity of Jesus; hence, the designation of the evangelist by a human figure.



Luke is depicted by an *ox* because his gospel begins with the story of Zachary, a priest. As a priest, he offered the customary sacrifice in the Temple: an ox. The theme of sacrifice also appears in Luke's portrayal of Jesus' death.

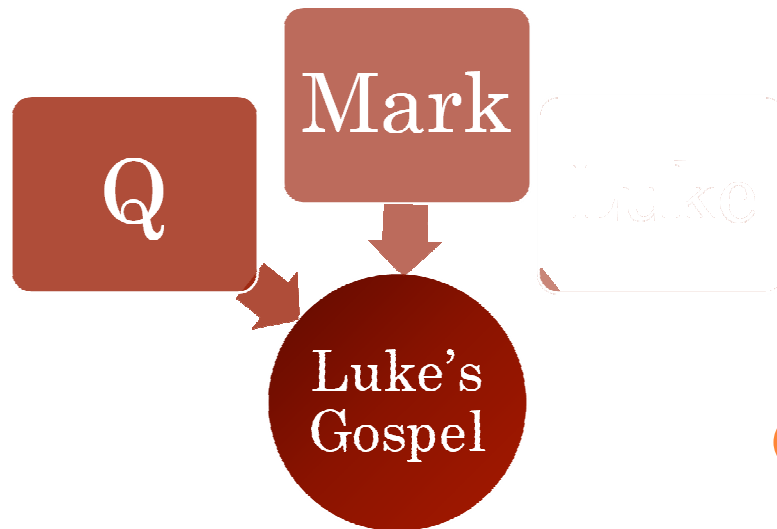


John's gospel emphasises the divinity of Christ. His portrayal of Jesus is both lofty and sublime, like the *eagle* who soars gracefully close to the heavens.

LUKE 15:11-32 - AUTHORSHIP

- *Who?*
Luke A Syrian of Antioch, a physician and collaborator of Paul.
- *Where?*
Probably written in Greece or Asia Minor
- *When?*
Later than 70CE – around 80-90CE.
- *Why?*
Writing for a community of Gentile Christians during a period of expansion for Christians. Luke wrote for a community who do not know Palestine. Explains many terms. Parousia not imminent. Church to grow under guidance of Spirit.

SOURCES



LUKE'S THEOLOGICAL SLANT & THEMES

Who is Luke's Jesus?

- A prophet, savior of the oppressed.

What are his concerns & themes:

- Table fellowship
- Poor & marginalised
- Holy Spirit & Prayer
- Compassion & Forgiveness
- Stewardship of wealth
- Women

| | |
|--|--|
| Author/ authorship /audience | |
| Theological slant & concerns | |
| Text type & structure | |
| Characters /Occupations | |
| Places / movements | |
| Objects / images | |
| Key words / Recurring words/ Metaphorical & Symbolic language | |
| Themes | |
| Historical background & perspectives | |
| Social, economic, political, cultural contexts considered | |
| Other versions | |

LUKE 19:1-10 ZACCHAEUS

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Characters / occupations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Zacchaeus: Chief Tax Collector; •Had tax collectors working for him – tax farming; •Zacchaeus paid Romans and kept rest of money; •A sinner: Ritually unclean & a traitor; •Name Zacchaeus means ‘pure one’. | <p><i>Setting/Places/Movements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Jericho – oldest city in the world •295 m below sea level & a total of 1,025 m below Jerusalem |
| <p><i>Specific Language: Metaphorical/ Symbolic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •“I must stay at your house today.” •“He has gone to be a guest of one who is a sinner.” •“Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham.” | <p><i>Theological meanings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Marginalised •Table fellowship •Compassion & forgiveness •Stewardship of wealth |

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

Lk 15:3-7

3 So he told them this parable:
4“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? 5When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 6And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.” 7Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.



