

**TUTORIAL**  
**9.6**

# The complete Narrative

This tutorial discusses the fourth question in the area of *Word*: 'Are they growing in their ability to correctly understand God's Word as His complete Narrative, with Jesus Christ as the heart of the story and its interpretive key?'

Hebrews 1:1-3: Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God...

## Last time

We looked at the third question from the WILD outline. We talked about some of the factors relating to the authority that God's Word is given by people in their lives and among communities of believers. In this tutorial we will discuss the fourth question in the WILD outline which is also in the area of Word.

### **Are they growing in their ability to correctly understand God's Word as His complete Narrative, with Jesus Christ as the heart of the story and its interpretive key?**

Dave talks about how the church they worked with were equipped to interpret life through a foundational, narrative approach to teaching God's Word:

We were so thankful for the privilege of teaching the people we worked among foundationally and chronologically through originally the Old Testament narratives but then getting into the New Testament and teaching them foundationally through the book of Romans and other New Testament books. I honestly believe that the average Christian in that people group has a better cohesive view of God's plan as it is outlined in Scripture than a lot of Christians in our home countries who really haven't been taught in that way. As they face questions within their own culture, they are able to apply God's Word to them in ways that we wouldn't really even be able to because we understand their culture to a certain degree but they can go even deeper and deeper and deeper and they are viewing these various areas of their culture now from the perspective of a Biblical worldview instead of their former animistic worldview.

They're identifying changes that need to be made. They're identifying ways that their life can be just centered around God and His Word.

Bill talks about how teaching through the Luke narrative helped to tie the Biblical themes together for the church:

I guess one of the things that's been a little amazing to me is that, as we thought about the developmental resources that we taught them through, we tried to make sure that they had the major points of the New Testament down. But one of the things that was really important was the book of Luke. We did that the very last. The reason we did it last was because we had just gone through a bunch of the Epistles, and we realized that, although we maybe in our own lives could say, "Hey, this is what this looks like," we had never really spent the time in letting them walk through the life of Christ and watch Him, see how He was going to react to life and was walking with God.

As they went through the book of Luke, they took all those examples of how Jesus did things. We started hearing a lot of different ways in which they saw their own lives and how they can apply it to their lives. I think that it was really important to let them watch Jesus Himself walk through the book of Luke and watch Him deal with people that were angry with Him, deal with people that were lying to Him, trying to kill Him. All the things that He was saying to people just seemed to come alive to them. I think that was just good to help them start really internalizing the message that they'd been hearing.

Matt talks about how they used a foundational approach to teaching, but had to make adjustments for the specific situation:

Our strategies or our focus is to teach our friends who are wanting to be taught or open to being taught in their homes, teaching foundationally from Creation to Christ. At this point due to their work schedule and lifestyle, we're able to teach three to four times a month in that situation. It takes us a considerable amount of time to work our way through the teaching with them. Because of the exposure to the Catholic Church and exposure to other churches in our area, they have an understanding of some of the content of the Scripture but they have no understanding of the meaning of that content.

One of the things we did recently with this family is, in our first conversation together, we gave them a panoramic overview of where the story is going. We started in Creation and we very quickly, in one session, went through to Christ coming back into the future. That has really helped us with them to keep them on the storyline

and where we're at when we're teaching the Bible, and help them relate with what they're hearing in the story, how that relates to when Jesus lived and when they are living and keep it straight on the storyline, in line with history.

Philip describes a foundational, narrative approach to teaching God's Word:

In the past, we had no understanding at all of the truth of God's Word or anything about Him. We had heard fragments of God's Word previously but it wasn't really clear to us at all. The way we came to understand the truth and come to faith was from hearing God's Word from the beginning. As we heard God's story, we understood who He is, how He saw us and the way of salvation that He has provided. Those who are teaching us didn't jump ahead in the story, so God's Word prepared us for the coming of the Saviour. And when we came to know Him through the story, our hearts were ready to accept Him as our Saviour.

**Has their initial engagement with Truth introduced them to God as Creator and Lord, to Satan as Enemy, to humanity as God's lost race of image-bearers, and to Jesus Christ as Saviour?**

We asked John, "What was the result of your foundational teaching approach?"

Well, the result was amazing, and we saw the result actually happen back in the Old Testament. We saw, even as we were going through the Old Testament, that the people's trust was in this promised Redeemer. We hadn't told them about Jesus at that stage. All they knew of Him was that He was the One God had promised would come and get us out of this mess that we're in. And so, they had seen the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. And so, once we got into the life of Christ, we said to them, "Now if this Jesus is truly the Messiah, if He's truly the One God has sent to get us out of this mess, then He's going to have to fulfil all these prophecies."

