

Presented by ShareGrace

A consortium of WELS congregations in the Milwaukee area

at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Mequon, Wisconsin

Prof. Mark Paustian

Martin Luther College

March 7, 2009

Keeping it real...

Write notes for yourself about someone you'd like to talk to about Jesus in a fresh way on the basis of this workshop. What is their story? How have they come to think they way they do? What's it really all about for them? If you don't know, how can you find out? If you have no one in mind, what might you do about that?

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Where we're going...

Opening – Keeping it real – our agenda

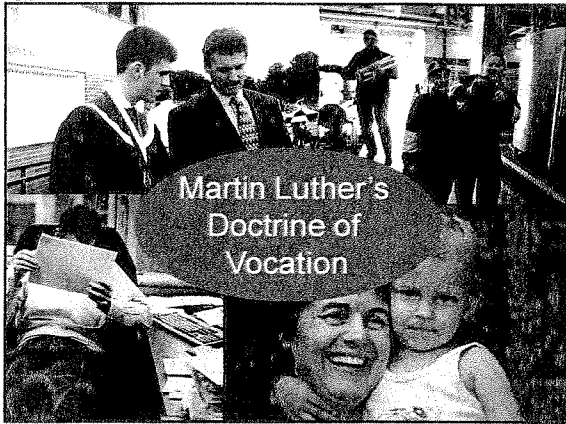
Part 1 The Lutheran Doctrine of Vocation	<i>react to a brief written lecture</i>
Part 2 The Power of Story	<i>react to a brief written lecture</i>
Part 3 Narrative Witnessing	lecture / discussion / Q&A
Part 4 "What Story?" Case Studies	<i>small group brainstorming</i>

Devotion & Lunch

Part 5 What do you really think?	<i>large group discussion</i>
Part 6 Small Group Bible Study	<i>simulation of one training method</i>
Part 7 Final Case Study	<i>small group discussion</i>

Closing – What story?

Part 1. The Lutheran Doctrine of Vocation



I've changed my mind and have decided not to include this session. Ironically enough, it is the doctrine of vocation that makes me feel free to do so. Please listen to a very streamlined explanation of what you're missing.

However, the best I can offer in this area is to refer you to the goldmine known as the "Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File."

A Google search will take you right to it. Under "Authors" you may search "P" for Paustian to get to a practical paper on the doctrine of vocation. You should know that it was specifically addressed to pastors; that will explain the way it is framed. Search for Vocation under "Topics" to get to several stronger papers on this timely and vital issue.

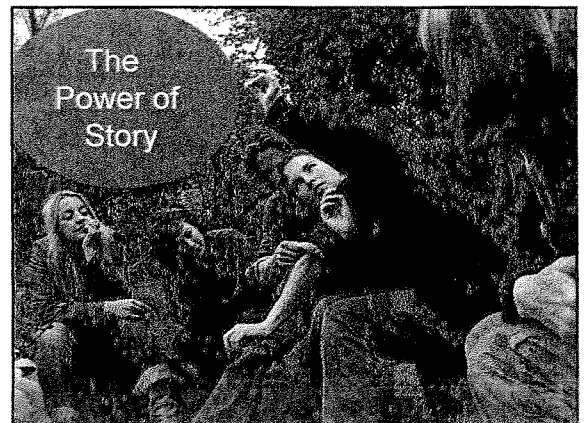
Part 2. The Power of Story

The queen died, and the king died.

Those are facts.

*The queen died, and the king died
of a broken heart. That's a story.*

- EM Forster



I'm not the only one who has noticed that story is showing up in new and incredibly diverse places across our cultural landscape.

I open my subway sandwich from *Erbert & Gerbert's* and read, not the company's mission statement, but the story that inspired its creation.

Maybe you've heard of "narrative medicine." There is documentation to suggest that doctors who say, "Tell me about your life" are more effective than those who only say, "Tell me where it hurts."