JESUS TEACHES WITH PARABLES

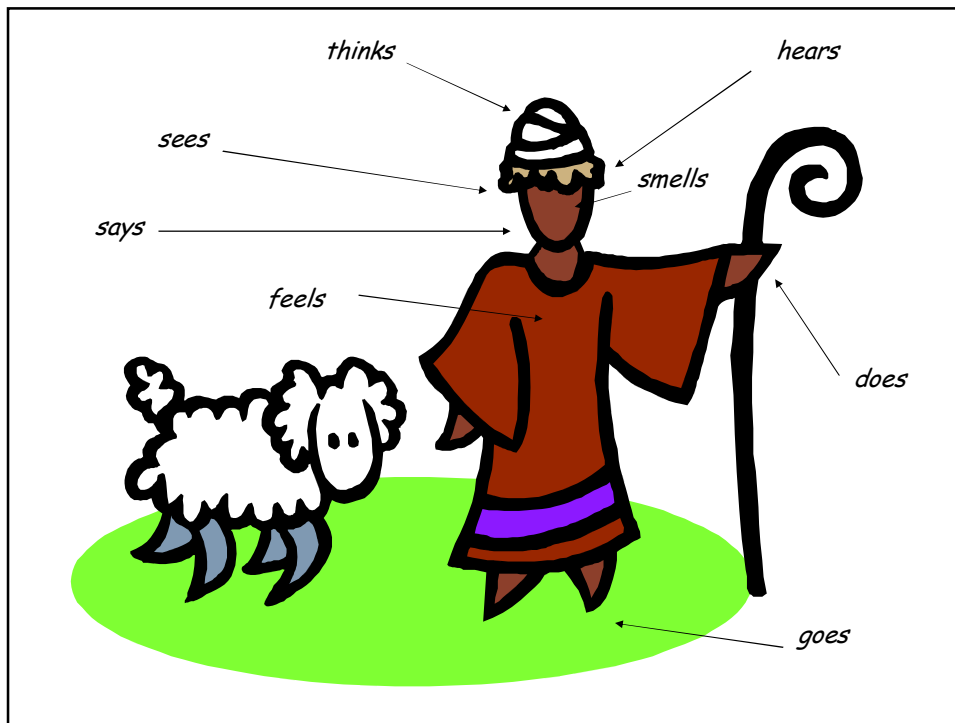
Text Type: Parable

- Repetition: *Look for the words or phrases that are repeated.*
- Contrast: *Look for words that are opposites.*
- Rule of three: *Look for three main characters or groups within the parable.*
- End stress: *What is the twist or unexpected ending that is the lesson?*

Parable Types:

- The *arrival* of the Kingdom.
- The *values* of the kingdom.
- The *growth* of the Kingdom.





What is Process Drama?

Process drama develops :

- *language skills;*
- *decision making;*
- *problem solving;*
- *creative imagination;*
- *narrative thinking.*





What does process drama look like?

Process Drama involves planning at four levels:

- 1. Setting the Stage: Topic, Role & Focus*
- 2. Curtain Up: Getting Started*
- 3. On with the Play: Co-ordinating the Drama*
- 4. Directing the Action: Techniques & Conventions*



1. Setting the Stage

- **Topic -**
 - *Can be based on a gospel story but not whole story e.g. an incident in the story or a character;*
 - *Teachers need own deep knowledge or background of topic.*
- **Roles -**
 - *Choose roles for students - give them all the same role in which they must be experts; and treated as such;*
 - *Teachers' roles should be low status - contradictory roles (reluctant dragon, timid pirate). Key aspect is that teachers are seeking advice & assistance from students.*
- **Focus -**
 - *Set a problem or challenge for students to solve or some tension for children to overcome. Keep this outside of the story or students follow the story line.*



1. Setting the Stage

- *Topic -*
 - *New shepherd loses one of his sheep.*
- *Roles -*
 - *Children as experienced shepherds*
 - *Teacher as the inexperienced new shepherd.*
- *Focus -*
 - *Experienced shepherds help new shepherd to solve his problem of the lost sheep.*



2. Curtain Up - Getting Started

Introduce the elements at beginning:

- *Before drama begins discuss with students the setting - the place, the characters, the time.*

Establish time setting - present, past, or future:

- *Talk about what the characters do, perhaps practise some of their actions, for example, if they were going to be tax collectors talk about where they would be sitting and doing.*

Set the challenge, tension or problem to be solved.





3. On With the Play - the drama begins...

Re-enter looking shy, anxious, and hesitantly approach group:

Questioning:

- *Hello. You are shepherds, aren't you... Look I am really in a mess and I was wondering if you can help me? Pause for response.*
- *Explain your predicament. End with how can you help me?*
- *Will I be away for long? I will have to let my sister know I won't be able to be home for lunch... Do you need to tell anyone that you will be gone?*
- *I wonder if we should leave a note or maybe a map of where we are going...*
- *What do I need to bring with me?*



3. On With the Play - the drama continues...

Questioning:

- *Have any of you ever lost a sheep or lamb?*
- *What happened?*
- *Where did you find it?*
- *Did the owner get angry?*
- *I wonder what would happen if we came across a wolf?*
- *Mmmm is that a cave over there? ... Should we look inside? I'm scared can you go first?*
- *I've just cut myself? I do not have anything to clean it?*



3. On With the Play - the drama concludes...

Questioning:

- *I'm really tired now, do you think we should stop?*
- *Maybe a wolf did get the sheep?*
- *How much longer will we search?*

- *Ah I hear a sound/ It's my sheep..... Can you hear it?
Where is that coming from?*
- *Oh dear over the cliff? How will we get down there?*
- *At last safe...*
- *Thank you for helping me.*
- *Explain to class that drama now ends and counting to 3 we
all will return to the present time in the class.*

Debrief:

- *Did they enjoy it? What parts did they most enjoy? What
was difficult?*

Children's Bible Stories

Evaluating use of children's versions:

Is it faithful to the text?

