**The Art of Narration – By Thailer Jimerson**

This article is a supplement to this morning’s sermon. A few weeks ago, I received the sermon request “How to keep kids engaged in their bible”. Admittedly, I’ve had a lot of challenges doing that very thing with my high school bible class at the first, but since employing a new teaching philosophy, I’ve seen whole classes revolutionized. I believe it can do the same for you whether you’re teaching a new believer across a kitchen table, an adult study, your kids at home – anyone, really.

A lot of what’s written below will make more sense after you’ve listened to the morning sermon.

**How-To:**

1. Tell your students that you’re reading the narrative with the aim of asking any and every student at random: *“Tell it back to me in your own words.”*
2. Read the scripture story from a Bible (paper is preferred over screen, especially for younger minds).
3. Have every student close their Bible as this teaches them to rely on memory. Then say: *“Tell it back to me in your own words.”* While the aim is not for them to have a perfect recall, because it is memory, they will share the elements that resonated most with them.
4. The aim for this segment is not to answer their questions. Encourage them to wait to ask until the second portion. This first segment is about having each student reconstruct the narrative together, working to order it chronologically even if the entries are not initially chronological. Its purpose is to establish relationships between events in the narrative and seeing relationships between this story and others.
5. The teachers should be silent, not interrupting until all pieces of the narrative are in place.
6. Try to include every child. Even the shyest can contribute basic elements of the story. However, do not press a shy child for more once they’re finished.
7. While listening to their answers (their “narrations”), pay attention to deficiencies forgotten events or wording as this will clue you into what to teach and where their understanding could be supplemented.
8. To encourage active listening at the first, do not allow the scripture to be re-read. If they don’t catch it the first time, then they don’t catch it. By reiterating the text we’re teaching that they don’t have to listen closely the first time.
9. In guiding their missing pieces in the narrative, ask: “Do you remember \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (insert a key word or two)?”
10. Only after narration is complete, and the narrative is reconstructed to satisfaction, may you prompt for meaning, detail, and specific points. It’s usually at this point that I encourage them to open their Bible back up, look over the text, and ask questions or add comments. The following are some good ways to do that (as opposed to asking leading questions):
    1. “What stood out to you, resonated?”
    2. “Do you have any questions?”
    3. “Does this remind you of another story?”
    4. “What would happen if they had done this instead of that?”
    5. “Would you have done the same?”
    6. “What solutions would you suggest…?”
    7. “What ideas could you add?”
    8. “Compare/contrast with…”
11. Some other examples of narration practices:
    1. You narrate a single element from the story and ask the class to fill in the rest
    2. Narrate the story purposely erroneously and ask the class to correct it
    3. Organize students in threes: A’s narrate first half, B’s narrate second half, C’s listen to both and add missing pieces to the narrative
    4. Written narration where they write out the story
    5. Story board the narrative
    6. Write a poem based on the story
    7. Draw a picture from the story
    8. Write out the passage by hand itself, word for word, (Dt.17.18)