Nowadays, your business consultant may not be as interested in your books or organizational flowchart so much as the "corporate narratives," the stories gathered at the water cooler and in the break-room, in order to read the true health of the organization.

"There are a thousand ways to tell any story, so why tell it *this way*?" – so goes the axiom of a trendy way to study the historical prose of the Scriptures. The question helps us to notice things we might have missed. The book of 1 Samuel is the historical account of the new monarchy in Israel – a monumental event – and of her first great kings of Israel, King Saul, King David. And how does such a book begin? With the empty arms of Hannah, that is, with the better part of three chapters on the birth narrative and early childhood of, not Saul, not David, but the prophet Samuel! *Of course*. On this will kings and kingdoms either stand or fall, that is, on the Word and the Spirit of God.

It's difficult to imagine resolving a long-term interpersonal conflict without listening and taking to heart each other's stories. It can hardly be overstated, the degree to which the stories of two people in conflict can be dramatically different and yet both are true. The way people are reacting to you and how they feel, though it may be unfathomable to you, probably *makes perfect sense within the story* they tell themselves.

There many more examples of the growing awareness of the role stories play in life; the most important will come in Session 3. For now, the question is: Why do stories matter?

For starters, consider the power of episodic memory. A seven-digit number, say, 6,296,408 involves far less information than any of the narratives you've already heard today. What will you remember tomorrow or next week (unless, of course, you're "Rainman")? Some researchers go so far as to say that story coincides with human thought itself, and how our minds actually work.

"And the king died of a broken heart."

Simply put, story packs a wallop. Brain research has long raised the question whether we ever really learn anything if it doesn't pass through or involve the emotional center in our brains. (So, in case anyone has been wondering, it's okay to have a heart when we are communicating the Gospel of our Lord.) Is it true of you, as it is of me (your presenter) that the older I get, it's not that I'm becoming more emotional, but the defenses aren't there like they used to be? A story such as the message the Lord Christ sent to John the Baptist – "Go and tell John that the blind regain their sight" – moves me in a way I cannot begin to explain, nor do I need to. That

is, the story bypasses the analytical, sequential left brain, and goes straight for the heart. How does it work?

CS Lewis wrote about story as if it were a net. *This happened...then this...then this*. These subsequent events are the mesh in which something is caught that is not subsequent, such as what love is, our courage, our hope.

In his Lutheran classic, "Notes on the Parables of our Lord," Richard Trench explored the fact that, according to Matthew, Jesus reached a point in his ministry where he no longer taught without telling parables. The imagery of planting a seed is very appropriate. The time and the place, the characters and the plot, these are like the *shell* of the seed in which the *life*, the story's meaning, is hidden inside. By virtue of the fact that Jesus' teachings came in the form of story, his words would find purchase in the minds of his disciples. They would remember, even when they did not yet understand. One day, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they would.

Now, it should be said that we aren't necessarily talking about long drawn-out stories. Just a 2-3 minute story wrapped around a compelling image may be ...

(The presenter will take this lecture just a little farther, after you've had a chance to talk with someone about you've read so far. Please do so now.)