We had them written up and even though they were all illiterate, we would every so often read through this list. We'd say, "Now, remember, Jesus has got to fulfil all these prophecies if He is truly the One that God has sent." And so, as they saw the life of Christ and they saw those prophecies fulfilled, they became more and more convinced that He was the One that God had sent to redeem us. And it was just amazing to see the things that happened.

Phil understood that the people there needed to grapple with the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ:

It's been, say, five years since we've taught the first group with initial evangelistic teaching, where we started having believers. We've

always felt like the challenge is it's easy to say, "I believe that." The question that we ask or that we wonder as they say that is, "Yeah, is that all you believe?" It's one thing to say, "I believe that and I've added that in with a bunch of other stuff I believe." So for someone to say to you, "I believe," if you just take that at face value and think, "Oh yeah they must be believers now since they say they believe this,"— it's not that straight forward.

**Do they understand the Biblical Narrative primarily as God's interactions with real people, living in real times and places?**

The believers in a Siberian community could relate to the struggles of the early church in Acts:

When they were beginning, after we had gone through several foundational teachings, we began the idea of teaching through the book of Acts. As we were going through it in each individual group, what's actually amazing was that the different group leaders wanted to follow those patterns. They actually saw the persecution that happened around the church in Acts and the way that the families and the way the individuals didn't care for their identity in Christ, and they began to relate to that very strongly and they felt like this was a very real picture of what the church not only looked like for them, but what they thought it looked like everywhere in the world. It was their perspective of how the church is and they began to use that as a model which they would use to develop their own format of how they functioned as a church.

Philip talks about the central role that God's Word has in their community:

In terms of the central place that God's Word now has in our lives, it relates to us coming to really understand the truth and the plan that God has for us. We have God's Word applied to specifics of how we used to think and how God wants us to live now. Now when death happens, or when potential tensions arise in the church, or if we have opposition coming from outside, we know that the only solutions are in God's Word. That's where both our defence and comfort can be drawn from because God's Word explains to us how Christ's work has completely changed everything in this new life we have.

**Are they being helped to move progressively into new areas of God's Truth so that it ties in historically and thematically with what they've already understood?**

Bill talks about the need for a teaching strategy that provides a church with a cohesive, Biblical theology:

I think that one of the key things is to have a strategy to actually get yourself there. People don't just naturally come to an understanding

of something unless there is a plan to actually move them from not understanding it to then understanding it. I think early on as we saw people—our teachers—develop, we started out helping them understand how to present things. And then once they got good at presenting things then we worked with them on how to actually add illustrations in, and then add application in. Over a period of time, as they grew in their ability to be able to present information and then to teach it, it started coming more from the heart.

The last stage was actually leaving out a lot of the teacher's helps in the lessons and forcing them then to actually think through why they were saying what they were saying. It was that reflection I believe, as they were teaching the Word of God and reflecting and as the Holy Spirit was giving them insights, then they started seeing all the connections between the different things that they had learned and studied. Again, I just think it's important that you have a planned strategy to get there and not just assume that they're going to come to that point but actually help develop them to get to that point.

Phil describes how the ongoing teaching continues to reinforce the centrality of Christ in God's Word and in our lives:

The thing that we're looking for and shooting for is the centrality of Christ becoming more and more integral and becoming more and more all-encompassing and all satisfactory for whatever problem might be out there, that He is the answer to all of that and there isn't any other answer. So as we see it, we want Him occupying more and more of the horizon of how they view life in general. They started out with Him there in the scene but he was inconsequential. "Yeah, we know that prophet's name. We know He's great. We know there's things said about Him in the Quran, yeah, yeah, yeah." But relatively speaking completely a zero.

Through the teaching and through the lessons... I mean you're getting into Ephesians. There is no other power. He's ruling everything. You're seeing Him constantly occupying more of this horizon of how they view life. And so that for us, as we see that growth, and we see these Scriptures that are communicating that, we're sensing, "Okay we're on the right track in terms of growing the centrality of Christ and the all-encompassing-ness of Christ in their minds and hearts."

We close this tutorial with a reminder of the importance of reinforcing the centrality of Christ in God's Word and in our lives which is found in Colossians 1:17-18. "And He is before all things and in him all things hold together and He is the head of the body, the church. He's the beginning of the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent."



## DISCUSSION POINTS

*The complete narrative*

1. As you watch the tutorial video, note any benefits mentioned of a narrative or foundational approach to teaching God's Word.
2. One of the church planters interviewed said that many believers in the people group he worked with have a more cohesive view of God's Word than the average Western believer. Do you think that is really possible in a first-generation church planting context? Please give your reasons.
3. What do you consider to be the key principles of Foundational Bible Teaching?



## ACTIVITIES

*The complete narrative*

1. Research and in a short paragraph describe Latin American Folk Catholicism. Note down your sources of information. What do you think might be some of the inherent obstacles, in that particular context, to a clear understanding of who Jesus Christ is, as the Biblical narrative reveals him?