What does it add or delete to the text?

Does it avoid 'sermonising'?

Are the illustrations appropriate to biblical life and times?

Does it avoid Anti-Semitism?

Would you use it?



THE RESURRECTION


| | Matthew 28:1-10 | Mark 16:1-8 | Luke 24:1-0 |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Who went to the tomb? | | | |
| When did they go to the tomb? | | | |
| Why did they go to the tomb? | | | |
| What happened at the tomb? | | | |
| What did they do afterwards? | | | |

Creation Myths

A *cosmogony* which is a narrative that describes:

- the original ordering of the universe
 - describe separation between Absolute Reality and humans.

An *etiology* which is concerned with origins of:

- rites
 - places
 - objects sacred to culture
 - more general explanations: "How the leopard got its spots."
- 

SACRED CREATION MYTHS

In religious literature myth communicates:

- profound truths
- beliefs & values
- rituals



GENESIS

First 11 chapters:

- Concern origins of world of humans
- Humans' relationships with God, each other, self and environment;
- Religious & philosophical explanation of humanity, institutions & people's ultimate destiny with God.



| Yahwist Writer - J | Priestly Writer - P |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earliest source called so because referred to God as <i>Yahweh</i>. • Uses vibrant images, realistic narrative style • Represents God using human characteristics and qualities • Humans are marked by sin and fragility • Emphasises the saving acts of God in human history • Obvious interest in tribe of Judah • Probably lived around 10th century BCE during time of united Israel ruled from Jerusalem, from time of Solomon • May have been composed in the Court of Solomon 930BCE. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for holiness, sacrifice, the priesthood, Sabbath, circumcision and the Law • God's presence is seen as glorious • Emphasises traditional elements of covenant, Temple, ritual • Contains genealogies, legal codes and liturgical rites • Could have been an editor weaving other sources together • Around 587 BCE time of exile to Babylon the Priestly writer supplied final document used in creating the Pentateuch • Final composition of P dated to Persian period, 522-333 BCE • By this time sacrifices had ceased replaced by assemblies – synagogues. |

3 Stages of Israel's History



1. Primeval History
2. Ancestral History
3. Mosaic or People's History

Israel's God was *liberator* and *saviour* before *creator*.



Israel's Foundational Event

The EXODUS is Israel's foundational event. It defined the Hebrews as a single, united nation – Israel:

- Liberation & Deliverance
- The Covenant
- Conquest of the Promised Land



AUTHORSHIP OF CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

- Read Crossing of the Red Sea and note contrasting details



The Covenant

Covenant is a recurring and dominant theme throughout the Hebrew Scriptures:

Initiated by God

Formal agreement between God and people

Blessing & curse

Covenant incorporates key themes of
liberation & creation




TEACHING SCRIPTURE

- Teaching children calls for critical approaches - use text, adapt, remain faithful to original text.
- Avoid overuse of biblical narratives.
- Don't take passages out of context.
- Teach after some critical reflection.
- Avoid selection based on mere verbal association - you must know through own interpretation.




TEACHING SCRIPTURE

Your preparation:

- Research historical issues.
 - Identify literary form.
 - Explore setting, characters, structure, plot and dialogue.
 - Attend to context and function of text in particular book.
- 

TEACHING SCRIPTURE

Your lessons should:

- Teach particular skills.
 - Develop students' interpretative skills.
 - Explore theological realities.
 - Teach and provide opportunities to use the scriptures in prayer experiences.
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TEACHING SCRIPTURE

Be creative:

- Develop story telling techniques.
- Apply teaching literature skills.
- Make use of the imagination – drama, art, dance, music.



FURTHER READING

Charpentier, E. (1981). *How to read the Old Testament*. London: SCM Press.

Charpentier, E. (1981). *How to read the New Testament*. London: SCM Press.

Crotty, R. (2003). That holy night: Reflections on the infancy narratives. In M. Ryan (Ed.). *Reading the Bible* (pp. 159-175). Australia: Social Science Press.

Goosen, G. & Tomlinson, M. (1994). *Studying the gospels: An introduction*. Australia: HarperCollins.