Part 3. Narrative Theory

The Narrative Witnessing Ideal

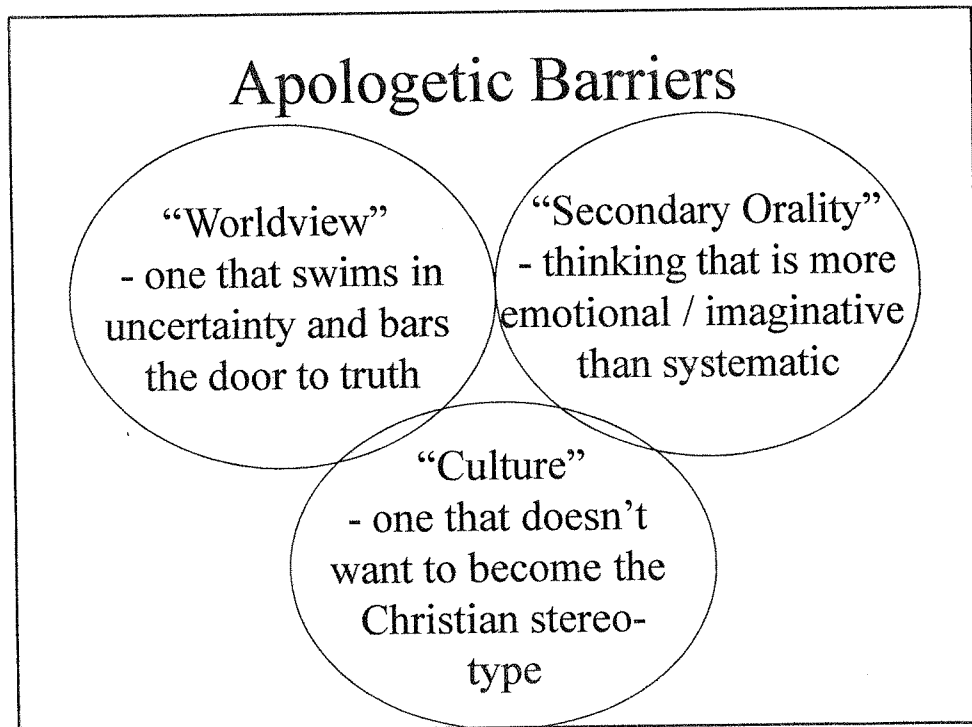
Social Penetration Theory.

Stories as an exchange of friendship.

Find ourselves in the Gospel stories.

“In the same box”

“With the same naturalness”



Why Tell Stories?

“Worldview”
- one that swims in
uncertainty and bars
the door to truth

The backdoor is
not as tightly
locked

The Christian meta-
narrative *is* the
Christian worldview

The knowledge about the way the universe
really is sleeps deeper in the Postmodern
mind...but it is still there.

Why Tell Stories?

Thinking changes as
Better Stories disrupt
and replace tired and
dysfunctional ones

“Secondary Orality”
- thinking that is more
emotional / imaginative
than systematic

“Abductive Reasoning”

Storytelling *does* fit with the “narrow Lutheran
way” on the matter of emotion

Why Tell Stories?

Storytelling (as opposed to argument) is
an exchange of “spiritual friendship” –
humility is the price of admission

“Gentleness and Respect” is realized in
Ethical Dialogue

Balancing
advocacy
with
openness

“Culture”
- one that doesn't
want to become the
Christian stereo-
type

Just who
is finding
Jesus,
anyway?




Part 4 “What Story?” Case Studies – Small Group Brainstorming

Instructions for this exercise will be displayed by PowerPoint. Use this space for keeping notes as you like.


My example:

What I want to say:



Possible stories:

The best and why:



Part 5. What do you really think? – Whole Group Feedback

This slide may take your thinking a little further than the 3 questions displayed on the PowerPoint.

What's On Your Mind?

What about “God’s Great Exchange?”

Are we marginalizing doctrine or systematic theology?

Are we trying to avoid the legitimate offense of the cross?

Does Law & Gospel have the same place it always used to?

Are we trying to use other means than the Means of Grace to work in people’s lives (such as relationships or emotions or imagination)?

Are we jumping on a bandwagon?

ON THE OTHER HAND...

Are there things that excite you about narrative witnessing that we haven’t talked about yet?

Notes:

Part 6. Small Group Bible Study – simulation of a method of training

Taking it to the Church

Study the Gospel Stories (Trench, Edersheim) – 40 minutes

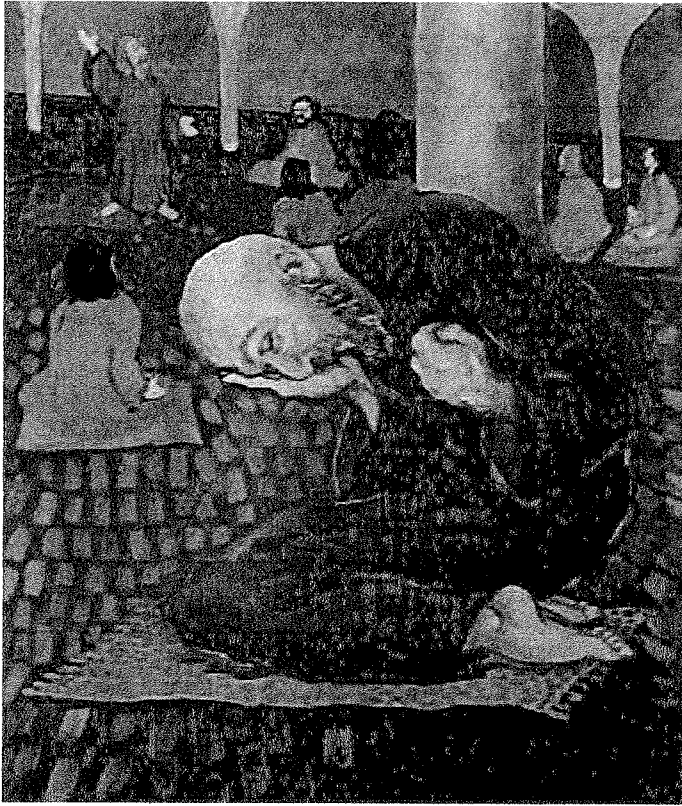
Develop and Discuss Formulaic Questions: when might I use this story, what is its Law content, what is the Gospel hook, how would I tell it / what might I emphasize in the telling? – 10 minutes

Role Playing and Spiritual Conversations in Small Groups and/or in front of the class – 10 minutes

Break after every 5 or 6 sessions for Special Topics: e.g., worldview, active listening, ethical dialogue, other witnessing methods, “What Story?” brainstorming, sharing of witnessing stories...

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself; ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14)



To some who
were confident of
their own
righteousness and
looked down on
everybody else...

Enjoy some unscripted talk about this Scripture: What questions does this parable or the situation that occasioned it raise for you? What strikes your mind or heart?

Who needs to hear this story? For what situation or question could this story be the answer? What would our lives be missing if we didn't have this story?

How does this story confront us? How does it hurt? How does it reveal our true condition – we are not what we are supposed to be – and our desperate need?

What is the good news in this story? How does it comfort us when we are convicted? If this story did not contain specific Gospel, what internal connections with the Gospel can you discern?

How would you tell this story? What might need explaining? What details would you emphasize and how? How will you make the meaning crystal clear after you've told it, that is, how the story speaks to the situation? Will you work in the essential features of the Gospel; if so, how?

Use this space to prepare to tell the story:

4) Agree/Disagree. All conversations have moments in which the conversational rules expect a new topic to be introduced. This allows us to thoughtfully prepare ahead of time how we will turn a conversation to spiritual things in a way that will fit naturally into the context of the relationship. How *specifically* will you accomplish this with the person you've had in mind all day?

5) Comment on the importance or validity of any of these qualities of "ethical dialogue."

a. It's important to achieve a careful balance between advocacy and openness. (This does not mean any sort of openness to lies or error, but a certain openness to the person, their story, how they've come to see things the way they do, and an openness to what we ourselves are learning about Christ as we dialogue? (Philemon 6)

b. Agreeing with me is not a condition for treating you with non-possessive warmth and friendship. Note: take this in the context of spiritual friendship with people who don't know Christ. There *are* situations in which we would not want to even shake a person's hand (2 John).

continued...

- c. Not having all the answers, rather than being a problem because of the way it ruins my credibility, actually makes me someone people can talk to.

Conclusion – What Story?

